

Wis. State Journal

Madison, Wis.

June 2, 1929

# Seek Winnebago Agency as State Historical Center

PORTAGE.—Plans for establishing the old Fort Winnebago agency house near here as a state center of historical activity will be discussed at a meeting of patriotic organization representatives in the state capital Monday.

The meeting has been called by the History and Landmarks department of the State Federation of Women's clubs. Other organizations which have agreed to cooperate in the movement are:

The Wisconsin Archeological society; the American Legion; the Daughters of the American Revolution; the Daughters of 1812; the Friends of Our Native Landscape; the Monena Sanctuary association; the Izaak Walton league; the American Association of University Women;

en; the Madison Women's club; the Catholic Women's club; the United Women's club; the University Extension department; and the University league. Chief Justice Marvin B. Rosenberry of the state supreme court will preside at the meeting.

The agency house was built by the government for John H. Kinzie and his wife in 1831. Mrs. Kinzie, who came here with her husband in 1830, was the author of "Wau-Bun," or "The Early Day," a descriptive account of the Wisconsin of a century ago.

The various organizations which are sponsoring or co-operating in the movement hope to make the agency house a center of historical activity such as that connected with the Sibley house, near St. Paul, the old Lincoln home at New Salem, Ill. and the Harrison house at Vincennes, Ind.

June 9, 1929

# Old Landmark 100 Years Old in 1930

## Is Sale Remnant of Old Structure Near Fort Winnebago at Portage

By EDNA L. E. HANSEN

The old U. S. agency house located about half a mile out of the city of Portage will see its hundredth birthday in 1930 if some unforeseen accident does not destroy the old rather dilapidated building before then.

It stands on the Portage side of the canal which joins the Fox river and the Wisconsin at the end of a

narrow rather rough road which follows along the banks of the canal, and is the sole remnant of the old-time structures which were built about the portage when Fort Winnebago was in its prime.

It was not actually a part of Fort Winnebago, which has long ago disappeared, but the connection was so close that one cannot think of one without including the other.

### Beautiful View

The agency house is located on a hill which gives a beautiful view of the Fox and the canal on one side, and of the Wisconsin on the other. The fort was on the opposite side of the Fox river, southeast of the agency house.

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# U. S. Agency House



(Courtesy of Bureau of Visual Instruction, Extension Division, U. of Wis.)

Two of the elm trees planted by

The fort was built by the government as the request of John Jacob Astor, who wished protection against the Indians who wished to control the  $1\frac{1}{2}$  mile portage between the two rivers, and whose warlike attempts to get control endangered the prosperous fur-trade in which John Jacob Astor was engaged. The lead miners in the vicinity also asked protection from the Indians.

Jefferson Davis, later president of the Confederacy, was just fresh from West Point when he was commissioned by the government to go into central Wisconsin to take charge of the building of Fort Winnebago.

The Agency house and the 164 acres on which it is located is now for sale in the settlement of the estate of the late E. S. Baker, attorney and ex-mayor of Portage. The farm was purchased by Mr. Baker in 1878, who lived on it for 10 years. Here Miss Ada Baker, Portage, and her brother, Fred, were born. The house has been occupied constantly until the last four years.

In spite of its age and the difficulties under which it was con-

Mrs. Kinzie a hundred years ago may be seen in the picture. The house faces the canal and the Fox River.

structed, the house is still in good condition. It is two stories high and has an attic. The main part of it measures 30x36 feet, and the kitchen, attached to the rear has a floor space of 20x24.

This kitchen is more recent than the main part of the house, the old log kitchen having been torn down years ago. This old kitchen had a fireplace chimney made of sticks and mud—very satisfactory, it is said, except when the rains were heavy and long continued. At such times the mud had a tendency to wash away and cause all sorts of disaster to the housewife.

## Heavy Shutters

The shutters of the old building, which still remain, are made by hand, and cannot be shifted up and down, as most shutters can. They are exceptionally heavy, and were made as a protection against the Indians, who were prone to center attacks on unprotected windows.

The latches and all the iron work about the house are handmade, having been forged in the old blacksmith shop of the fort.

John Kinzie was the first Indian

agent to occupy the house, and he brought with him as his bride, a charming, cultured eastern girl, who courageously looked forward to life in the great wild northwest as an interesting adventure.

Mrs. Kinzie has written a book, "Wau-Bun", which tells of life at the old agency house in a refreshing and entertaining manner.

#### First Piano

The Kinzies brought with them what was probably the first piano ever brought to Wisconsin. Mrs. Kinzie was an accomplished musician, and many gatherings at the old agency house were enlivened by Mrs. Kinzie's playing on her piano. Just what has become of Wisconsin's first piano does not seem to be known.

It is thought that the Indian chief, Four Lakes, father of the now famous Glory-of-the-Morning, lies

buried near the agency house.

In front of the house may now be seen three large elm trees. They are all that is left of the circle of elms planted around the agency house by Mrs. Kenzie a hundred years ago. Numerous patches of tansy here and there about the grounds also indicate the former presence of old pioneers.

After the need for an Indian agency was over, the agency house was changed into a tavern run by an Italian with an Irish wife, who was said to be "the better man of the two". Later on it was used as a farm house.

Various clubs about Portage and Madison have been interesting themselves in the raising of \$6000 for the purchase of the old agency house with the purpose of restoring it as far as possible and of preserving for the state one of its most historic spots.

*Milwaukee Journal  
Milwaukee, Wis.  
July 4, 1929*

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## Agency House Talked About Campaign Opened to Buy Historic Spot at Portage

BY STAFF CORRESPONDENT OF THE JOURNAL  
Portage, Wis.—A drab, old house, high on a bluff over the Fox river and Portage, enjoyed a bit of the popularity Saturday that it did nearly a century ago.

The barren rooms, dank with years of disuse, resounded with the voices of persons who spoke of the heyday of the old house, when Indian chieftains and their tribes from throughout central Wisconsin gathered there for food and money offered by the government.

Historians from many counties in the state braved the intermittent showers to listen to the program which opens a campaign of the landmarks committee of the Wisconsin Federation of Women's Clubs to re-

store the old Fort Winnebago agency house to its original condition.

#### Old Pump Remains

Across the valley of the Fox from the agency house stands the old pump which is all that remains of the Fort Winnebago stockade. Directly below the bluff flows the Portage canal connecting with locks the Fox and the Wisconsin.

All around the old house are fertile farmlands. To the south lies Portage. Two narrow tracks, grass separated, reach from the main highway to the spot which the sponsors hope to make one of the historic meccas of the state.

The house itself, built in 1831, is in a remarkable state of preservation. Upright studding, walled in with whitewashed brick, and covered with flatboard, make up the walls. Wide uneven boards are laid in the floor. The windows are shaded with large shutters. Hinges on doors and shutters alike are hand made.

#### Judge Fowler Speaks

Justice Chester A. Fowler of the Wisconsin supreme court, formerly a Portage man, told of the early days at the agency house, as described in the book, "Wau-Bun," written by Mrs. John H. Kinsey, wife of the first Indian agent at Portage.

Numerous plans were suggested

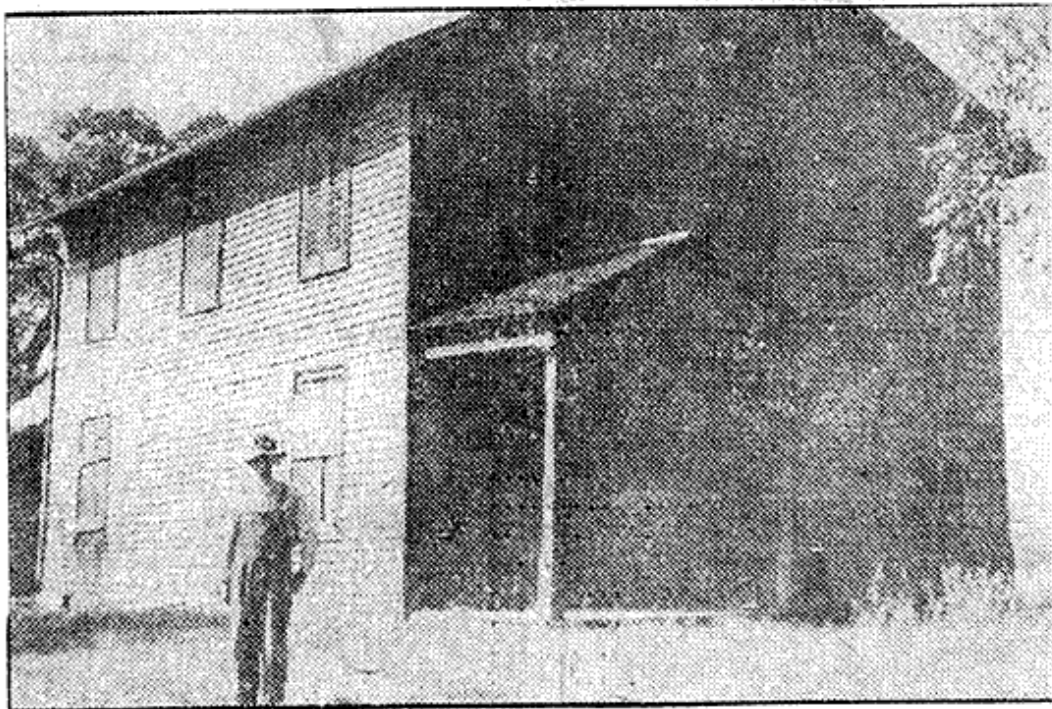
by which the property might be acquired. One plan is to reprint Mrs. Kinsey's book and offer it for sale. Another is to get the money by subscription. No plan was definitely selected at Saturday's meeting.

Other speakers were Dr. Louise P. Kellogg, Burt Williams, Charles E. Brown, and Mrs. C. E. Buell, all of Madison; Col. Howard Green, Milwaukee; and H. E. Andrews, Portage. Mrs. Buell is chairman of the land marks committee of the federation of women's clubs.

*Capital Times  
Madison, Wis  
July 4, 1929*

## OLD INDIAN AGENCY HOUSE

[Photo by The Capital Times Staff Photographer]



The historic old Indian agency house at Portage, built for John Kinzie, Indian agent, and his bride in 1831 when barracks at Fort Winnebago became crowded as several officers were bringing wives to the fort. The agency house was built of hewn logs and located across the Fox river from the fort, a bridge connecting the two. All the fort buildings are now gone, the agency house on the Baker farm being the only one remaining of that early day. John Bartells, 77, in the picture above works part of the 164-acre farm owned by Miss Ada Baker, on which is located the agency house.

