THE GRIGNON HOTEL AT BUTTE DES MORTS, WISCONSIN:
AN ESSAY IN HISTORIC PRESERVATION

EDWARD NOYES
Department of History
University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh

One of the older buildings in Winnebago County, Wisconsin, the hotel constructed by Augustin Grignon at the village of Butte des Morts is an attractive subject for an essay in historic interpretation. The builder was a person representing the French presence in historic Wisconsin at its best. Born at Green Bay in 1780, Grignon was a grandson of the colorful Charles Langlade and a subject of the British Empire. As an adult, he occupied a prominent branch on "the wide-spreading tree of the Grignons"; and after the United States barred outsiders from its Indian trade, he abjured "all allegiance . . . to every foreign prince . . . particularly to the king of the United Kingdoms of Great Britain & Ireland . . ." to become an American citizen on July 27, 1820. Recognizing Grignon's grasp of early times in Wisconsin, Lyman C. Draper believed that an interview which he obtained from "The Capt." in 1857 would be regarded by future historians as "the most valuable individual narrative ever contributed to the State Historical Society of Wisconsin."

When he died in 1860, Grignon left a legacy of interests in a variety of far-ranging pursuits. He had been an entrepreneur in the Indian trade of Wisconsin. He had pioneered at farming in the Lower Fox River Valley. He had acquired widespread holdings in land. And he had been a community founder and promoter. In that role, he had striven to enlarge the importance of Butte des Morts which he platted in 1848. The hotel he built there not only figured in the development of the village, but also was a potential means of keeping Grignon afloat financially as settlers from outside Wisconsin shouldered their way into the affairs of the region.

Built in the simple Greek revival architectural style popular in America between 1830 and 1850, the Grignon Hotel stands at its original location on the southeast corner of the intersection where Main and Washington streets meet in Butte des Morts. Once, the hotel looked southward over a broad marsh through which flowed the Upper Fox River and across which passed the trail from Portage to Green Bay. After the damming of the Lower Fox, however, the waters of Big Lake Butte des Morts rose, so that today a mere city block separates the hotel from the north shoreline of the lake.

Although the Grignon Hotel has endured more than 130 years of weather and wind, its original appearance is largely unaltered. Admittedly, the building has suffered wear and tear, and it has undergone both interior and exterior changes. For example, a central staircase which extended upward to the second floor from a point facing the main entry on the first floor has been replaced by narrow steps ascending along the interior of the front wall. At the rear of the hotel, an outside stairway built to allow guests independent access to the second floor sleeping rooms has disappeared and with it, an entry door at the top of the stairs. Some items of hardware remain as do window panes which may be the original ones as they are of poor quality glass badly marred by cords and

* Published with the permission of the Winnebago County Archeological and Historical Society. For certain suggestions concerning subject matter, the writer is indebted to Mrs. Lynn Webster and Mr. Dean Sandeman of Oshkosh, Wisconsin.
seeds. Other original features of the interior construction are the door-like shutters covering the windows. (One writer has claimed that these devices shut off light from the rooms and thereby dampened the urge of a red man to put an arrow through a lighted window.) A bar—or counter—also remains which reputedly served a first-floor tavern. On the second floor, there are chimneys for stoves used to heat the rooms during the chill of Wisconsin winters. A large third-floor room whose precise purpose has been the topic of some speculation appears to have experienced little, if any, alteration. A door between the stairs from the second to the third floor contains a peep-hole which can be opened and closed by a small shutter. On the east side of the building there is an attached apartment presumably intended as living quarters for the hotel manager; but none of the detached structures which once served the establishment and its guests remain.

Whatever the condition of the Grignon Hotel at the time of this writing, in the day when it was constructed the building stood in surroundings that could only have pleased the eye. An early picture demonstrating that condition, is a sketch of the Grand Butte des Morts with its "bold shores" drawn by Captain Henry Whiting in 1819. Marching with the Fifth Regiment from Fort Howard to Prairie du Chien when he captured the view, Whiting estimated that "about ten lodges" of Menominees dotted the bluff where one day Augustin Grignon would build his hotel. But in Whiting's time, the Butte served the red men either by affording the living a place to camp, or by furnishing the dead a place to sleep through the ages.

