

Grignon House,
Kaukauna, Wis.

Outagamie Co

HABS No. 28-13

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Photographs
Written Historical and Descriptive Data.
District No. 28.

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey.
Alexander C. Guth, District Officer,
1249 N. Franklin Place, Milwaukee, Wis.

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GRIGNON HOUSE
Augustin Road, Kaukauna
Outagamie County, Wisconsin

Owner: Not given.

Date of Erection: 1838.

Architect and Builder: No record.

Present Condition: Poor.

Number of Stories: Two.

Materials of Construction: Wood.

Other Existing Records: See text.

Additional Data: See following pages.

GRIGNON HOUSE

The Grignon House was built by Charles Augustin Grignon on the banks of the Fox River in what is now known as the city of Kaukauna, Wisconsin.

The architect is unknown; as a matter of fact there are no records to show that an architect was ever employed on the building. The workmen as well as most of the materials were brought from Buffalo, New York. The beautifully carved stair newel, balusters and hand rail were made in New York City, shipped to Green Bay by boat and then by canoe up the Fox River to Kaukauna.

Charles Augustin Grignon was born in Kaukauna in 1808 and was the oldest son of Augustin Grignon, a fur trader who settled in Kaukauna in 1804. This gentleman(?) was the grandson of Charles DeLanglade, who with his father were the first white settlers in Wisconsin*, settling in Green Bay in 1745. Augustin bought the land on which the house is now situated in 1804 from Dominick DuCharm and worked it until 1837, when he retired to Buttes De Morts, leaving his entire estate to Charles.

In that same year Charles married Mary Meade of Kaukauna and settled down to manage the large estate left him by his father. In 1838-39 he built the Grignon house which is standing today. He died in 1862 leaving nine children.

The home of this family is truly an historic home

* The French in 1634 were white.

on historic ground. In the twilight days of the township Kaukauna the balcony of its front portal commanded a view of the camping grounds of the Indians that roved up and down the Fox River. In the following years it stood a silent witness to the advance of industry along the river. The white man came in numbers, the Indians withdrew, the river was harnessed and the canals with the five locks were built almost in the front yard of the old homestead. Today, with Kaukauna developed all around it as a thriving industrial center, it still stands watching the progress of the white man.

The hospitality of the Grignons was proverbial. All distinguished visitors to the Valley in the early years of the last century were welcomed and entertained by Mr. and Mrs. Grignon. Mrs. Kinzie, author of "Waubun", says in describing a trip from Green Bay up the river to Fort Winnebago: "By evening of the first day we arrived at Kakalin, where a branch of the Grignon family resided. We were very pleasantly entertained and partook of the good cheer offered us in the shape of hot venison steaks and crepes, and that excellent cup of coffee which none can prepare like a French woman and which is so refreshing after a day in the opening. The next morning after breakfast we took leave of our host and prepared to resume our journey."

The exterior of this house may well be classed as an outstanding example of Colonial* work. One must look far to find a building at ^{whose} ~~which~~ the details have been carried out

*Greek Revival

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in such a refined and bookish way. One is apt to believe that whoever was responsible for this house had access to Ascher Benjamin's book on Colonial work. The first story treatment is most unusual, with pilasters placed at regular intervals.

The house is in a deplorable condition at the present time. When the district officer visited the place the first time, the owner was on the premises. She is an elderly lady who makes her home in Chicago. The house is closed up entirely. We were shown through the entire house and were astonished to find that every room was completely furnished with furniture that was placed ~~in the same~~ ^{there} when the house was originally built. This is the finest collection of antiques, of every kind imaginable, that can be found anywhere in the state. It is being kept intact because a movement is under way in the city of Kaukauna to purchase the house and furnishings. It is the intent to make a museum of it similar to many in the eastern states. This certainly would be a worthwhile enterprise because the house is so worthy of preservation. The fittings are so in keeping with it. Much money will have to be expended in getting the house in shape, because it is in the most deplorable condition with sagging floors, leaky roof and many other structural defects.

Written by Raymond N. Le Vee

With the assistance of State of Wisconsin Historical Society Collections, Leading Events of Wisconsin History by Legler, Miss Anna Mae Tenee, Appleton, Wisconsin, Mrs. Rossiter Cotton Grignon.

Reviewed by H.C.F., 1936.

Raymond N. Le Vee
District Officer.