

Langlade Papers, 1737-1800

The stranger visiting the ancient settlement of Green Bay as late as 1827, would have found it in very nearly its primitive condition. No dwellings, save one or two, of modern structure, no vehicles similar to those found elsewhere, and, in fact, no highways in proper condition of improvement for their use.

About a half mile above the fort, which was near the mouth of Fox River, was the usual landing from vessels, where were the remains of the old Langlade and Grignon mansions—on one side the ruins of a grist-mill, and on the other several buildings, more or less in a state of decay, scattered along the river bank, at short intervals; the Langlade and Grignon possessions extending, either way, a distance of a mile or more.

After the death of Pierre Grignon, in 1795, his eldest son, Pierre, Jr., became the head of the family, and so continued until his death in 1823; when his brother, Augustin Grignon, assumed a similar position, and managed the large estates which the family had acquired during their long residence at the Bay. His residence was at the Grand Kaukauna, but by his tenants the whole Langlade and Grignon estate was occupied.

In the early spring of 1828, I took up my residence within the limits of the present city of Green Bay. Soon after, having procured a site from my friend, Mr. Augustin Grignon, who was in possession of the premises formerly occupied by his brother Pierre, my office was erected immediately opposite, and within a few feet of an old trading-house then in ruins. In passing the building which had remained unoccupied for several years, the floor of the loft still remaining intact, I discovered a large quantity of rubbish which seemed to have been abandoned to the action of storms of wind and rain, pouring in at will through the open gables.

There were several bushels of old accounts, books, letters and other papers, with dates recurring back a period of nearly one hundred years. Curiosity led me to spend hours in looking them over, as they proved to be an accumulation, during the life time, of Sieur de Langlade, Senior, his son Charles, and son-in-law, Pierre Grignon, Sr., all of whom had been dead many years. The settlement of Green Bay, at the time of my search, consisted of very few families of the old stock, chief of which were those of Lawe and the Grignons. It was natural to suppose, that these papers being treated as of no value, others of importance had been preserved by the descendants of Langlade, who were quite numerous, and that these would be of no little consequence in furnishing an historical account of men and events occurring during the first colonization of our State.