A year before Whiting sketched the site of the future village, Augustin Grignon and Jacques Porlier had built a trading post where a stream now called Daggett's Creek emptied—in the words of Porlier's son Louis—into the "upper end of Lake Butte des Morts, two miles below the present village of that name." According to Louis Porlier, Grignon brought his family to that post in 1840. Porlier's word has the ring of authority; in 1840, he became Grignon's business manager, and in 1841, he married Grignon's daughter, Sophia. Writing in observation of America's Centennial, reporter Reuben Gold Thwaites of the Oshkosh City Times also fixed 1840 as the year marking Grignon's permanent residence in the Butte des Morts neighborhood. And, in 1839 a surveyor of the area not only referred in his field notes to Grignon's house and improvements, but also mapped farm land belonging to Grignon. The 1840 federal census was the first to show Grignon to be living in Winnebago County. At that time, the sixty-year-old Grignon headed a household of four females and seven males.

Having established his family on the soil of Winnebago County and having improved his land, Grignon seems to have anticipated a busy life as a farmer. In November, 1842, he contracted with one Thomas Evans to have a new barn built. The agreement called for the barn to be finished by July 31, 1843; the building was to measure 30' by 50', and it was to be of pine lumber. The contract stipulated, too, that Grignon was to pay Evans $450 of which $300 was to be due at the "Monomonee" [sic] payment in the fall of 1843; should that source not allow Grignon sufficient funds to settle in full, the balance was to be paid in livestock at the going cash price. Completing the circle in 1876, Reuben Gold Thwaites wrote that in the winter of 1842 Evans "worked up his crops at the Stockbridge mill"; then, from what appears to be an omission in newprint, Thwaites went on to remark, "and used most of the boards in building a barn for Augustin Grignon."

Although Grignon had settled down to follow a rustic existence which—according to the census of 1860—depended on twenty-two acres of improved land and fifty acres that were not, in 1840 he made two entries
of land which are of especial concern to this discussion. One parcel lay in Section 30, Township 19, North, Range 16 East in the Green Bay Land District. It was the site of Grignon’s farm home until his death. When the federal government opened former Mennonite lands lying north and west of the Fox River for sale in 1840, Grignon entered another 205.50 acres in Section 24, Township 19 North, Range 15 East. It was on this land that Grignon platted the village of Butte des Morts where stands the hotel, which he built on lots one and two in block twelve of the young settlement.14

Being in his late sixties did not deter Augustin Grignon from promoting the fortunes of Butte des Morts. It has long been reported that Grignon tried to have the county seat of Winnebago County, which had been created in 1840, located there permanently. As an inducement, in December, 1845, he deeded to the County a plot containing 90,000 square feet of land—about 2¼ acres—for a courthouse site, even though the village was not to be platted until 1848. The County accepted the gift and obligation; but there is a curiosity about it as the deed—and related documents to follow—located the parcel in Section 24, Township 19 North, Range 16 East.15 In other words, Grignon’s proposed courthouse location lay six miles due east from the spot where it might be needed. But no matter, the business of the County came to be conducted at Oshkosh despite the fact that Grignon had donated a site for the county courthouse and that Butte des Morts had been selected as the county seat in 1845.16 To the Oshkoshites, it was fitting that county affairs be so handled; to Augustin Grignon it was another matter. In 1849 he served public notice in the Oshkosh True Democrat of his intention to seek legislative approval for the purpose of locating the county seat permanently at Butte des Morts. Moreover, he intended to request the lawmakers at Madison to approve either his establishing a ferry or building a bridge across the Fox, and he wanted their approval for him to construct a plank road to a ridge of timber near the farmstead of his nephew Robert.17

Butte des Morts possessed some points favoring its becoming the seat of justice in Winnebago County. One was its position on the historic trail between Portage and Green Bay. Another, making its selection “eminently proper,” was its central location in Winnebago County.18 In response to Grignon’s plans, the Oshkosh True Democrat noted that the rapidly growing village of Oshkosh was really the business center of the County; besides, the Indian country north and west of the Fox and the Wolf Rivers was not yet settled. In addition, Oshkosh was to be the location of a new jail costing $500 to which sum the Oshkoshites were to contribute $200. To the Democrat, it seemed hardly fair to have the taxpayers of Oshkosh pay so much toward the construction of the jail only to have the county seat moved to Butte des Morts.19

