

MCHENRY COUNTY RURAL HISTORIC
STRUCTURES SURVEY

SURVEY NARRATIVE

Prepared by Nancy L. Baker
McHenry County Department of Planning
for the
Illinois Historic Preservation Agency

Revised: February 1987

The activity which is the subject of this McHenry County Historic Structures Survey Narrative has been financed in part with federal funds from the Department of the Interior, administered by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Department of Interior nor the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation by the Department of the Interior or the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency.

MCHENRY COUNTY RURAL HISTORIC STRUCTURES SURVEY

I. MCHENRY COUNTY OVERVIEW

McHenry County is located in Northeastern Illinois, 25 miles west of Lake Michigan and about 40 miles northwest of downtown Chicago. The County consists of 17 political townships, 27 municipalities, and numerous unincorporated communities. It is bordered by Lake County on the east; Cook, Kane, and DeKalb Counties on the south; Boone County on the west; and the Wisconsin Counties of Walworth and Kenosha on the north. Geographically, McHenry County is rectangular in shape, measuring approximately 611 square miles.

In 1980, the population of McHenry County was 147,897. The City of Crystal Lake is the largest municipality in the County with a 1980 population of 18,590; the Village of Bull Valley is the smallest with a population of 509.

Samuel and Margaret Gillilan are recognized as the first permanent white residents in the County, arriving in the Algonquin area in 1834. Within a few years, settlements were scattered throughout the County. These early settlers found extensive stream networks, an abundance of timber and prairie vegetation, and productive soils.

Three main routes were used to reach McHenry County from Chicago--the Kinzie or Great Chicago Trail (present U.S. 14)

extended northwest from Chicago and diagonally across the county; the Rockford to Chicago Trail (present U.S. 20) running northwest from Elgin through the southwestern part of the County; and the Fox River Trail running north from Elgin to McHenry.

The City of Chicago has always been a major influence on the growth and development of McHenry County. Chicago was the major trading center for early County residents, though some residents in the northeastern part of the County turned to Milwaukee, Racine, or Kenosha, Wisconsin. In recent decades, substantial development, particularly in the eastern third of the County, has resulted in the conversion of thousands of acres of farmland (and farmsteads) to urban uses. In the western half of the County, residential development has typically been in the form of large lot subdivisions or on individual 5 to 10 acre parcels. As the consolidation of farmland holdings continues, the division and sale of small parcels containing farm residences and farm buildings is becoming a common occurrence.

II. PREVIOUS RURAL PRESERVATION EFFORTS

This survey is the first comprehensive inventory of historic structures in unincorporated McHenry County. Previous efforts have concentrated on urban areas and on rural residences with little attention given to other farm buildings. Three residences in unincorporated McHenry County have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places--they are the George Stickney House, the Terwilliger House, and the Orson Rogers House. These residences

were nominated by the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission following the publication of the McHenry County Historic Landmarks Survey and the McHenry County Historic Structures Interim Reports under the auspices of the Illinois Department of Conservation.

McHenry County has had an agriculture oriented zoning ordinance since 1979. This ordinance requires a minimum lot size of 160 acres on land with agricultural zoning. While this ordinance protects farmland, it in no way encourages the preservation of historic farm structures.

III. SURVEY FRAMEWORK

The McHenry County Rural Historic Structures Survey is intended to provide the foundation for future preservation efforts in unincorporated McHenry County. All structures built prior to 1945 in unincorporated McHenry County were surveyed as well as pre-1945 structures within the Village of Bull Valley and the Village of Prairie Grove. Both villages are rural in character and were incorporated in 1977 and 1973 respectively.

A. SURVEY PERSONNEL

Nancy Baker, a senior planner for the McHenry County Department of Planning, was designated as the project supervisor and main participant in the McHenry County Rural Historic Structures Survey. SuzAnne Ehardt, senior planner, and Harry Luckey, senior draftsman, were assigned to the project on an "as time permits" basis. Diane Banks and Kay Derdeyn provided secretarial assistance and assisted in assembling photographs, cards, and negatives. Annette LeVernier and Bill Howard were hired as project interns

for a 10 week period to perform survey fieldwork.

B. SURVEY DETAILS

Work on the Rural Historic Structures Survey began on May 14, 1986 following notification from the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency that the project would be funded. a 60-day extension of the project completion date was requested immediately. Work on the project was performed throughout the summer and fall of 1986. At the request of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, the survey narrative was revised in January and February of 1987.

The first phase of the project was devoted to finalizing all details necessary to conduct the survey. Press releases were sent to all local media and the county sheriff's department was informed of the field survey and was asked to forward all inquiries to the McHenry County Department of Planning. Cost estimates were obtained for all photographic supplies and equipment. Project interns were hired following interviews of all interested applicants.

McHenry County was divided into three survey zones. Zones 1 and 2 each consisted of six relatively rural townships while Zone 3 consisted of five townships which included the Fox River Valley.

Actual fieldwork began on June 9, 1986. A typical survey day started a 8:00 a.m. when the survey team reported any problems or concerns to the project supervisor and ended at 5:00 p.m. Project interns typically worked 40 hour weeks because little overtime compensation was budgeted. Routes were chosen, when possible, which would minimize problems with sunlight and traffic.

In McHenry County, 4,867 historic sites were inventoried

and approximately 5,200 miles were driven. No estimate was made of the miles walked along the Fox River.

1. Photographic Supplies and Equipment

A Nikon FG 35 mm camera and Tokina 28 mm lens were purchased for use by the survey team. After approximately 3,000 photographs, camera batteries were in need of replacement. Cold weather in November also created battery problems, but the camera gave the survey team no other difficulties.

