

## The King House Association

# Newsletter

Issue #2: July 2017

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**Comment:** *"I've seen the house on various trips in the area over the years and think it's nothing short of fantastic that an organization has come along to protect and maintain it."* **Bob Christensen, National Historic Register coordinator, State of Michigan Historical Preservation Office.**

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## Restoration Project Progress Report

Summer 2017

### **The Why: The Historical Significance of Wauganakezee (Middle Village) and the King House**

18<sup>th</sup> century maritime maps identify Aphitahwaing ("in the middle") or Wauganakezee ("the half-way place" in Odawa) as one of the largest of the Odawa settlements in the area known as L'Arbre Croche ("The Land of the Crooked Tree") that stretched from the Straits to present-day Harbor Springs. John Wright, 'Michigan's Indian poet' who lived in Middle Village, wrote that in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, "So populous was the settlement at this time than an Indian might walk a distance of a full twenty miles along the shore and find a wigwam every few rods." Chief Andrew J. Blackbird similarly described the area as "a continuous village some fifteen or sixteen miles long and extending from what is now called Cross Village to Seven Mile Point." Other accounts estimate that there were upwards of 30,000 Native Americans living between Petoskey and the Mackinaw area before European settlement.

Middle Village was indisputably the largest and most prominent of the Odawa settlements of L'Arbre Croche. The kinship ties of the Odawa of Wauganakezee were immense and tangled into all surrounding nations who could be called upon at any time for protection of their Lake Michigan trade routes or as combat allies. Known for their technical skills (they built the best canoes in the Great Lakes), the Odawa of Middle Village also kept themselves less visible and vulnerable to disease and attack by living in small clan villages. The Odawa were the middle men in all trade negotiations at Michilimackinac and were always considered the "most expert on the warpath and wise counselors." Every nation "far and near" deposited a peace pipe at Michilimackinac and pledged to let the Odawa settle disputes between them. The Odawa were consummate traders and bartered fish and surplus corn, beans, squash, and meat to the French traders at Fort Michilimackinac in exchange for European trade goods.

Given the presence of this well-established community, it is not surprising that early French Jesuit priests built a mission in Wauganakezee in 1741. A second church building was erected in 1833, and dedicated by Father Frederick Baraga. Fr. Pierz collaborated with local Odawa leaders to purchase the land around the church as early as 1846. One of those leaders was Peter Onaanso (King) whose family chose to remain and build a permanent house in Middle Village when several hundred families fled

to Manitoulin Island to avoid being sent west under the Indian Removal Act following the Treaties of 1836 and 1855. The Kings were also allotted farmland under the Dawes Act (1887) and are one of the few Native American families to retain their allotment land ever since. The King House, believed to be built in the 1850s, is the only example of some 52 log and clapboard houses that once comprised Middle Village that is close to its original form. We are fortunate that the King family kept the House so close to its original presence over these 167 years.

***It is ours to preserve out of respect for both past and future generations***

*(Note: A bibliography of historic resources will be listed on [facebook.com/KingHouseAssociation](https://www.facebook.com/KingHouseAssociation))*

## **Focusing on the 1900s Photo Imagery as a Guide**

Clearly the best restoration information we have about the King House resides in the photo albums of the King family and historical postcards and photos of Middle Village. The Board feels fortunate that we have them to use as a preservation guide. King family descendants Rose (King) Silvey and her daughter MSU professor Le Anne Silvey have been most helpful in providing access to their collections and memories. Rose has cautioned us not to make the House “too pretty” as the village certainly was not that in her memory of visits to Tom and Eliza King’s House in the 1930’s.



## **Discovering What’s Wrong and What’s Possible**

Mathilda (King) Ramage Allison, a well-known quill artist, financed significant reconstruction of the House in 1979-80. After the King House Association purchased the House (thanks to more than 140 donors!) in 2015, the Board consulted with preservationists, historical architects, and builders to develop a list of what now needs to be done to preserve this 150-year old community treasure. The Board also adopted the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties as a guide to best practice.

**Squared logs:** The most historically significant architectural aspect of the House is its 22’x15’ hand-hewn timber construction. Based on external examination, at least three of the wall timbers are known to have dry rot. Many also have mildew and insect damage.



*Dry rot and powder post beetle damage*

How many more can only be determined with disassembly and chinking removal. The original hand hewn logs were native yellow birch, which now would cost up to \$500 each to replace! Preservationists have recommended hand hewn maple as an alternative. The pine timbers used in the 1979 reconstruction may be repurposed in order to restore the House with greater historical accuracy.

*A photo from the King family album*

## Funding

**Crafting a budget:** We estimate that the total restoration budget will approach \$100,000 to restore the existing core structure of the house and grade and landscape the lot. Once we have a final budget, we will post it on Facebook.

**Finding and securing grants:** Board Chair Jim Clarke has taken the lead in assembling a largely grant-based \$50,000 Challenge Fund to encourage a local community fund-raising campaign to complete our funding needs. So far this Challenge Fund consists of \$58,000 in grants, donations, and pledges in addition to the earlier \$7,500 Evans Graham Memorial Preservation award for the roof. Announced grants include the Americana Foundation (\$20,000), the Baiardi Family Foundation (\$5,000), the Petoskey-Harbor Springs Area Community Foundation (\$12,000), and the Great Lakes People's Fund (\$5,000).



Mary Stewart Adams - "The Odawa Night Sky"

## Community Expectations and Feedback

**Getting it right:** Investigating the best way to preserve and restore the King House has taken a long time. After lots of study, consultation, and discussion the Board is getting close to a final restoration plan, contractor, budget, and schedule. Now it's time to look forward and begin thinking about how best to use this historical treasure as a **community asset**.

**Community input:** In order to assure that the King House will continue to serve the Middle Village/Good Hart community, the Board is seeking feedback and ideas. One thought is to continue to host a few annual events on the history of the area, similar to the two programs (one on Odawa star story-telling and one on the Burt Lake burnout) held on the Middle Village beach and the House grounds in the summer of 2016. We would welcome suggestions.

Please send your thoughts, comments, and advice for future programming ideas to:

**[thekinghouseassociation@gmail.com](mailto:thekinghouseassociation@gmail.com)**

or post them in the comments section of the King House Association's Facebook page at

**[Facebook.com/KingHouseAssociation](https://www.facebook.com/KingHouseAssociation)**. In its time, the King House was the center of the community and known as "the finest house in town." With community support, we can restore its historic presence.

**Other ways to help.** In addition to financial donations and ideas about future use, the King House Restoration effort would appreciate community in-kind support such as:

- Truck removal of debris and hauling hewn logs to the House.
- Storage space for Marty's lumber and squared timbers during construction.
- Site for locating the hand-hewing process accessible to the site.

***Let us know if you're willing to help.***



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### **King House Association Board**

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