

105 N. 11th St.  
La Crosse, Wis.  
October 19, 1933

Mr. W. C. English  
Portage, Wisconsin

Dear Mr. English,

In reply to your inquiry about my sideboard at the Agency House, there is, as far as I can find out, nothing very certain up to 1879 or 1880.

When it came into our possession about that time, the story was, that it was one of three that Jefferson Davis had helped make and that it had been in the officers' quarters at Fort Winnebago. These sideboards were called Davises. However, the description of the Davis as given by Mrs. Kinzie in "Waubun" does not fit this sideboard at all, so I do not believe that Jefferson Davis had anything to do with the making of this one.

I think it is a Sheraton, for I recall having seen in a magazine, a picture of one that was almost identical with this, except that on each side there was another compartment or "box". The title was: "Sheraton sideboard---early 18th century design. The knife boxes give it a clumsy appearance." These "knife boxes", if I remember correctly, made the sides about twelve inches higher.

As you probably know, the sideboard is mahogany veneer. Many of the original glass knobs were broken when it came into our possession, so Mother had them replaced with others. I regret that I have none of these knobs. After the death of my parents, when our home was broken up, I arranged to have the sideboard crated and put in storage. I, myself, packed those glass knobs in one of the small drawers, but when a few years later I had it shipped, there were no knobs to be found in it when it reached my niece in Michigan. Later she sent it to Grand Rapids where it was refinished, and the present knobs, similar to knobs of that period, were put on.

There were no castors on it, which made it very hard to handle, so Mother had a small piece cut from each leg before having castors put on, thus leaving the height as before.

Mrs. Bronson, who first wrote me in regard to loaning the sideboard to the Colonial Dames of America, asked me last year to write up what I knew about it for her, but I neglected to do so, and your amusing story of the tale the woman told her

friends shows that some sort of history about it is necessary. Now as to how it came into our family--

My father, James Collins, rented a building to a man who used it as a flour and feed store, as well as a second hand store. This sideboard was among the articles brought there for sale. The man who brought it there claimed that it had been in the officers' quarters at the Fort. There seems to be no reason to doubt that statement.

Business, apparently, was not very good and the proprietor found it difficult to pay the rent, so when the building was vacated, Father took the sideboard in lieu of rent. It has been in our family ever since and now it has been handed down to me.

When I was in Portage at the dedication of the Agency House, I noticed that one of the legs of the sideboard was split. If you will have it glued I will pay for the repairs.

I also noticed that some of the drawers were lined with velvet. That was done by my niece, as she used the drawers for silver. I think that lining should be removed as it was not there originally.

A friend of mine who visited the Agency House last summer told me that it was listed among the things loaned but that my name was given as "Mrs" Anna Collins. If "Mrs." is still there, will you please cross out "Mrs." or change it to "Miss"?

I would have replied to your letter before but I have not been well this fall, due to an operation during the summer, and I have had to conserve all my energy for my school work. Letter writing was difficult so I kept putting it off, but now I am almost back to normal and can take care of my neglected correspondence.

I hope the information I have given will be helpful to you.

Sincerely yours,

*Anna L. Collins.*

ALC:BCF