Register Democrat  
Portage, Wis.  
January 14, 1930

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## PERPETUATE AN OLD LANDMARK?

### Plea For Saving Old Agency House Is Written By Local Teacher

Note—The following article appears in the Wisconsin Journal of Education for January. On the cover of the magazine is a picture of the Old Agency House, about which the article is written. Miss Mary Baird, the author, is a teacher of history in the Portage junior high school:

Fort Winnebago on the "portage" of the Fox-Wisconsin rivers was an important fortification in the early pioneer days, being the link between Ft. Howard, Green Bay, and Ft. Crawford, Prairie du Chien. About 5,000 Indians from the regions of Lake Winnebago, Green Lake, Fox Lake, Baraboo, and Beloit came to an old log building, the Agency House, which was located on a small hill just west of the "portage," to receive the \$15,000 annuities, besides presents and rations during emergencies.

It was long recognized that the "portage" was one of the most important keys to the control of the Winnebagoes. At the east end of this tract of land was a log house and barn occupied by Pierre Pauquette, several huts which were the homes of half breeds, and the Agency House.

The feeling of insecurity that prevailed among the white traders and trappers moved General Macomb to recommend the establishment of a military post between the Fox and Wisconsin rivers.

This request was granted and in 1828 Major Twiggs reported his arrival with his command. Jefferson Davis, who had just graduated from West Point, and who later became the president of the Confederacy, was sent to the fort as first lieutenant. Temporary barracks were constructed of logs, but in a short time all hands were busy putting up good substantial buildings. Davis not only aided in the plans for the fort but also helped materially to furnish it as he was a first class cabinet maker. Several pieces of furniture which he made are now in the homes of Portage and Columbia county people.

John H. Kinzie, son of John Kinzie, whose name occupies so prominent a place in the early history of Chicago, was sent out as agent to the Indians. When he and his wife arrived in 1829 they found accommodations very poor, but they were urged to stay at the "Fort" until a new building could be put up.

Under the able leadership of Mrs. Kinzie the structure, which is still standing, was built. Mr. Davis also helped to plan and furnish this building, having his office at one time in the "front room." Its framework is massive, the studs, rafters, joists, sleepers, and sills being twice the size of materials used in buildings at the present time. Mrs. Kinzie describes the building in a very interesting manner, in her book Wau-Bun.

When the Kinzies arrived at the Fort they found the Winnebagoes assembled in anticipation of the arrival of Shawkeeawkee (the Indian name for agent), who was to pay them their annuities. Many of them pitched their tents near by, and some camped for days in the front yard. Here they whiled away the time playing what seemed to be their favorite game, "Moccasin."

Mr. Kinzie had great influence



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over this tribe, so much so that he persuaded them not to join their forces with other tribes during the Black Hawk war.

The Kinzie home was a social center for the people in and around the Fort, the young people meeting every week for singing school. (Mrs. Kinzie had brought her piano with her all the way from Chicago.) It was near this historic building that the famous Red Bird surrendered to the whites; and the first postoffice at the "portage" was sheltered in one of its large high ceilinged rooms.

The old fort, however, like all earthly things had its day. The approaching war with Mexico had reached its threatening stage and preparatory for it, orders for the evacuation of the fort were issued in 1845, the troops being sent to St. Louis to relieve those stationed at Jefferson Barracks, which had been ordered to the Gulf. In 1853, the property was sold at auction under the direction of Jefferson Davis, then secretary of war. The Old Agency House was sold at the same time.

Columbia county people lost the almost priceless opportunity of preserving the Old Fort itself but it is not too late to save the Indian Agency landmark.

For several months past, people in various parts of the state, as well as our local people, have become interested in the project of purchasing and restoring this property to its original condition, as nearly as possible, and having it for a museum and a shrine. About 130 acres of land belong with the building and they will have to be sold together.

This project is especially sponsored by the Committee of Landmarks and History of the State Federation of Women's Clubs.

Miss Louise Phelps Kellogg of the State Historical society has

the following to say concerning the Old Agency House:

"The plan for the preservation of the house involves the incorporation of a non-profit company with shares to be sold at moderate rates. Any school which would contribute one or more shares would have a permanent vested interest in this project. Then when the pleasant summer days come again pilgrimages will be made to this historic spot, where imagination may reconstruct the days of its prime, may see the thronging Indians coming to visit their father, Agent Kinzie, may listen to the bugle calls from Old Fort Winnebago when Jefferson Davis, just from West Point, was one of its officers. The whole neighborhood is replete with historic memories from the time when Joliet and Marquette in 1673 passed by on their adventure of discovery to the days just before the Civil war when the fort was abandoned and the Agency House became a farmhouse. A visit to Portage and the Agency House vivifies the reading of Wau-Bun, Mrs. Kinzie's charming account of life in primitive Wisconsin, and together they make an object lesson in early Wisconsin history. It is hoped that the educators of the state will become interested in the preservation of the old house and the new edition of Wau-Bun."

Wisconsin State Journal  
Madison, Wis.  
July 7, 1929

# Program at Agency House Attracts Many

## Portage Spot May Be Purchased As State Landmark

By EDNA L. E. HANSEN

**P**ORTAGE—The old Indian Agency house on the Fox-Wisconsin canal at Portage was the focal point of a state pilgrimage conducted under the auspices of the committee on history and landmarks of the Wisconsin Federation of Woman's clubs, for the purpose of purchasing and restoring the historic old landmark, Saturday afternoon.

A picnic lunch was eaten at noon under the three old elms remaining of the circle planted by Mrs. John A. Kinzie around the Agency house a century ago.

Despite the rain more than a hundred people remained for the afternoon program, which was planned by Mrs. C. E. Buell, chairman, assisted by Mrs. M. C. Van Ostrand, Theodore Brown, Burt Williams and Albert Barton, all of Madison.

Judge Chester A. Fowler of the Wisconsin supreme court delivered an address on "Early Wisconsin History."

### Sketches History

"The Historical Significance of the Agency house" was discussed by Dr. Louise P. Kellogg of the State Historical library, and Charles E. Brown, curator of the State Historical museum spoke on "Preserving Historic Places."

Other speakers were Col. Howard Green, Milwaukee, Burt Williams, Madison, and H. E. Andrews, Portage.

Oscar Stotzer, president of the Milwaukee Association of Commerce and Daniel Grady, Portage, who were also to have been on the program, were unable to be present.

Among the "pilgrims" were Miss

Conklin, Portage, whose parents were married in the Agency house, and who now has the key to the gate of Fort Winnebago, which stood on the opposite side of the Fox river, of which no vestige now remains; Mrs. Charles Morris, Berlin, founder of the Wisconsin Federation of Women's clubs; Miss Mary Preston, granddaughter of Pierre Pauquette, interpreter and ferryman at Fort Winnebago; Mrs. William MacMahon, great granddaughter of Pierre Pauquette.

### Plan Purchases

Mrs. C. F. Kerwin, Madison, who was unable to be present, is also a descendant of the famous old French-Canadian pioneer.

John A. Kinzie, who was the first Indian agent at Fort Winnebago, was the son of J. H. Kinzie, Chicago's first settler. His wife, who was Julietta McGill, was a cultured eastern woman, unused to hardships, but who enjoyed every moment of her life in the Wisconsin wilderness which surrounded the Agency house.

Mrs. Kinzie recorded her impressions in a charmingly written book, called "Wau-Bun." It is this book which the Wisconsin Federation of Woman's clubs plans to republish, and from the proceeds to help in buying the 164 acres on which the agency house stands.

This land was owned by Judge E. S. Baker and is now in the hands of his daughter, Miss Ada Baker, who was born here, and who wishes to sell the house in settlement of her father's estate.

The following were appointed as members of an executive committee to carry out the Agency house project:

T. H. Cochrane, Portage; Mrs. Herbert Puffer, Portage; Col. Howard Green, Milwaukee; Stanley Hanks, Madison, Miss Amelia Stevens, Madison.

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## Drive on to Save Historic Building

### Women Raising Funds to Preserve Indian Agency House of Portage

PORTAGE—In an effort to purchase and preserve the Old Indian Agency house here, remaining relic of the old Fort Winnebago and early pioneer days in this section, interested Portage women have formed a ways and means committee to raise funds for this purpose.

The committee has adopted an extensive program whereby a part of the money required to restore the

historical old building, buy the lands around it, and make the place into a museum for Indian and pioneer relics, may be raised. The plan includes selling stock in the Old Agency House corporation, a plan already put into effect whereby each person buying stock becomes a participant in the project. The committee also plans to develop one special way each month through the fall and winter to earn money for the enterprise. The first undertaking is a tag day to be held Thursday of fair week, September 18.

Officers of the committee are: Mrs. H. J. Puffer, chairman; Mrs. William Mohr, first vice-chairman; Mrs. E. P. Andrews, second vice-chairman; Mrs. Walter Washburn, Jr., secretary, and Mrs. Ross Bennett, treasurer. A publicity committee consisting of Mrs. David Bogue, chairman; Miss Bessie Davis and Mrs. John B. Gay, was also elected.

Capital Times  
Madison, Wis.  
October 12, 1930

## Agency House Plan Is Given To John Bell

### Luncheon at Madison Club Opens Season

THE first meeting of the year of the John Bell chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution was held at the Madison club Friday. A cordial greeting was extended by the regent Mrs. Harrison A. Smith, following which she spoke on her trip abroad during the summer.

Mrs. C. E. Buell, chief speaker of the afternoon, discussed the preservation of the old Indian agency house. She said in part:

"An organization of patriotic citizens of Wisconsin is endeavoring to acquire and preserve for posterity the old Indian agency house. This historic building stands on the banks of the Fox river, opposite the former location of the old frontier Ft. Winnebago. The House was erected in 1831 for the use of the United States Indian

agent John Harris Kinzie, and his charming wife Juliette Kinzie, author of Wau-Bun. At the time of erection Gen. Triggs was in command of the fort.

"Jefferson Davis was once stationed there as a lieutenant. At the agency house there gathered a noted Winnebago chief, Four Legs, and other important Indians. The house was for a time used as a cabin where many travelers were entertained. Since the last owner of the property has died, the property must now be sold.

"The Federation of Women's clubs, the D. A. R., the Daughters of 1812, the Colonial Dames, as well as individuals, have been asked to contribute to the fund for the purchase, maintenance, and restoration of the 100 year old house."

