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*Connecting our story with others***Community collaboration**

Juliette Kinzie describes in detail her travels in the 1830s along ancient trails which traversed the frontier in what is modern-day southern Wisconsin and northern Illinois. The Agency House was privileged to be a part of two separate projects this spring related to the Kinzies' travels. The first involved assisting the Cherrywood Neighborhood Association of Middleton in research and design for a historical marker being placed where the Blue Mounds trail cut through that area. We also provided a program in May for the Mount Horeb Area Historical Society's "Driftless Perspectives" series.

In April and May, HIAH was involved for the second year in a national education initiative called Remake Learning Days, and we were subsequently invited to include our Archaeology Kids' Camp program in the Wisconsin Science Festival in October.

In June, we placed a temporary exhibit on "The Forensics of Historic Preservation" at the Portage Public Library, and of course we plan to be back at the Columbia County Fair in July to share the history of frontier Portage with those who call this area "home" today.

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one of which had functioned as the Indian agency and home of the Kinzies prior to the construction of their existing 1832 home.

Questions and conundrums have arisen along the way, some of which are still in the process of being amply addressed. In one instance, a feature which seemed at first to be problematic in identifying the structure as the officers' quarters unexpectedly ended up being strong evidence of support when studied further and understood within context. The process of discovery and interpretation is ongoing.

The question at hand is, "Should this building be saved?" Few buildings in the state of Wisconsin today could boast the age and powerful historic richness of this unassuming structure. There is no doubt that if it can be saved, it should be saved.

But *can* it be saved? That is an inquiry we are still attempting to answer. Upward of 50% of its major structural components survive. Some timbers are beyond repair, but the old-growth heartwood within most of the remaining timbers may be sound

enough for some level of reconstruction, assuming the joints are addressed and reinforced. If able to be reconstructed, the cost would be steep, but there are alternatives to full-scale reconstruction, as well.

While it is unknown what may ultimately be done to protect what remains, this building is too important not to receive every chance for preservation if viable options exist. This piece of history is at a crossroads. Once it is gone, it can never be replaced.

Find a detailed report on the structure and research to date here: agencyhouse.org/fort

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watered herds of cattle mattered little. In a way, history still lived at that place."

"The 1918 gathering at the site was a consequence of renewed interest in visiting the disappearing relics of the early days. While talk of the agency house grew, something comparatively mundane was about to touch off a new chapter in the history of that most 'unusually interesting place.'"

In 1929, the Wisconsin Archaeological Society coordinated another public gathering in regard to the Agency House's fate—this time at the state capitol.

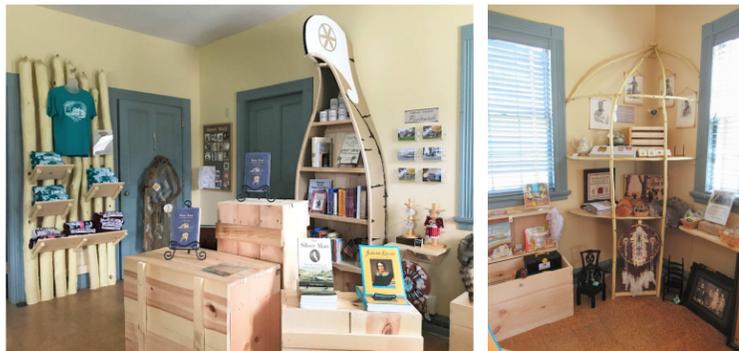
"A pilgrimage was made to the [agency house] site four weeks later. Participants turned out two hundred strong from across southern Wisconsin. Justice Chester Fowler of the Wisconsin Supreme court officiated. For those who had taken up [Mrs. Charles E.] Buell's call to read *Wau-Bun*, the

experience of walking the cobweb halls of times past provided a valuable taste of the wonder evoked by history in three dimensions. They understood the reason why they labored to save the decrepit home. If something weren't done, the palpable presence of the historic which they felt that afternoon would soon, as Brown warned, 'disappear and be forgotten.'"

