

A museum on a mission

A mission statement is a charted course along which an organization resolves to travel, providing a blueprint for its pursuits and facilitating the best use of its resources and energies. A mission statement is the filter through which all decisions are made, from financial expenditures to staff efforts to programming ventures to exhibit design.

The Historic Indian Agency House's mission statement is worth unpacking as it describes who we are, what we do, and why we do it.

Who we ARE: "...nationally significant historic site... importance within the larger story of America..."

We are not merely a local historic house. The house and the entire site on which it is situated hold pivotal and far-reaching national significance within the story of America. We are deemed Nationally Significant on the National Register of Historic Places.

What we DO: "...preserve, interpret, promote...educate the public..."

Historic preservation of the house and collection, including all aspects of curation and archiving, constitute our starting point. Interpretation builds upon that foundation via scholarly analysis and the presentation of information through exhibits, speakers, newsletters, programming, academic curriculum, website and social media posts, and published works. Promotion takes it a step further into community outreach in the form of school visits, mobile museum booths, public speaking, participation in local events, and collaboration with other museums and organizations. The main thrust of what we do is to educate.

Our central STORY: "...cultural and historical context surrounding John H. Kinzie's 1830s commission as United States Indian Sub-Agent to the Ho-Chunk (Winnebago) Nation..."

We are not myopically focused merely on home furnishings, architecture, and genealogy. Instead, as we relay the story of the Kinzies and the Ho-Chunk Nation, we place their narrative within its broader context of time and place. Included within this context are the cultural underpinnings that influence the making of history. Incorporating a look at the culture (anything from art

to religion to music to social mores) puts flesh on the historical framework, bringing history to life. The overall context brings meaning to the specifics. We need both the microscope and the binoculars to convey history.

Our goal of BALANCE: "...foster a multi-dimensional understanding of the period..." Our story is not flat or one-sided. As cultures, ideas, and ways of life converged, it was in some ways a melting pot and in other ways a bull fight. Each player brought something to the table, from the Natives to the missionaries to the fur traders to the military to government representatives to the lead miners to the Euro-American settlers. Diverse viewpoints and cultural intersections shaped America as it is today. Our goal is to tell the story with balance, representing the various viewpoints and contributions so that patrons may hear, consider, discern, and understand the complexity of the time period, including the difficulty of the decisions that had to be made in the face of competing pressures. We endeavor to present the story in a

way that is comprehensive, clear, immersive, and educationally accessible to visitors of all ages.

WHY we do what we do (our PURPOSE): "...inspires and shapes the quality of civic responsibility among those who contemplate the lessons of history."

It is not ours to determine the precise effect our museum may have on individual visitors, but we do hope that each will take with them something that will influence their own involvement in their community, as well as inspire a love for our country and a desire to serve its greater good. We believe that we are responsible to one another in a civic sense as we sojourn through our corner of the world at this time in history. These sentiments are at the core of why the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America (NSCDA) exists. They are the very reason why the Wisconsin chapter of the NSCDA even cares about preserving a 188-year-old structure of wood and brick in the first place. The ultimate hope is that visitors are impacted, affected, inspired, shaped, changed in some way by having contemplated the lessons garnered from the historical story we present. That is why we do what we do.

The mission of the Historic Indian Agency House is to preserve, interpret, and promote this nationally significant historic site in order to educate the public about the cultural and historical context surrounding John H. Kinzie's 1830s commission as United States Indian Sub-Agent to the Ho-Chunk (Winnebago) Nation; to expound its importance within the larger story of America; and to foster a multi-dimensional understanding of the period that inspires and shapes the quality of civic responsibility among those who contemplate the lessons of history.

Visitor center unveils permanent exhibit

We now have a brand-new permanent exhibit in our visitor center, made possible in part by a generous grant from the Greater Sauk Community Foundation. We are also grateful to James Petersen for donating his collection of artifacts from the 1980 archaeological excavation of the Ho-Chunk village of Wild Cat (Pesheu).

The permanent exhibit, entitled "Crossroads," brings our powerful and pivotal story to life, weaving the people, events, and material culture into the bigger picture of history. The crossing point between the Fox and Wisconsin Rivers (i.e., the portage) has been a keystone of travel and migration in Wisconsin ever since post-glacial waters carved their channels. Cultures intersected here. Ideas, values, beliefs, and ways of life converged here. Complex issues and difficult decisions were faced here. History of national significance was forged right here at the crossroads.

We strive to tell the story with balance, representing various viewpoints and

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The exhibit room awaiting its overhaul



Springtime at the Agency House

Flexibility and resourcefulness amidst difficult times

Pandemic necessitates adjustments

Dear Friends,

As Covid-19 continues to impact every corner of our nation and the world as a whole, the staff and volunteers at the Historic Indian Agency House have been working hard to address the pandemic's effects on our seasonal offerings.

While many events in our area have been shelved for the entire summer, we are doing what we can to adapt to circumstances and employ creative solutions that allow most of our events to continue, albeit with some adjustments.

Our opening day is currently slated for June 6 this year. Because the safety of our visitors and staff is imperative, we have established some important Covid-19 policies which are described in this edition of *Wau-Bun Express*. Our hope is that if we all do our part, we may have a safe and enjoyable season together.

Thank you to our volunteers, patrons, supporters, staff, and board of directors for their patience, understanding, flexibility, aid, and continued enthusiasm as we head into our 89th season!