A birdseye view of the programs arranged for the winter will give an idea of the topics in which the John Bell chapter is interested.

Locating and marking historical spots in and around Madison is one of the features of the historical spots committee. This committee is sponsoring the November meeting and will give a portrayal of the covered wagon days in song and tableaux, at Esther Vilas hall, Nov. 4.

The December program will be de-



voted to international relations and will be given under the supervision of Mrs. F. Hoyt. Mrs. E. B. Van Vleck, who has recently returned from a trip around the world, will be the afternoon speaker.

The Americanism committee will be in charge of the January meeting at which time the speaker will be Miss Gay Braxton, of the Neighborhood house. Patriotic education for the foreign born is the object of the Americanism committee. Their goal is "Better American Citizens". Mrs. U. F. Von Wald, who has been chairman of the committee for 5 years has resigned and the work is now in the charge of Mrs. William H. Wright.

The Sons of the American evolution will be the guests of the D. A. R. at the Washington birthday dinner to be given at the Loraine hotel Feb. 23. The March meeting of the club will be held at the historical museum. C. E. Brown will cooperate with the historical relics committee in planning this meeting.

The revised list of committees and chairmen of the club is as follows: Americanism committee, Mrs. William H. Wright, chairman; Better Films

committee, Mrs. George P. Hambrecht, chairman; Correct Use of the Flag, Mrs. Carol Davis, chairman; Ellis Island committee, Mrs. Norman T. Gill, chairman; Geneological research committee, Mrs. William E. Emery, chairman; Magazine committee, Mrs. James G. Fuller, chairman; National Defense committee, Mrs. Ralph Hess, chairman; Patriotic Education committee, Mrs. W. L. Olds, chairman; Preservation of Historic Spots committee, Mrs. E. R. Jones, chairman; Revolutionary Relics committee, Mrs. Henry Ewbank, chairman; Sons and daughters of the Republic committee, Mrs. Annie T. Axtell, chairman; Program committee, Mrs. J. G. Fuller, chairman; eYar Book committee, Mrs. Charles Gorst, chairman; Publicity committee, Mrs. Lulu E. Devereaux, chairman; Social committee, Mrs. Marshall Hanks, chairman; Telephone committee, Mrs. Gustav Borstadt, chairman; Membership committee, Mrs. B. C. Campbell, chairman; Flower committee, Mrs. R. S. Scheibel, chairman; Dane County Illiteracy committee, Mrs. John M. Linden, chairman; and Auditor, Mrs. Lee M. West.

*Daily Tribune  
Chicago, Ill.*

*October 19, 1930*

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## COLONIAL DAMES VOTE TO RESTORE HISTORIC HOUSE

### Indian Agency Building at Portage to Be Bought.

BY MABEL MAYHEW.

[Chicago Tribune Press Service.]

Milwaukee, Wis., Oct. 18.—[Special.]—The National Society of Colonial Dames in Wisconsin has voted to purchase, restore and maintain one of Wisconsin's historic buildings, the Indian Agency house between the Fox and Wisconsin rivers at Portage. The

president, Mrs. Arthur T. Holbrook, opened a recent meeting with the question "are you historically minded, and are you interested in preserving for your state one of the most interesting relics of the pioneer days of Wisconsin?"

Hitherto the Colonial Dames have been asked only to contribute to national rather than state landmarks.

The opportunity of purchasing the old Indian Agency house, built a hundred years ago, was presented by Mrs. Hobart S. Johnson of Madison whose interest had been aroused by Dr. Joseph Schafer and Miss Louise P. Kellog of the Wisconsin Historical library.

Near Site of Fort.

The house is now known as the "old Baker farm," and looks much like one of the early New England farm houses, greatly in need of repairs. It is on an interesting site near the spot on which the old Fort Winnebago stood, overlooking in one direction the head waters of the Fox river and in the other the Wisconsin river with the Portage between. Reminiscent of the old days when the Indians brought their pelts down the river and the fur traders and voyageurs, up to meet them.

It was the hope of the state historical society that this house should not fall into disrepair and final obliteration, and a warm pleader was found in Mrs. Johnson. After her address the Colonial Dames voted without a dissenting voice to go on with the work which had reached a stage of discouragement in the local ways and means committee at Portage. The early activity on behalf of the agency house in the Wisconsin Federation of Women's clubs had lapsed due to the pressure of its million dollar campaign fund.

#### \$7,500 Is Needed.

The project now passes to the Colonial Dames, who will receive the gifts already made, amounting to about \$2,000, and go on with the work. A total of \$7,500 will be needed in the financing for purchase and restoration, to be obtained through state-wide contributions.

Among the members of the first

ways and means committee and original contributors to the fund were Mrs. J. H. Puffer and Mr. T. H. Cochrane of Portage; Mrs. Hobart Johnson, Mr. Stanley Hanks and Miss Amelia Stevens of Madison, and Mr. Howard Greene and Mr. Frederick Best of Milwaukee.

The house has interesting clapboarding and the eaves which belong to the early colonial period. The interior is most interesting with fine doors, beautiful moldings, fireplaces, and a generous staircase, unusual for a house built in the wilderness as early as 1830. It attests the skill of the early builders and shows the taste and refinement of its occupants. The boulder basement and the kitchen with a tiny staircase to a bedroom are charming in character.

Committees on the purchase will be announced shortly by Mrs. Holbrook. Mrs. James P. Brown will be custodian of funds, and Charles M. Morris will be counsel.

*Wisconsin State Journal*

*October 31, 1930*

## Colonial Dames Will Purchase Agency House

### Take Over Project of Buying and Maintaining Historic Building at Portage

The purchase and preservation of the Old Indian Agency House at Portage is to become a reality through the recent action of the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the State of Wisconsin.

This project, originally sponsored by a group of patriotic individuals in the state, was also endorsed by the Wisconsin Federation of Women's clubs, but due to the million dollar campaign fund of that organization, the early activity lapsed.

The plan for taking over the house was discussed at a meeting of the Colonial Dames by Mrs. Hobart S. Johnson of Madison, and the organization voted unanimously to go on with the work, which involves the raising of a fund of \$7,500. The Colonial Dames will receive the gifts already made, amounting to about \$2,000, and will immediately go

about securing the remainder needed for the purchase of the property.

Members of the original gifts committee and original contributors to the fund include Mrs. J. H. Puffer and T. H. Cochrane of Portage, Mrs. Hobart S. Johnson, Mrs. C. E. Buell, Stanley C. Hanks, and Miss Amelia Stevens of Madison, Howard Greene and Frederick Best of Milwaukee. Mrs. Johnson's appeal to the Colonial Dames came as a result of her interest aroused 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 Riley, 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 published, 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

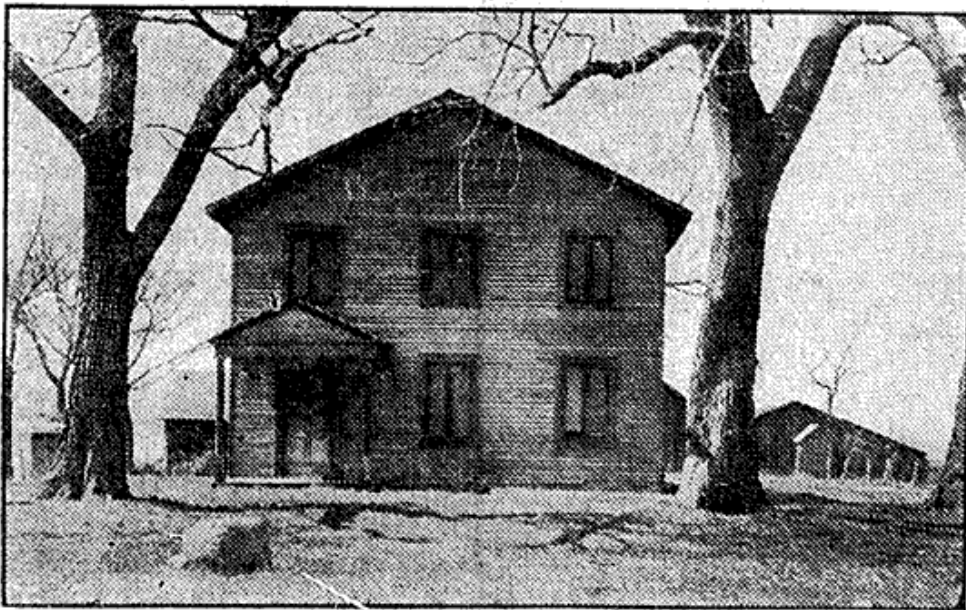
in the first days of their residence. In swift moving canoes the Indians brought their furs down the rivers, and at the agency house, about a mile from Portage, meeting the traders and voyageurs who came to buy them.

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.

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*Wisconsin State Journal*

## Landmark to Stand



The old Indian Agency House at Portage which will be preserved and restored by the Society of Colonial Dames.

# Start Fund to Save Indian Agency House

**Colonial Dames Raise \$2,000  
Toward \$7,500 Needed for  
Restoration of His-  
toric Place**

[State Journal News Service]  
**P**ORTAGE—Wisconsin "in the raw", as it existed in its virginity a century ago when this "land-o'-lakes" was still a territory, infested with wild life, In-

dians and trappers, will live again at the Old Indian Agency House at Portage as a result of recent meetings of Wisconsin members of the National Society of Colonial Dames of America who have raised \$2,000 of the \$7,500 needed to purchase the site and restore the original setting.

Since the greater part of the other \$5,500 needed has been promised to the Portage committee organized to purchase the house, Mrs. Arthur T. Lowell, Milwaukee, in charge of the committee, announced recently that

the work of restoration of the agency will begin soon.

**Plan Restoration**

Plans are to restore the house and furnish it in the style of its original furnishings. It will be a historical shrine, and it is hoped, a museum where visitors may reconstruct vivid scenes from early Wisconsin history.

The pages of "Mother" Kinzie's "Wau-Bun", the story of the life at the agency as told by the wife of John H. Kinzie, agent of the Indian house, leave a complete record of the site and details of the life at this outpost of early Wisconsin civilization. From this account and other historical data, the committee plans to replace the old setting as it actually existed.

The project of restoration was first undertaken by the state federation of the state historical society. Working with a Portage committee under leadership of the late Atty. H. E. Andrews, which had raised some funds, interest grew but the federation was forced to abandon the historical project.

