



Coumbe farmhouse - Wisconsin Historical Society photo.

John and Sarah Coumbe Homestead - Jct. of WI Trunk Hwy. 60 and Co. Trunk Hwy. X, Town of Richwood, Port Andrew, Richland County – 1861-1888. Aka: Tippesaukee Farm Rural Historic District National Register of Historic Places – 1992 - 1996.



John Coumbe Wisconsin Magazine of History Vol. 6, No. 4 (June, 1923).

The first settler within the limits now comprising the town of Richwood was John Coumbe, the first actual settler in Richland County. Coumbe first came to the county in 1838 and erected a log cabin on section 35, town 9, range 2 west, but as the Indians were rather numerous, he returned to the south side of the Wisconsin river, and again the territory which now comprises Richland county was uninhabited by any white person. In 1840, however, Coumbe again crossed the river and took up his abode in the cabin he had erected two years previously, and here gave his attention to agricultural pursuits until the time of his death.

The Coumbe homestead, home of John Coumbe, the first white settler in Richland County, who came to the site in 1838, was built in 1861-62; the original buildings were log structures. John Coumbe, a native of England, was the first Euro-American settler in Richland County. Coumbe named his farm "Tippesaukee" after the Ho-Chunk village he found on the site. Having established himself as a successful farmer, in 1849 Coumbe married Sarah

Ann Palmer. In 1863 Coumbe constructed the present gabled-ell form farmhouse. The wood frame house rests on a foundation built of stones collected in the nearby fields. The narrow clapboard siding was sawn at a nearby mill from basswood trees that grew on the farm. The interior is finished with white ash floorboards and black walnut trim and



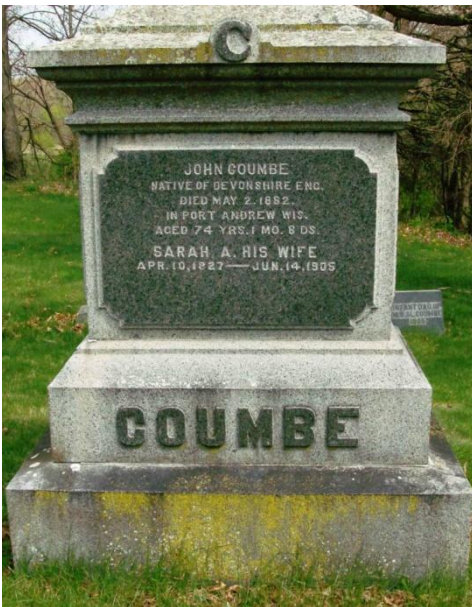
Wisconsin Historical Society photo.

doors. With minor exceptions, the exceptionally intact interior retains much of the original floorplan and finishes.

Wallpaper, drapery and carpeting dating to the 1880s adorn the interior.

Also located on the property are a three-seat privy and smokehouse, dating to 1863, an 1861 timber-framed barn, and an early corncrib. Other buildings on the property are of mid-twentieth century construction and reflect the farmstead's continued use. Coumbe died in 1882. His wife, Sarah, and children continued running of

the farm. It remains in the Coumbe family to this day. The



farm is private property and is not open to the public.

Ownership of the property passed to Mary Moffat, a great granddaughter, who continued the family tradition of taking care of the house and painstakingly restoring it as needed. She recalled many family gatherings at the farm during her years growing up in Richland Center. Her mother, Camille Coumbe, wrote in the Wisconsin Magazine of History about some of the tales they had heard.

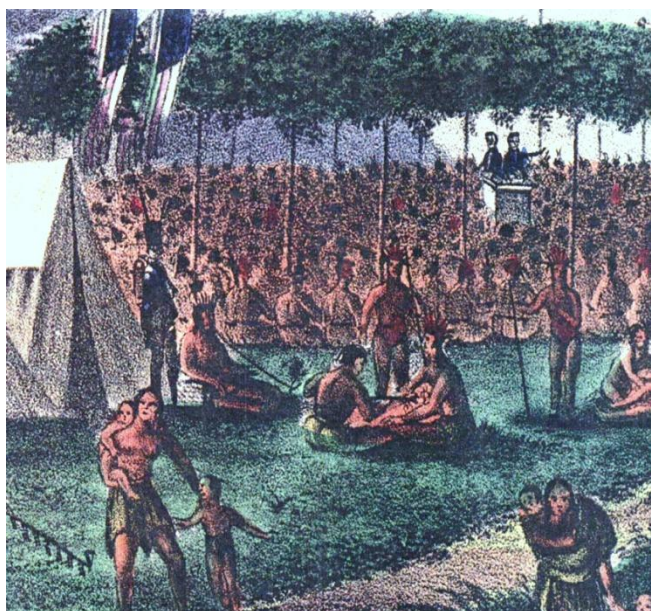
Here is Camille's account of what happened after the Indians set fire to the first two cabins that Coumbe built. "Nothing daunted, (he) appealed to the military for protection... (But) the officer in charge declared his intention to give up the charge. The soldiers were eager to make a forward movement, and...by unanimous acclaim they chose John Coumbe to lead them...Addressing the Indians in their own language Coumbe told them they would have to move on.

"The Indians knew him to be absolutely fearless, and gradually gave way before the stern determined man. The Indians have continued to return each

year during the hunting season up to the present time (1922) but in ever diminishing numbers. Mr. Coumbe always treated them with kindness and fairness, and many times on stormy nights his cabin floor was covered with the forms of sleeping savages."

The gnarly oak tree just past the front gate at Tippeesaukee Farm was already more than a century old when two worlds collided on this picturesque piece of earth along the lower Wisconsin River. John Coumbe, a 20-year-old native of Cornwall, England, eagerly crossed the river here in June 1838 to stake his claim as the first white settler in what would become Richland County. But the land was far from an unoccupied wilderness. The river valley in this area is rich with effigy mounds, evidence of long use, and the land where Coumbe would stake his claim was home to a Ho-Chunk village called Tippeesaukee. "He was surprised that there were parts of the tribe still here, using the village as a seasonal camp," said Coumbe's granddaughter, Mary Moffat. A treaty that opened the land to settlement had required them to move west across the Mississippi River. The Ho-Chunks' reaction to Coumbe's arrival was not recorded, but his first two cabins

burned to the ground, and Moffat said the Indians were believed to have been involved. Coumbe appealed to the soldiers at Fort Crawford in Prairie du Chien for help getting the Indians to leave. Despite the cabin fires, the drowning of his oldest son in the Wisconsin River and the other hardships of frontier life, Combe persevered and prospered. The farm, with its 1863 farmhouse and 1861 barn is still in the family, and so well-preserved that even its outhouse is on the National Register of Historic places. Coumbe went on to serve the area as a census enumerator, ran a ferry on the river, and helped lay out the route of the present-day Highway 60.



UW-Richland hosted a symposium in 2003 entitled “Cross Currents: The Intersection of Native and European American Cultures in Southwest Wisconsin.” The event featured panels on Tippesaukee Farm, Ho Chunk Culture, Meskwaki villages, European and Native American relations then and now, area plant life, architecture, and archeology. The keynote speaker was PhD and journalist Patty Loew, a member of the Ojibwa nation. Tippesaukee Farm is an absolute treasure.

Above: Coumbe farmhouse – Wisconsin Historical Society photo.

Left: Original color lithograph “TREATY AT PRAIRIE DU CHIEN”

By J.O. Lewis, 1825 – Wisconsin Historical Society – Image WHI-3142.