Despite the contentions of the Democrat, the legislative wheels began to turn. That Grignon’s hope to move the county seat enjoyed strong support can be substantiated by the fact that one petition sympathetic to the change went to Madison with 800 signatures.20 Next, on January 30, 1850, the lower house of the legislature received a bill having the purpose of authorizing the electors of the County “to vote on the removal of the County Seat.” The first version of the bill provided for an election to be held in November, 1850, plus a fifty-dollar fine for anyone who offered, gave, or promised to any elector either money or property in return for voting “for or against such removal.” The same penalty was applicable to a voter who yielded to such temptation. A substitute bill provided that the citizens were to make their choice at the yearly meeting of their towns on the first Tuesday of April, 1850; it dropped the clause concerning the fine of fifty dollars. The substitute bill re-
ceived legislative approval, and on February 9, 1850, Governor Dewey signed it into law.21

Although Butte des Morts had some points in its favor for becoming the County seat, that does not mean that Oshkosh was without advantages for the electorate to consider. Oshkosh was on the main line of communication between Milwaukee and Green Bay; indeed, the Democrat was soon to proclaim that the telegraph was coming to Oshkosh. In addition, Oshkosh was where the people were; the census of 1850 showed that it outnumbered Butte des Morts by a ratio of fourteen to one.22 It was hardly surprising, therefore, that when the voters cast their ballots they favored Oshkosh by a comfortable margin.23 In December, 1852, the Winnebago County Board returned to Grignon his gift of land for a county courthouse.24

Thus it was that Augustin Grignon's hope to give Butte des Morts a brighter then ordinary place in the sun suffered eclipse. But the grandson of Charles Langlade was no quitter. In 1853, he organized a company to build a plank road to run from Butte des Morts to Ripon, and besides, platted an addition to Butte des Morts lying on the north side of the town.25 Had the county seat been located in Butte des Morts, his hotel would have looked out on the courthouse square and doubtless would have given its owner a position of prestige as well as profit.

Meanwhile, in 1849 the United States government had taken a step related to Grignon's building the hotel. On June 15 of that year, it established a post office at Butte des

Fig. 1. Line drawing of the Grignon Hotel at Butte des Morts. Artist, C. F. Norris, Oshkosh, Wisconsin. Courtesy of the Winnebago County Archeological and Historical Society.

With deep regret the writer reports the death of Charles F. Norris on November 19, 1981. He was a man of great talent devoted to serving others.
Morts with Grignon as postmaster. The new post office was a "special" office; that is, it received mail only once a week because Butte des Morts did not lie on a direct mail route. Moreover, by terms of the law in effect, the income from the postmastership could have been only modest as the compensation of the postmasters was geared to the postage on pieces of mail handled. Hence, Grignon soon relinquished the position. Grignon's successor was Finley F. Hamilton, a man of affairs both at Butte des Morts and in the county of Winnebago. A History of Northern Wisconsin published in 1881 made the following remark about the time when the hotel went up:

In 1849, a post office was established and Augustin Grignon appointed Postmaster. The Postmaster, not content with the ‘emoluments of his position,’ put up a house which he called a hotel. F. F. Hamilton opened a general store in the first frame building erected in the village, which saw the light of day also during that year. (Italics mine.)

Although others have suggested various dates for building the hotel, the writer has discovered no evidence so sure as the above statement relative to its construction. Oddly enough, accounts concerning Grignon and early Butte des Morts left by Thwaites, Draper, and Porlier are silent on the subject; nor has diligent search in papers associated with the Grignons discovered a date when the hotel was built. The nomination for enrolling the structure on the National Register of Historic Places stated simply that it was built in 1852, while Harry Ellsworth Cole in his Stagecoach and Tavern Tales of the Old Northwest wrote that it “was erected about 1848.” On the other hand, the History of 1881 not only gave a time for building the hotel but also related it to a contemporary venture in construction. Furthermore, the History provided a reason for Grignon's erecting the building in connection with his disappointment over the financial returns from the postmastership at Butte des Morts. The earliest association of the hotel with Grignon’s name to come to the writer’s attention was in a legal instrument negotiated by Grignon in early January, 1852. The document referred to the building as “Grignon’s Tavern.”

