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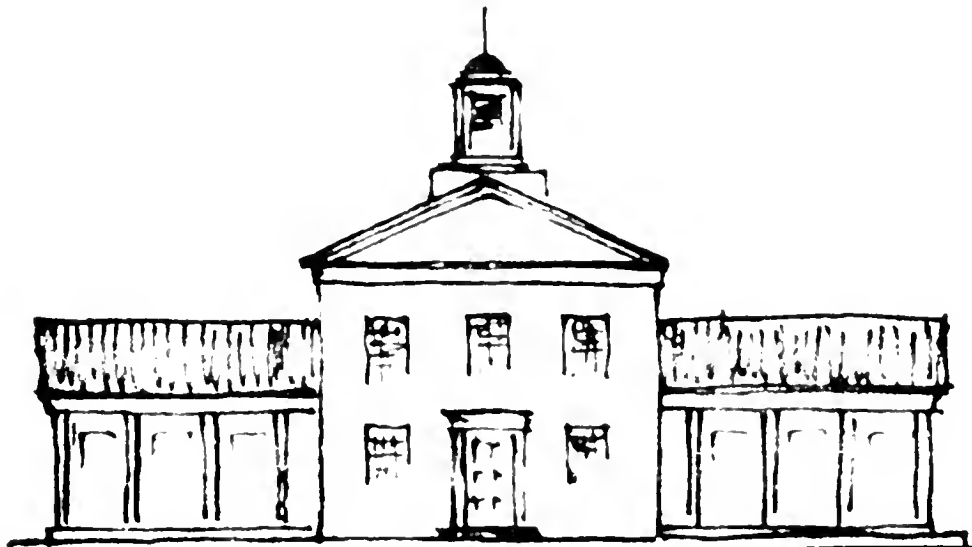
Historic Preservation  
Commission

ILLINOIS HISTORICAL SURVEY





# Historic Preservation Is 'Creating the Future'



MORE STUDENT COMMENTS ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION .....September 1974

ILLINOIS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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In the Spring Semester of this year, students in my Seminar on Planning for Historic Preservation took three weekend field study trips to various sites in Illinois. A sampling of their comments on the first trip (to Oak Park, Chicago's Loop and Pullman) was published in a booklet entitled, "Historic Preservation is Not Just a Thing of the Past."

The following pages set forth some of the comments made after their travels to the Springfield and Galena areas in March and April. In Springfield, visits were made to the Lincoln Home National Historic Site, the Old State Capitol and the Lincoln-Herndon Law Offices. On the second day they visited the Old Clayville Stage Coach Stop, Lincoln's New Salem Village State Park, and the Dickson Mounds Archeological Museum.

On a three-day trip to Northwestern Illinois, the Washington Square Historic District, Reddick's Library and the Appellate Court Building were among the places seen in Ottawa; and then the John Deere Site, Colonial Inn, and the Episcopal Church in Grand Detour. The group stayed overnight in old hotels in Dixon and in Galena, where a full day was spent. The return trip included a brief stop at the land sales office for a major new development near Galena, and an extended exploration of Bishop Hill. At almost every site, the students benefitted from discussion with those responsible for preservation activities.

I am confident that these few students have come to the realization that Historic Preservation is a very important and timely part of "Creating the Future," and that sharing their frank comments will prove helpful to others.

We are grateful to the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts and to the Ottawa Silica Company Foundation for providing the funds which made the study trips possible.

*Lachlan F. Blair*  
Lachlan F. Blair  
Professor

LFB/bs





# HISTORIC PRESERVATION IS . . . . "CREATING THE FUTURE"

## More Student Comments on Historic Preservation

The comments in these two booklets have been edited only by selection and grouping. Each student was asked to submit a page or two of observations and reactions to what he saw and experienced on each of the three field trips taken by the Seminar group. These are not intended as scholarly findings; rather, they are the discoveries and concerns of young minds being opened to the new field of planning for historic preservation.

