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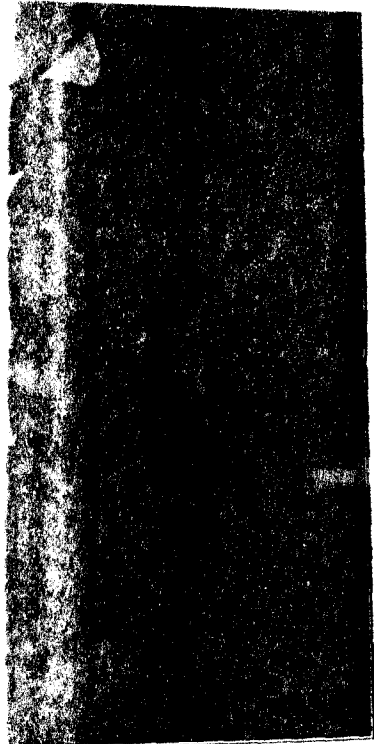
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## Augustin Grignon's Recollections

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.—At the instance of the Historical Society, I made a visit to the venerable Capt. Augustin Grignon, at his residence at the Butte des Morts, on Fox river, and spent a couple of weeks with him, from May 26th to June 8th, 1857, in obtaining the following narrative. It is here presented just as I noted it down from his lips at the time, all simple and unadorned—characteristic of the aged chronicler, whose narrative it is of a life time's recollections. It is true, that while the facts and statements are essentially his, the language, order and arrangement are mine, as are sometimes the inferences and deductions, but in all cases with his approval and adoption.

Mr. Grignon, though now seventy-seven years old, is robust and healthy; the hardy life he has led as a trader in the wilderness, with the simplicity of his habits, seems to have toughened his constitution, so that old age does not appear irksome to him. He is cheerful, pleasant and communicative, intelligent and well read. I was pleased to observe, that he was familiar with that rare and sterling old work, Charlevoix's *Histoire de la Nouvelle France*, published in three quarto volumes, in 1744. He spends his time mostly between fishing, smoking, and reading the papers, of which one is *Le Courier des Etats-Unis*.

I have taken great pains to elicit from Mr. Grignon a narrative, as replete as possible, of the men, events, habits, and life of the olden time. I felt that another such opportunity of securing a full account of the early settlement and early men of Eastern Wisconsin, would never again occur; a native of the country, and an intelligent descendant, as he is, of the Sieur Charles De Langlade, emphatically the *Father of Wisconsin*, and personally acquainted with him, as well also as with Glode, Tomah and other noted Menomonee chiefs; and with Reaume, Porlier, Lawe and their fellow pioneers, a participant in the war of 1812 and in the Black Hawk war; with a retentive memory, in no wise disposed to exaggerate, filled with a just and discriminating knowledge of the men and events of Wisconsin for the past seventy-two years, and by tradition for the forty years preceding—such a living chronicle we may never expect to see again in Wisconsin. Very much of this information he alone possessed—the last of the grand-children of Charles De Langlade; and

Making his way back to Mackinaw, with no very amiable feelings towards the Spaniards at Pancore, he soon managed to get up quite a large expedition, in the spring of 1780, for their chastisement. It appears to have been almost entirely, if not exclusively, a volunteer affair, yet my recollection is that my grandfather told me, that Lieut. Gov. Sinclair, of Mackinaw, gave it his countenance and encouragement. The numbers engaged I do not remember, but it was pretty large, and they were mostly Indians. The bold Ottawa chief Matchikuis had the chief command of the Indians, and was honored with the title of General. They came by the way of Green Bay, where they were joined by Pe-go-na, or *The Feather Shedder*, Ma-wa-sha, or *The Little Wolf*, Le Baron, and other noted Menominee warriors, and some Winnebagoes. From Green Bay, they took the usual route up Fox river to the Wisconsin Portage, and thence down the Wisconsin and Mississippi. The expedition, however, accomplished but little; they killed a few innocent people around Pancore or St. Louis, and were foiled in their chief design, and returned dissatisfied. About the year 1788, I saw General Matchikuis at Green Bay, who seemed to appreciate the importance of his title, for he wore a bright red British dress coat, with epaulettes, and cut quite a figure. He was then getting old, and was a tall, large-sized Indian. Young as I was, he attracted my attention, and my grandfather told me about him and his Pancore expedition, otherwise I should not probably have known anything of it. My grandfather had a dislike towards General Matchikuis, and remarked that he was unreliable and treacherous, brave and sanguinary, and probably had more special reference to his treacherous conduct at the surprise of Mackinaw in 1763. I may add, that I am quite confident that my grandfather did not accompany the Pancore expedition, nor do I think any whites at Green Bay joined it.