Kodak Plus X 35 mm black and white film, 36 exposure rolls, were used throughout most of the survey; however, 23 rolls of Tri X film were used near the end because the vendor failed to order more Plus X on time. Most of the Tri X film was shot on cloudy days and no noticeable difference in quality was observed.

All exposed rolls of film were processed and hand-printed by DeWayne's Studio in Woodstock, Illinois.

(DeWayne's had provided the lowest cost estimate for both film and film processing of all vendors contacted.) The photo lab was not particularly careful in handling the film, despite frequent requests. Two rolls of negatives were destroyed completely in the developing process and negatives were allowed to touch, thus destroying parts of four other rolls of film. These photographs were retaken at the photo lab's expense.

Four prints of each negative were made at various exposures settings, usually resulting in two good prints to choose from. About 100 individual frames were returned to

the studio because no prints were satisfactory. One hundred fifty-six rolls of film were processed resulting in approximately 5,600 2" x 3" prints.

2. Mapping

Because of the large number and density of sites in McHenry County which were built prior to 1945, and the lack of detail on the Illinois Department of Transportation map, site mapping proved to be a greater challenge than expected. The best alternative seemed to be the use of township maps from the McHenry County Plat Book, published by the Rockford Map Company; however, even these maps did not provide sufficient detail for unincorporated communities and subdivisions. For these developed areas, 11" x 17" photocopies of McHenry County parcel maps were made. The scale of these maps was 1" = 800'. In retrospect, a better scale would have been the 1" = 400' parcel maps which were used for several of the final maps and which were forwarded to the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency.

C. PROBLEMS IN THE FIELD

Weather did not seriously disrupt field survey work in Zones 1 and 2; however, bad weather caused major delays in Zone 3. Even light rain was a problem in Zone 3 because much of the area was surveyed on foot and there was no way to protect survey materials or the camera. Heavy rains in October led to flooding which made most subdivisions along the Fox River inaccessible. Finally, record cold temperatures and snow further delayed the field survey in November.

Vegetation was perhaps a greater problem in McHenry County than in many counties in Illinois, because woodlands were once so plentiful. McHenry County contains many farmsteads which sit a considerable distance from the road. This problem was further complicated by closed gates and "keep out" signs at the end of the driveways. The use of ornamental hedges, planted across front lawns, also made photography difficult.

Houses and cottages along the Fox River were constructed to face the river rather than the road. In most instances, additions were constructed on the back (street side) of the residence, often making identification of the original form difficult. Garages were always constructed along the road, thus making photography more difficult.

Many of the larger residences along the Fox River and Pistakee Bay did not fall within the categories listed on the rural survey cards. Cottages were typed as the rural form they most closely resembled.

Traffic was a problem on major highways and even on less traveled roads; parking along the roadsides was difficult because of hills and steep ditches.

D. ATTITUDES

Overall, landowners were cooperative, though suspicious, if asked for permission to take a photograph from a location other than the roadside. Every effort was made to carefully explain the purpose of the project and obtain permission to take a photograph of structures that were not visible from the road. Some property owners (or tenants) ordered the survey team to

leave, even if photographs were taken from a public road.

The timing of tax bills also presented a problem and led to the assumption that the photographs would be used to raise taxes, regardless of the explanation given. Numerous landowners expressed opinions regarding the usefulness of the survey and questioned the expenditure of tax dollars on the survey. This attitude was especially prevalent among owners of small cottages along the Fox River who must maintain their own roads and receive few county services.

IV. SURVEY OBSERVATIONS

For purposes of discussion, historic sites will be grouped into three categories--farmsteads, unincorporated communities and nonfarm structures, and Fox River corridor structures.

A. FARMSTEADS

The majority of farmsteads occur in Zones 1 and 2. A typical farmstead in McHenry County consists of a medium to large farm residence in good repair, a dairy barn in good to fair repair, a pumphouse and/or milkhouse located near the dairy barn, a small corn crib, two or more concrete silos, an abandoned chicken house, a new metal machine shed and one or two smaller wooden sheds.

1. Barns

Though dairying has declined in McHenry County, it is still a major farm industry. Dairy barns are almost always large in size, many dating to the late 19th century. Additions to these barns were found to take many forms including "T" or "L" shaped additions; additions in length that would go un-

noticed except for differences in foundation materials, windows or symmetry; and shed-like additions extending on the side of the barn or from the gable end of the barn.

Original native oak timbers can still be found inside many old barns and landowners proudly point out the white-washed bark on these old logs. Fieldstone foundations can be readily observed throughout McHenry County. As the cement holding these stones together crumbles away, some farmers are opting to have a concrete foundation poured around the original stone foundation. Twentieth century barns generally utilized a poured or block foundation.

Many variations on siding materials were observed. While farmers used to cover old wooden siding with asbestos, today's farmers are replacing old wood with vertical metal sheeting. Many barns still exhibit wood shingle roofs, but few retain their original wood ventilators or cupolas.

Gable barns, gable barns with extensions, gambrel barns, and dairy gambrels are very common in McHenry County. Dairy gothic barns are also common but few predate 1945. Small western barns are a very recent form in McHenry County and have been built to accommodate a very large horse population.

Only one round barn remains in the County. It is located west of Marengo on River Road and dates to 1897. This barn is in good condition and is probably not in immediate danger of destruction. One eight-sided barn was observed east of Spring Grove on East Main Street Road. It too, is not in immediate danger of destruction.

Perhaps the most impressive barns were observed on Bay Road near the southeast end of Pistakee Bay on what was once the George Sayer Farm No. 1. This farm contains three gambrel barns constructed of blocks--two of which are very large in size. The third barn is also large and contains a cement silo constructed inside the barn, extending up through the roof. All three barns retain their wood shingles.