**State Group Formed**

A state-wide organization, the Old Indian Agency House association was then formed with a central committee of which Mrs. H. J. Puffer, Portage, was temporary chairman. Mrs. C. E. Buell, Madison, chairman of the landmarks committee of the state federated clubs, T. H. Cochrane, Maj. Howard Green

and Fred Best, Milwaukee; Miss Amelia Stevens, Madison, and Stanley Hanks, Madison, were members of the committee.

Plans were then made to form a corporation in which shares in the Agency house might be purchased, but because of legal difficulties, it was abandoned.

**Indians Loved Kinzie**

When the house is restored and the grounds landscaped as they were 100 years ago, it will be easy to visit the place and call up memories of the time when Indians came to the Agency, traveling down the river in their canoes to bring furs to exchange for food, clothes and trinkets, and meet the traders who came to buy them.

"Father" and "Mother" Kinzie, they called the agent and his wife, whom they loved and trusted, and to whom they came for advice in dealing with the federal government and various matters. Mr. Kinzie spoke 13 Indian languages and his influence was so great and far-reaching that he is credited with holding back the Winnebagoes from joining in the Black Hawk war.

It was not uncommon to see a half dozen or more Indians camped on the grass in the Kinzie garden, smoking their pipes or playing their favorite gambling game of "moccasin," while the squaws might be inside, talking with Mrs. Kinzie or learning from her.

*Register Democrat  
Portage, Wis.  
November 1, 1930*

**MRS. KINZIE'S  
'WAU-BUN' TO  
BE REPRINTED**

**Story of Frontier Life at  
Old Fort Winnebago Here  
Written in 1856**

Wau-Bun meant "the break of dawn" to the Ojibway Indians who roamed the forests of what was to become Wisconsin.

It is significant that Mrs. John H. Kinzie realized that her experience at old Ft. Winnebago, near the present site of Portage, would sometime be the "break of dawn" to Wisconsin historians. So, in 1856 she wrote a book named Wau-Bun in which she related the story of her life at the Indian agency.

Wisconsin residents interested in perpetuating the memory of the early settlers, formed The Old Indian Agency House association, which sought to buy the old agency house which still stands overlooking the Portage canal. Recently they were successful and have turned the historical property over to the Wisconsin chapter of the Co-

lonial Dames society.

**Miss Kellogg Leader**

Miss Louise Phelps Kellogg was one of the leaders in the movement. She is senior research associate of the Wisconsin Historical society and has written several books and edited several more. She took Mrs. Kinzie's Wau-Bun which had been out of print for many years and had it reprinted on behalf of the association.

Miss Kellogg was graduated from the University of Wisconsin in 1897. In 1901 she completed her work for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and the university recognized her research work in Wisconsin history with an honorary degree of Doctor of Letters in 1926.

Wau-Bun, in its last edition, is a classic of Wisconsin history. It tells of life in Wisconsin before that state became even a territory. John H. Kinzie, the husband of the author, was Indian agent at Fort Winnebago, and he brought his

bride to the fort in 1830, just 100 years ago.

**Has Charming Style**

Mrs. Kinzie was a very highly educated woman. She had attended a select womans' school in the east and shows a charming style in her historical book. The incidents which she related have all the thrills of the dime novels of the extinct Wild West.

Mr. Kinzie's father is recognized as the first settler of Chicago where he came in 1804 to settle across from the site of what was to be Fort Dearborn.

The proceeds from the sale of the book, which was printed by the George Banta Publishing company, Menasha, will be used in setting up the Kinzie home as a historical memorial. The house, including a farm of 169 acres, has just been turned over to the Wisconsin Colonial Dames and the property will be ready for visitors by next summer, according to present plans.

*Wisconsin State Journal  
November 23, 1930*

# Indian Agency Pilgrimages Start

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# Kilbourn Pupils Hear History of Portage House

## Caravan of 24 Cars Brings 100 to See Relics; Son of Indian Hero With Party

By SARA ROBERTS

PORTAGE—Monday marked the beginning of historical pilgrimages to the Old Indian Agency house near here when 24 cars from Kilbourn, containing over 1100 school children, visited the picturesque pioneer home and heard stories of early Wisconsin.

W. C. English, Wyocena, an authority on the early history of this section of Wisconsin, spoke to the children. He told the students something of the history of agency house, the old Fort Winnebago, then one of the three lone outposts of civilization in the northwest territory. He also delved with them into the history of Fort Winnebago cemetery where soldiers of eight wars lie buried.

### Indian Boy in Group

Among the students present was little Theodore White Eagle, nephew of the World war veteran, Archie White Eagle, a Winnebago and de-

scendant of the tribe which once owned this country, who is now buried in the national cemetery here. Only a metal insignia marks this hero's grave and efforts will be made to secure a more fitting marker for the spot. Theodore is in the fifth grade at Kilbourn.

In addition to the students of the Kilbourn graded school who visited the agency house were M. H. Spicer, principal; Miss Rose Tobin, eighth grade teacher; Miss Anna Voight, teacher of the seventh grade; Miss Dorothy Jones, fifth and sixth grades teacher, and Mary Conway, high school librarian. Miss Jones sponsored the trip.

### Gather Theme Material

One of the purposes of the visit was to gather material for competitive essay contests conducted annually by Mrs. William B. Shute, Kilbourn, who is a member of Wau Bun, local D. A. R. chapter.

Mrs. Shute usually chooses historical subjects. This year's essays will be written on the Old Agency House and Ft. Winnebago's historical sites. Mrs. Shute will give prizes for the best essays which will be judged principally on historical merit. The contest is open to students of the sixth grade.

Decisions will be made by three Kilbourn persons interested in school work. History, rhetoric, writing and diction will be the principal points for judging the contests.

Portage people who visited the Agency house with the Kilbourn visitors were Charles Boylan, from the county board of supervisors, and Miss Anna R. Nelson, county superintendent of schools.

*Milwaukee Journal  
December 4, 1930*

# Story of Pioneers to Have a Holiday Sale

THE holiday season will be combined with a patriotic cause by a large group of prominent Milwaukee women who have volunteered to aid in the sale of "Wau-Bun," the story of pioneer life in the old Indian agency at Portage, Wis., written by Mrs. John H. Kinzie, the first mistress of the house.

To aid the fund maintained by the Colonial Dames for restoring historic sites throughout the state, the mem-

bers will sell copies each day during the two weeks preceding Christmas at Frances McLeod's book shop on Milwaukee st.

Mrs. Charles H. Stoddard, chairman of the sale, will be assisted by Mmes. Henry M. Ogden, William C. Frye, Arthur T. Holbrook, Charles J. McIntosh, George B. Miller, James P. Brown, Frank Lindsay, H. F. Norris, Charles H. Palmer, Forbes Snowden, Harriet Mitchell Young, Loyal Durand, Robert A. Williams, Charles M. Morris, William MacLaren, Wheeler P. Bloodgood, Clarence J. Richards,

George Manierre, Alfred P. Wettstein, Albert K. Stebbins, Frank Curtis, Frederick Casterline, Frank G. Turner, John A. Butler, George L. Graves, Ralph E. Newton, Irving Seaman, Irving Reynolds, Gilbert Hickox; Misses Rose Case and Gertrude Mann.

Published in 1856

"Wau-Bun" was written and first published by Mrs. Kinzie in 1856 and has been republished by Dr. Louise Phelps Kellogg, editor of the Wisconsin Historical society, with the assistance of George Bantz, jr.

It is the story of a pioneer woman, detailing Mrs. Kinzie's experiences in 1830-1831 as the first white woman at Fort Winnebago and her journeys up and down the treacherous waters of the Fox river. More than early Wisconsin history is contained in the book, which includes also an account of the Chicago massacre of 1812, as told to the author by her husband's relatives, who were eyewitnesses.

### Centenary Next Year

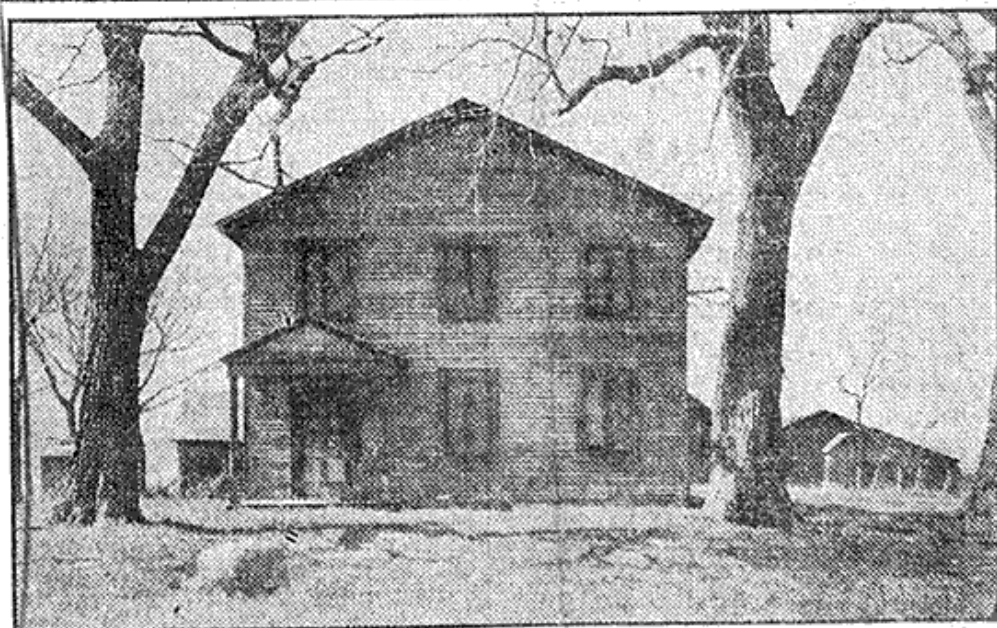
The old agency house was built for the Kinzies. It is planned to open the house for public visitors in 1931 when the centenary of its building is observed. Mrs. Kinzie's story begins with a lake voyage from Detroit to Green Bay, with Mrs. Kinzie, a young bride, accompanying her husband to his post. A stop was made at Fort Howard. Garrison life there is interestingly described. The voyage up the Fox river, through chutes and rapids, the crossing of Lake Winnebago, the continuation through Butte des Morts and the winding reaches of the upper Fox are described. The trip was made in a 30-foot Mackinac boat of the period and was guided by picturesque French voyageurs.

There follows the reception at old Fort Winnebago at Portage and the life there. A charming incident is the building of cupboards in the garrison house for the first mistress of the post by a young lieutenant who turns out to be Jefferson Davis, afterward president of the Confederacy.