Fast forward to July 17, 2021, as the WAS plans to return to the site which had sparked a historic preservation movement 103 years prior. Members of the society will be able to experience the fruit of their predecessors' efforts in the form of a restored and preserved landmark which has endured as a museum for ninety years and counting. A nationally significant site on the National Register of Historic Places, the Agency House continues to bring history and its crucial lessons to life for visitors, generation after generation.

Gift shop makeover

The gift shop was overhauled in April to reflect the themes within our site's permanent exhibit and to provide a unique space in which to highlight our new 2021 Historic Preservation Edition of *Wau-Bun*.

*Year two of archaeological dig underway***Learning & discovery abound**

A multitude of eager participants and spectators converged at the Agency House on July 10 and 11 for the first of two weekends of a public education archaeological dig.

Archaeologists Constance Arzigian, John Wackman, and Dan Joyce are again leading the second year of efforts to locate the Agency blacksmith shop and learn more about how the Agency functioned in the early 1830s. Adults and children ages five and up are invited to work alongside the professionals after participating in a five-minute "Archaeology Boot Camp."

Our objective is to be able to more holistically understand the site's story, as well as foster an appreciation and basic understanding of this important scientific process by which history is preserved and interpreted.

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*Detective work leads to significant find***Fort Winnebago discovery unexpected and intriguing**

The officers' quarters which was the Kinzies' first home at Fort Winnebago has now possibly been found extant.

[Excerpt from *Wau-Bun*, by Juliette Kinzie, wife of Indian Agent John Kinzie at Fort Winnebago in the 1830s]: "Major and Mrs. Twigg and a few of the younger officers gave us a cordial welcome—how cordial those alone can know who have come, like us, to a remote, isolated home in the wilderness. The Major insisted on our taking possession at once of vacant quarters in the fort, instead of at 'the Agency,' as had been proposed."

"After dinner, Mrs. Twigg showed me the quarters assigned to us, on the opposite side of the spacious hall. They consisted of two large rooms on each of the three floors or stories of the building. On the ground-floor the front room was vacant. The one in the rear was to be the sleeping-apartment, as was evident from a huge, unwieldy bedstead, of proportions amply sufficient to have accommodated Og, the King of Bashan, with Mrs. Og and the children into the bargain. We could not repress our laughter, but the bedstead was nothing to another structure which occupied a second corner of the apartment. This edifice had been built under the immediate superintendence of one of our young lieutenants [Jefferson Davis], and it was plain to be seen that upon it both he and

the soldiers who fabricated it had exhausted all their architectural skill."

An Agency House volunteer recently brought vague news about the existence of a possible fort structure and coordinated a visit to the farm of an Amish gentleman who had several years prior taken down a barn for a nearby farmer. He had hauled the components to his own property with the intent of building a barn for himself. Although the barn was never constructed from the pieces, he saved them and protected them as he recognized their historical significance.

Although in 1856 newspapers across the region made the erroneous announcement that Fort Winnebago had burned to the ground, the *Portage Independent* soon set the record straight, reporting that the fire's impact had been limited and most of the fort buildings remained intact. By 1898, Andrew Jackson Turner, in his treatise on the fort, noted that no fort structures were then visible upon the landscape except the surgeon's quarters, the commissary, and part of the hospital. Some of the fort had fallen victim to time and the elements, but some of it had been salvaged in those intervening decades by local residents. It was during that time of salvaging that a fort structure was reportedly hauled by horse and sledge to the property where it was used as a barn up until just several years ago.

Generations passed down the story that mortised sockets in the cross-beams once held floor joists for a second floor on which soldiers would sleep, although it was unknown precisely which fort building it was. This family tradition was preserved in an interview for the 2008 PBS Special, "Wisconsin Hometown Stories: Portage Memories."

The Amish gentleman was able to sketch many intriguing details he had discovered when he had dismantled the barn with his brother some years previous. He easily recalled specific measurements and pointed out special features still present among the elements of the building. We then commenced a period of research in which fascinating information emerged, pointing to the likely identity of this old fort building.