2. Silos

McHenry County has the distinction of being the location of the first vertical silo in the United States. The stone foundation of this silo built by Lewis Hatch near Spring Grove remains and has been plaqued by the McHenry County Historical Society and a marker has been erected by the American Society of Agricultural Engineers.

McHenry County farmers soon followed Hatch's example and built many different types of silos. Four wooden silos remain in McHenry County, though because they tended to be rather short in height, it is possible that additional wood silos were overlooked. All remaining wood silos appear to be in disrepair.

Brick silos also tended to be shorter in height, however, several examples were observed. These brick silos are usually red in color and seem to be concentrated more in the eastern half of the county. Glazed tile silos are more common than brick silos and colors range from carmel to dark brown.

3. Windmills, Pumphouses, and Tanks

Abandoned windmills, or at least windmill towers are a common occurrence on the landscape. Pumphouses have also survived, probably because they were used by dairy farmers to cool their milk. No above ground tanks were observed in McHenry County, though they can be found in surrounding counties.

4. Corncribs

Corncribs take many sizes and forms. Small rectangular corncribs give the appearance of small sheds because many have been re-sided for other purposes. Large two-story rectangular corncribs and small round wire corncribs were observed throughout the county. Oval shaped corncribs, constructed of concrete blocks, were found in the southwestern quarter of the county. According to Midwestern Vernacular; Farm Structures in Kane County, these cribs were built in the 1920's and 1930's and were designed in DeKalb, Illinois.

5. Farm Residences

The most frequently occurring residential forms on farms in McHenry County are the "Upright and Wing" and the "Prairie Square." There are also numerous examples of I-houses, four-over-four houses, L-cottages, bungalows, Italianate houses, Greek Revival houses and Carpenter Gothic houses.

McHenry County's old houses exemplify the variety of building materials available to 19th century county resi-

dents. Wood was plentiful throughout the County and builders made use of native oak trees in all phases of construction. Fieldstone foundations were used throughout the County, however, limestone, which was quarried in western Marengo Township, was used for the foundations of several buildings in the Marengo area.

Clay was also plentiful and many of the old brick houses used bricks produced by local brick companies. Historical accounts report that this brick was not of particularly high quality, but nevertheless, many examples survive today.

Of particular note is the use of cobblestone in McHenry County. No cobblestone sided houses exist in unincorporated areas of the county; however two cobblestone farmhouses are within the corporate limits of the City of Crystal Lake. Cobblestone foundations were observed at various locations on the eastern side of the county. These foundations were constructed prior to 1860.

B. UNINCORPORATED COMMUNITIES AND NONFARM STRUCTURES

Historical maps, atlases, and platbooks record the locations of many small "villages" or unincorporated communities. Some, such as Tryon's Grove or Walkup's Corners, were simply intersections of two fairly well traveled roads where a school was erected. Like the school, the crossing was named for the family living there. Others, like Deep Cut or English Prairie, were the locations of a post office. Today, these locations

blend in with the surrounding landscape and go unnoticed unless there is the telltale presence of a schoolhouse or cemetery.

Other unincorporated crossroads communities such as Riley, Harmony, Franklinville, Big Foot, and Barreville were never platted as towns, but they typically consisted as a cluster of buildings including a school, church, townhall, general store, blacksmith shop, a cheese factory, and several residences. Coral was platted in 1866 (long after it was settled) but is similar to the above crossroads communities in other respects. These crossroads communities still retain a cluster of structures and a roadside sign provides the name of the community.

Several unincorporated communities were actually platted as towns, and some even prospered, for awhile. Plats were recorded for Alden, Chemung, Greenwood, Johnsburg, Lawrence, Ridgefield, Ringwood, and Solon Mills. With the exception of Greenwood and Johnsburg, these towns were all located along railroad lines (and actually predated the arrival of the railroad.) Each of these towns once had a small but identifiable business district which offered most of the goods and services of a typical 19th century town. All of these towns offer good historic preservation opportunities.

Unincorporated Wonder Lake, unincorporated McCullom Lake, Boulevard Park on Slocum Lake, and Lilymoor compose a fourth category of unincorporated communities. These areas began as summer vacation or recreational areas during the 1920's, 1930's, and 1940's. They contain hundreds of small summer cottages, most of which have been converted to year-round residences

after considerable alteration. Very few cottages are architecturally or aesthetically significant, and thus, these areas would be given low priority for preservation activities.

Rural nonfarm structures once included schools, chuches, stage stops, cheese factories, breweries, brick factories, and other industries. While most of these structures have long since disappeared; schools continue to provide variety to the rural landscape. The typical surviving school is a traditional one room schoolhouse sitting on about one acre of land with large oak trees along the property lines. Though some of these schoolhouses have been converted to single family residences and have undergone a series of additions, excellent examples remain undisturbed, particularly in western McHenry County. The biggest threat facing these structures is probably vandalism and neglect.

One of the few industrial sites left in rural McHenry County is the American Terra Cotta Corporation plant, now T. C. Industries. It is located within the Village of Prairie Grove, but the area is still predominantly agricultural. The company, which began in 1881, was once one of the largest manufacturers of terra cotta in the United States. The office building for T. C. Industries is a residence with a cobblestone foundation and was constructed in 1851. T. C. Industries has already established a small museum on the property exhibiting American Terra Cotta products.

C. THE FOX RIVER CORRIDOR

The Fox River enters McHenry County at Pistakee Bay in the northeast corner of McHenry Township and continues south through Nunda Township. The river leaves McHenry County in the northeast corner of Algonquin Township and then curves back into the County near Fox River Grove. From Fox River Grove, it flows in a southwesterly direction and finally leaves the County at the Village of Algonquin.

