

April 2025 Local History Report

Gavin Schmitt, Local Historian

Fox Cities Magazine

- Fox Cities Magazine contacted us regarding the building at 145 East Second Street. They wanted to highlight restaurants in historic buildings. Look for an article in May – I provided a 100+ year summary and old photos, so we will see what makes it to print.

Recollection Wisconsin (RW)

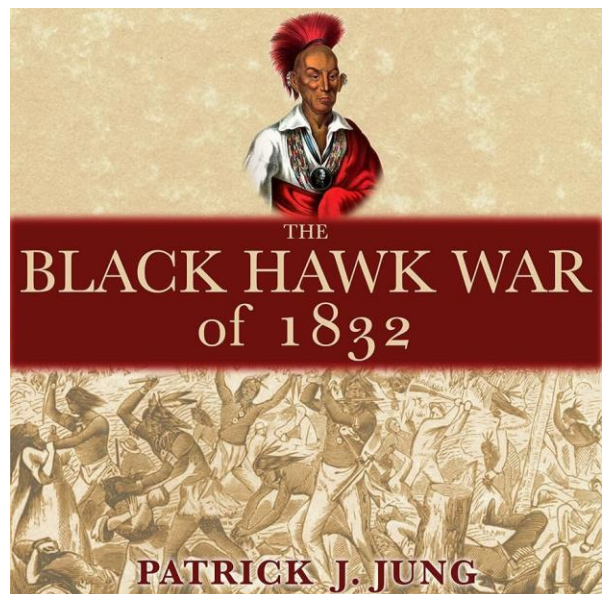
- I remain on the steering committee for RW. In the past few months, four more organizations had their collections digitized and added to the index. This is useful for all of us, adding more context to statewide historical events. While KPL is Kaukauna-focused, it must be recognized that things that happen here do not happen in a vacuum.
- Potential budget and funding cuts at the federal level do risk affecting RW, which relies on federal funding for roughly 15% of its budget. While I do not see this affecting the mission of RW, it does cause us to be vigilant about trends in funding.

Grignon Family / Mansion

- As of mid-April, I serve as vice chair of the Grignon Mansion Board. Our chair, Pennie Thiele, has resigned, and this places me as acting chair.
- Going forward, I intend to make the goals of the Grignon Mansion and the KPL local history collection more interwoven. Obviously, the Grignon family is a key piece of Kaukauna history, so that connection is implicit. However, I feel that while the Mansion excels at fundraising events and operating as a house museum, it does not achieve its full potential as a place to highlight Kaukauna's importance in regional and state history. I would like to increase the number of Grignon-adjacent events presented under the KPL banner. In conjunction with this, I have also reached out to *Voyageur* (a regional history magazine) about having more articles on the family's importance. They were very receptive, and I will be submitting an article for publication in the next few months.

Patrick Jung

- As part of the attempt to link local history and the Grignon family, Dr. Patrick Jung of Milwaukee spoke on April 15. Sponsored by a patron, Jung discussed the Black Hawk War (1832) and the leadership roles held by



Augustin and Charles Grignon during that conflict. Few people know about the Black Hawk War, and even fewer realize we have Kaukauna residents from 200 years ago who were active in that event. Jung was a here a few years ago, speaking on Jean Nicolet, which was a very engaging discussion that challenged many of our assumptions – it left a strong positive impression on me and several patrons. Jung is on my shortlist for guest speakers – he also has a talk on slavery in Wisconsin, which ought to be engaging and informative.

WIR

- Increasing the amount of material on Wisconsin International Raceway remains a priority for 2025. Multiple contacts have been made and people have expressed willingness to share what they have, but thus far, the fruits have been few. I have been adding items as they arrive, and intend to present a program on WIR / Evel Knievel later this year to spur more discussion.

Police

- In an earlier report, it was said that a target date for a Kaukauna Police Department book rough draft would be in May 2025. At this point (mid-April), the bulk of the research is done and the writing is progressing in earnest. I am over the 30,000-word mark, and believe I should be done on schedule.

DPI / OWLS

- This month during spring cleaning, Director Thiem-Menning discovered a large cache of documents, letters and reports that cover topics such as the creation of OWLS in the 1970s and DPI reports going back to 1925(!!!), written by KPL librarian Lillian Bell. I am going through them page by page to eliminate anything of no value* and hope to have the pages filed soon. While it is largely “minutiae” and nothing “juicy,” the papers provide a rare look at communication between the library, the city attorney, OWLS and the state.
- * “no value” is subjective, of course. I mean such things as newspaper articles which are easily retrieved and don’t need to be on file.