Louis Porlier and Mrs. Ebenezer Childs (Grignon’s daughter Margaret) managed the hotel until 1855 when they leased it to one Thomas B. Petford, a native of England. Petford may have been in the hotel business before 1855 as the census of 1850 gave his occupation as landlord, and showed him as heading a household of ten persons, four of whom were not members of his family. An advertisement appearing over Petford’s name in the Oshkosh Courier of August 16, 1854, invited the public to attend an “Opening Ball” to be held in the St. Charles Hotel at Butte des Morts. That Petford operated the Grignon establishment during the time indicated can be substantiated by a rent receipt acknowledging that Petford had paid Grignon “forty [sic] three Dollars and Seventy five Cents being in full for the Rent of the Tavern House up to February 16/56.”

Evidence suggests that Butte des Morts may have had more hotels—or at least buildings called by that name—than that of Augustin Grignon. While visiting the village in January, 1851, editor Charles D. Robinson of the Green Bay Advocate reported stopping at a hotel owned by a man named Bell. Moreover, on August 15 of that year, the Oshkosh True Democrat reported that “Mr. Jones, from . . . , New York,” was erecting “a very large building” intended to be a hotel. “It is a fine structure,” stated the Democrat, “and is most conveniently planned.” Mr. Jones also had something to say about the “fine structure.” In January, 1852, he invited the “young bloods of the county” to visit his cotillion hall where, in parties of twelve, they could dance and dine for a dollar a couple. Just a week before Jones’ advertisement appeared, the Democrat mentioned a party to be held at Church’s Hotel
in the village.\textsuperscript{36} Surely, it appears that for a hamlet numbering only 102 souls in 1850, Butte des Morts was performing well in providing overnight facilities for the public.

Whatever the number of hotels at Butte des Morts, a report concerning that of Augustin Grignon alleges that a destructive fire caused it to be rebuilt. But when George Overton, local historian of Butte des Morts, remarked that just before the Civil War "fire completely destroyed the Grignon establishment," he also stated, "Mr. Grignon did not rebuild but put in a stock of goods in a building near his . . . [farm] residence." However, the fire reported to have destroyed the old hotel could not have done so; it is likely that a mercantile concern which Grignon operated "on the east side of Main street, north of Washington street" was the building destroyed.\textsuperscript{37} A recent analysis of the soil on which the building stands has shown no indication of any fire.\textsuperscript{38} Therefore, it can only be concluded that the report of the hotel's having been reduced to ashes is faulty. The same statement cannot be made, however, of the fact that Grignon rendered his connection with the building somewhat uncertain when, in 1852 he put it in hock and did not redeem it by the time of his death in 1860.

Why did Grignon turn to borrowing in 1852? Did he borrow because of the decline in the local Indian trade after 1848 when the Menominees left the neighborhood around Butte des Morts for the reservation?\textsuperscript{29} Was he attempting to raise funds for his plank road plan? Did he wish to defray any unsettled costs related to building the hotel? Had his failure to receive compensation long due him from the Indian trade entangled Grignon in a financial morass from which he could not extricate himself? Or, had time run out for the fur traders of the area?

With regard to the last two questions, there are some observations to be made. According to the terms of the Menominee Treaty of 1836, Grignon had received $10,000 in settlement for credit extended members of that nation; in 1837, however, he received only $1759 under the terms of a treaty applying to credit allowed the Winnebago.\textsuperscript{40} Grignon tried to collect more after the settlement as he entered a claim amounting to $20,000 for goods which he had supplied the Winnebago year after year without adequate repayment, according to depositions of old associates in the Indian trade.\textsuperscript{41} Describing as "erroneous" the "impression that the old fur traders waxed very rich," Louis Porlier once pictured the "universal credit" they granted the red men as being most uncertain because the system contained numerous risks which could spell disaster to a man in Grignon's position.\textsuperscript{42} A document that leaves little doubt as to the hazards of the fur trade by the 1840's is a letter written by Ramsay Crooks of the American Fur Company to John Lawe at Green Bay. Writing on April 3, 1843, that in a bygone day the traders could "provide bountifully and run some risks," Crooks told Lawe:

The winter has been unusually mild all over Europe, and fears have been entertained that Furs would consequently sell badly this spring. . . . Beaver has fallen about a dollar per pound, compared with the sales 12 months ago. This is caused principally by the introduction into England of the French silk Hat, which looks nearly, or quite as well, as those made of Beaver, and unfortunately last almost as long, while they are sold for much less money.\textsuperscript{43}

