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Wisconsin Historical Society Placed the St. Germain dit Gauthier House on the State Register of Historic Places

Prairie Du Chien, Wis. – The Wisconsin Historical Society placed the St. Germain *dit* Gauthier House (Prairie du Chien, Crawford County) on the State Register of Historic Places on August 18, 2017.

The St. Germain *dit* Gauthier House is a small, one-story, side-gabled cabin of hewn logs set on a rock-faced stone foundation. A front-gabled, frame addition clad with vertical boards is attached to the rear of the cabin, resting on a poured concrete foundation. The cabin is an example of the French-Canadian method of construction known as *pièce sur pièce à queue d'aronde*, in which logs are laid horizontally, and fitted with dovetail joints. In addition to the form, the St. Germain *dit* Gauthier House displays other distinguishing characteristics of this building tradition, dating to Wisconsin's fur trade era: the logs average five inches in width, and are marked with Roman numerals; and the length of the house is a multiple of 13 feet. The house was likely erected for Guillaume and Magdelaine (Brunet) St. Germain *dit* Gauthier ca. 1837. It was moved to its current site in 1894 and the addition constructed in 1916.

The symmetrical façade may be French-Canadian, or it may be an influence of the Federal style, built in Wisconsin between about 1830 and 1860. The pitch of roof of the St. Germain *dit* Gauthier House (less than the 45 degrees typical of French-Canadian colonial houses), the lack of a bell-cast eave (*coyau*), and the lack of the knee wall that created more headroom in the loft, may also derive from the Federal style and reflect the influence of the Yankees settling in Prairie du Chien beginning in the late 1820s. The blend of two cultures, predominantly French-Canadian, overlaid with a Yankee aesthetic, makes the St. Germain *dit* Gauthier House a unique representative of the transition of the fur trade in Prairie du Chien, and of the community itself, from French-Canadian to American domination in the early 19th century. The rarity of this method of construction, representing the fur trade and early settlement era before Wisconsin statehood, lends the house significance at the state level.

The State Register is Wisconsin's official list of state properties determined to be significant to Wisconsin's heritage. The State Historic Preservation Office at the Wisconsin Historical Society administers both the State Register and National Register in Wisconsin.

To learn more about the State and National Register programs in Wisconsin, visit www.wisconsinhistory.org.

About Wisconsin Historical Society

The Wisconsin Historical Society, founded in 1846, ranks as one of the largest, most active and most diversified state historical societies in the nation. As both a state agency and a private membership organization, its mission is to help people connect to the past by collecting, preserving and sharing stories. The Wisconsin Historical Society serves millions of people every year through a wide range of sites, programs and services. For more information, visit wisconsinhistory.org.

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