Each of the participants also prepared and presented a seminar paper dealing either with a preservation project or community case study, or with research into a special aspect of preservation planning. And most of the participants are pursuing further studies in planning for historic preservation.

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# HISTORIC PRESERVATION IS . . . . . ALIVE

"It is a long way from the Oak Park district to New Salem and Dickson Mounds. The key point is the life and variety within the movement. In few areas of planning have I seen such child-like vibrancy. Preservation is moving, and quickly, openly.

"To me, one of the most valuable results of preservation is that it offers the opportunity for history to 'come alive' for people in a way that history books never can."

*"The museums are not static creations. Planning for them is a continuing process. The Federal plans for expansion of the Lincoln Home area, and the state plans for additions and improvements at New Salem and Dickson Mounds reflect the museums' popularity and the desire to increase authenticity."*

*"Dickson Mounds, which I expected to be the low point of the trip was perhaps the most interesting. It, to me, exemplified the potential in proper development of a scheme. The presentation was dramatic and almost of a 'gee whizz magician's trick' quality."*

"The final field trip of the semester presented at least one aspect of virtually all the diverse forms that historic preservation encompasses. Among them were reconstructions, restorations, house museums, historic districts, private, corporate, and state-financed projects, adaptive uses, and preservation planning."

"I fell in love with Galena. I'd move there tomorrow if I could. Walking the streets above the city on that peaceful, windy, sunny day brought back to me the memory of the small towns life that I remember from my childhood. It was truly an emotional experience. By dinnertime, I was thoroughly enthralled with the city, yet dinner with the Mayor brought my head out of the clouds as we discussed the very real and complicated problems that Galena faces today."

*"I left Bishop Hill optimistic about it's future as a preserved and functioning community. It was a good ending for this tour, since each site we visited left me with a similar feeling of optimism. None of these communities has achieved all of its goals in preservation. But they are at least moving in the right direction."*

"Indeed, as I have learned, historic preservation is not the preserving of antiquity as much as the weaving of heritage into the vibrancy of change."



## HISTORIC PRESERVATION IS . . . . . LOCAL

"An overall reaction is that it is local interest and local leadership that is the powerful force behind historical preservation. This was demonstrated to me through attitudes in both Galena and Bishop Hill. There is so much more opportunity for success in preserving elements of the past if the people have "sense of place" that triggers a real concern for these matters."

*"Galena shows more so than Bishop Hill the problems of gaining local support. Had there been a more local and less Chicago summer resort visitor orientation in Galena's early efforts in historic preservation, Galena probably would have progressed much further than it has in historic preservation programs."*

"To be successful, I feel that any historic preservation work must have the support of the local community. Will the people of the community be more concerned with economic survival regardless of what must be sacrificed (i.e., old buildings) or will they see the potential for adaptive reuse of their deteriorating structures that could complement instead of hinder economic growth?"

*"Lincoln's Law Offices were fascinating, but I do question the necessity of preserving sections of old steps upon which Lincoln walked or old beds in which persons died."*

"The Lincoln Home and neighborhood are off the main thoroughfares of Springfield, enabling the visitor to escape the bustle of the twentieth century and step back into the past. The houses which remain from Lincoln's time are to be restored to their original appearance in order to recreate the 'feel' of the neighborhood around Lincoln's Home. As one interested in history and in historic preservation, I welcome the attempt to restore the ambiance of the neighborhood. However, as a feeling human being, I must admit to doubts about the rightness of displacing neighborhood residents from their homes, for ordinary citizens as well as Presidents have personal histories."

*"Bishop Hill is not only a preservation of buildings, but a culture as well. Quite often, the cultural aspect is totally ignored, buildings are restored but the cultural feeling is lost. Fortunately, the people of Bishop Hill realize that to preserve their buildings and homes means to preserve a culture, a past, a true sense of being."*



"Grant's Home was nice, but I found many of the other buildings more interesting. I realize that a town tries to capitalize on historic persons or places important in its history, but I felt that the Grant idea was over-done."

