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## **BARN PRESERVATION PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES (IOWA)**

Public interest in barns remains high. Sympathetic newspaper coverage, numerous grant inquiries to the State Historic Preservation Office, and the growing direct involvement of local historic preservation organizations in studying and helping save particular barns testify to the continuing interest. So far, the inquiries typically come not from farm operators, but from persons living elsewhere who have inherited or become responsible for the family farm, or from recent buyers of a farm acreage. Iowa farmers will no doubt take a more direct interest in exploring barn preservation if and when information and materials also are made available through their more familiar outlet--Iowa State University Extension.

The most tangible accomplishments this past year have come in survey and National Register projects covering aspects of barn development. In terms of new barn inventory data, the best information continues to derive from large highway projects across Iowa for which advance survey work is done. In Iowa the barn data includes not only exterior photos, but a sketch floor plan layout and a sketch of the typical middle bent in a heavy timber frame barn or, in the case of light frame construction, the truss configuration. This in time will make possible increased comparisons of barns through having better data about the kind and distribution of barn construction methods.

Two projects have also advanced our knowledge about two major providers of barn designs and barn equipment, namely, the Loudon Machinery Company in Fairfield, Iowa and the Clay Equipment Company in Cedar Falls, Iowa. Both had gotten into the barn plan business as a way of promoting their barn equipment. In 1996-97 a survey of the former company's buildings and of some associated sites in Jefferson County yielded several properties identified as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. This year the properties are being nominated to the National Register. With regard to the Clay Equipment Company, the building site, its features and history were recorded in 1995 before demolition when, to make way for road construction, the company moved to a new location.

Future prospects for barn preservation in Iowa improved this year with the creation of a non-profit organization, the Iowa Barn Foundation. The organization is now out raising money with the hope of offering grant assistance to rehabilitate nine barns this year. Their plan is to raise \$400,000 so that one barn in each of the state's nine crop-reporting districts can be selected for rehabilitation. Farmers would apply for funds under one of two categories: barns that meet the criteria of the National Register, and barns that do not meet the National Register criteria but yet contribute to Iowa's agricultural heritage.

As for other activities, the Elgin Community Betterment Club and Elgin Historical Society sponsored their 4th Annual Historic Barn Tour on September 6th, 1997. Each year about ten barns are selected in the Fayette County vicinity of northeastern Iowa. Visitors tour them either by bus or by car with self-guided map and brochure.