Construction techniques and materials were compared to those of the Agency House to authenticate the time period, and these were found to be consistent down to the particulars. Using specific data from the Amish man and comparing it to various historical documents, including a blueprint created by Jefferson Davis, the identity of the building was narrowed down to three possibilities, and then further reduced to the two most likely candidates: a pair of identical officers' quarters,

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**Meet our intern:
Erin Rice**

Erin Rice, a senior at Concordia University-Wisconsin, joins our staff this season as a public history intern with a special emphasis on archives.

With a major in history and minor in graphic design, Erin is “interested in telling the story of history, as I believe one of the most important elements of history is to give voices to those who have not had the opportunity to be heard and to recognize all elements of the past.”



We are pleased to welcome Erin and invite you to come and meet her.

**HIAH referenced in
*American Archaeology***

The summer 2021 issue of *American Archaeology* magazine, published by the Archaeological Conservancy, references HIAH in an article written by Sara Millhouse.

**Thank you to those
who make it possible**

Our 2021 programming is made possible by our members, donors, and dedicated volunteers, as well as the following financial sponsors:

- The Antiquarian Society of Wisconsin in memory of Olive “Cissy” Bryson
- General Engineering Company
- The Community Foundation of South Central Wisconsin
- The George L.N. Meyer Foundation
- The H.L. Palmer Masonic Angel Fund
- Community Bank of Portage
- Associated Bank
- Brakebush Family Foundation
- City of Portage Tourism Commission
- The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the State of Wisconsin

Thank you for supporting our mission to preserve history, educate the public, and inspire generations to civic responsibility.

Group returns to HIAH after 103 years

Visit provided spark that set movement ablaze

When the Wisconsin Archaeological Society inquired about holding their 2021 meeting at the Agency House during the archaeological dig, little did they realize that they were circling back around after 103 years.

On August 31, 1918, a Labor Day gathering at the old agency house was organized by the Wisconsin Archaeological Society in conjunction with the Wisconsin Historical Society and Sauk County Historical

Society in order to commemorate the important history that happened at locations around Portage.

[Quoted material below is excerpted from the new addendum in *Wau-Bun*, 2021]

“Visitors milled about the historic structure—one of the last surviving vestiges of the history they had gathered to commemorate. Then it was off across the river to old Fort Winnebago, although after ninety years very little remained to intimate the existence of the formerly impressive compound.

To all these gathered history enthusiasts, the material remnants of an era long past had made the occasion unique. Those who had thus far studied the period’s records in only two dimensions on paper could now envision the very scenes of the First Infantry Regiment drawing water from the fort’s well and of Juliette Kinzie furnishing the brand new agency house with marvels previously unseen in this part of the world. The fact that the agency had become a farm and the fort’s well now

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A look back at some June events at the Agency House

(Left) Work progresses on our fire-wrought dugout canoe project. Join us the last Friday of each month through September: agencyhouse.org/dugout-canoe. (Center) Pastor Mike Gormican as an 1830s itinerant preacher at the Praise on the Prairie event. (Right) Collections care expert, Nicolette B. Meister, presents an engaging workshop on how to best preserve antiques and family heirlooms.

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General Engineering Company has again generously sponsored this rare opportunity for community involvement in a professional scientific and historical endeavor. The George L. N. Meyer Foundation and the H.L. Palmer Masonic Angel Fund have offered additional logistical support.

June 17 and 18 will be our final dig weekend. Pre-registration for dig times is available here: <https://agencyhouse.eventsmart.com/>. You may also register at the door for any time slots that are still available.

More details may be found at agencyhouse.org/archaeology-2021.

Tree gets vaccinated

Every three years, the historic elm tree in front of the Agency House receives an inoculation against Dutch Elm Disease. The tree is known to be over 200 years old.

Hamm’s Arborcare inoculates the tree, not with a syringe, but by drilling and pumping the solution—all 70 gallons of it—directly into the roots of the tree. It takes a few hours.

Watch a brief video blog produced by Hamm’s Arborcare featuring our historic tree receiving its booster shot this year:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PYPHri45jps>

A Landscape of Families

A new outdoor exhibit is coming to the Agency House by the spring of 2022, thanks in part to a grant from Wisconsin Humanities with funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the State of Wisconsin.*

HIAH is partnering with the Ho-Chunk Nation Museum and Cultural Center to create an exhibit designed to powerfully present the personal story of the Ho-Chunk people.

