

Butte des Morts Historical Preservation Society



Augustin Grignon

June, 2014

We would like to welcome and thank you for attending the Butte des Morts Historical Preservation Society kick-off on June 22! We were thrilled at the wonderful turnout for our event. We had over 75 people attend and so far about 60 have joined us as charter members! Thank you if you joined!! If you haven't joined yet and wish to do so in order to continue receiving our newsletter, please contact us! (I've attached a membership application.) We'd love to have everyone who attended join our group! Charter memberships will run until December 2015. After that memberships renew annually at the end of December. Individual memberships are \$15, couples \$25,

and families \$35. Email addresses help us defray our costs communicating with members!

We even had some local government representatives attend our kick-off, which was quite an honor.

Representatives Gordon Hintz from district 54 and Penny Bernard-Schaber from District 56 were there to help us celebrate the birth of our society. We were thrilled at everyone's interest and enthusiasm in preserving the rich local history of Butte des Morts.

George Kontos brought in an aerial photo from the 1950s which was very interesting to look at. Chuck Nichols brought several large photos and other memorabilia from the old Hull House, (also known as the Scovel farm) to share. We talked to dozens of former and current Butte des Morts residents about their priceless memories. If you have more stories or pictures to share please send them to BDMHPS@gmail.com. Otherwise send to BDMHPS at PO Box 332 Butte des Morts, WI. 54927. (Note we now have our own PO Box thanks to donations!!) You can also call Patti or Joe Yana at 582-9616.



Long time BDM resident George Kontos enjoyed the kick-off event with his 12 year old great grandson Tanner Groshek.



BDMHPS President Joe Yana welcomed guests.

President Joe Yana introduced our board of directors. Randy Domer (a local author and member of the

Winnebago County Archaeological Historical Society) is Vice-president. Patti Yana, also a member of the Winnebago County Archaeological Historical Society is the Secretary/Treasurer. Other board members are Jim Quillinan, owner of the former Grignon Hotel; George Kontos, Butte des Morts resident for 85 years; Harold (Skip) Thorpe, local author; Debra Daubert, BDM resident and Oshkosh Public Museum curator; and Vicki Wilson, long time BDM resident. We are so honored to have such a committed board of directors! We will be adding another board member soon. Read more about our board of directors in our first newsletter, out in September!

Joe Yana also gave a brief history of the village of Butte des Morts. Here are some highlights....

The settlement of Butte des Morts was initiated in 1818 by fur traders Augustin Grignon and James Porlier, who established a fur trading post near the point where the Fox River joined what is now known as Daggett's Creek. The confluence of the Wolf and Fox Rivers just a few miles away created a natural highway used to transport muskrat and beaver furs to

the trading post. As the fur trade flourished, the community grew. Grignon was committed to creating a commercial center in Butte des Morts. In 1840, he initiated efforts to construct a hotel which was completed a few years later. The building is still in existence today and is the oldest remaining commercial structure in Winnebago County.

Grignon eventually created a plat to subdivide the land he had acquired in the area. As the community grew, various commercial enterprises were established to meet the needs of a growing population. Several lodging establishments, groceries, inns and a dance hall were operating by the mid to late 1800s. Many of those buildings still exist. Around the time Wisconsin achieved statehood, Butte des Morts was regarded as the county seat of Winnebago County. In French, Butte des Morts means "Hill of the Dead." Indeed, it served as a burial site for the Menominee Tribe during the 18th and 19th centuries which has resulted in some enchanting lore which includes haunted buildings.

Thanks for sharing that history Joel!

Our kick-off group was so large we had to split into two groups for Vice-

president Randy Domer's presentation. Randy's program was entitled "History's Hidden Treasures - Butte des Morts, WI." The program highlighted the history of Butte des Morts back to a time when Augustin Grignon established the first permanent trading post nearby. Also included was an overview of the historic Grignon Hotel. It was built by Augustin Grignon between 1840 and 1848. It is on the State and National Historic Registers and still stands in Butte des Morts today. Truly a treasure! Thanks for an awesome presentation Randy!

The purpose of our new organization is to preserve the rich history of this little community through creating a chronicle of the many anecdotes of life in historic Butte des Morts, to preserve artifacts and to assist in efforts to preserve some of the structures from old Butte des Morts still in existence and place markers to identify them. The organization will affiliate with the Wisconsin Historical Society and is working with the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation to establish various funds for these purposes.

We would like to get our first quarterly newsletter out in September so you can "meet" the board members. We will begin to publish some of the stories so many people shared at our kick-off. We hope to keep the momentum going in the community! We appreciate your continued support as we have much to accomplish! We cannot do this without community support. Thanks also go to Sarah Mathewson and Diane Lang for helping serve cookies and lemonade, Dave Tovar and Nick Hergert for pitching in when we ran out of tables and chairs, and Debra Daubert for taking in all those memberships. Thanks to Karen Domer, Sarah Mathewson, Diane Lang and Vicki Wilson for donating cookies!

The Butte des Morts Historical Preservation Society thanks you for helping us get off to a great start!

Patti Yana, Secretary/Treasurer

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Butte des Morts, WI. 54927
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Nearly 75 people attended the Butte des Morts Historical Preservation Society's kick-off event on June 22, 2014.



Thanks for sharing in the birth of the Butte des Morts Historical Society! If you have memories you'd like to share, please let us know!