Respectfully,

Adam Novey
Executive Director and Curator



Vintage Viewpoints



In January, we launched our new “Vintage Viewpoints” series which allows listeners to immerse themselves in the conversations of the early 1800s.

Each monthly audio posting reflects the perspective of a unique individual in their own words regarding the removal of America’s Native people groups from their ancestral lands. Narrated from primary sources, each selection is a product of the culture and time period in which it was produced.

The values and motives from which some of the statements arose may seem unusual, outmoded, or disturbing to us today. Embrace this opportunity to consider the diverse mindsets of past generations. Understanding how everyday people wrestled with this complex and emotionally-charged issue can provide insight into the world around us and even encourage us to evaluate our own personal guiding principles today.

This new series offers an opportunity for you to join in the Facebook discussion. Comment on what stood out to you in the narration. Questions for consideration are provided with each post to encourage discussion. We welcome you into the conversation.

Vintage Viewpoints is found at the following web address: www.agencyhouse.org/explore-history



In memoriam

New welcome sign

Memorials made in loving memory of Olive (“Cissy”) Bryson (1926-2020) have funded a new welcome sign in front of the visitor center.

Mrs. Bryson was a long-time supporter of the Historic Indian Agency House and proud member of the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the State of Wisconsin (NSCDA-WI) which is our governing board.



exhibit, continued from page 1

contributions so that visitors may understand the complexity of the time period and exercise critical thinking as they consider the lessons taught by history.

Multimedia and tactile sensory items are incorporated into the exhibit to augment the experience. Our goal is to tell the story in a manner that is engaging, immersive, comprehensive, clear, and educationally accessible to visitors of all ages.

Our new exhibit also allows us to better serve our patrons with physical disabilities as we now have a video presentation of our house tour available for those who are not able to negotiate the stairs of the historic home itself.

We hope that you will visit us this season—whether in person or through a live virtual tour—and enjoy all that our new exhibit has to offer!



Covid-19 policies for in-person tours



If you have any symptoms of illness, test positive for Covid-19, are awaiting results from a Covid-19 test, or have been recently exposed to someone with Covid-19 (even if you have no symptoms), please wait for at least 2 weeks to take a tour.

should remain at least 6 feet (2 meters) apart. There will be a maximum of 6 individuals allowed on a tour. If possible, please call ahead (608-742-6362) to schedule your in-person tour time. Drop-in visitors should note that there could potentially be a wait time until a tour is available. The good news is that we have beautiful grounds to explore while you wait!

Wash your hands. Please use hand sanitizer when you arrive. We will have some available, but if you are able to bring your own, it will help us conserve resources. Thanks!

Our staff will be careful to disinfect all frequently-touched surfaces after each tour. We are allowing 30 minutes between tours for cleaning, so we have implemented specific tour times this season to allow for this.

Masks are required. Face coverings (cloth or disposable) must be worn by both staff and visitors during all tours. Please bring your own mask. A limited number of cloth masks may be available to purchase on site, but we cannot guarantee they will be in stock when you visit.

Group size is limited to allow for social distancing. Visitors and staff

Precautions for outdoor events



Currently, our precautions for scheduled outdoor events are similar to those for indoor tours and events. These policies may change as the season progresses, but we feel that at this early stage, these precautions will best protect everyone and provide a level of comfort to those who would otherwise be hesitant to participate.

If you have any symptoms of illness, test positive for Covid-19, are awaiting results from a Covid-19 test, or have been recently exposed to someone with Covid-19 (even if you have no symptoms), please do not

attend an event for at least 2 weeks.

Masks are currently required. This may change as the season progresses. Even though events are safer outdoors, depending upon the number of people present, masks offer an extra level of protection in case it is difficult to maintain proper social distancing at times.

It is possible that we may need to limit numbers of participants at any given time depending upon the situation. Please also check the “Events” page on our website before you come to determine if you must pre-register for an event.

We have a great lineup of events this season! www.agencyhouse.org/events



2020 tour times

In-person tours:

Wed - Sat: 10 am / 11:30 am / 1 pm / 2:30 pm
Sun: 12 pm / 1:30 pm / 3 pm

Online tours before June 6:

Wed - Sat: 10 am / 12 pm / 2 pm
Sun: 12 pm / 2 pm / 4 pm

Online tours June 6 and beyond:

Thu: 8 am / Sun: 5 pm
Additional times possible by appointment



Take a live virtual tour

We are offering online tours for your enjoyment from the convenience and safety of your home. A docent will guide you through the brand-new visitor center exhibit and the Agency House itself. Because the tour is live, reservations must be made a minimum of two business days in advance.

Take your virtual tour prior to June 6 at a discounted rate. Online tours will also be available after opening day and throughout the season.

Are you a member? Choose to take your free tour either in person or online!

www.agencyhouse.org/online-tours
www.agencyhouse.org/membership

Dig with us!



Our 2020 theme is Archaeology and Frontier Blacksmithing.

Archaeology Kids’ Camps were originally offered to students in grades 3 through 5 spanning two weeks in May. Due to the pandemic, these were canceled, but the camp is now available online for FREE to any students, teachers, and families who are interested thanks to generous funding by Alliant Energy.

Thanks to the sponsorship of General Engineering Company of Portage, we are also hosting a real archaeological excavation on our property! You are invited to dig with the archaeologists!

www.agencyhouse.org/archaeology-2020