I do not know much of Jean Marie Ducharme—never

having seen him; but he was many years engaged in the Indian trade, and finally retired to Lachine, near Montreal, his native region, where he had a fine property, and died there about 1800 to 1805. He had three sons in this country, Joseph, Dominick, and Paul—the former of whom, I remember, went to Lachine to settle his father's estate; and Paul Ducharme, yet survives, at about eighty years of age. I have heard that about 1782, Jean Marie Ducharme once left Mackinaw on a trading expedition, without obtaining the necessary written license or permission from Lieut. Gov. Sinclair, who, on his return, required him, for his disobedience, to provide fifteen hundred pounds of wild hay, weighing some fifteen pounds to the bundle, for the King's public supplies, and paid the penalty. About the same time, one St. Paul De La Croix, a trader, also departed on a trading voyage without permission, and, like Ducharme, was directed to pay the same penalty, for disobedience of a well-known order. But De La Croix, who was rather a hard case to manage, said that the King lived over the ocean, and he didn't believe he needed any hay; if he thought he really stood in need of any, he would procure some for him; but as it was, he shouldn't get any. Sinclair could not, or did not, enforce the fine. I can only further say of Jean Marie Ducharme, that he had a brother Dominick Ducharme, and a cousin Laurent Ducharme, the latter of whom was at Mackinaw when surprised in 1763, and both were many years engaged in the Indian trade in the North-West.\*

\*Of Ducharme and his expedition, by a visit to the venerable Paul Ducharme, of Green Bay, we are enabled to add the following interesting particulars. Mr. Ducharme stated that he himself was a native of Lachine, Canada, and has attained the age of about eighty-seven years; that he came to Green Bay when he was twenty-four years of age, as a clerk for his brother, Dominick Ducharme, an Indian trader, and has ever since, for a period of about sixty-three years, remained in the country. That his father, Jean Marie Ducharme, was residing at Lachine when the Americans invaded Canada in 1775-76, and they endeavored to persuade him to take part with them in the contest then waging against the mother country, but he deemed it best to maintain neutrality; that the Americans, while in Canada, were scantily supplied with provisions, but would never plunder, not even chickens; that they

In or about 1782, Lieut. Gov. Sinclair gave to my grandfather a grant to all his lands at Green Bay, including his improvements and such prairies as he may have used for meadow, and wood lands used for wood, or sugar-making; this document I confided to Col. Isaac Lee, the U. S. Commissioner, in 1820, to examine into the land titles at Green Bay and Prairie du Chien, and he took it to Detroit with him, and dying soon after, I never was able to reclaim it.

After the Revolutionary war, my grandfather, De Langlade, remained in his Indian agency at Green Bay, having the general superintendence of the Indians in this quarter, and also continued in command of the militia. It was an ancient custom among the Canadians, on the 1st of May in each year, to have a holiday, raise a flag-pole, and salute it with volleys of discharge, well blackening it over, and all these demonstrations were designed as complimentary to their militia Commandant; and thus was Charles De Langlade most affectionately revered and honored by the simple-hearted people of the settlement.

Mr. De Langlade, by his marriage with Miss Bourassa, would, in a respectful manner, beg for sour milk; and that his father advised them, and was determined not to take up arms against so brave and suffering a people, but was at length forced to do so, and the British authorities for having furnished the Americans food and supplies, and he never after liked the English.

He had long been engaged in the Indian trade in the North-West, conveying his goods from Lachine and Montreal, and making Mackinaw his chief trading post. In 1778 or 1779, he had ventured high up the Missouri river with his trading boats, and the Spaniards getting jealous of his trade, took his goods, and if they did not capture him, as it seemed they did not, he must have gone to St. Louis to obtain indemnity. He was there thrown into prison, and kept in confinement a year. He had been so successful in his Indian trade up the Missouri, that the Spanish traders united in making representations against him, as not only interfering with their trade, but as getting too much acquainted with the Indians, for a foreigner. He was in danger of being executed, but at length proved that he had, in more than one instance, saved their lives; whereupon he was liberated. Indignant at the loss of his property and his long imprisonment, he led an expedition against St. Louis, to chastise the Spaniards and make reprisals, but his son could not recall the details. He often heard his father speak of Mackinaw as a brave chief; he must have lived and died in the Mackinaw region.

Jean Marie Ducharme died at his residence at Lachine, about the year 1800. He was then nearly blind, his head all white, but he walked erect, and was perhaps nearly eighty years of age.

