

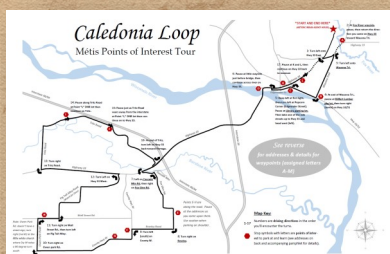
Historic Indian Agency House

Caledonia Loop

Métis Driving Tour

On the grounds surrounding our historic site stood a trading post, an 1830s Indian agency complex, and several French/Métis dwellings. People from the Manaire, Pauquette, Dubay, Jourdain, Mirandau, Ouilmette, and other households called this place home. Voyageur camps and Ho-Chunk lodges added to the mix. This little island in the Fox River floodplain was a Métis community hotspot.

However, the Portage Métis settlement is better seen from a wider lens. **This 30-mile meandering loop** through Portage and the nearby Caledonia hills introduces you to Portage's Métis community through the places in which they found value to live, work, worship, and be laid to rest.



Use the **map** to navigate to the parking points along the route. **This booklet correlates with the lettered stopping points on the map.**



Note: Nothing is offered indoors or beyond the roadside/ parking lot except if noted. Please respect residents' privacy.

Names of French/Métis family members are underlined.



Listen Here

Stopping Point A:
Fox River Wayside
1825 State Hwy 33

Just after crossing the Fox River, pull into the wayside on the left. Picturing this spot in the 1830s, **Fort Winnebago stood above you**. Some Ho-Chunk mothers of Métis children such as Agathe Decorah and possibly Charlotte Harney lived in the barracks on this hill before being abandoned by their military spouses.

Across the highway, Francois LeRoy's c. 1819 **Canadian-style log home** still stands (Ft. Winnebago Surgeons Quarters museum).

Most Métis families likely had accounts for food and supplies at the **fort sutler's store** just across the river from this wayside. The sutler's home has been moved and now stands at 505 E. Cook St.

A Native trail which later became the **military road** extended northeast from here, connecting Portage with Green Bay. Pierre Pauquette raised livestock along this trail at a **farm called Bellefontaine**. Just beyond, Luther Gleason and his wife (a relative of Chief Four Legs) lived at Lake Puckaway prior to moving to Portage in the mid-1830s. Following Pierre Pauquette's early death, his widow, Therese, was married to Silas Walsworth who is buried at the **fort cemetery** which stands on Hwy EE.

Many Portage Métis families were involved in some aspect of portaging boats and cargo between the Fox and Wisconsin Rivers. That **portage trail** (called "wawa'ajja" in Ho-Chunk) began near this Hwy 33 bridge and led to the Wisconsin River. Jean Lecuyer and Laurent Barth converted the footpath into an ox trail which followed the present street called Wauona Trail, which you will travel next.



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Stopping Point B:

Bliffert Lumber Parking Lot

1009 E. Wisconsin St.

You have now crossed the approximate **route of the Portage trail**. The Wisconsin River is located just on the other side of the levee. A granite monument notes Marquette and Joliette's 1673 entry into the Mississippi Watershed at this point where the portage trail ends.

Entrepreneur Daniel Whitney operated a **warehouse** in this vicinity in the early 1830s. Some Portage families (Pauquette, LeRoy, Lecuyer, Manaignre, Grignon, etc.) held accounts here for essentials like flour, pork, sugar, ammunition, leather, and more.

A few blocks south stood Abraham Wood's "grog shop." Wood married the daughter of Ho-Chunk elder Quick Heart and also spent time trading at the Four Lakes (Madison). Wood's location may have had special significance since this was also one of Portage's Ho-Chunk seasonal camping/home sites in the 1830s, and even as recently as the 1930s-40s. A local 96-year-old recalls Ho-Chunk tar paper lodges near Kwik Trip two blocks south of here during her youth when the area was a broad willow-covered lowland. Her 92-year-old friend remembers that a Ho-Chunk lodge was seasonally occupied further east into the willow plain.

Looking down Hwy 51 south, a **Native trail** navigated its way from Portage to the Four Lakes roughly following the highway. Métis traders at the Four Lakes, such as Oliver Armelle's family, likely traveled this route when they came to Portage for their annual supply of goods.