*Wisconsin State Journal*  
*November 23, 1930*

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## Indian Agency House



Historical relic in Portage visited by caravan of Kilbourn students last week to gather material for essays.

*Register Democrat  
Portage, Wis.  
March 11, 1931*

## CENTENNIAL OF BUILDING AGENCY HOUSE

### Noted Authoress to Write Scenario for Pageant of Local History

Plans for a historical pageant and mammoth celebration of the 100th anniversary of the completion of the Old Indian Agency house here, were presented at the regular meeting of the board of directors of the Chamber of Commerce and received favorable discussion and interest.

President D. W. Billings appointed a committee to study the possibilities of the celebration and report at the earliest possible date. The investigation committee consists of William M. Rhyme, Hugh N. Woodside, H. H. Niemeyer, Ernie Dickow, Wallace Murison and William Eulberg.

Mrs. Zona Gale Breese, eminent authoress of this city, has promised to write the story and scenes for the pageant.

Plans are to present a complete outline of Wisconsin history, placing especial emphasis on the important part played by territory in the vicinity of Portage in the state's development.

The pageant, with not less than 500 local persons participating, would begin with a prehistoric scene, showing the ancient Indian mound builders at work. It would then trace the state's history from the spectacular landing of Nicolet at Green Bay in 1663, through the

coming of Marquette and Joliet and their momentous voyage, the wars of extermination carried on by the French and their allies against the Indians; the rebellion of Pontiac; the first white settlers at Portage, the surrender of the Indian chief, Red Bird; the building of Fort Winnebago; the coming of Indian Agent John Kinzie and his wife Juliette; the erection of the building of the Old Indian Agency house for their home; and up to the present time. A large part of the pageant would be devoted to scenes taken from Mrs. Kinzie's book "Wau-Bun." The pageant would be interspersed with allegorical scenes and probably would be concluded with scenes from modern Portage, and fireworks.

In last night's edition of the Register-Democrat the representatives of the Columbia county fair announced that September 15, 16, 17 and 18 are the dates set for the 1931 fair. They also mentioned that they had concluded a contract with the John B. Rogers Producing company for the presentation of a pageant.

The officers of the Columbia County Fair association well know that for some time the Chamber of Commerce has contemplated putting on an historical pageant celebrating the 100th anniversary of the old Indian Agency.

One of these pageants must certainly conflict with the other and the Centennial Pageant of the Agency should have the right-of-way for the members of the fair association knew this for some time. It is not understood why in the face of all this, the officers of the fair association should make arrangements for the presentation of a pageant along the same lines and at practically the same time.

Register - Democrat

Portage, Wis.

April 23, 1931

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# RESTORATION OF OLD INDIAN AGENCY HOUSE

Work Now in Progress Under  
Direction of Colonial Dames

Restoration of the Old Indian Agency house is progressing rapidly and sometime this summer, the famous old historical house where John Kinzie and his young wife Juliette lived under the shadow of old Fort Winnebago while Mr. Kinzie was the government's agent to the Indians, in the early 1800's is expected to look as it did when it was among the first white men's houses in this section that was then a wilderness.

The beautiful old house is at present almost denuded of its siding outside, and plaster on the interior. Architect Frank Riley of Madison who is restoring the place for the Wisconsin Society of Colonial Dames, which now owns the property, found that the joists and settings had decayed, and these are being replaced. The old siding, however, is in perfect condition and will be put back on the new support pieces, for as much of the original building as possible is being retained.

Work on the foundation began last fall and was completed then. The old foundation, in less perfect condition than the house was crumbling into the basement, and had to be reinforced and partially rebuilt. Every stone used in rebuilding it was a part of old Fort Winnebago.

## Find Four Fireplaces ..

In removing the plaster, the

architect discovered four beautiful old fireplaces, two in upstairs rooms and two down. The fireplaces, at first believed to be imitations, were discovered to run all the way through. When the brick has been restored and andirons of that era used, the fireplaces are expected to be among the most attractive spots of the old house's interior.

Inside, the walls stripped of their plaster now have a peculiar appearance. The laths are unlike those used today. Probably John Kinzie himself split them with an ax from tough boards. They look as if they had been split only part way and then pulled apart. Panes in many of the windows have been replaced, and work of repairing the interior is going forward as rapidly as possible.

Architect Riley commented that the house is one of the finest examples of early New England architecture in the United States. He thought it remarkable that such a house should be built out here in the wilderness of Wisconsin. Dr. Louise Phelps Kellogg has a letter which was written by John Kinzie to a St. Louis lumber company, ordering the lumber for the house.

## Grounds to be Landscaped

When it is finished, the present weather beaten, gray walls will probably be painted white. Green shutters are expected to help restore the original exterior appearance. The grounds are to be landscaped and planted with old plants and shrubs such as probably Mrs. Kinzie planted on the lawns where Indians used to come and sit in the evening and play their favorite game of moccasin.

Inside, an attempt will be made to reproduce the furniture that is believed to have been used by the Kinzies. There will, of course, be variations, but furniture of that era, which might have furnished

the Kinzie's house, will be used in refurnishing it. The old cupboard is being rebuilt, and the interior will not be altered. Perhaps a piano, such as the cultured young eastern woman brought from her home to the wilderness, may be secured.

Standing on a high hill overlooking the Fox River canal, with the site of the old Fort not far away on another hill, with beautiful old elms standing sentinel in front of the house and the grounds at the side landscaped, the place will be one of the loveliest spots in Wisconsin. Here will come tourists and students, pilgrimages of history loving people will journey to the white and green house, there to reflect on the rich historical heritage of the place, to recall scenes vital to the building of this state and view the historical relics which

will be in the museum.

#### Officials Visit Place

A number of the officers of the holding society which the Colonial Dames of the state formed in order to take over the property for restoration and preservation recently visited the property and were gratified with the manner in which the work was progressing. They were Mrs. Arthur Holbrook, president of the society, Mrs. Charles Morris, wife of the attorney who is doing the legal work, and a daughter of Ex-Governor Fairchild, Mr. James Brown, treasurer of the society and Mrs. A. P. Wettsten, all of Milwaukee.

E. B. Maltbey, who is acquainted with the property and Mrs. H. J. Puffer, a member of the Old Agency house committee, showed the women over the 13 acres which belong to the place, pointing out the great elms which Mr. Kinzie planted. They visited the old Fort Winnebago cemetery and other historical points while here.

*Chicago Daily Tribune  
Chicago, Illinois  
June 12, 1931*

A goodly number of the Colonial Dames and their families and friends will motor to Portage, Wis., tomorrow to inspect the old Indian agency house and to attend the annual Flag day observance. The flag raising will be held at 12 o'clock noon. Mrs. Arthur T. Holbrook, president of the state organization, will conduct the ceremonies. Talks will be given by Dr. Louise Kellogg of the University of Wisconsin, Mrs. Hobart Johnston of Madison, and Mayor Henry Heimeyer of Portage.

Those who have made reservations to attend include Dr. and Mrs. Arthur T. Holbrook, Dr. and Mrs. George A. Harlow, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph L. Simpson, Mrs. Charles M. Morris, Mrs. William H. Adams, Mrs.

Wheeler P. Bloodgood, Mrs. James P. Brown, Miss Dorothy Brown, Mrs. Frederick J. Casterline, Miss Alice Chapman, Miss Emily Hale of Boston; Miss Gay Rawlins, Mrs. Loyal Durand, Mrs. John W. Flint, Mrs. George L. Graves, Mr. and Mrs. Nathaniel Greene, Miss Caroline Greene, Miss May Houghton, Mrs. Robert J. Lacey of East Troy; Mrs. Frank G. Turner, Mrs. Alfred P. Wettstein, Mrs. Robert A. Williams, Mrs. William MacLaren, Miss Ada Matthews, Mrs. William H. Mayhew, Mrs. Henry M. Ogden, Mr. and Mrs. Irving H. Reynolds, Mrs. C. J. Richards, Mrs. Bryant Smith of Oconomowoc; Mrs. Forbes Snowden, Mr. and Mrs. Albert K. Stebbins, Mrs. George Schuster, and Col. Charles M. Pearsall.



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Milwaukee Sentinel  
Milwaukee, Wis.  
June 13, 1931

## Portage Rites Will Dedicate 'Kinzie House'

### Milwaukee Colonial Dames to Aid in Services.

Forty Milwaukee Colonial Dames, led by Mrs. Arthur T. Holbrook, state president, will motor Satur-

day morning to Portage, Wis., to participate in dedication of "Kinzie House," the first Indian agency post to be erected in western Wisconsin.

The post was constructed 99 years ago by Capt. John Kinzie, sturdy pioneer. The story is told in a book by Kinzie's wife, who called her story "Wau-Bun."

Colonial Dames of Wisconsin will have charge of the rites. Dr. Louise P. Kellogg of the State Historical society; Mrs. Hobart Johnson, Madison, chairman of the restoration committee, and Mayor H. H. Niemeyer, Portage, will address the gathering.

June 14, 1931

## Portage Honors Builders of Fort

PORTAGE, Wis., June 13—(P)—Capt. John Kinzie and associate pioneers, who built the first Indian agency post in this part of the state, were honored here Saturday at ceremonies dedicating the old fort, restored under auspices of the Colonial Dames in Wisconsin.

Praise for the courageous spirit in which these pioneers opened a new territory was given by Dr. Louise P. Kellogg of the State Historical society, and Mrs. Hobart Johnson, Madison, chairman of the restoration committee. Mayor H. H. Niemeyer welcomed the guests.

The house will be open to visitors throughout the summer, although formal opening will not take place until 1932.

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Milwaukee Journal  
June 14, 1931

## Agency House Flag Is Raised

### Colonial Dames Join in Informal Cere- mony at Portage

BY SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT OF THE JOURNAL

Portage, Wis.—Scenes of Wisconsin of nearly 100 years ago, when still a territory of Indians, wild life and a few scattered trappers and traders, were recalled here Saturday in the informal dedication of the reconstructed Indian Agency House built by the government for its agent, Capt. John Kinzie, and his young bride, Juliette, under the shadow of Fort Winnebago. The Wisconsin chapter of the Colonial Dames, which is restoring the house as a national historical shrine, held flag raising ceremonies.

Nearly 200 persons, including 60 members of the Colonial Dames from Milwaukee, West Allis, Madison, Reedsburg, Oconomowoc and Fond du Lac attended the service, the first held on the grounds since the organization purchased the old building and its 164 acres of land last October.