Equally gloomy were Crooks' comments concerning prices being paid for American muskrat skins in Europe as a result of the Hudson's Bay Company's unloading 500,000 rat pelts on the markets there.\textsuperscript{44} Even so, a generation later Reuben Gold Thwaites wrote that "the glory of Butte des Morts" was its annual catch of muskrats.\textsuperscript{45} And although the natural habitat of muskrats was destroyed in 1905 when the bog in Lake Butte des Morts began to disintegrate, George Overton claimed that the "sales of
fall rats alone at Butte des Morts totaled more in 1935 than the entire year's business done by Augustin Grignon in 1816 [sic]."46 Ergo, it would seem that in Grignon's day, the fur trade, as then conducted, had become an unreliable source of income; even the American Fur Company—whose papers disclose that on occasion the skins of dogs, groundhogs, and house cats were in the shipments overseas—was forced to suspend payments in 1842.47

Whatever Grignon's reasons for turning to the money lenders, on January 14, 1852, he mortgaged the hotel property to one Francis B. Webster of Oshkosh. The sum Grignon obtained was $800; the interest he paid was 12 percent per annum.48 When the census of 1850 was taken, Webster told the enumerator that he was a liquor dealer by occupation; but when he died in 1860, The Oshkosh Courier complimented Webster as having been "a shrewd and successful financial operator."49 Whether or not the compliment was deserved, Grignon continued to borrow so that by July, 1854, he was obligated for well over six thousand dollars with relatively short due dates.50 The upshot of it all was that he was unable to clear the slate, and litigation over payments in arrears occurred before he died intestate on October 2, 1860.51

Although the census of 1860 showed Grignon to be the owner of real estate worth $20,000 and personal property worth $800,52 Mrs. Ebenezer Childs stated that her father's finances were largely encumbered. On the ground that Louis Porlier best knew Grignon's business affairs, Mrs. Childs petitioned that he become executor.53 It followed that in December, 1860, Porlier received the responsibility of settling with the creditors of his late father-in-law.54 In 1861, the value of all Grignon's worldly goods stood at $15,424.18; and, as Mrs. Childs had stated, her father's debts were nearly as great. But if Augustin Grignon's estate were obligated beyond redemption's cure, the final expenses connected with his journey through life were modest; his funeral costs totaled only $62.00. Forty dollars of that sum went for teams and drivers to Kaukauna and return plus entertaining friends of the family. Burial clothes took five dollars as did the services of a priest. It cost eleven dollars for a coffin and one dollar more to dig a grave.55

Pursuing his duty as executor of Grignon's estate, Louis Porlier decided that because of Grignon's heavy indebtedness, all of the property would have to go on the auction block to satisfy his creditors' claims. The courts so ordered on September 16, 1861. Of greatest interest to this discussion, the valuation of the hotel property was fixed at $1,000.56 A settlement over the hotel did not become final, however, because—among other reasons—a Grignon grandson and heir was serving in the Twenty-First Wisconsin Regiment and so enjoyed immunity from civil actions.57 But in due course, by sheriff's sale in September, 1866, the hotel went to Gabriel Bouck, an Oshkosh attorney.58 Bouck retained the tavern property for only a few weeks, and, in November, 1866, sold it for $500 to Louise McCord and Julia Jenney both of whom bore the Grignon name before marriage. Like Gabriel Bouck, Jenney and McCord soon disposed of the hotel. In 1869, they sold it for $450 to Peter C. Peterson, a Norwegian immigrant who arrived at Butte des Morts in the 1850's and had begun to keep a store in the hotel after the expiration of the Petford lease, presumably in 1859.59 An associate in the venture was Tomms Tonneson, another migrant from Norway. Except for a brief period, 1863-1865, which he spent at Virginia City, Nevada, Peterson kept the store until his death on May 28, 1900.60

Like Augustin Grignon, Peter Peterson died intestate. His son Percival became administrator of the estate; in 1901, settlement provided for the real property to go to him and his sister Frances. By land contract, Peterson sold the property to John J. Boe,
aged thirty-one and born in Norway. In 1902, Boe married Peter Peterson's fifty-three-year-old widow Bertha, and in 1911 obtained full ownership of the hotel. Boe operated the store in it until his death in 1952. Under the terms of Boe's will, the hotel went to his stepdaughter, Mrs. Frances Donkle. In 1953, she sold the hotel to Emma Ann Straus (now Mrs. George Nevitt of Oshkosh). After operating an antique store in the building for some years, Mrs. Nevitt gave the old Grignon Hotel to the Winnebago County Archeological and Historical Society. The structure is presently undergoing extensive restoration.

