

# Wisconsin Historical Society: The St. Germain dit Gauthier House listed in National Register of Historic Places

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Prairie du Chien, Wis. – The Wisconsin Historical Society has announced the listing of the St. Germain dit Gauthier House in Prairie du Chien, Crawford County, in the National Register of Historic Places. National Register designation provides access to certain benefits, including qualification for grants and for rehabilitation income tax credits, while it does not restrict private property owners in the use of their property.

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.

We gratefully acknowledge the Fuldner Heritage Fund which paid for the preparation of this nomination. This endowed fund, created through a generous donation by the Jeffris Family Foundation and administered by the Wisconsin Historical Society, supports the nomination of historically and architecturally significant rural and small town properties.

The register is the official national list of historic properties in America deemed worthy of preservation and is maintained by the National Park Service in the U.S. Department of the Interior. The Wisconsin Historical Society administers the program within Wisconsin. It includes sites, buildings, structures, objects and districts that are significant in national, state or local history, architecture, archaeology, engineering or culture.

To learn more about the State and National Register programs in Wisconsin, visit [www.wisconsinhistory.org](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org).