#### Left Partly Finished

Previous to the flag raising visitors wandered over the grounds and inspected the historic old home, one of the first outposts of civilization in this territory. The house, a pure example of New England colonial architecture, has been left for the summer only partly restored, so that pilgrims may see its sturdy construction.

The ax split lath, bricks made in the agency house kiln, the curious construction of plaster laid on bricks inside the building, the heavy beams and fireplaces were admired. Architecturally the house is as valuable as its history is rich and interesting, and the architect, Frank Riley of Madison, is faithfully following every original detail. The 24-pane glass windows have been restored with old, crinkly glass and the shutters have been faithfully reproduced and painted the original shade of green.

The foundation is of stones from the old fort. Porches with round colonial columns enhance the beauty and simplicity of the house. Next year, when the house is formally dedicated June 1, on the one hundredth anniversary of its completion, it will be one of the most beautiful sites in Wisconsin. It stands on a high hill overlooking the government canal with the Fox river and site of the old fort across another hill. The house will be painted white and furnished as nearly as possible as it was in the days of Mrs. Kinzie.

#### Flag Is Raised

Mrs. Arthur Holbrook, Milwaukee, state president of the Colonial Dames, opened the exercises Saturday. Dr. Louise Phelps Kellogg, Madison, of the State Historical society, described the early history of the agency. Mrs. Hobart S. Johnson, who presented the idea of purchasing the property to the Colonial Dames and under whose supervision the work of restoration has been done, described the present story of the agency and pointed out all the interesting features of the house. Mayor H. H. Niemeyer of Portage welcomed the visitors and expressed the appreciation of the city to the society for preserving the house.

Miss Eleanor Schley of Milwaukee, sister of Mrs. Thomas Mercien, founder of the Wisconsin chapter of Colonial Dames, raised the flag, which was the donation of Mrs. Thomas W. Spence, also of Milwaukee. Mrs. Charles Mann of Milwaukee gave the flag pole. The Colonial Dames salute closed the program.

Officers of the Colonial Dames present from Milwaukee were Mrs. Holbrook, Miss Mae Houghton, Mrs. Alfred Wettstein, Mrs. George B. Miller, Mrs. Henry Ogden, Mrs. William Mayhew, Mrs. Loyal Durand, Mrs. James P. Brown, Mrs. Irving Reynolds, Mrs. Grant Fitch and Mrs. James W. Simpson.

Many parties had picnic lunches on the old lawn where the Indians used to play their favorite game of moccasin, dance for the Kinzies, consult with the agent, or sit for a friendly call.

# Historic Home Opened

Wisconsin State Journal

June 28, 1931

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Above is a view of the old Indian Agency house near Portage which is now being restored by the Wisconsin Colonial Dames. The photograph was taken at the time of the informal dedication of the place on Flag day, June 13, and the raising of the new flag, a gift of Mrs. Thomas W. Spence, Milwaukee, a charter member. The flagpole was given by Mrs. Charles Mann, Milwaukee. Miss Eleanor Schley, Milwaukee, a

sister of the founder of the Wisconsin chapter of the Dames, Mrs. Thomas Mercein, raised the flag on this occasion.

In the fore of the picture is H. H. Niemeyer, mayor of Portage, who spoke. Directly at his left is Mrs. Hobart Johnson, Madison, chairman of the committee on restoration, and next is Mrs. Arthur T. Holbrook, Milwaukee, president of the Dames.

**DUPLICATE EXPOSURE**

Daily Journal  
Antigo, Wis.  
May 26, 1932

# AGENCY HOUSE GETS ANTIQUES

## Historic Old Building Near Portage Will Reflect Early 19th Century

Since the F. A. Deleglise cabin, preserved in this city, is being furnished with pioneer articles in harmony with the time it was built, the following account of how the Old Agency House near Portage is being equipped should be of especial interest. It is reprinted from the Madison Capital Times.

A large spinning wheel and an exquisite little turned bookcase belonging to Frank G. Bowen of Madison and some simple old chairs of Mrs. Hobart S. Johnson are among the many contributions being used by the Society of Colonial Dames to recapture the spirit of 1830 in the little frame house near Portage which John Kinzie, Wisconsin pioneer, built for his bride, Juliette, in the first decade of the 19th century.

Only gifts of a period not later than 1830 are being accepted, and all contributions must be in keeping with the spirit of 1830, reflecting the pio-

neer life as given by Juliette Kinzie through the pages of Wau-Bun. Mrs. Charles J. McIntosh, chairman of the furnishings and gift committee of the house, and her assistants hope to have all the donated furniture, bric-a-brac and rugs installed by June 14.

The walls of the living room will be papered after the design found on a bit of paper in the house, believed to be the original paper. The society is considering having the design stenciled on paper at the Layton School of Art, Milwaukee.

Many of the fine old pieces which will be placed in that room have been in Milwaukee families for generations. Mrs. Charles M. Morris has given a very lovely old mahogany love seat, and Mrs. Edgar Mark Williams of New York, the former Helen Sexton, is sending a most attractive mahogany secretary, made in 1800.

One of the fireplaces will be adorned by a set of wrought iron implements donated by Mrs. Irving Seaman. Mrs. Jackson Kemper of White-water has contributed an interesting old brass skimmer, with a wrought iron handle, which has been in her family over 100 years.

By June, Mrs. McIntosh's committee hopes to have enough of a fund to purchase a Nunn & Clark piano, dated 1825, which was discovered for them in the east, and similar to the one Juliette Kinzie brought with her from Boston.

Milwaukee Sentinel  
May 27, 1932

The opening of the Old Indian Agency house at Portage, sponsored by the Colonial Dames, which was to have taken place formally on June 14, has been postponed until later in the summer. However, the house will be open, as it was all last summer, for parties who wish to drive out and have luncheon there.

Register - Democrat  
Portage, Wis.  
August 6, 1939

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## NEW PAPER FOR INDIAN AGENCY HOUSE PARLOR

### Wall Covering Century Old Duplicated by Layton Art Students

One hundred years after it was first done, Mrs. Juliette Kinzie's parlor in the Old Agency house will be papered Monday with as near an exact duplicate of Mrs. Kinzie's own wall paper as students from the Layton Art school, Milwaukee, could create.

The placing of the wall paper on the walls will almost finish the reconstruction of the old house under the direction of the Colonial Dames. All of the other rooms have been refinished in the flat paint and whitewash which was used in the original house, the parlor being the only one which was papered.

At the time the old agency house was built and furnished, all wall paper in the United States had to be imported from France in blocks 18½ by 13 inches. Since the paper was printed from hand-carved wood blocks it was an expensive decoration, explaining why John Kinzie and his wife could afford to have it placed in only one room.

#### Halbrook Directs Work

The wall paper which is to be placed on the parlor walls next week is no less expensive than that of 100 years ago. The work is being done under the direction of Prof. Robert Halbrook of the Layton Art school, Milwaukee, under whose direction students have cut

linoleum blocks to reprint the wall paper design. The paper for the room will cost the Colonial Dames \$300.

The paper is of a pretty floral design, with two shades of blue and gray-blue being used. Separate linoleum blocks were necessary for each color variation, and the dots in the paper had to be put in by hand.

When Prof. Halbrook began his research to determine just what the pattern of the original wall paper held, he had to soak off six other layers of all paper which had been placed there by other residents of the old house who had attempted to make the old house liveable before it was restored as a historical monument.

#### Install Old Furnishings

Since the redecorating of the old house will be completed with the hanging of the wall paper, it is expected that the old furnishings of the period, with which the house will be filled, will be installed in the near future.

Nothing will be placed in the home which is not an exact duplicate of the furnishings in the home at the time of its first occupancy.

The first, and most valuable contribution to its furnishing was made recently by Mrs. Charles Albright, of Milwaukee, who donated a Nunns piano, made by Robert and William Nunns in New York in 1825. In "Wau-Bun" Mrs. Kinzie speaks of "my Nunns piano."

The fireplaces and their furnishings have been restored, the brick used in them being taken from the walls of the old house. The brick is of a solid kind, so made to resist the bullet fire against which the first residents of the old agency house had to protect themselves.

When the house is completed it will be one of the most important collections of early Americana in



existence in the United States today.

Already it is attracting many visitors, Mrs. G. A. LaShure, who is in charge of the house, says. On the average of 20 people each day, with about 100 on Sundays, come to the house to see the historic place.

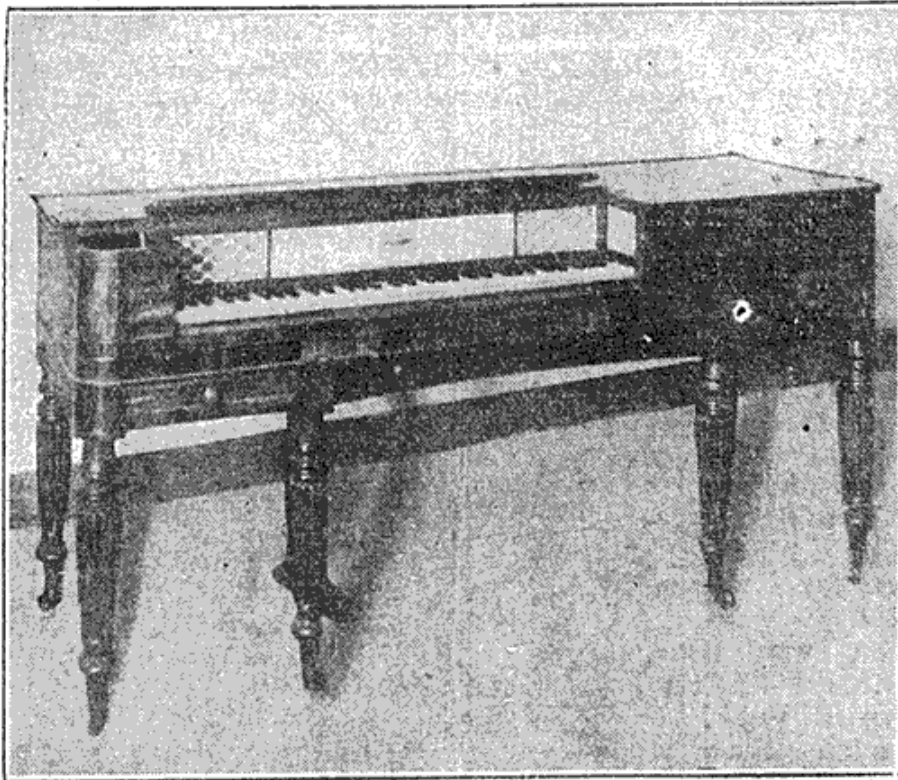
Mrs. LaShure and her mother are also serving tea and lunches at

the cottage just to the rear of the old house. They have now installed a telephone for the service of their guests.

