



THE GRIGNON GAZETTE

April 2017

UPCOMING EVENTS

Welcome!

With the arrival of spring, things have definitely been waking up around the Mansion! Over the past month, tour guides have spent several Saturdays at the Mansion preparing for the upcoming season which is only a few short weeks away! Our blacksmiths have also been diligently fixing up the forge and working on improvements to the shop. Volunteers have also been busy continuing to organize events for the upcoming season, and we have some new things in the works for this year! Watch our newsletter, website and Facebook for more information as details are finalized!

One event we are particularly excited about is coming up soon on June 24th. We are thrilled to welcome the Menominee and Oneida Nations to the Grignon Mansion for a Native American Dance Performance/Pow Wow. Charles A Grignon is the grandson of a Menominee woman, so this event is particularly special for us. In talking with the

Menominee Nation representatives, there has been a sense of "coming home" expressed during our conversations.

During the event, the Menominee representatives want to honor the descendants of the Grignon family during a special ceremony. Invitations are being mailed and we hope that we will have many Grignon family members join us for the event.

During the event, the Mansion will be open for tours from 10am – Noon and 3:30pm – 5pm. The Native American Dance Performance will be from 1pm – 3:30pm and will include dancers, Native American drummers and singers, Smoke Dancers and Native American history. Indian fry bread, Indian tacos, beverages and other food will be available for purchase.

For more information, watch our website and Facebook, or contact us. We hope to see you there!

May 6 – September 3: Saturday & Sunday tours

June 10 – Little Chute Jazz Band

June 10 – Appleton Flag Day Parade

June 14 – Little Chute Community Band

June 17 – Brat Fry @ Piggly Wiggly

June 24 – Menominee & Oneida Nation Native American Dance Performance/Pow Wow

July 29 to July 30 – Civil War Living History Demonstration

August 5 – Bike to the Beat

August 13 – Car Show and Brat Fry

September 9 – Fall Fest

September 16th & 17th – Fur Trade Encampment

December 5 – Kaukauna Christmas Parade

December 1st to 3rd – Christmas Tours

December 8th to 10th – Christmas Tours



Fur Trade Business Transactions

by Dick Boyd Ph.D.

It has often been implied that the Indians were cheated by established "rates of exchange" when pelts were bartered for European materials. In modern times, it's difficult to judge the fairness of this system, since understanding how each side perceived the value of the items involved is difficult, if not impossible. History suggests that the fur trade was a giant pyramidal scheme and only folks at the very top became tremendously wealthy, e.g. the John Jacob Astors of the day. Let's take a look at the day-to-day economics of the fur trade at the end of the 18th century at the actual trade exchange level. Below is a sampling of the exchange value for a "made beaver" skin, considered the most valuable of all pelts. (A "made beaver" was a prime pelt, completely prepared for market.)

One beaver = eight iron knives or one kettle
Eight beavers = one blanket
Ten beavers = one gun

At first blush, such transactions might seem unfair. However, archeologists have pointed out that while the system seems to favor the trader, it is impossible today to judge how valuable trade items were to the Indian recipients. Obviously, a kettle, gun, iron knife, or fishhook would be highly useful tools

for gathering or preparing essential foodstuffs. Various ornamental danglers, brooches, lockets and other ornamental items were prized items for daily wear and use in the perceived spirit world to come.

As the beaver population was steadily depleted, other pelts became more acceptable, their particular values reflecting that of a single beaver. Skins of muskrats, bobcats, lynx, pine martens, deer, and even skunks had value.

One beaver = ten muskrats, two lynx or five martens

Once the trader had procured a supply of peltries, he had to in turn sell them to one of the major trading companies. Below are the prices offered to the Grignons by a New York firm in 1839, toward the end of the fur trade heyday in Wisconsin. Note that beavers are not mentioned, because by 1839 they were nearly extinct.

Muskrat -15 cents	Marten - 42 cents
Mink - 60 cents	Fisher - \$2.75
Lynx - \$4.00	Bear - \$5.00
Otter - \$9.00	Deer - \$4.00

So how did the Grignons fare in the fur trade? Actually, not too well for several reasons: (1) Our "Kaukauna Grignons" were active at a time when the fur trade in Wisconsin was on the decline, and (2) various factors caused Indian traders to default on the credit loans that the Grignons had extended to them prior to the hunting seasons. Proof of this indebtedness by the Menominees can be seen in the fallout from the Treaty of the Cedars in 1836 where that tribe sold four million acres of tribal lands to the government for \$700,000. About \$47,500



of this money went directly to the Grignons to repay fur trade obligations that tribal individuals had incurred to family members. On a per capita basis, this means that in 1836, each member of the tribe owed the Grignons about \$60.00...significant money back in the day!

It has been popularly believed that the Grignons became wealthy through fur trade transactions, but as just noted, that was not the case. The Grignons did very well through their extensive land ownerships around the State, family sawing and grain milling businesses, government service contracts, and portaging operations at Kaukauna. As we will see in later *Gazettes*, Augustin Grignon even got into the steamboat business!

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS!

We are always looking for new volunteers of all ages at the Mansion. Volunteers are able to choose their level of involvement and the amount of time they are able to volunteer. Opportunities include tour guides, gift shop, blacksmith, demonstrations, grounds keeping, and more. Prefer to be behind the scenes? There are also opportunities for event planning, sewing, costume making, strategic planning, advertising, and social media.

Contact us by email at info@grignonmansion.org or complete the Contact Form on our website for more information!

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