

BARN PRESERVATION PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

(ILLINOIS)

Program Collaborators:

Stephenson County University Extension,
Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (IHPA),
Iles House Foundation, Springfield
Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois (LPCI),
Chicago area county preservation commissions,
including Kane, McHenry and Will counties

Current Barn Activities in Illinois—National Barn Alliance February 4-5, 2002

Summary

Barn preservation activities in Illinois are primarily the result of individual efforts at the county, local or private level. They are educational tours, farm surveys, or specific building rehabilitation.

Specific Efforts

Workshops/Meetings:

- The Statewide Preservation Conference organized by the Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois scheduled a tour of the Manske-Nieman Farm near Litchfield, as part of their statewide preservation conference. This is a wonderfully intact farmstead with numerous intact buildings.
- The Statewide Preservation Conference also had a session on “Highways and Byways: Preserving Historic Corridors.” Since many highway corridors run through rural areas (Route 66, Dixie Highway, Lincoln Highway, the National Road, etc.) this is an interesting landscape link between promoting highway preservation and tourism and the rural
- Diane King continues to promote activities and host events at Walnut Grove Farm in Knox County. Each Thanksgiving weekend they host a festival.

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- Bob Sherman (Iles House Foundation) continues to give talks to local historical and preservation societies, U of I County Agriculture Extension Meetings, and provides information and ideas on barn preservation throughout Illinois.
- Will County is planning a conference on rural preservation this year.

Rural/Barn Surveys

- **Will County:** Historical Preservation Commission continues to conduct intensive survey of various townships including barns and farmsteads, and has been taking a pro-active role in assisting the small communities within the County to preserve their rural resources. These include remnants of farm and roadside properties, including an old tavern and a creamery.
- **McHenry County:** Historic Preservation Commission has about completed their re-survey of rural buildings in all of the townships within the County. When they started the survey they initially concentrated on the areas most heavily impacted by urban sprawl. Information on barns, outbuildings, and house types is now available on a computer database.
- **Kane County:** Historic Preservation Commission -“That Darn Barn” Program continues and several barns have been converted into residential use. More work is ongoing with the 16-sided Teeple Barn (NR listed). The barn has been made an official “Save America’s Treasures” Project – this will be a great help in raising local and national awareness. The County is also working toward expanding the preservation ordinance to designate historic road systems and a “Rustic Road” 2002 Calendar was printed and all have been distributed.

The 1855 three-bay English Barn that was dismantled in 1999 and now “born again” with a Barn Raising is now situated on its new site in Franklin Grove.

The Gardner Farm Museum in La Fox has just acquired a 95+ acre farmstead adjacent to their property which has an 1850’s English three-bay English barn and Carpenter Gothic house with later 1880’s additions of dairy barn, horse barn and chicken house. This farmstead will be used for future museum programs.

The Peck Farm in Geneva has done some adaptive reuses by turning a granary into an art gallery and top of the silo into an observatory.

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- **Lee County:** The Nachusa Grasslands Preserve has relocated the 1868 timber-frame bank barn from nearby Ashton to the Preserve where it is being used as a dual-purpose headquarters and storage building.
- **Adams County:** The Lewis Round Barn originally scheduled for demolition has been moved to the County Fairgrounds and is open to the public. Adams County continues to work on their rural structures survey.
- **Clark County:** The “Barn Again” Exhibit was in the City of Marshall during December and January. 8 of the 13 townships have their rural structures survey completed and the remaining 5 townships are about half completed.

This November 2001 the County sponsored their first Barn Tour (see booklet), priming the local citizens for the “Barn Again” Exhibit which followed in December.

- **Edgar County:** The County has begun to do a rural structures Survey. Many of the school children from Edgar County traveled to neighboring Clark County to see the “Barn Again” Exhibit.
- **Greene County:** Continues to have their annual Fall Barn Tour (15th). This was a favorite of Wayne Price who always helped with the research of the barns and the writing of their programs.
- **Piatt County:** Produced their 5th Annual Barn Tour in October 2001 (see booklet). Of the 8 townships within the County, 4 have completed their rural structures survey.
- **Champaign County:** There is still talk concerning the moving of the University Farms further south away from St. Marys Road, so that hi-tec incubator businesses can be established on the western edge of the farms.
- **Brown County:** A small County with little people resources continues to work on a photographic survey of all the barns within the County. According to the local historian “We haven’t forgotten our Barns”. Brown County was another place where Wayne Price liked to work.

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- **McLean County:** Within the past two years the McLean County Extension Service has begun a rural structure survey.
- **Stephenson County:**
- **Barn organization**—Illinois State Historical Society has a Save Our Barns Committee, but no strong not for profit organization has been formed in the state for barn preservation.
- **Publications/Internet**
- Kane County published a 2002 calendar “Rustic Roads” which features many barns and rural outbuildings.

The list of National Register properties in Illinois is now available on the internet at www.state.il.us/HPA. Some photographs of NR properties and the nomination forms are available (not all yet). Eventually, this information will be accessible for all National Register properties and all survey information.

- **Barn Rehab/Preservation**
- Heritage Grants—this program continues into its second year. It provides up to 60% of total project costs not to exceed \$50,000. Property must be listed in the NR or locally landmarked. Currently the properties must be publicly owned or not for profits.

Other

- The National Register program continues to see a number of applications for farmsteads and barns each year which are good candidates for NR listing. However, very few are listed because applicants do not follow through.

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- The Illinois Historic Preservation Agency has been contacted by a number of local park districts and historical societies interested in preserving barns on park property.
- The IHPA's Review and Compliance Section has seen a number of proposed cellular tower placements at farmsteads. Locating these towers in the barnyard or very close to barns or outbuildings.

Critical Needs

Financial incentives for barn rehabilitation
Contractor list of those who do work on barns in Illinois
An active not-for-profit barn organization in the state.

Future Efforts

IHPA will just keep on doing what they do best.

The Illinois Future Farmers of America is working on a book on the Barns of Illinois. Bob has persuaded them not to produce a coffee table book that only has Geewiz value.