Ho-Chunk Museum director Josephine G. Lee states, “The Ho-Chunk Nation has a long relationship with the Historic Indian Agency House, and the Museum looks forward to encouraging healing through this new partnership. [The exhibit] will help the Museum fulfill the community desire to have access to cultural information that is meaningful and impactful. This partnership will also provide meaningful opportunities for learning about our unique history, language, and way of life to foster a well-rounded perspective of Ho-Chunk people and our relationship to the state of Wisconsin.”

The Ho-Chunk Nation was, in 1832, on the cusp of forced removal from their homeland. A census conducted right here on the Agency House grounds lists nearly every head of household in the Ho-Chunk Nation along with their villages and families. Written in the midst of the historically pivotal circumstances of 1832, this document today remains the last intact picture of the tribe prior to the start of forced dispossession.

An exhibit based on the 1832 register which connects visitors to the families who called this place home exactly 190 years prior will combine with oral story enhancements, cultural horticulture, and programming.

The following are the key personal reflective constructs which we desire to encourage

through the exhibit:

An Indigenized Landscape: I’m physically standing in the midst of someone’s homeland.

An Agency in Perspective: This is the place where an entire people were approaching a turning point. The cultural landscape of this place would be nearly wiped out of Wisconsin in the space of a decade. The Mounted Troops are already preparing for the first push in the spring.

“The [Ho-Chunk] Museum looks forward to encouraging healing through this new partnership.”

Josephine G. Lee

An Immense Impact on Real Families—Not Nameless Numbers—Resulted, But the Story Did Not End There: I can see the names of the people who were impacted by the history that happened under my feet and learn stories about these individuals and their communities. These families were driven off their own land, yet many of their descendants persevered and returned despite more than a century of promises broken by the United States government.

A Personal Response Evoked: I know my historic neighbors by name. Now I am challenged to think about if this were my home and my way of life that stood on the brink. The lessons derived from the real people at this real place facing real conflict and trauma are what make the history of the Ho-Chunk Nation and the Fort Winnebago Indian Agency important to remember.

*This project supports Wisconsin Humanities’ mission to strengthen the roots of community life through educational and cultural programs that inspire civic participation and individual imagination. Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this project do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Fantastic offerings for the whole family

July 17 - 18
Final weekend of community archaeological dig and live blacksmithing demonstrations
agencyhouse.org/archaeology-2021

July 13, 20, and 27
“Wisconsin’s History Keepers” speaker series continues on Tuesday evenings at 6:30. Coming up: Frederick J. Turner, Ho-Chunk oral/cultural history, and Milo Quaife.

July 30, Aug. 27, and Sept. 24
Work on our fire-wrought dugout canoe project continues at 6 pm. Hands-on workshop for adults and teens.
agencyhouse.org/dugout-canoe

July 31
Nature walk with conservation specialist Tony Abate at 10 am.

August 14 - 15
Enduring Skills Weekend. Have you ever tried blacksmithing? Flint knapping? Ancient copper pounding? Played the game of graces? Whist? Washed clothes on a washboard? Spun wool? Made soap or a 19th century toy? Now’s your chance to try out skills like these and LOTS more! Ages 5 - adult.
agencyhouse.org/enduring-skills

August 28
Girl Scouts Day

September 18
Living History Day: 1830s. How did frontier folks entertain themselves?

September 24-26
Scouts BSA “Camping and Cultures” weekend (Fri - Sun)



The Grace Bible Church band performs at Praise on the Prairie



The Historical Timekeepers reenact year three of the Civil War



History hike along the Fox River



Live blacksmithing demonstrations



Flag Day celebration: Portage American Legion Post 47 pledge of allegiance; Scouts BSA flag-raising; Rita Dow presentation of “Letters Home to Portage: Charles C. Dow, Civil War Soldier”



“Wisconsin’s History Keepers” speaker series: Rob Nurre presents the life and work of Increase A. Lapham in first-person narrative. Join us for three more presentations on Tuesday evenings in July.