There is a postscript to the story of Augustin Grignon. Until 1941, he and ten members of his family lay in unmarked graves near Butte des Morts. In that year, under the direction of Arthur Kannenberg, archaeologist of the Oshkosh Public Museum, the bones of all were disinterred preparatory to being placed in a crypt at the Grignon Mansion near Kaukauna, Wisconsin. The transfer did not take place however, with the result that for about twenty years the undertaker to whom the bones were consigned kept them in storage. At long last, on October 12, 1961, the remains were buried in an unmarked plot of the Holy Cross Cemetery at Kaukauna. As an associated curiosity, it was alleged that according to family accounts, Augustin's skeleton was identifiable by a gold Cross and chain suspended from the neck. The tale appears, however, to have been confused with a Cross painted in yellow on the lid of his coffin. Indeed, no artifacts were present with Grignon's remains except a button presumed—because of its location among the bones—to have been from his trousers.

Whatever the changes in the ownership of the Grignon Hotel, this paper has attempted to identify its history with that of Augustin Grignon and his times. True, Grignon owned the hotel for a scant eleven years, but during his ownership economic and social institutions in the Fox River Valley had begun to change rapidly and profoundly. In that era Grignon and his kind were finding it increasingly difficult to accommodate their ways to those of a new breed of Wisconsinites who had little regard for the men who had once bargained over furs with the Indians. In essence, the hotel stands as a testimonial to its builder's efforts to bridge the gap between a way of life that had room for persons like himself and a newer way that did not.

**Documentation**

1 Mrs. John H. Kinzie, *Wa-Bun The Early Day in the Northwest* (1948 reprint, Menasha, Wisconsin), p. 48 identifies the Grignon family as stated. For the document assigning American citizenship to Grignon, see State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Division of Archives and Manuscripts, Grignon, Lawe, and Pollier Papers, 1820-1822, LXXI, pp. 13 and 14, Territory of Michigan, County Court of Michilimackinac, action of July 27, 1820, taken in accordance with "An Act to establish an uniform rule of naturalization. . ." Hereafter, materials used from the Archives and Manuscripts Division will be cited as A.M.D., S.H.S.W. See also Reuben Gold Thwaites, editor, *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin* (Madison, 1911), XX, pp. 120-121. Cited subsequently as *Collections*. The law closing American Indian trade to non-citizens is available in Richard Peters, Esq., editor, *The Public Statutes at Large of the United States of America, . . .* (Boston, 1848), III, pp. 332-333. Cited subsequently as *U.S. Statutes*.

2 *Collections*, III, p. 195; IV, p. 102. Draper's interview with Grignon is in *ibid.*, III, pp. 197-295.

3 For the plat of Butte des Morts, see County of Winnebago, Oshkosh, Wisconsin, Registrar of Deeds, Plat Book #1, pp. 10-11.

4 Nomination Form, National Register of Historic Places Inventory, Offices of the National Register of Historic Places, Washington, D.C. Cited subsequently as Nomination, National Register.

5 Information in this paragraph is derived from *ibid.*: and also Martha Wohlford, “Butte des Morts Has Its Place in History of State,” in *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern*, July 1, 1969. Hereafter, the *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* will be cited as Northwestern.

6 A description of the Grand Butte des Morts is available in Winnebago County Courthouse, Zoning Office, Commission of Public Lands Interior
East Field Notes, CLV, p. 70, Township 19 North, Range 16E, D. Giddings, Assistant Surveyor, June 29, 1839. Cited subsequently as Surveyor's Field Notes. See also Journal of the March of the 5th Regiment in June, 1819, from Green Bay to Prairie du Chien, kept by Captain Henry Whiting, General Services Administration, The National Archives, 1949, microfilm in A.M.D., S.H.S.W.

In 1887, Louis B. Porlier indicated that the name Butte des Morts was based on the place being "a higher point of land" than customary in the area and that it was "a principal burying place" for Sac, Fox, and Menominee. See "Narrative by Louis B. Porlier," in Collections, XV, pp. 439-444.

