

# Local History Report

August 2024

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A few updates this month.

## RECOLLECTION WISCONSIN

DPLA (the national digital database Recollection Wisconsin, and Kaukauna Public Library, feeds into) was scheduled to shut down by the end of 2024. There was scrambling to create a Midwest alternative. However, a large public library system (not yet announced) stepped forward and will be taking on the hosting duties. As I understand it, that means no changes on the local or state level aside from possible interruptions late 2024 / early 2025 as things are moved over.

The bulk of the discussion centered on changing metadata and ways people search for information to reach communities that are traditionally under-represented. Metadata criteria created in 2000 may not reflect how we see the world in 2024. Recollection Wisconsin is framing these revisions as “metadata accuracy.” The Dewey Decimal System, as well, was created from a narrow framework. This is reflected in how Dewey treats religion, for example – the vast majority of the numbers correspond to Christianity. Some belief systems end up in “folklore” and are not treated as real religions at all. On the local level, we have little control over Dewey and we are unlikely to replace it (though some state libraries such as Whitefish Bay have), but being aware of its limitations is a good first step.

Recollection Wisconsin, as part of this re-balancing, is encouraging members to tackle topics that may be embarrassing. UW-Milwaukee has a project called *Mapping Racism and Resistance* where they have maps outlining covenants that created Milwaukee’s ongoing de facto segregation. Kaukauna, to my knowledge, never actively put in place ordinances or policies to create racial divides. However, negative racial attitudes can be found in “minstrel shows” and the way the newspapers wrote about indigenous neighbors. Walworth County is contemplating a presentation called “Things We Should Be Embarrassed About.” I would not advise going quite that far, but we should be honest about our history, and not just the things we take pride in.

One thing I would love to see is an expansion of Hmong material in the local history collection. We have had a sizable Hmong minority for 50 years, but that presence is largely absent from our archive. Oral histories of adapting, assimilating and maintaining culture would be of great value to the community, particularly in decades to come as first-generation immigrants fade away.

Lastly, three student-led digitization projects chosen for the fall semester are Ho-Chunk language learning materials, the *Edgerton Reporter* and *Wisconsin Tobacco Reporter*, and documenting tourism and recreation in the Eagle River area (historic resorts and supper clubs). How these projects could shape Kaukauna history research remains to be seen, but if there’s one thing I cannot stress enough about Wisconsin history: we are all connected, nothing is ever truly “local.”

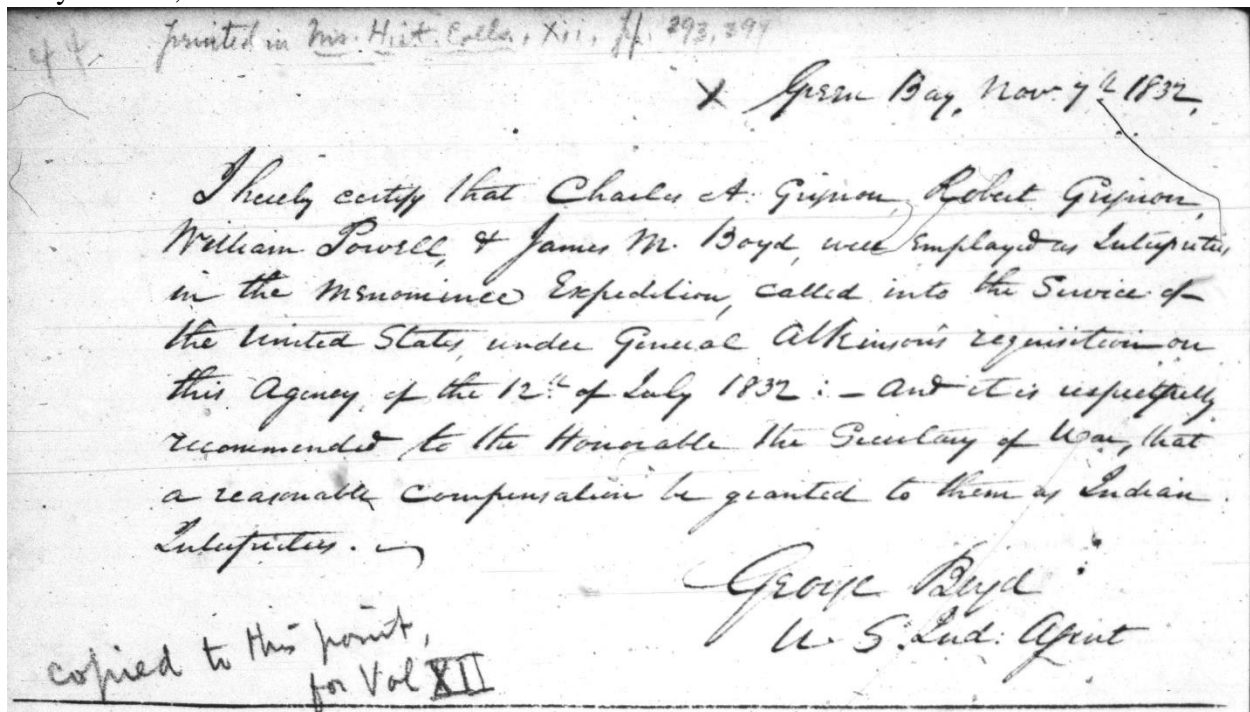
## MILITARY PROJECT

Lyle Hansen continues to provide military-related news clippings and our wonderful volunteer staff has been adding in photos to PastPerfect. While not directly related, I will have a WWI display in November, so it is a great year for honoring our veterans and preserving their memory.

## LONGER-TERM: POLICE AND GRIGNON

At the suggestion of Carol VB, I have been assembling a history of the Kaukauna Police Department. Initially I hoped to have it done at the end of 2024, but now think early 2025 is more likely. This will be in book format, and proceeds will benefit the library.

Even further out will be some sort of Grignon project. I have been amassing materials from Appleton, Green Bay, Madison, Chicago, Detroit, and elsewhere. I swore I would not do a book on the Grignon Family, but Cassidy Mickelson has been wearing me down, and I now have 500 pages of notes and 100s more documents that have not been incorporated into said notes. I feel very strongly that the Grignon Family has a central place in Wisconsin's creation and development, and this story has still not been told to its fullest extent. What comes of this I do not yet know, as there is no indication when "all" the material will have been collected



## UPCOMING PRESENTATIONS

This year: Eagle Mill (Sept), Greyhound Park (Oct), World War I (Nov), Polio (Dec).

We also have two presenters hopefully arriving in early 2025 – one speaking on the Grignon role in the Black Hawk War (1832), and the other on the lime kilns of High Cliff.