"Galena has something very special. Its aesthetic effect and charm are going to make it of interest to far more than just those who live there. Because of the excessive outside interest in Galena, the possibility of it becoming a healthy, well-balanced town is eliminated. But another consequence is that Galena will be preserved...in the physical sense. The value of this type of preservation is questionable. Integrity will become secondary to marketability. But I liked it -- as a tourist, not a planner, -- I liked it."

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION IS...EDUCATION

"At Oak Park and Chicago the major problems for preservationists was finding some way to educate people about the value of their old buildings and neighborhoods. In Springfield, such education is not necessary. No one is about to tear down Lincoln's Home or turn New Salem State Park into a cornfield. This is partly because these sites are clearly of such great national importance, and partly because the economic pressures to put them to other uses are not as great. There is little need to make the historic value of these sites better known to the public. In fact, one of the most serious problems for the administrators in the Springfield area is that their historic sites are too well known."

*"For me, New Salem was the highlight of our trip. After touring the site I understood why the ranger considered New Salem the most important historic site in the Midwest. The restored village would be fascinating even if it had not at one time been the home of young Abraham Lincoln. Great pains have been taken to give an air of authenticity to the village, and the result is a believable restoration of a village of the 1830's. Those responsible for the restoration are so intent on authenticity that they are even 'back-breeding' the chickens so that they will be like those of the nineteenth century!"*

"It was refreshing to see a historical tribute to a non-political or military figure in the John Deere Historic Site. I wonder though if John Deere's real significance to farming technology has not been over-emphasized? His home is a typical house museum; the antique display is good but only two items belonged to the Deere family."





*"The John Deere presentation package failed to make John Deere seem like he was ever alive. The archeological dig was interesting and informative, but the rest was dull. It needed more vitality."*

*"This trip impressed on me how important the surrounding landscape is in creating a pleasant mood. For example, it was not difficult to get a "feel" for what it was like to live in the era of John Deere, for one could see what his home and blacksmith shop looked like in the context of the surrounding environment. The setting of homes in Ottawa that were set back from the street and beautifully landscaped offered so much more to the structure than those buildings surrounded by modern development."*

*"The Lincoln Home National Historic Site was aesthetically impressive in its attempt to re-create 'Springfield, 1861'. To my amateur eye, the furnishing and decor of the Lincoln Home seemed authentic and this was followed through in detail. It not only lent insight into the personal life of Lincoln, but to the typical family of the upper-middle class in that period."*

*"The Lincoln Law Offices seemed to lack some of the normal integrity associated with a museum; documents, some of which were historically inappropriate, were too striven about to achieve a 'realistic' look. In contrast to the informality of this museum the Old State Capitol has an extremely formal and intensely authentic interpretation."*

*"Clayville and New Salem are both state-financed outdoor museums of high quality. Clayville contains a restored inn dating from 1824 and several reconstructed log buildings from the period. New Salem, originally a private restoration of the village in which Lincoln lived. Both museums serve to portray village life of the 1830's and the actual production of handcraft articles and foods by the original methods enhances the illusion of reality and better supports the education role of the museums."*

*"Dickson Mounds State Park is a modern, highly dramatic archeological/anthropological museum created on an original Indian burial site. Incorporating the virtually undisturbed burial site intact in the museum is extremely educational and thought-provoking, causing one to easily reflect upon the ancient culture."*



# HISTORIC PRESERVATION IS . . . . TOURISM

"My general reaction to the Springfield trip was one of pleasant surprise. I was surprised at how much I enjoyed visiting these sites. Previously I had had the impression that the Lincoln-related sites in particular were little more than miniature Disneylands or sideshows designed to draw in as much tourist trade as possible. But I found that I was wrong."