The Fox River was a shallow, slow moving stream prior to the construction of a lock and dam in the early twentieth century. Two of the earliest settlements in the county occurred at points along the river where Indians had constructed fords. (These settlements grew into the present City of McHenry and the Village of Algonquin.) The Fox River shoreline remained relatively unchanged until the late 1880's with only farmsteads spread out along the river, with the exception of a small area on the east side of the river which was part of the McHenry "Original Town" plat.

The recreational potential of the Fox River was realized by 1875 when at least two steamboats advertised trips from the Village of McHenry to the Chain of Lakes (Pistakee Lake, Fox Lake, and Grass Lake.) The excursions were reportedly taken by "pleasure seekers," picnikers, hunters, and fishermen from the area and from as far away as Elgin and Chicago. The lotus beds in Grass Lake (Lake County) were probably the biggest attraction until they were destroyed by heavy recreational boat traffic.

As the popularity of these attractions increased, hotels

and clubgrounds were constructed to accommodate out-of-town visitors. The first development on the McHenry County side of Pistakee Bay was probably the Spring Lake Club Grounds, located along the southern most end of the bay. Other clubgrounds, resorts, and subdivisions were soon developed all around Pistakee Bay.

Judging from the size, style, and building materials used on the summer homes around the bay, these turn of the century summer residents were very affluent. The area has declined in recent decades, probably in part due to the water quality of Pistakee Bay. Most residences have been converted to year-round residences; hotels have been put to other uses (apartments, religious retreats) or torn down; and large estates have been subdivided.

The Pistakee Bay area in general offers many preservation possibilities. Residents of the Mineral Springs Beach Subdivision, developed in 1904, expressed an interest in National Register recognition. This subdivision contains structures with good integrity and is a fairly representative example of the Pistakee Bay area, though every subdivision has its own unique qualities in terms of size and styles of structures.

In 1982, the first subdivisions began to develop along the Fox River between McHenry and Pistakee Bay. Houses in these subdivisions were generally not as large as those around Pistakee Bay but they were more substantial than the cottages of subdivisions which developed later. The integrity of structures in these subdivisions varies from very good to altered beyond recognition.

The Emerald Park Subdivision located south of McHenry in Nunda Township was the only subdivision to develop south of the City of McHenry prior to 1900. Emerald Park exhibits the same characteristics of those subdivisions developed during the 1890's north of McHenry.

The 1920's brought a real burst of subdivision activity along the shores of the Fox River from Algonquin to Pistakee Bay. More than 50 subdivisions were recorded between 1920 and 1929. These subdivisions were characterized by small cottages on narrow lots which were originally intended for summertime use only, but like older residences along the Fox River and Pistakee Bay, these summer cottages have since been converted to year-round use. Many Fox River subdivisions were summertime extensions of Chicago neighborhoods, ethnic communities, or organizations.

The depression of the 1930's brought cottage building to a halt, and forced some people to sell their city houses and live in their Fox River cottage year-round. When construction resumed, the same small cottage forms were utilized, making it very difficult to date many of the cottages along the river.

The Fox River has been the site of the Illinois Turner Camp since the turn of the century. The camp was originally located on the north side of the river at the site of the present Cary Country Club; the camp moved across the river in the 1920's. The Turner Camp contains 308 buildings, many dating back to the 1920's. The dining hall was part of the original camp on the north side of the river and was cut into four sections and floated

across the river. The dining hall, along with the men's and ladies' clubhouses, the crafthouse, and many of the cottages, are still relatively unaltered and provide a reminder of summertime along the Fox River during the first half of this century.

The Fox River has also been the home of Camp Algonquin since the 1920's. Camp Algonquin was founded as a camp for underprivileged children from Chicago. Like the Turner Camp, many of the original structures remain in good condition and additional historical documentation could be obtained.

V. HISTORIC LANDSCAPES

Even to the untrained eye, McHenry County seems to exhibit a wide variety of historic landscape remnants.

Evidence of millraces is reported to exist in various locations throughout the county. A mill race near the village of Chemung and one in southwestern Seneca Township were observed by the survey team and are very evident on current air photos.

Stage coach ruts are still apparant in a wooded portion of northwest Dunham Township near the Boone County line. Ruts are also reported to exist along U.S. 14 in Hartland Township.

Evidence of early gravel and clay extraction activities can be found in Nunda and Dorr Townships. It is likely that a historic landscape survey would find many remnants of the brickmaking activities that were once located throughout the county. Nineteenth century limestone quarrying can be detected in northwest Dunham Township.

The McHenry County Conservation District has preserved one of the earliest large-scale gravel pits in the county. This site,

known as "The Hollows," is located along U.S. 14, northwest of the Village of Cary. Gravel mining took place at The Hollows from the 1910's through the 1960's, with different mining technologies leaving different "tracks." An early homesite has also been discovered in archeological digs on the property.

Other McHenry County Conservation District sites contain 20th century fence rows, windbreaks, and various archeological finds. The Queen Anne Cemetery in Greenwood Township is one of a very few examples of native prairie vegetation.

Abandoned railroad right of ways also contribute to the diversity of the historic landscape. Remnants of the Rockford and Kenosha Railroad line can be found between Harvard and Alden, though much of it has been removed and plowed under. Eastward from Alden, the right of way was acquired by a single landowner and has been preserved. The bed of an electric railroad line which was supposed to run between Marengo and Harvard (but was never operational) can still be observed along Ill. 23 in a few locations. Portions of the Sycamore--Woodstock traction line south of Marengo are also reportedly still visible.

Modern agricultural practices have generally obliterated historic field patterns, fence rows, windbreaks, and woodlands, though many farmyards retain trees which were planted more than a century ago.

The landscape around small remodeled schoolhouses helped confirm the original "school" use of the structure. These schoolyards tend to be quite flat with trees only around the perimeter.