In 1857, Augustin Grignon stated that certain burial mounds at the Grand Butte des Morts were "ordinary burial places" not connected with any military contest. See Grignon's "Seventy-two years' Recollections in Wisconsin" in Collections, III, p. 293. Concerning the burials at Little Butte des Morts (sometimes confused with the Grand Butte) see an essay entitled "Little Butte des Morts, its former appearance," by Charles V. Donaldson, A.M.D., S.H.S.W. Donaldson wrote in 1905 from memories extending back to 1848 or 1849.

Collections, XV, pp. 439 and 444-446. Daggett's Creek was formerly called Overton's Creek. For data concerning Porlier's marriage, I am indebted to John Ebert, Archivist, Catholic Diocese, Green Bay. Porlier and Sophia Grignon were married at St. John's Church, Little Chute, Wisconsin.

Beginning on April 29, 1876, Thwaites contributed to the Oshkosh City Times a series of articles on the history of Winnebago County in relation to the Centennial observances. Cited subsequently as Thwaites, Times.

Surveyor's Field Notes, 1839, maps and pp. 57 and 68.

United States Census, Manuscript, County of Winnebago, 1840, p. 128. The total population of the county in 1840 was 132; hence, the Augustin Grignon household amounted to 6.6 percent of the tally. Hereafter, all census reports of this class will be cited as U.S. Manuscript Census with the appropriate year.

See A.M.D., S.H.S.W., Contract of Grignon and Evans, November 10, 1842, in Grignon, Lawe, Porlier Papers, B, LXV, p. 49.

Thwaites, Times, April 29, 1876.

U.S. Manuscript Census, 1850, Winnebago County, Town of Oshkosh, Agriculture, p. 228c.

Concerning Grignon's land entries, see John L. Homer, Statement of Certification, September 1, 1843, in Grignon, Lawe, Porlier Papers, B, LXV, p. 51. See also the National Archives, National Archives and Records Services, General Services Administration (Washington, 1951), Record Group 49, Records of the General Land Office, Local Tract Books Wisconsin, XLV, pp. 169, 176-177, Certificates 2399 and 2455, in A.M.D., S.H.S.W. Cited subsequently as Local Tract Book. Grignon purchased these lands under terms of an "Act Making Further Provision for the Sale of the Public Lands," approved on April 24, 1820. For precise definition of lots and acreages, the writer has used Joseph H. Osborne, compiler and publisher, Sectional Map of the County of Winnebago, State of Wisconsin (Oshkosh, 1855). Descriptions of land under Certificates 2399 and 2455 are also available on microfilm of Book M, pp. 105-106 and 107, Register of Deeds Office, County of Winnebago. Original documents are in storage with the Winnebago County Highway Commission, Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

Grignon made his offer on July 16, 1845; the County Board approved and ordered the land to be surveyed. See A.M.D., S.H.S.W., Winnebago Small Series 1, Clerk, Board Proceedings, 1843-1847, July 16, 31, and Dec. 2, 1845. The survey was done by S. L. Brooks, county surveyor; it locates the site in "Sec. 24 of Township 19, North of Range 16 East." These documents are in the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh Area Research Center of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. Cited subsequently as Clerk, Board Proceedings. See also Augustin Grignon Deed to Winnebago County, Wis., December 8, 1845; in Book A, Deeds, pp. 120-121, in the Office of the Register of Deeds, County of Winnebago. The location of the tract in the deed corresponds with Brooks' Survey.


Issue of November 23, 1849. Cited subsequently as Oshkosh Democrat.

See "Petition of Burr S. Craft and 800 other citizens of Winnebago Co. asking the legislature to pass an act fixing upon the Village of Butte des Morts as a point to be voted upon by the people of the county in reference to the removal and permanent location of the County Seat of said County" in Secretary of State Election and Records, Petitions 1836—1850, A.M.D., S.H.S.W. Oshkosh Democrat, December 7, 1849.

A.M.D., S.H.S.W., "Petition of Burr S. Craft... ."

A.M.D., S.H.S.W., Secretary of State Elections and Records Legislative Bills 1836—Assembly Bills 1849-51 no.194(a) A Bill to authorize the Electors of Winnebago Co. to vote on the removal of the
County Seat cites the action taken in the legislature. For the text of the law authorizing the vote, see *Acts and Resolves passed by the Legislature of Wisconsin* (Madison, 1850), p. 138. Cited subsequently as *Wisconsin Laws* with appropriate date and whether general or private and local.