In the late 1830s, prior Fort Winnebago military officer and trader Alexander Hooe bought **tracts of land** approximately 6 miles south along the Wisconsin River near this trail, but likely never lived on them. Following Hooe's early death, his Dakota Métis wife, Emilie Rolette (niece of Pierre Pauquette's clerk, Laurent Rolette), sold this land and continued living at Prairie du Chien.



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Stopping Point C:

Portage Library Parking Lot

253 W. Edgewater St.

You are now parked at the **center of Portage's west-end Métis community**. You are on a small rise overlooking the Wisconsin River (just beyond the canal across the road from the library). Laurent Barth, the first Frenchman to gain Ho-Chunk permission to transport boats commercially across the portage, built a house somewhere along this ridge in the 1790s.

By the 1830s, just a little beyond this parking lot (near where Lock St. intersects with Edgewater St.) stood a **little cluster of homes** occupied by the families of Perrish, Paul, and Lavoine Grignon; and J. B. L'Ecuyer. Edgewater Street roughly follows an 1830s trail that led along the edge of this ridge. One house was likely north of the trail and two were south.

In the other direction (looking toward downtown), two 1830s homes were noted as being immediately behind the **big bank building** on the corner of Hwy 33 and 16. Evidence indicates that one of these was the home of Francois LeRoy after the military purchased his earlier home which you saw at point A. The other home behind the bank may have possibly been owned by Luther Gleason and his Ho-Chunk wife after they built a house at Portage prior to 1836. John T. De la Ronde and likely other Métis families boarded with their relatives in these homes, as well.

There are more Métis families known at Portage than there were houses. Perhaps this meant that these houses were accompanied by Indigenous-style lodges in which other relatives lived nearby.

The 1835 military road map shows some of these homes along with a large **agricultural field or garden** spreading out north from here.



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Stopping Point D:

Pauquette Ferry Wayside

Next to 809 W. Edgewater St.

Shortly after the first Métis transport enterprise began at Portage in the 1790s, Spoon Decorah (the son of Coming of Day and French trader Descaris) moved his **substantial Ho-Chunk village** from Lake Puckaway to Portage, likely along this ridge. While his son relocated the village to the Baraboo River, this was still **a choice Ho-Chunk campsite** in the 1830s. Little Hill spent time seasonally just across the Wisconsin River from here. Spoon's grandson spent the summer of 1832 living near this spot.

Spoon Decorah was **interred above-ground** nearby after his death in ~1808. In 1837, Pawnee Blanc (whose wife was a relative of Pierre Pauquette's Ho-Chunk mother, Ho-a-mau-nee-ka) was buried in an **ancient mound** which stood near this wayside.

In 1834, Pierre Pauquette got Ho-Chunk permission to move from his post near the Agency House to the **knoll at the other end of the Wisconsin River bridge** where he built a home, trade building, and farm structures. Pauquette's Meskwaki Métis widow, Therese, continued living here until 1857 when she and her children, Moses and Therese, relocated further into the interior of the Caledonia hill country into which you will travel next.

In later years, other Métis families came to be connected to this quarter of town. About three blocks north, Antoine and Paul Grignon, and their mother, Archange Reed of Trempeleau, were **granted mortgage rights** to three city lots by a Portage lawyer in 1859 in exchange for "power of attorney" that this Métis family had granted to the lawyer. Perhaps this land was collateral for assets administered by the lawyer for the family? Reed had been the widow of Portage-born Amable Grignon, and was, herself, a Dakota Métis woman. In 1870, John W Brisbois (born in 1833 to a Prairie du Chien Métis family descended from the Menominee Carrons) **lived here in the fourth ward** of Portage and made a living as a river raftsman.



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Stopping Point E:

LaVigne/Lessard Homestead

Near N6042 Fox Glen Rd.

Park in a safe spot along Fox Glen Road and view the changed landscape. You've risen up from the floodplain into the Caledonia Hills, or as it was previously known to Métis people, "**the Baraboo country.**" Setting aside the modern road system in your mind, this bluff is the first major eminence of land encountered by canoe as one ascends the Baraboo River from where it meets the Wisconsin. These Caledonia bluffs became an early and enduring spot of significance for Métis families.