General areas where a trained landscape historian would most likely find concentrations of historic landscape features include River Road in Marengo Township; northwest Dunham Township; the area around the village of Greenwood; and along VanderKarr Road in Hebron Township.

VI. PRESERVATION STRATEGY

Growth and development pressures exist throughout McHenry County, but rural historic structures are most in jeopardy in the eastern third of McHenry County from the Cook County line to Johnsburg. Sixteen (16) of the County's 27 municipalities are competing for undeveloped land in this area. Though some of these communities have shown a regard for historic structures, their definition of historic structures has not included farm buildings.

Perhaps the biggest threat to rural structures in the western two-thirds of the County is vandalism and neglect. Fire has claimed many barns in the past few years along with other structures of historical importance.

McHenry County's flood hazard ordinance will allow for very little new development along the Fox River, while the demand for riverfront property is high. Alterations and additions are allowed by the flood hazard ordinance, thus many owners have taken small riverfront cottages and turned them into rather substantial year-round residences. This phenomenon is likely to continue and fewer and fewer examples of typical old Fox River cottages will be found.

A. EXISTING PRESERVATION EFFORTS

The McHenry County Historical Society has undertaken a county-wide plaquing program to recognize historic sites of cultural or architectural importance, both in municipalities and in unincorporated areas. Plaqued sites include the location of the first vertical silo in the United States, and schools, churches, a stage stop, mills, log cabins, and residences. The majority of the 29 sites plaqued to date would not qualify for the National Register, but they are all representative of various aspects of McHenry County's history.

In addition to the rural National Register sites listed on page 2 of this report, the following are also listed on the National Register:

- Woodstock Opera House--Woodstock
- Old McHenry County Courthouse--Woodstock
- Charles Hibbard House--Marengo
- Count's House--McHenry
- Woodstock Square Historic District

The Illinois Agricultural Areas Conservation and Protection Act provides for the protection of farmland through the (voluntary) formation of agricultural areas. To date, six agricultural areas have been established by the McHenry County Board. Several of the farms in these agricultural areas have been in the same family for a century or more. These farm families who have voluntarily committed themselves to protecting farmland resources are also concerned with preserving farm heritage. A complete discussion of McHenry County's farmland protection strategies can be found in Farms and Farmland: A Study of McHenry County

Agriculture. The map on the following page locates the six agricultural areas that have been established in McHenry County.

B. FUTURE PRESERVATION STRATEGY

The Illinois County Preservation Act provides McHenry County with a means of implementing a variety of historic preservation programs. A preservation study committee should be established immediately to review preservation alternatives and recommend a county-wide preservation plan. The celebration of McHenry County's Sesquicentennial in 1987 may help to make the public more receptive to, and interested in, historic preservation.

Through a preservation study committee, a list of sites that should be considered for nomination to the National Register could be developed and refined. This list should include representative examples of all building types and uses that were significant in the County's history. Dairy farms, wooden silos, residences with native brick and cobblestones, cheese factories and dairies, Pistakee Bay mansions, Fox River cottages, schools and town halls all contribute to a landscape rich with historic structures. The list of sites at the end of this report contains several likely National Register nominations.

At least two unincorporated communities are possible candidates for National Register historic district nominations. The Village of Greenwood contains several historic buildings in good condition including a school, town hall, church, general store,