*"The Ranger in Charge at the Lincoln Home and National Historic Site told us that his most serious problem is that 'we're loved too much.' He detailed for us the problems involved in drawing up development plans, acquiring land, and dealing with the large federal bureaucracy. But he emphasized that his most difficult problem was finding some way to make the Lincoln Home site readily available to the thousands who come to see it every year. What he wanted the site to be was an educational experience for everyone who came there, a place where they could get a sense of Lincoln and the times he lived in. But during the peak seasons, such goals necessarily had to be compromised in order that the crowds could be moved in and out as efficiently as possible and with the least wear and tear on the facilities."*

*"Despite the bitterly cold weather, I am glad that we made our visit in March rather than during the warm months. I'm afraid that hordes of tourists would seriously detract from the atmosphere of the place and would not allow the feeling of the past that I enjoyed. The ranger explained that the inordinately large number of fences was historically inaccurate but necessary for crowd control. This may, unfortunately, be an inevitable result of successful preservation -- an area is restored so well that it becomes exciting, attracting large numbers of visitors who then detract from the effectiveness of the preservation attempt. I guess there's no solution to this problem."*

"Almost everyone in the city realizes Galena's future lies with tourism and the restoration of its 19th century architecture, yet such development will have to benefit and provide for the needs of the town and its people and not just outsiders who come to exploit the area for its tourist potential."



*"Tourism is going to have an increasingly greater impact on the town because it has what people want to see. But it is this factor that is going to provide serious problems which will have to be solved soon. ...Lack of parking space within the city is apparent and will result in monumental congestion. The town is oriented linearly and vertically, thus compounding the traffic problem."*

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION IS . . . . CONFLICT

*"Lincoln's Home was interesting since I had always wondered what their plans were going to be. I think I can understand the reactions of the people who are objecting to the tearing down of 1890's buildings. They appear to be structurally sound and worth saving. People see the building down the street next to the office that is deteriorating and yet it is going to be saved. The difference in these two buildings is unbelievable from a 'layman's' point of view. Talking about integrity is certainly difficult at this point."*

*"I had mixed feelings about the effort to create a total environment. The closure of the streets to auto traffic and the purchase of the nearby homes, seemed to have drained the area of vitality."*

*"The problems of funding as well as overall problems in maintenance of historic districts were brought out at Lincoln's New Salem Village State Park. This Department of Conservation project already has artifacts, land, and a tradition established, but the problem of crowd control is much the same as for the Federal project in Springfield. One must maintain a site before interpretation becomes possible, hence the need for control."*

*"Our visit to the office of the city planning commission reinforced the complications of priority, administration, and similar problems encountered in preservation. It counter-balanced the dosage of pro-preservation offered during the rest of the trip."*

*"The weather conditions at New Salem did not promote my most benevolent reactions. Only in hindsight can I try to appreciate the positive aspects of the park. The authenticity, once again, was to make one marvel."*



"The 'Galena Territory' project is a product of our wasteful times. There is no earthly reason besides profit that such a beautiful natural environment has to be 'developed' and thereby ruined by contemporary land speculators. It is a crime against nature to have allowed such an operation to begin."

"I was dismayed to find that Galena had lost a great number of trees. The buildings and homes no longer had the peaceful and quite appearance they once had. It really struck me how trees and plantings play an important role in the overall picture of a building or neighborhood."

"All these diverse groups of people recognize that preservation is important, but each approaches preservation in a different way based on their resources and concern. ...As planners we should support diversity in preservation because it represents the very essence of America. Preservationists should recognize the value of different approaches. ...'Purists' must not shun laymen action and interest which may not result in 'ideal' preservation but which has value as an expression of concern for the community heritage."

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION IS . . . AUTHENTIC ?

