

Wisconsin Historical Society: Oct. 23 event spotlights African American women in Prairie du Chien in the 1800s

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Prairie du Chien, Wis. – This Sunday, Oct. 23, the Wisconsin Historical Society's Villa Louis Historic Site and the Wisconsin Historical Society Press cohost a special book launch with author and Prairie du Chien historian Mary Elise Antoine about the history of African American women on the Midwestern frontier, drawing from her newest Society Press book, [Enslaved, Indentured, Free: Five Black Women on the Upper Mississippi, 1800-1850](#).

The book shines a light on five extraordinary Black women—Marianne, Mariah, Patsey, Rachel, and Courtney—whose lives intersected in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. Relying on legal documents, military records, court transcripts, and personal correspondence, she will share the stories of how four of these women each ultimately secured her freedom through perseverance, self-purchase, or freedom suits and, in part, through the bonds they forged with one another. Antoine will also share some of the little-reported history of slavery in the Upper Mississippi River Valley.

The free event begins at 2 PM and is part of the Villa Louis Speaker Series. To accommodate a growing audience, this Speakers Series talk will be held at the nearby Dousman House Hotel, 230 N. Water St., Prairie du Chien, Wis. Guests are encouraged to join Antoine for a walking tour of the first Fort Crawford site on the Villa Louis grounds after the talk. Books will be available for purchase and signing (both before the talk and after the tour). Note that The walk is over grass, attendees are encouraged to wear appropriate footwear.

Media: For author interviews, review copies, and more contact Society Press Sales & Marketing Manager Kristin Gilpatrick at kristin.gilpatrick@wisconsinhistory.org .

The Villa Louis Historic Site and the Wisconsin Historical Society Press serve the mission of the Wisconsin Historical Society, to collect, preserve, and share our history.

For more information, visit www.wisconsinhistory.org/whspress.