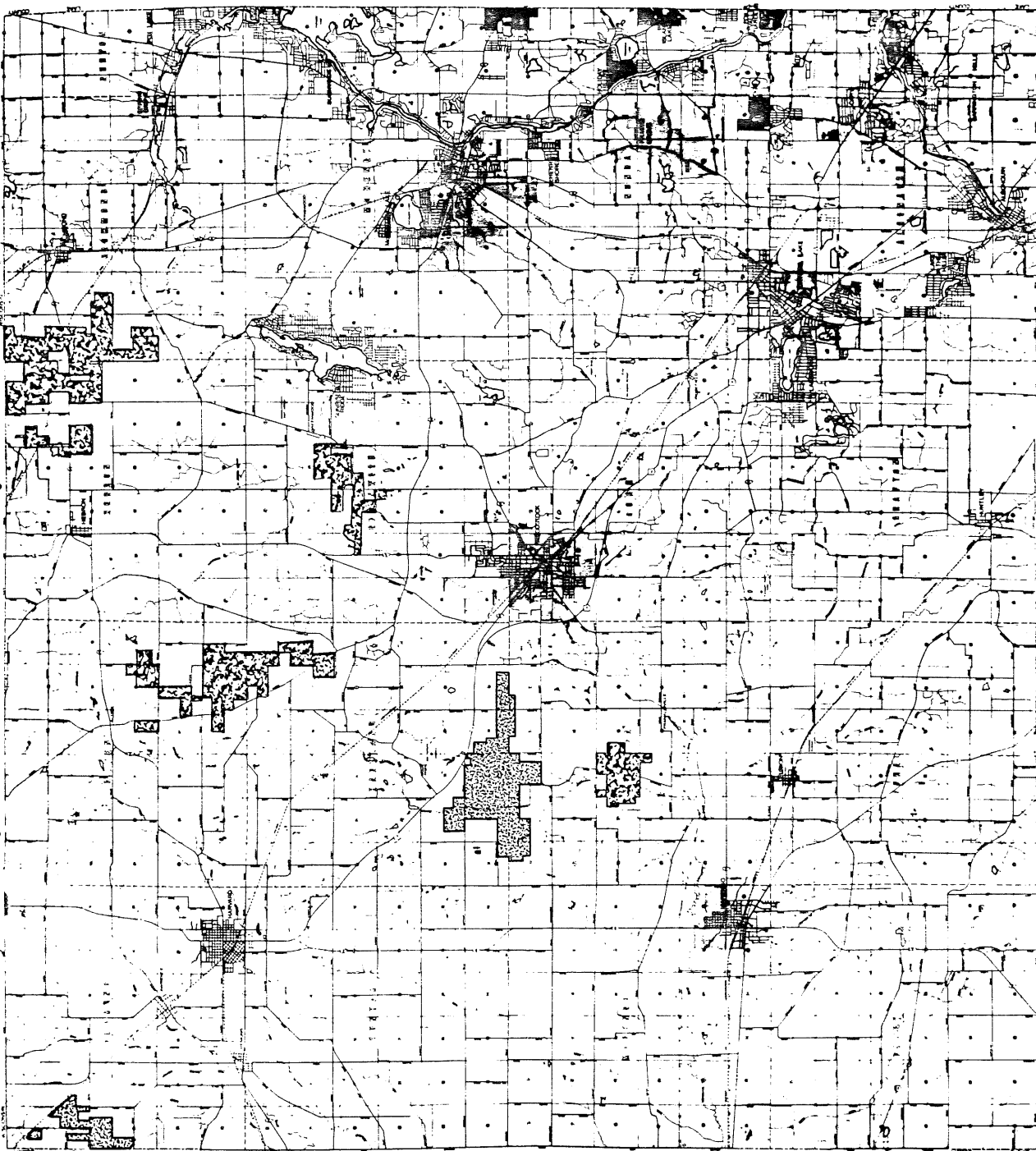
McHENRY COUNTY

ILLINOIS

BASE MAP

AGRICULTURAL AREAS IN McHENRY COUNTY

AGRICULTURAL AREAS



Scale: 1 inch = 1 mile

North Arrow

McHENRY COUNTY GENERAL PLANNING COMMISSION

1970

and various residences. The village of Ridgefield was settled very early in the county's history. Like Greenwood, it contains a variety of old buildings, though some of these structures have been altered. Ridgefield antique merchants are quite interested in anything that will promote the historic "charm" of their community.

Implementation of the Illinois County Preservation Act should involve a multifaceted approach. Programs initially should be oriented toward creating an awareness of, and interest in, the historic resources of McHenry County. Several examples of private adaptive reuse of old and/or historic structures can be cited--including the conversion of a mill in McHenry to office space, a dimestore in Woodstock to a retail shopping mall, a barn in Alden Township to a residence, a summer kitchen in Dorr Township to a cottage, and the incorporation of a silo in an Algonquin Township residence.

The Preservation Study Committee should consider the designation of McHenry County "heritage corridors," thus calling attention to the various aspects of the county's natural and cultural history. This could be done in conjunction with the county-wide trail plan which was recently initiated by the McHenry County Planning Department and the McHenry County Conservation District.

The Preservation Study Committee should consider preparing an ordinance establishing and regulating historic landmarks and districts. The actual likelihood that such an ordinance would be adopted is doubtful unless a voluntary approach is used.

Thus the committee should also offer incentive programs, such as low interest loans or property tax reductions, to encourage participation.

The McHenry County Zoning Ordinance should be reviewed for its affect on the preservation of historic structures. At present, it appears that the Zoning Ordinance would greatly restrict alternative uses of historic properties. If this proves to be true, amendments to the ordinance which would allow greater flexibility of lot sizes and which would require screening of developments adjacent to designated historic structures should be considered.

The following is a list of sites which the survey team identified as very old, unusual, or significant in the County's history.

<u>SITE</u>	<u>COMMENTS</u>
12	This Greek Revival House on Greenwood Road is believed to have been constructed in 1857. The original brick has been painted white and some remodeling has occurred; most obvious is the installation of a large picture window on the street side of the house. A smokehouse, constructed of the same brick and style of the house sits to the north of the house. Also on the same site is a small one room frame schoolhouse, in good condition, now used as a residence.
21	The residence and one of the barns on this farmstead were constructed in the 1850's. The residence is a typical upright and wing farmhouse and has not been altered except for the original siding which is now covered with asbestos. The farm has been in the same family for over a century.
70	The Greenwood General Store, still in use today, is one of several structures in the Village of Greenwood which warrants historic preservation considerations. It was built in 1894 by Will Westerman. The outside of the structure has seen very few alterations.

- 80 The Greenwood Town Hall, located in the Village of Greenwood has seen very few changes since its construction in 1887.
- 110 The Greenwood School is a two story brick structure, constructed in 1859. Though the school is presently used as two apartments (1 upstairs, 1 downstairs) the outside of the structure retains its original form. The owner of the property is very dedicated to the preservation of McHenry County history.
- 214 This farmstead, located in Alden Township, is included in this list because it is a centennial farm.
- 263 This house is included on the list because it is one of a very few examples of Queen Anne farmhouses found in McHenry County. No ornamental details survive. The barns, sheds and other structures are very deteriorated.
- 272 This farmstead was pictured in the McHenry County 1872 Combination Atlas. The farmhouse, now abandoned, retains it's original doors and windows, however dormers, a porch, and a shed-like addition were added. The original siding has been covered with asbestos siding. The barn appears to be used for hay storage only.
- 290 This brick residence has been known throughout

County history as the "Mansion Farm." Horace Capron, a member of the family that first occupied the house, was a prominent U.S. citizen - he served as a special agent over Indian tribes in Texas, was a brigadier general and adjutant to General Grant in the Civil War, was Commissioner of Agriculture under Presidents Johnson and Grant, and introduced agricultural practices and products to Japan. Granville Bates, a star of silent movies, was born in the Mansion House. The house was originally constructed of red brick brought from Milwaukee in 1850 and 1851, then covered with pebble-dash. In the process of restoration, recent owners found that the bricks were in need of replacement. The house also originally had a cupola which was removed many years ago.