"The people in charge at every place we visited were seriously concerned about the accurate restoration and preservation of their sites and their effectiveness as educational and cultural resources. They seemed to have definite principles by which they guided their preservation work and compromised these principles only when it was necessary to do so in order to make their facilities more accessible to everyone who wished to visit them."

*"I think this digging up of the facts by historians or whoever is really interesting, you start with only a belief and from there try to solve a mystery about details of things that have happened long ago."*

*"The reconstruction of the Old State Capitol seemed very well done. The detail and workmanship enjoyed a very professional look. The tour here invoked curiosity and a certain feeling of time and place. I could feel the important business which had been transacted in the building. I was most impressed with the continuity of theme in the functional use of the building. It seemed the perfect place for the State Historical Library. The lower level could quench the thirst derived on the upper floors."*





"The 'preservationists' have used old records to reconstruct what they thought might have been in these two places. The location of walls and exact offices appears to be only an educated guess in the case of the Capital. New Salem will look like what the historians believe might have been there over 100 years ago. They do have accounts of some of the building but nothing seems to be certain."

"Constantly, older buildings are being torn down because they no longer meet the needs of today. If the building is saved from demolition, it is usually remodeled inside. Quite often, the remodeling will completely change the interior, and alter the exterior beyond recognition. This is not the case for the Appellate Court Building in Ottawa. This building was remodeled, in taste, and with regard to the original interior. As a result, the building is still in use today in its original function."

*"The Colonial Inn was an example of private people 'restoring' a period structure. Obviously the authentication of the work is not perfect -- yet that can be overlooked in my opinion when you weight the other benefits that such business could mean to the community. I hope that the Colonial Inn (and I'm sure alot of its neighbors do too) will be able to maintain a thriving business without destroying the restful essence of the community."*

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION IS...FOR WHOM?

*"I learned more from Dixon than Grand Detour. The arched sign over the highway, of course, has been thoroughly discussed among us. Yet when noted with all the other neon from a distance, it does blend into the city scape. As preservationists, we must not become too righteous. We may think something good or bad, but if the people we work with do not agree we cannot force ourselves on them."*

*"Historical preservation efforts have traditionally been the result of endeavors instigated and managed by the wealthy. A current trend is to involve more of the middle and low income people into preservation work. ...It is possible that opinions as to what elements should be preserved in a community may greatly differ among income groups. The fact th' traditionally, preservation has been promoted by the wealthy may have served as a kind of self generating, closed system; operating of the rich, by the rich and for the rich."*



"The short amount of time spent in Bishop Hill served to reinforce my ideas that a large percentage of one's efforts is spent in an attempt to gain a feel for the people. From there you spend the majority of your time communicating your suggestions to your constituency. Public relations is a vital part of planning. Too much time is spent in emphasis on what a plan is, instead of on what planners must do, must learn to do."

*"The city over the hill must be considered. Although all of the city is within the historic ordinance, little is done 'over the hill'. I infer that even in the days of great prosperity, 'over the hill' was a separate social group. They now must not be left out of preservation. The work on federal and other architecture can serve the whole town."*

"A popularly supported planning program in all areas, including preservation, is needed. This program must have as its goal the preservation and enhancement of those qualities which make Ottawa unique. The major problem seems to be one of education. The people of Ottawa must be shown that they have valuable resources and that these resources are worth maintaining, not as magnets for tourism (which, realistically, they probably aren't) but as an enhancement to their daily lives as residents of the community."

*"The local people are directly behind the preservation work being done in Bishop Hill. They are in an unique position since they see it not only as potential economic growth via tourism, but as a preservation of their own history and heritage."*

*"Preservation in Bishop Hill is geared for the uses of the local citizens who are descended from the original settlers. Historic old buildings are to be used as homes, not converted into house museums. It was refreshing to see such preservation oriented, not to the tourist and his dollars, but to the heritage of a living ethnic community."*

"Although, not grammatically correct, the question remains, 'Who is preservation for?'"



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**Seminar in Planning for Historic Preservation**

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