It is the plan of the Colonial Dames here, as elsewhere where they have restored historic sites, to charge admission to the place until it is paid for and then to turn it over to the state for a state park. The society has a 160 acre tract surrounding the house.

*Wisconsin State Journal  
August 7, 1932*

## Piano in Agency House



**Nunns-Clarke piano in Agency House**

(Photo Courtesy Milwaukee Journal)

**O**NE of the most charming gifts presented to the Old Indian Agency House at Portage thus far, a lovely old Nunns-Clarke piano, has recently been installed there. Procured in New York by the Colonial Dames, it was given to the society by Mrs. Charles E. Albright, Milwaukee. It has been admired by

several of the Madison people who have visited at the Agency house this season.

The piano, a rare and valuable piece, was made prior to 1825 and is of the same type as Mrs. John Harris Kinzie's piano which she brought by boat from Middletown, Conn., when she came to pioneer Wisconsin.

sin as the bride of the Indian agent. The mahogany six-legged piano is now standing in the living room of the Agency house, which has been restored by the Colonial Dames in the last year and is being carefully and painstakingly furnished in the manner of the home of 100 years ago.

#### Happy to Have Piano

The furnishing committee of the house is particularly happy to have an old piano, for Mrs. Kinzie valued her piano above all else. It was the piece she insisted most upon taking with her when she decided to move all her mahogany furniture out into what was then the wilderness, among the Indians. It was an almost unheard of undertaking for the times, but she determined upon carrying out her plans and had her piano packed and shipped on the boats with the rest of her furniture.

In her book, "Wau-Bun," which she published in 1856 describing the early day in the northwest, Mrs. Kinzie tells of their arrival at Fort Winnebago, now Portage, in 1831. The government had built the Agency house for her husband, the Indian agent, and she tells of the excitement of the arrival of the furniture and the unpacking and settling.

When the boats bearing the furniture arrived they found that everything they owned had been overturned in the water, even the piano. She says in the book: "Water poured out of the corners of the boxes as they were successively hoisted on shore. . . . Alas for the

mahogany, not a piece from which the edges and veneering were not starting. It had all the appearances of having lain under the Grande Chute for days.

"There was nothing but to be patient and make the best of it. And when the pretty sideboard and work table had been thoroughly rubbed and set up . . . when the white curtains were hung at the windows and the chairs and dining table each in its place in relation to the piano, our parlor was pronounced 'magnificent'."

Throughout the entire stay of the Kinzies at the Agency house their piano created a stir. Mrs. Kinzie, speaking of the son of Alexander Hamilton, a young officer at Green Bay, writes:

" . . . Hamilton . . . came to give one admiring look and to hear the music of the piano, which was a perfect novelty to him. His description of it to the young officers after his return to the Bay was expressive of his admiration and wonder—"There it stood! Anybody might go up and touch it!"

Throughout the winter Mrs. Kinzie spent at Fort Winnebago her piano was the main center of the social life among the young officers stationed at the fort. Many of these later became famous men, chief among them being Jefferson Davis. Mrs. Kinzie entertained at many musicales to which all the white people in the vicinity came and which proved their main source of pleasure during the winter months in the wilderness.

*Wisconsin State Journal*  
*August 21, 1932*

## Gaiety Again Pervades Indian Agency House

THE little white colonial house which is pictured is not a modern home but rather the newly restored Indian agency house at Portage which this year has been attracting so many people, not only from Madison but from neighboring places as well.

The restoration has been done by the Colonial Dames of Wisconsin and Mrs. Hobart Johnson, Madison, has been one of the most active members working on the project. The home is now being made as nearly as possible identical with that in which

F90246

John Kinzie, Indian agent for the government, and his bride, lived 100 years ago. It was completed for them in June 1832. The past year has seen a great deal of progress in the restoration.

The entrance hall is quite small with a simple stair leading to the second floor. A very old Windsor chair stands near the window in the hall. The chair is more than 100 years old as are all other pieces in the agency house.

#### **Kitchen Also Illustrated**

One of the most interesting rooms is the kitchen which boasts of an old Dutch oven and many cast iron cooking utensils. The spinning wheel which is at the right of the fireplace is one of the most quaint pieces and it vies for honors with the little hour glass on the mantle above the fireplace. Another unique piece is the carriage warmer, seen against the right side of the fireplace.

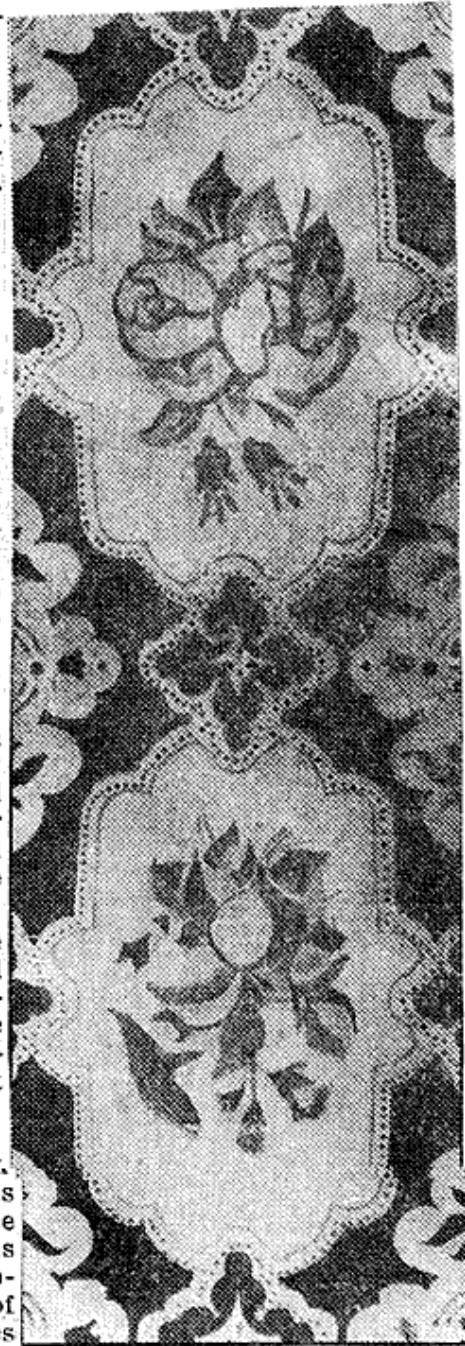
The corner of the dining room which is pictured shows two very interesting antiques, a lovely oil painting of Mrs. Kinzie's daughter and her little child and a beautiful mahogany sofa, upholstered in blue velour.

The mantle which is shown is in one of the upstairs bedrooms and above it are pictures of the first inhabitants of the house, John Kinzie and his young bride. Another carriage warmer and a chair form part of this interesting picture.

#### **Wallpaper Restored**

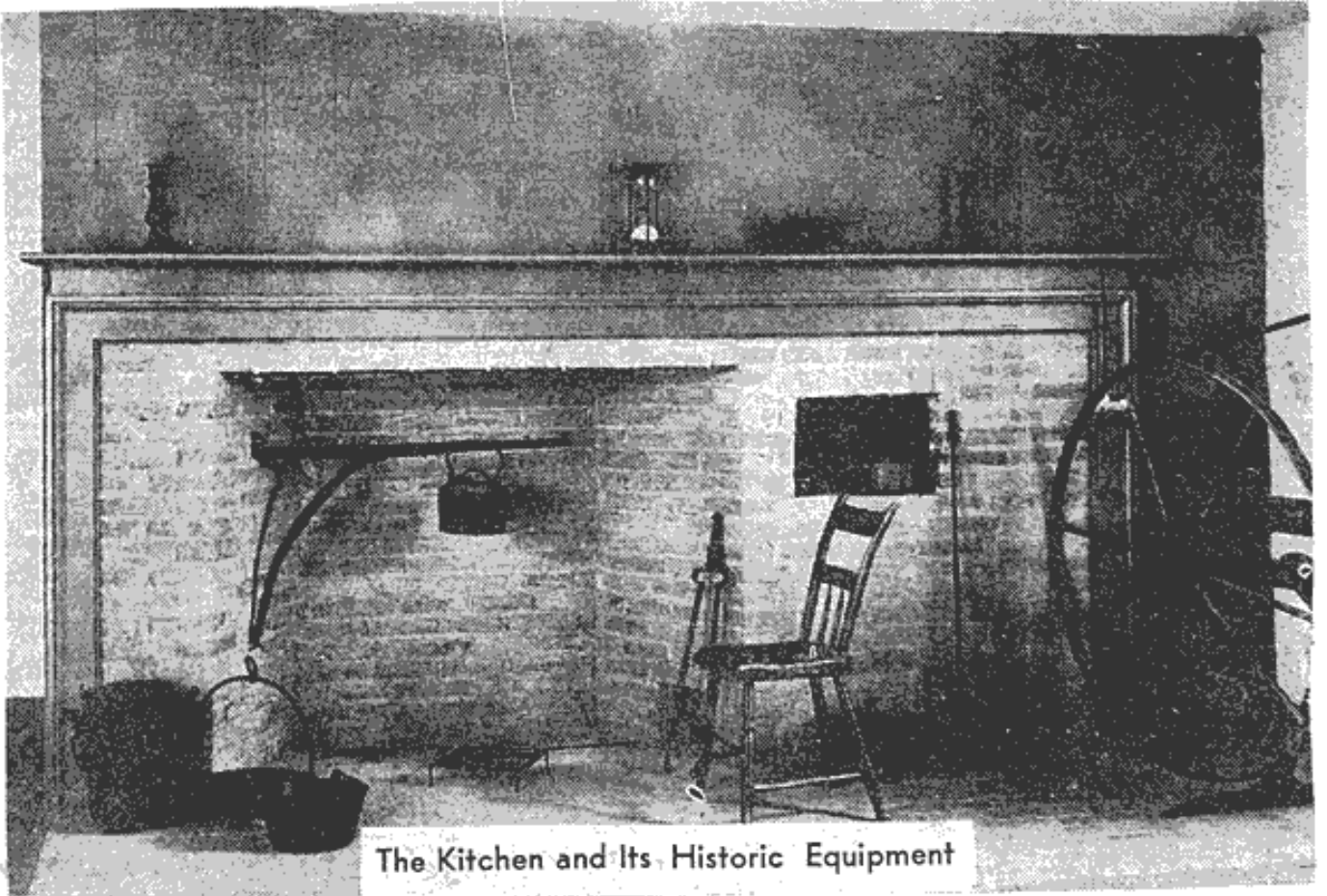
Through the efforts of Frank Riley, Madison architect, who has assisted in the restoration, a piece of the original wall paper which was on the living room wall was obtained after removing six layers of other paper. The Wisconsin Dames had a reproduction of the paper made and it now appears on the walls of this room. The design is illustrated here and is carried out in very delicate blue and cream colors.