332 This brick Italianate house is one of several on Vander Karr Road which merit further consideration. Very few alterations appear to have been made to the exterior of the structure.

337 This impressive Greek Revival residence on Vander Karr Road appears almost identical to the structure in the 1872 Combination Atlas. It is in excellent condition. The front view is obscured by tall evergreen trees, presumably planted many, many decades ago.

- 365 The original portion of the Alden School was constructed in 1896. A wing was added in 1919 to house a community high school. The school closed in 1967. This structure offers many possibilities for adaptive reuse, however the present owner has been unable to find a buyer.
- 366 This Italianate frame house is thought to be the residence of one of the original settlers of the Village of Alden - the Disbrows.
- 410 This small pyramid cottage was included in the list because of the unusual ornamental details - i.e., Italianate brackets and fishscale. It is located in the Village of Alden on Alden Road.
- 416 This former feed mill in Alden is now used as a craft and gift shop. It is a good example of a relatively inexpensive conversion of a vacant structure to a commercial use.
- 526 The Kennedy Way Station is a Greek Revival House that was an inn of the "Northwest Stage Line." The house was built in 1853 and the exterior has seen very few alterations, however the interior has undergone several changes. The house sits by itself at the top of a hill along U.S. 14.
- 543 This frame clapboard sided Italianate farmhouse

appears to be in good condition, however the farm buildings on the property are deteriorated. The present owners of the property know little of it's history.

- 559 The King School is a frame one room school house that is representative of many of the early rural schools in the county. Though the structure has deteriorated, it is relatively unchanged in form.
- 619 This store/antique shop in Big Foot is representative of turn of the century general stores in McHenry County.
- 646 Few wooden silos remain in McHenry County (or the State of Illinois). This silo is rapidly deteriorating and should be preserved. The metal fasteners date the structure to about 1915.
- 725 This farmstead has been in the Davidson family for 98 years. The owners are interested in pursuing National Register designation. The brick residence was built in 1876 and remains relatively intact. The upright and wing Italianate farmhouse sits on a limestone foundation, believed to have been quarried less than a mile away. The original portion of the barn was constructed during the Civil War and is relatively large for a barn of that time period. A brick smokehouse also remains. The trees in front

of the house were planted in the early 1870's.
THIS SITE SHOULD DEFINITELY BE CONSIDERED FOR
NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION.

- 730 This abandoned school was constructed from limestone quarried in the area. It is the only structure found to be constructed entirely of Dunham Township limestone.
- 791 This Gothic Revival residence was constructed between 1838 and 1839 by the Rodolphus Hutchinson Family. Each finial on the houses many gables is different. It is not known whether or not vergeboards were once found on the gables. This structure was plaqued by the McHenry County Historical Society in 1983. DEFINITE POTENTIAL FOR NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION.
- 1000 The sign above the entrance to the Seneca Town Hall bears the date 1885. The building has been in continuous use for town meetings and elections ever since.
- 1084 Standard School [District] 108 was built in 1914. It is included in this list as an example of early 20th Century McHenry County rural schools.
- 1269 This abandoned gas station in the Village of Chemung offers good adaptive reuse possibilities, however the site is presently zoned heavy industry.

The structure's original form has not been altered.

- 1398 No information was available on this abandoned mill in Ridgefield. A sign on the building gives a date of 1837, but no historical reference to this mill was found.
- 1524 This limestone school is one of several structures along River Road that make River Road a likely rural heritage corridor. The integrity of the exterior of the school is excellent; the structure is currently used as a residence.
- 1534 This brick Greek Revival upright and wing farmhouse was reportedly constructed in 1850. The brick entablature was found on few other Greek Revival houses in the county. The structure has a rough cut limestone foundation. Some windows have been fully or partially "bricked in."
- 1540 The only remaining round barn in McHenry County is also located on River Road. The barn was constructed in 1897. A plaque on the barn gives the names of the builders.
- 1543 Several alterations have been made to this limestone Greek Revival house on River Road. The site is included in this list because both the house and barn were pictured in the McHenry County 1872

Combination Atlas. The house was constructed in 1856 according to the owner. The owner seemed cooperative and knowledgeable about the history of the property.

- 1579 This residence did not clearly fit into any of the rural survey categories. It is a two story square structure with a hipped roof as in the prairie square, however the entablature appears to be Greek Revival. The structure is constructed of limestone, probably quarried in Marengo Township, and probably once had a cupola which was more typical of Italianate houses in the county.
- 1638-
1639 Located in the unincorporated community of Riley, these two structures along with the Riley Church are about all that remains of this small village. The Riley Town Hall was the first town hall built in McHenry County (1868). The school dates to about 1895.
- 1771 The Anson Rogers house was one of two identical houses nominated to the National Register by the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission. Only it's twin, the Orson Rogers house, was approved. The full facade porch on these two residences are fairly rare in Illinois. The McHenry County Historical Society provided the following additional information:

This Greek Revival house was built by Anson Rogers and his brother, Orson, five years after his father, Jedediah Rogers, had received the land grant from the United States government. Anson, newly arrived with his wife, from a New England cultural background, worked diligently with his brother to build this home.

Anson hauled the lumber for the columns and trim from Chicago by oxteam. The six, 14-foot Doric columns were fluted and finished by hand in the cellar during the winter months. All other trim was also created by hand.

Most of the original timber was cut from the land on which the home stands, including the solid walnut stair rail which leads to the second floor. For assurance of permanency when building, hand-hewn, solid oak timbers were used for floor joists, many measuring 18 to 20 inches square.

The main house consists of 11 rooms and 3 baths, and is an example of charming New England Colonial architecture of truly Early American design. It is of wide clapboard construction, painted snowy white, and the many old-fashioned shutters, painted grass green, offer a lovely color contrast.