One of the **longest-residing families** lived on the left (east) side of this road. Jean Roy (the son of Francois LeRoy, and past agency employee/translator) married a Prairie du Chien Métis woman named Ursula Lessard. Following Jean's 1840 death, Ursula remarried an Ojibwe Métis man named Charles LaVigne. The couple settled on the edge of this bluff. The land remained in the family for generations. Ursula's half-uncle, Antoine Courville, was employed as a Portage agency blacksmith assistant. Her aunt was Pierre Pauquette's wife, Therese Crelie.

On the right side of the road was a tract of land which, in 1890, was owned by John De la Ronde (likely the son of Portage's well-known Métis De la Ronde family). More about this family soon.

This bluff had already been a **place of significance to these families' Ho-Chunk relatives.** You'll visit a major village site elsewhere shortly, but as it relates to this particular spot, a 99-year-old local recalls how even in the early 20th century, her father was accustomed to granting Ho-Chunk families permission to seasonally stay on their farm on the Baraboo River at the base of this hill.



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Stopping Point F:

Breaux and Decorah Claims

Crossroads of Rowley Road and County Road W

Some Portage Métis families began gravitating here already in the mid-1830s, *before* the land was owned or surveyed by the United States. Settling here initially meant requesting Ho-Chunk permission, meaning that kinship likely opened the door for these opportunities. The **first claim within the Baraboo River country's interior** was a full decade before the land was available on the government market. In 1837, Leon Braux (an agency/American Fur Co. employee) with his wife Mariette Bellaire (a daughter of Perrish Grignon) secured Ho-Chunk permission to farm the acreage straight ahead of where Rowley Road ends.

Breaux had been part of Pierre Pauquette's enterprise to set up a treaty-promised "Indian Farm" for the Ho-Chunk Nation four miles south of here in 1835. Perhaps this work introduced him to the area's possibilities. When Breaux established his own farm, he was apparently not the first to work the soil where he put his claim. A historic account makes note that he was farming some "**old Indian fields**" here while also trading with Ho-Chunks.

Perhaps existing Ho-Chunk agricultural use of this area is connected with **another early land-patent** along the south side of Rowley Road. In Oct. 1847—even before Yellow Thunder famously bought land to avoid removal near Wisconsin Dells—a Ho-Chunk woman identified as "Ursule Decora of Columbia County" bought 40 acres of land for \$50. In 1853 she lost the land due to unpaid taxes but bought it back again for \$10 from the speculator who had acquired it from the county. In 1858, she signed paperwork at the Blue Earth agency selling it to Therese Pauquette after she had relocated (likely forced) to the Blue Earth Reservation (by Mankato, Minnesota).



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Stopping Point G:

Pauquette / De la Ronde Land

Near W10972 County Rd W

Fearing increased taxation after their Wisconsin River home was incorporated into Portage's city limits in 1857, Pierre Pauquette's widow Therese and her family relocated to land which she had purchased here in the hill country. **The 160 acres** included both Breaux's tract (which he had sold in 1847 to Simeon Lecuyer) and the adjacent tracts which you are now viewing.

Therese **afterward split this land** between her two grown children: Therese Prescott and Moses Pauquette. Moses received Breaux's tract where he lived with his Métis wife, Madeline, who descended through Prairie du Chien's LaRiviere and Lapointe families. Moses' home was just a little south of the intersection where you previously parked. He left in 1883 to translate at Black River Falls as the Ho-Chunk Tribe was being reestablished as a government-recognized entity in Wisconsin.

Moses' sister, Therese, lived on the land you now see with her husband, Thomas Prescott. Therese (the mother) lived out her final days in her daughter's household. Therese Prescott's grandfather, Joseph Crellie, who had run mail between Portage and Chicago during the early days, also spent the rest of his life here.

This particular plot of land was **likely the second non-Native land claim** in this hill country after Breaux. The land was plotted in 1838 by John T. De la Ronde, a Canadian trader whose Ho-Chunk wife was Elizabeth Decorah. Ongoing contact with Ho-Chunk families continued to intertwine De la Ronde in trade, translation, and facilitation for decades. His daughter, Christine (by his earlier marriage to Agathe Decorah), married Antoine Grignon of Trempeleau (a grandson of Portage's Perrish Grignon) whom we met at Stop D.