Issues of August 16 and September 27, 1850. The census enumeration of 1850 was then in process.

On April 10, 1850, the *Milwaukee Sentinel* reported that of 1,111 votes cast, the majoriy in favor of making Oshkosh the permanent county seat was 279; *The Green Bay Advocate* gave the figure as 253. See also Goff, "War."

*Oshkosh Democrat*, January 30, 1852.

An act to incorporate the plank road company was approved early in 1853. See *Wisconsin Laws, Private and Local*, 1853, pp. 155-160. Grignon already had under construction a plank road across the low lying land before Butte des Morts. See *Oshkosh Democrat*, February 21, 1851. The plat of Grignon’s addition of 1853 is available in Winnebago County Plat Book #1, p. 52.


For rules defining salaries of postmasters for the period, see *U.S. Statutes*, LX, pp. 147-148, and 202.

Hamilton built a warehouse and dock at Butte des Morts in 1851; see *Oshkosh Democrat*, June 27, 1851. He also served as county treasurer from 1848 to 1849.


Nomination, National Register; Harry Ellsworth Cole, *Stagecoach and Tavern Tales of the Old Northwest* (Cleveland, 1930), p. 173. Cole quoted entries from “account books kept by the landlords” during 1854 and 1855 showing that “there must have been lively times at Butte des Morts . . .” (See pp. 234-235). Unfortunately these ledgers could not be located. *Northern Wisconsin*, p. 1191.

County of Winnebago, Mortgages, Book N, pp. 14-15. These records are on microfilm: the originals are in storage with the Winnebago County Highway Commission. Cited subsequently as Winnebago County, Mortgages.


This receipt is in the Harry Ellsworth Cole Papers, A.D.M., S.H.S.W.

*Green Bay Advocate*, January 23, 1851.

*Oshkosh Democrat*, January 23, 1852.


*Northwestern*, August 10, 1936.


For Porlier’s remarks concerning the Indian trade after 1848, see *Collections*, XV, p. 447.


For an example, see Affidavit of Francis Lousignon given with “the assistance of a sworn interpreter” on June 22, 1839, in Grignon, Lawe, Porlier Papers, B, LXV, pp. 5-6.

“In a narrative by Louis B. Porlier,” *Collections*, XV, pp. 441-442.

Kellogg Papers.


*Thwaites, Times*, January 27, 1877.

*Northwestern*, August 10, 1936.

“Papers of the American Fur Company, shipment from Detroit Department, November 22, 1838; and Shipments to London 1838 August 30; see also Grace Lee Nute, “The Papers of the American Fur Company: A Brief Estimate of Their Significance,” in *The American Historical Review* (New York, 1927), XXXII, p. 538.

Winnebago County, Mortgages, Book N, p. 15, Augustin Grignon Mort. to Franc. B. Webster.

U.S. Manuscript Census, 1850, Winnebago County, p. 63; and *Oshkosh Courier*, January 27, 1860.

In addition to the mortgage for $800 dated January 1, 1852, Grignon borrowed $1025 in February, 1852; see Winnebago County, Mortgages, Book N, p. 17; in July, 1852, he borrowed $2475.68, *Ibid.*, pp. 403, 404; in 1854, he borrowed
$2188, Book T, p. 320. The Abstract of Title to the hotel property outlines Grignon’s record of borrowing; cited subsequently as Abstract.

31 See Winnebago County Circuit Court, Judgement Rolls, #1657, September term, 1859.


33 Winnebago County, Probate Court, Documents 36 and 4, Augustin Grignon Estate, on microfilm; the original documents are in the possession of the Harry M. Schmitt Abstract Company of Oshkosh. They include Mrs. Child’s petition. Cited subsequently as Grignon Estate Papers. A copy of Mrs. Child’s petition is also available in Charles A. Grignon Papers, A.M.D., S.H.S.W. It was addressed by Mrs. Child “To the Honorable R. P. Hodges County Judge of Winnebago County, Wisconsin.”

34 Porlier received his appointment on December 3, 1860. See Abstract, sheet number 5; and Grignon Estate Papers.

35 Grignon Estate Papers.

36 Ibid.


38 Abstract, sheet number 8.


41 Northwestern, August 10, 1936; See also, Abstract, sheet number 29.