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had two children, Lalotte, born in 1760 or 1761, who was married to one Barcellou, but died the next year childless; and my mother Donnette, born in 1763, who was united in marriage to my father, Pierre Grignon, Sr., in 1776, when she was thirteen years of age. My grandfather spent the remainder of his days at Green Bay, occasionally making a journey to Mackinaw or Toronto on public or private business, for he continued to attend to his Indian agency, and the command of the militia, as long as he lived. He had a farm which was managed by my father, Pierre Grignon, Sr., and received an annuity of eight hundred dollars while he lived, as half-pay, from the British Government, for his services during the American Revolution, and he also received for those services a grant of 8,000 acres of land on the La Tronche river in Canada. He now felt the weight of years, and in January, 1800, after an illness of two weeks, he died, at the age of seventy-five years, and his remains were buried beside those of his father in the cemetery at Green Bay.

Thus passed away the Sieur Charles De Langlade, whose long life was one of varied excitement, replete with martial deeds, and scenes of deepest interest in the forest and among the savages. He had, as he often stated, been in ninety-nine battles, skirmishes, and border forays, and used to express a desire in his old age that he could share in another, so as to make the number one hundred. He was mild and patient, but could never brook an insult; friendly and benevolent in his feelings, and was devotedly loved by all classes of his acquaintances. He was very industrious, and always employed in some useful occupation, often chopping his own wood, and hewing timber for houses. His integrity was proverbial; once, under the old French regime, he made out his account of goods purchased for the Indians in his department, when the French Commissary returned it to him, and suggested that he make it over again; he did so, when it was again handed

to him with the same request, and thus repeated four times, and each time, though he made a new transcript, it was precisely the same. At length the Commissary intimated to him, that he had returned it to him, as he saw it was very moderate in size, and the King of France could very well pay it if it were four or five times as large. He simply replied, that that was all just, and he could claim nothing more. He never used his position or opportunities to plunder the public, and died as he had lived, an honest man. The name given him by the Indians, is expressive of their idea of the leading trait of his character—A-ke-wan-ge-ke-tan-so, or *He-who-is-fierce-for-the-land*, that is, a military Conqueror. Like his father before him, he was *un bon Catholique*.

He was of medium height, about five feet nine inches, a square built man, rather heavy, but never corpulent. His head was bald, and in his old age the hair on the sides of his head had a silvery whiteness; his eyes were large and deep black, with very heavy eyebrows grown together. His face was round and full, and he presented altogether a fine appearance. When dressed, as I have often seen him, in his British scarlet uniform, his military chaparran, his sword and red morocco belt, he exhibited as fine a martial appearance as any officer I ever beheld. The silver buckle of his sword-belt which he used in all his military services in two years, I take pleasure in presenting to the State Historical Society for its Cabinet, and hope it may be long preserved as a personal memorial of the early founder and father of Wisconsin.

My grandmother, the widow of Charles De Langlade, was a woman rather tall and portly in her old age with a mild, brown eye. She was regarded as quite handsome in her day. After her husband's death, she made her home with her daughter, and died at Green Bay in 1818, at about the age of seventy-five years.

It is creditable to the intelligence and cultivation of the De

Langlades and other early settlers at Green Bay, that a distinguished French nobleman, upon visiting the country many years ago, should express his surprise, at hearing from the natives of the country, the French language spoken with the same purity and elegance, to which he was accustomed to hear it in Paris.

I will now make some mention of such of my grandfather's old companions in arms, as were known to me. I have already said that Gantier De Verville, was his nephew, a native of Mackinaw. I can state no specific services of his beyond what I have given in connection with my grandfather's; but I know that he was my grandfather's constant companion in all, or nearly all, his services during the old French and Revolutionary wars, and had a captain's commission during the latter service. He was a tall, spare man, rather full face, brown eye, not handsome, but yet pleasant in all his intercourse. After the war, he continued to make Mackinaw his home, had a farm, and sometimes acted as Indian interpreter for the British Government. He married a Miss Chevallier, of Mackinaw, a tall and handsome woman; they had two daughters, the eldest of whom became the wife of Capt. Henry Monroe Fisher, a reputed nephew of President Monroe, who came to the North-West as a clerk for an English trader named Todd, with whom he remained three years, and then located himself as a trader at Prairie du Chien, where he resided when I first visited the place in 1795. That year Michael Brisbois married the youngest daughter of Gantier De Verville, and the next year, Capt. Fisher went to Mackinaw and married the eldest. Gantier De Verville and his wife went to Prairie du Chien, about 1798, to live with Michael Brisbois; and De Verville died there about 1803, at about the age of sixty-five; his widow survived him several years. Both Fisher and Brisbois were prominent and useful men at Prairie du Chien, and have left worthy descendants, so that the descendants of Sieur Augustin De Lan-