

BARN PRESERVATION PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES (MISSOURI)

We don't have a whole lot of news to report from Missouri. Perhaps the biggest boost to preservation in the state has been the implementation of the Missouri 25% rehabilitation tax credits. This program closely parallels the federal credits and can be used in conjunction with the federal credits. The new credits have sparked a great deal of interest and investment, but the vast majority of this investment has come from the urban areas of the state. Nonetheless, the credits remain a powerful preservation tool that is now available. Hopefully, in time, we will begin to see further investment in rural areas utilizing the credits.

We are experiencing many of the same problems as other states in preserving our rural resources. The northern tier of counties along the Iowa line are rapidly losing population. This has resulted in large scale abandonment and consolidation of farmsteads resulting in the removal of many historic resources. This part of the state has been particularly vulnerable to large scale corporate farming operations (i.e. hog farms) and all the attendant environmental problems associated with them. Many Missouri farmers, particularly those that rely heavily on hog production, have had a very hard time in recent months due to current record low hog prices.

At the opposite end of the spectrum is the rapid growth and sprawl that we are seeing in the counties surrounding St. Louis and Kansas City (actually in Kansas City, a large part of the growth is taking across the Kansas line). Although this growth continues seemingly unabated, we are at last beginning to see some public questioning of the wisdom of this type of growth. At least the issue is beginning to be discussed, although we are still a long way away from reaching any consensus on how to address the issue.

Regrettably in Missouri we don't have a strong statewide organization addressing rural preservation issues. The Missouri Alliance for Historic Preservation is beginning to become a more effective preservation organization. Perhaps as they develop, grow and broaden their base they can begin to play a more active leadership role in this effort. The calendar that they printed this year as a fund-raiser did feature a number of photos of endangered rural resources.

Our efforts in the SHPO have been somewhat limited this past year. Our program was successful this past year in getting a major expansion in our staffing (8 new positions). As we fill these positions, it is hoped that we will finally have the luxury of playing a more pro-active role shaping preservation policies on a statewide basis rather than merely trying to keep our head above water dealing with our mandated responsibilities.

We have seen a couple of good farmsteads with nice barns listed in the Register this year, but actually our percentage of rural listings is down somewhat this year. Our Review and Compliance program routinely butts heads with the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) on new highway projects--many of which adversely affect rural resources.

One aspect of our compliance program that has provided a promising opening to the rural community is a Memorandum of Understanding our office has with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). We have been working with them to provide training for their volunteer field staff to assess cultural resources. To date, much of their focus has involved archaeological resources, but we have begun to introduce training on above ground resources, as well. The field staff serves as a good point of contact in referring preservation questions to our office. We've passed information on the "Barn Again" program on to them, for example. You might wish to contact Don Williams who is our contact at NRCS. Don can be reached at (573) 876-0910, E-mail donw@mo.nrcs.usda.gov. His address is: NRCS Parkade Center, Suite 250, 601 Business Loop 70, Columbia, MO 65203.

Our staff also worked on putting together a special Resource Assessment Team (we call them SWAT teams) to provide a feasibility study to help save a one of a kind National Register farm. Working with the Trust, we helped study Longview Farm in Lee's Summit. The farm is a wonderful 1920's complex of buildings that is threatened by rapid growth and encroachment. The complex is incredible--Tiffany light features in the dairy barn, for example. The complex is still threatened, but the study may have raised awareness on the uniqueness of the resource.

That's a bit of what's going on with us here in the Show-me State. Please keep us posted on what other states are doing.