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Stopping Point H:

Dubay Claim

Near W11621 Wall Street Rd

After De la Ronde, the **next Métis farm established in Caledonia** was somewhere within the land on your left, atop the bluff overlooking present day Hwy 33. In the autumn of 1838, improvements were made here by a successful Métis entrepreneur, Jean Baptiste Dubay, who filled Pierre Pauquette's shoes as manager of Portage's American Fur Company post. Just prior to his arrival at Portage, he had become known in the area by running winter dog trains from Madeline Island on Lake Superior to Portage. Dubay personally lived near the Indian Agency House in Portage, however, rather than residing on this tract.

Dubay never formally entered a claim for this land, which highlights the **unusual nature of ownership** for these early claims. In the 1830s, the idea of "preemption" was gaining force. Preemption was an idea that a person could settle on US government land before it officially became available without any formal permission. Then, when the land was opened for purchase (around 1847 for this area) that "squatter" could demonstrate to the government that they had made valuable investments in tending the land and have first dibs for buying it. Just because a person staked out a land claim didn't necessarily mean they went through this next step. Dubay likely decided to pursue other interests elsewhere and left this claim to others.

You will now descend Pigtail Alley back into the Baraboo River valley enroute to one of the largest villages of the Ho-Chunk Nation in the 1830s.



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Stopping Point I:

Ho-Chunk Decorah Village

W11498 Tritz Road

Well before anyone even thought of land claims in this area, the space between where you are parked and the interstate was the location chosen by White War Eagle Decorah to **establish his village** in the opening years of the 1800s.

This village succeeded the one established at the City of Portage by his father, Spoon Decorah. White War Eagle was a brother of Ma-na-tee-see (wife of Jean Lecuyer), and E-Chau-wau-kah, (wife of Parrish Grignon). **The village was located at the foot of this bluff.** Locals recall how Ho-Chunk people continued to have a presence in this area into the 20th century.

Just across Tritz road is an oxbow of the Baraboo River. Just a mile in the other direction (across the interstate) is the Wisconsin River, likely making this a strategic point to access either waterway. Considering the Baraboo's numerous twists and turns before it connects with the Wisconsin, portaging here may have been a favorable prospect.

Today, this whole area is protected, publicly accessible DNR hunting/conservation land. If you choose, you may get out and walk around. In 1832, **over 330 Ho-Chunk people lived here** including the cousins of many Portage Métis families. Following the first Ho-Chunk forced removals, this village swelled with families from the Fox River, making this perhaps the largest Ho-Chunk village during that decade.



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Stopping Point J:

Manaigre Sisters' Land Tracts

W11015 Tritz Road

White War Eagle's Métis nieces, Josette and Jane Manaigre, who grew up near the Agency House at Portage, came to have connections with **the area diagonally across the interstate** from this point. Within sight of Decorah's village, the Manaigre sisters' husbands, Jean Baptiste Londroshe and Oscar Waggoner, purchased adjoining land patents here when the property became available.

Although not historically documented, perhaps there were existing Ho-Chunk fields associated with the village that made this area attractive (similar to Leon Braux's early bluff farm at stop F). Both the Waggoner and Londroshe families pulled up stakes and moved to the Blue Earth reservation in Minnesota within a few years of the patents being issued.

From here you will head back into Portage on Hwy 33 to reach two final points of interest.



Listen Here

Stopping Point K:

St. Mary's Church Sidewalk

301 W Cook St.

A small plaque in the sidewalk near the St. Mary's school building notes the fact that this was the location of Pierre Pauquette's death in 1836 at Walking Iron's lodge.

Thinking back to one of your earlier stops, this location is just a block north of the Grignon/Lecuyer homes, and in the vicinity of the main 1830s Ho-Chunk encampment grounds at Portage. The **church building here** is a continuation of the church Pauquette established prior to his death in conjunction with visits from Samuel Mazzuchelli. That church's original location—and a final cluster of interest points—is where you will head next.



