

PRESERVATION OF THE OLD INDIAN AGENCY HOUSE

The idea of the preservation of the old U. S. Indian Agency House as a State historical monument originated with Mrs. E. H. Van Ostrand and Dr. Louise P. Kellog. Both had visited the locality and had become impressed with the desirability and possibility of saving this historic building to posterity. They secured the interest of Mrs. Charles E. Buell, chairman of the History and Landmarks Committee of the Wisconsin Federation of Women's Clubs. Mrs. Buell labored diligently and enthusiastically for the fruition of the cherished project. Several meetings were held on the grounds. The assistance of Mr. Burt Williams, Col. Howard Greene, Col. Fred C. Best, Mr. Theodore T. Brown, Mr. and Mrs. Andrews, Mrs. H. J. Puffer, Mr. C. E. Brown, Mrs. Jessie R. Skinner, Col. Marshall Cousins, Miss Amelia Stevens, Mrs. Hobart Johnson, Mr. L. S. Hanks and other friends in Madison, Portage and Milwaukee was secured. A committee was appointed and the Old Indian Agency House Association, a non-profit sharing company, incorporated under the laws of the state. Mrs. Buell herself secured many subscriptions from members of the Women's Clubs. Citizens of Portage also raised a considerable sum of money through stock subscriptions. Through the activity and generosity of Mrs. Hobart Johnson and Mrs. Arthur N. Holbrook the Wisconsin Colonial Dames undertook the duty of raising the balance of the money required to complete the purchase of the property.

This historic building, constructed of hand-hewn timbers, stands on the bank of the Fox River across that stream from the former location of the famous old frontier Fort Winnebago, at Portage. It was erected in 1831 for U. S. Indian Agent John Harris Kinzie and his charming wife, Juliette Magill Kinzie. They were its occupants for three interesting years.

In the front yard of the old building are tall elm trees, in its rear a collection of barns, sheds and other buildings, and about it cultivated fields and pasture lands.

In the day of its erection Major David E. Twiggs, a soldier, who afterwards fought in the Mexican War, was in command of Fort Winnebago. Jefferson Davis was stationed there as a lieutenant. At the Agency House there gathered in those days the noted Wisconsin Winnebago chiefs, Four Legs, Yellow Thunder and other chiefs with their tribesmen. From the fields all about the old building hundreds of Indian stone and other implements and ornaments have been collected in the years from 1831 to the present date. The character of these indicates that the site has been occupied by redmen as a dwelling place since prehistoric time.

In its long life of a hundred years the old building has had many vicissitudes of fortune. It was for a time a tavern where many travelers were entertained. During recent years it served as a farm house.

While in residence in this historic building Mrs. Kinzie obtained the material for her delightful book, WAU-BUN, or the "Early Day" in the Northwest. "What happened to her, what she experienced, enjoyed, and endured she has embodied in her book. Wau-Bun is thus in part an autobiography, the account of the years 1830 to 1833 spent at Fort Winnebago and the journeys thither and thence. It was not written at the time the events occurred; it is founded on memories, the memories of, an unusually intelligent actor and observer." Her book was completed in 1855 and published the following year simultaneously in New York and Cincinnati. The six illustrations were from the author's own drawings. A second edition appeared in Chicago in 1857. In 1873, a third edition was printed in Philadelphia. This without illustrations. Two editions were printed in Chicago in 1901. One was printed by the Caxton Club of Chicago, Dr. Reuben G. Thwaites being the editor. The other was prepared by Mrs. Kinzie's eldest daughter, Eleanor, wife of General William W. Gordon of Savannah.

In order to further assist in the purchase, repair and furnishing of the Old Indian Agency House Dr. Louise P. Kellogg very generously undertook in 1930 the preparation of a sixth edition of this classic volume. This has now been

printed in most attractive style by the George Banta Publishing Company of Menasha, Wisconsin. Mr. Banta, who is himself greatly interested in the preservation of the Old Indian Agency House, is very generously contributing all of the profits of the publication to the Indian Agency House fund.

The cost of the book is \$2.50. Every member of the Wisconsin Archeological Society will wish to obtain a copy of *Wau-Bun* for his home library. Orders for copies should be sent to Mr. George Banta, Jr. at Menasha.

The site of the Old Indian Agency House has already become a place of pilgrimage for all persons interested in Wisconsin history. It is expected that thousands of visitors will gather there during the present year. Plans for the repair and re-furnishing of the building are now receiving consideration. No doubt a caretaker for the building and grounds will be appointed.

Persons who wish to contribute to the cost of the improvements may communicate with Mrs. C. E. Buell or Mrs. Hobart Johnson at Madison.