

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 19, 1930

Colonial Dames Will Purchase Agency House

Historic Site Near Portage Is to Be Restored and Preserved; 'Wau-bun,' Romance by Its First Mistress, Is Recalled by Project

A HISTORIC and romantic spot in Wisconsin—the "Old Indian Agency House" at Portage, as it is familiarly known—is to be preserved. At a recent meeting of the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the State of Wisconsin, it was unanimously voted to purchase and restore the house whose site on a mound overlooking the headwaters of the Fox and Wisconsin rivers, and near the spot where old Fort Winnebago stood, is one of the most picturesque in the state.

The matter of preserving for posterity this spot rich in state lore first interested the Wisconsin Federation of Women's Clubs. A local committee headed by H. E. Andrews of Portage had already been sought, and initial gifts had been received from enthusiastic friends. But with the prospect of the \$2,000,000 general federation endowment fund becoming urgent, the venture in historic preservation for the state federation was interrupted. The Portage committee was about to formulate plans for its purchase when its leader died, and the Colonial Dames finding the project so much in line with its objects, took immediate steps to purchase, restore and maintain the house. The tentative plan calls for turning over the property to the Wisconsin Historical library for supervision.

Good Workmanship

The plan for taking over the house was discussed at a meeting Oct. 10 by Mrs. Hobart S. Johnson of Madison at the Indian Creek farm home of Mrs. Irving Seaman. Mrs. Johnson declared that her enthusiasm for the project was due to the appeal made by Dr. Joseph Schafer and Miss Louise P. Kellogg of the State Historical society, and to her visit to the agency house in the company of Frank Reilly, Madison architect. Built in the wilderness in 1830 the house was a surprisingly good example of the pre-Greek revival style, he said, the fine doors, beautiful moldings, generous staircase and triple paned windows, etc., attesting to the taste of the early builders.

Much glamour and romance is associated with the historic home. Readers of "Wau-bun," a record of the early days of the northwest by Mrs. John H. Kinzie (Juliette Kinzie), about to be republished, are familiar with its history and charm.

Capt. John Kinzie of the United States Indian agency came to Wisconsin with his wife, Juliette, a native of Connecticut, from Detroit in 1830. Here in the heart of the wilderness he built the agency house, after having first lived at Fort Winnebago and later in a log cabin built in the first days of their residence. In swift moving canoes the Indians brought their furs down the rivers, and at the agency house, about a mile from Portage, meeting the traders and voyageurs who came to buy them.

Price About \$7,000

The property consists of about 165 acres, has about 20 acres of woodland, 20 of pasturage and some marsh land. The canal with the government locks is nearby. The Colonial Dames have estimated that purchase and restoration will necessitate about \$7,000. It will be raised through state-wide gifts.

The original gifts committee is still in existence and will turn over the funds collected to the society. Mrs. C. E. Buell, Madison, a former president of the Wisconsin Federation of Women's Clubs, was a member of

this committee, as were Mrs. H. J. Puffer and T. H. Cochrane of Portage, Maj. Howard Green and Fred Best of Milwaukee, Miss Amelia Stevens of Madison and Stanley Hanks. The property is now known as the Baker farm.

The purchasing committee will be announced shortly by Mrs. Arthur T. Holbrook, president of the Wisconsin society. Mrs. James P. Brown will be the project treasurer.

Besides Mrs. Holbrook, president, officers of the society are: First vice president, Mrs. George L. Graves; second vice president, Mrs. George Manierre; recording secretary, Mrs. Loyal Durand; corresponding secretary, Mrs. Alfred P. Wettstein; treasurer, Miss May Houghton; registrar, Mrs. Henry M. Ogden; historian, Mrs. William H. Mayhew.

Mrs. Charles R. Lindsay Jr., Grove Farm, Wayne, Ill., writes: "It occurred to me that you might be interested to know that a descendant of John Kinzie, pioneer, mentioned in one of your letters, was Juliette Low, founder of the Girl Scouts of America. I am sending you a copy of 'Juliette Low,' telling of her life."

[Thanks for compliment and book.]