Listen Here

Stopping Point L:

Grignon Tract / Log Church

200 E. Cook St.

Viewing this spot through 1830s eyes, you are sitting atop a low ridge where, in the 1830s, you would have had a view of the Fox and Wisconsin Rivers on each horizon. The ridge ends in a finger (Ketchum's point), from which the Agency House is visible.

Looking north from your parking area, today you see the Portage Center for the Arts. Just up Adams Street (which runs alongside the building) where it intersects with Conant St. was the **grave of Jean Lecuyer**, who died around 1810.

In the 1820s, French/Métis families at the Green Bay and Prairie du Chien settlements sought to formalize their long-standing French and British-era land claims in those towns with the new US Government. At that time, the United States also recognized **one Métis land claim here** at Portage. Historian Patrick Jung theorizes that this parcel at Portage was an equivalent of the distinctive Green Bay and Prairie du Chien French "long lots" which had a narrow river frontage. This "long lot" had frontage on both the Fox and Wisconsin Rivers and came to a triangular point on this ridge. The claim was called the "**Grignon Tract**" and was granted to Augustin Grignon after he purchased rights to the area from the children of Jean Lecuyer and Ma-na-tee-see. There were few natural landmarks in this prairie hill area, so the surveyor used the grave of Jean Lecuyer as the hilltop survey point. Today's official survey lines still converge on the spot.

Another item noted by the 1820s surveyor of the Grignon Tract was that an "old field" extended for two blocks east of this point. Pierre Paquette built a **log church** near the Portage Center for the Arts in the early 1830s. The surrounding area was an early cemetery. Paquette, himself, was buried beneath the log church's floor and was later moved to the present St. Mary's cemetery.

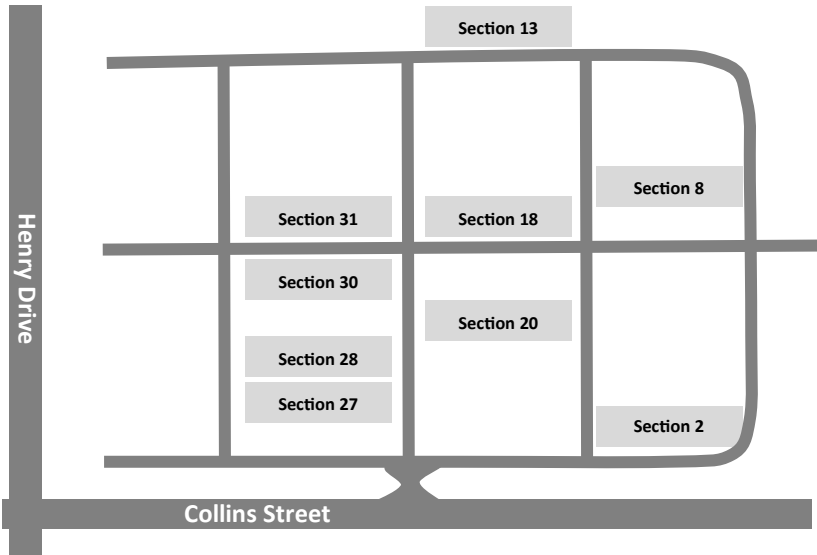
You may now return to the Agency House where you began.

Related Cemeteries

A number of Métis people are known to be buried at Portage. Several are not located in formal cemeteries, but two present-day cemeteries include a handful of early Métis families:

St. Mary's Cemetery

525 W Collins Street



Decorah: Children of Louis/Emma and Mr./Mrs. Brown Decorah

Section 13

De la Ronde: John T. De la Ronde, wife Elizabeth Decorah, and descendants

Section 30, Lot 5

Section 20, Lot 21

Fort Winnebago Cemetery

Just up from Hwy 33 on Cty Hwy EE

Silas Walsworth: Married Pierre Pauquette's widow, Therese

Just inside the front gate on the left.

LaVigne: Charles LaVigne, wife Ursula Lessard, and descendants

Section 2, Lots 26 & 28

Section 31, Lot 10

Pauquette: Pierre Pauquette, wife Therese, father-in-law Joseph Creely, daughter Therese Brisbois Prescott, and her families/ descendants

Section 2, Lot 25

Section 8, Lot 19

Section 18, Lots 20 & 22

Section 27, Lot 24

Section 28, Lot 15



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