A small hostess house has been furnished in the rear of the agency house and here one may be served with luncheon or tea. This has proved to be a very popular place for Madison women to drive for informal luncheons and tea during this season.

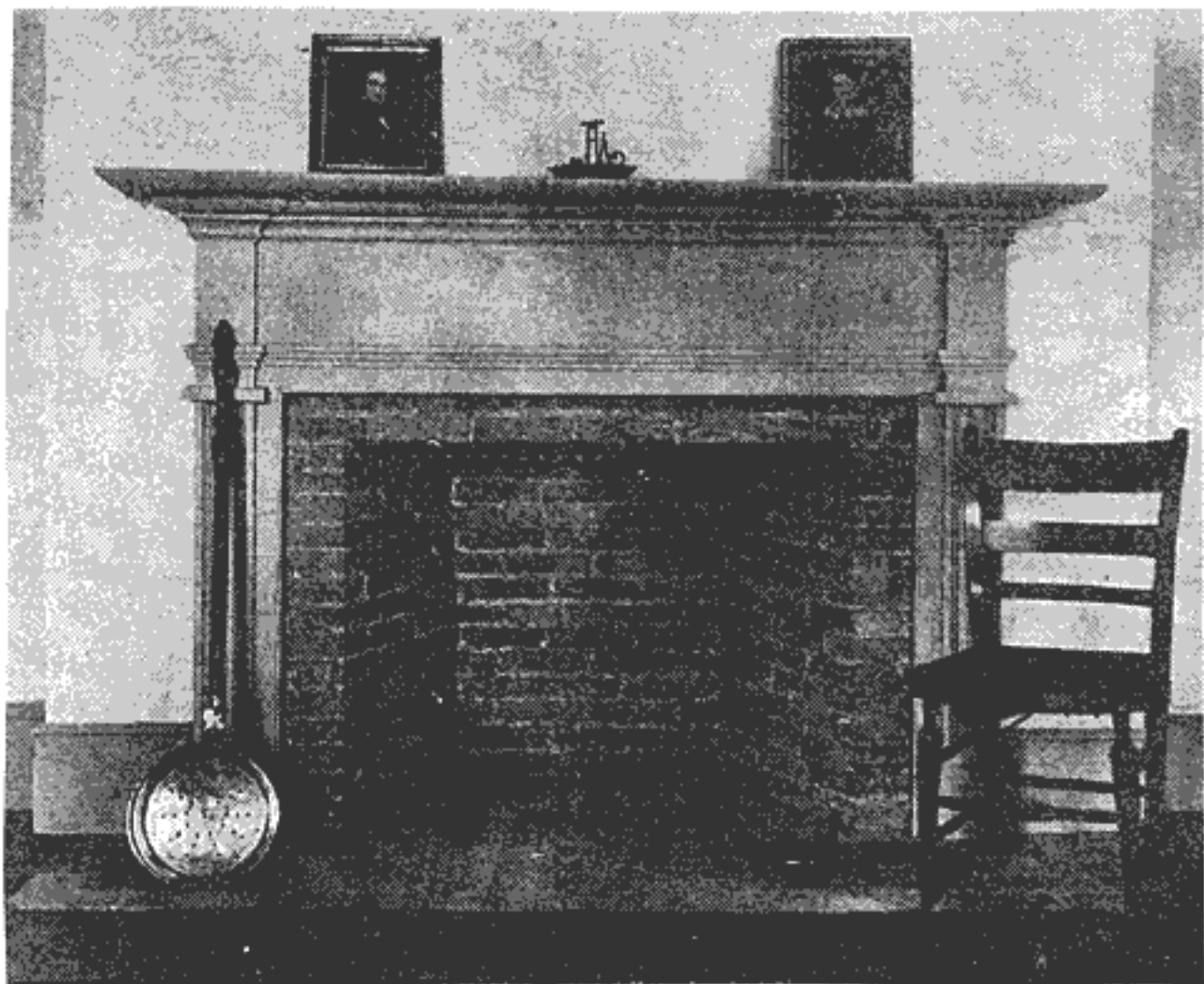


The Living Room Wall  
Paper

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AG 7



The Kitchen and Its Historic Equipment

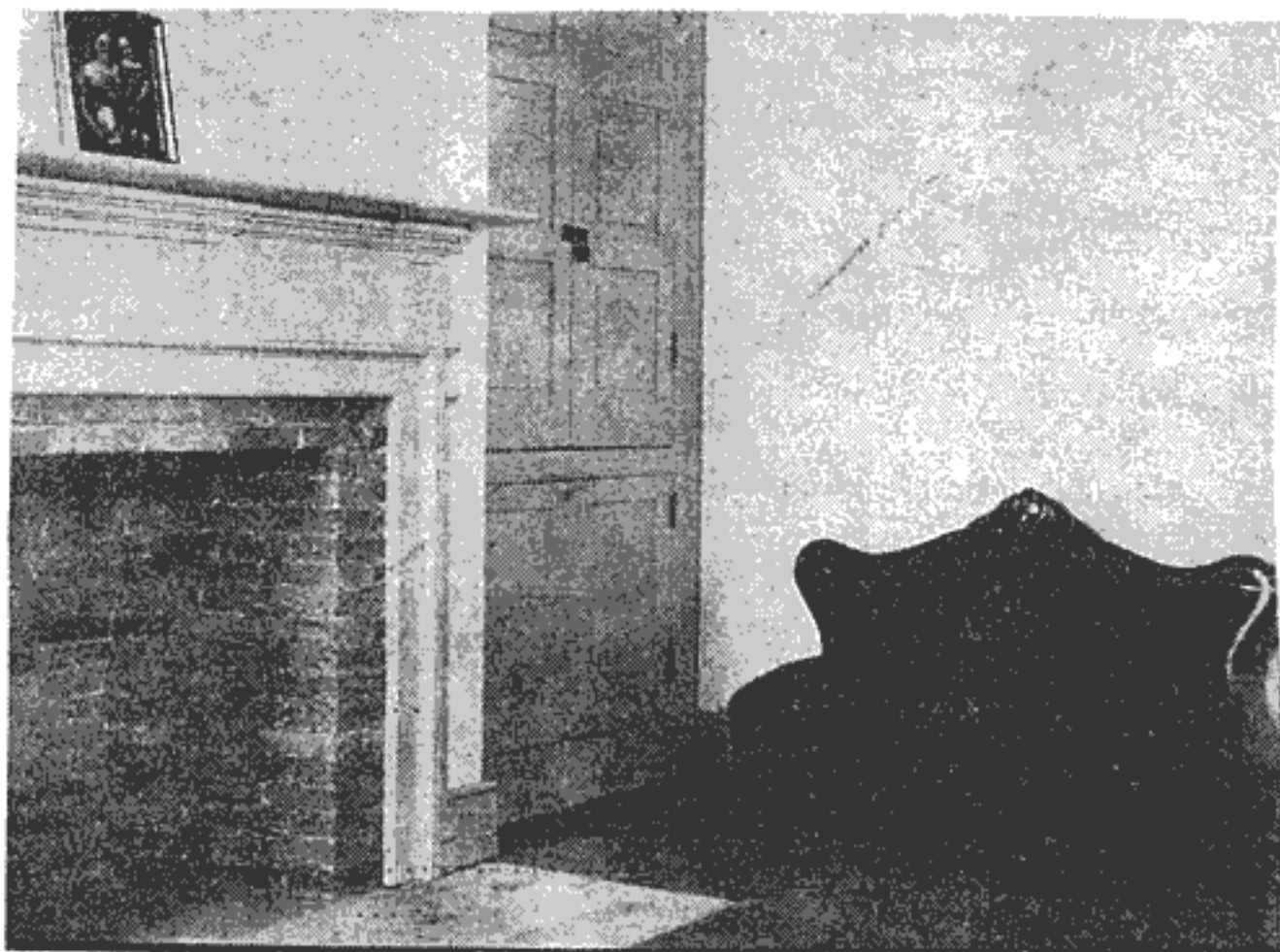


A Bedroom Fireplace

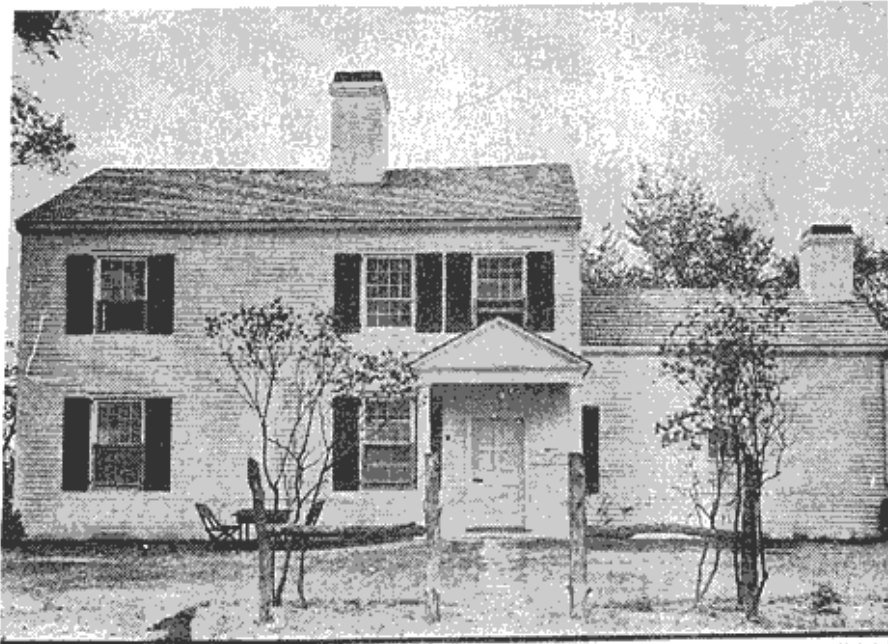


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A Corner of the Dining Room



The Restored Indian Agency House at Portage



The Entrance Hallway