The house is surrounded by giant oaks which were once dwarfed by the huge elms so abundant in this area.

The home was a center of social life during the Civil War, and many prominent people visited here; among them, it is said, Abraham Lincoln.

Anson Rogers lived here until 1867, and upon his death, the property was conveyed to his daughter, Maria Louise Rogers Seward, sister-in-law of W.H. Seward, Secretary of State in Lincoln's cabinet.

The home has been known at various times as the Rogers or Seward home, Blakely Manor, and The Coach and Four; used as a private residence, a boarding-house, a restaurant, and a dress shop.

THIS SITE SHOULD DEFINITELY BE RECONSIDERED FOR NOMINATION TO THE NATIONAL REGISTER.

1790 This farmstead includes a Second Empire house in excellent condition, a barn on a fieldstone

foundation, and a tile silo. The residence is unique in that only one other Second Empire residence was found in the rural county and the originality of it's mansard roof is in doubt.

- 1874 This 1840's Greek Revival house was constructed by one of the county's earliest residents, William Hartman. The original part of the structure is brick which was later covered by stucco.
- 1925 The William C. Rider house is one of two known log houses in the county. It was "discovered" a few years ago as the owners were in the process of demolishing the house. The present owners believe the lot house was built in 1838, but they have only been able to document 1845. This structure was plaqued by the McHenry County Historical Society.
- 2058 This unique brick residence is an example of 1930's depression-era ingenuity. There are no known alterations to the original structure.
- 2140 This farmstead on McCullom Lake Road includes an old brick Greek Revival house with brick entablature and a wood silo.
- 2167 This brick Greek Revival house was also pictured in the 1872 Combination Atlas. It's present owners reported that it was built in 1847. Major additions

obscure part of the original structure.

- 2170 The owners of this Greek Revival brick residence stated that the original structure was built in 1837, making it one of the oldest houses in the county.
- 2173 The Holcombville School was constructed in 1858. It was recently converted to a single family residence. The present owners are cooperative.
- 2716 The Richardson Farm has been in the same family for well over 100 years. The farmstead is pictured in the 1872 Combination Atlas and has been plaqued by the McHenry County Historical Society. The brick Greek Revival residence was constructed by the present resident's grandfather, who was a brick mason by trade. The barn is the same age as the house, however the original gable roof was replaced with a gambrel roof. A trained landscape historian would probably recognize significant landscape features also. THIS SITE SHOULD DEFINITELY BE CONSIDERED FOR NOMINATION TO THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES.
- 2314 According to the owners of this farmstead, both the house and barn were constructed in the 1840's. The upright and wing farmhouse appears to be fairly original in form. The barn did not appear to be actively used for farming.

- 2732 This Greek Revival upright and wing farmhouse was constructed on a cobblestone foundation. The farm buildings have been very well cared for. THIS SITE MAY HAVE POTENTIAL FOR NOMINATION TO THE NATIONAL REGISTER.
- 2741 The sign on this structure suggests that the building has existed since 1825 and is obviously in error. The building was formerly used as a store and post office and now appears to be divided into apartments.
- 2764 The Gardner farm has been in the same family since 1837. The age of the existing farm structures was not determined by the survey team.
- 2777 Only one eight sided barn was observed in McHenry County. This is one of two barns on the property and appears to be in good condition. It was probably constructed after 1910.
- 3052-
3061 The Pink Harrison Resort on Pistakee Lake is a mixture of very small cottages and marina facilities. This resort dates to the early part of the 20th century. The Harrison family members still reside in McHenry County and could likely provide extensive history and documentation.
- 3062 The Oak Park Hotel on Pistakee Lake (adjacent to

Pink Harrison's) has been a landmark on Pistakee Lake since the turn of the century. The hotel is pictured in the 1908 McHenry County Atlas. An article in the March 22, 1934 McHenry Plaindealer reported that the tavern and dining room was bombed causing extensive damage to the hotel. The exterior of the hotel structure and adjacent tavern (which is believed to have been a bowling alley) appear much as they did in the 1908 photo. The hotel is not a boarding house or apartment building.

3079-
3089

This area is a concentration of very large residences and mansions and was once an exclusive summer recreational area on Pistakee Bay. The area developed in the first quarter of the 20th century. Very little is presently known about the history of these sites but documentation is certainly possible. Local folklore describes residents and visitors as Chicago mobsters, crooked politicians, etc. during the Prohibition. Some houses have been kept in excellent condition while neighboring property has been allowed to deteriorate or has been severely altered. THIS DISTRICT SHOULD DEFINITELY BE CONSIDERED FOR NOMINATION TO THE NATIONAL REGISTER.

3129-
3134

These sites are located in an area known as Palm Beach. The residences are not as large or impressive as the previous sites, but they are a combination of

unusual, unique and intact residences. This area also includes a lovely old hotel which is used as a Catholic retreat. There was interest among some of the owners in establishing a National Register District. THIS DISTRICT SHOULD DEFINITELY BE CONSIDERED FOR NOMINATION TO THE NATIONAL REGISTER.

3143 This farm was known as the George J. Sayer Farm No. 1. This farmstead is included because the barns on the property are the largest the survey team has observed anywhere. The smallest of the three barns contains a concrete silo going up through the inside of the barn. THIS SITE SHOULD DEFINITELY BE CONSIDERED FOR NOMINATION TO THE NATIONAL REGISTER.

3339 This small Greek Revival house on Riverside Drive north of McHenry has a cobblestone foundation. It is believed to be one of the first structures built along the Fox River north of McHenry. The house was included in this list, primarily because of the foundation.

3401 This residence in Orchard Beach Subdivision was probably constructed around the turn of the century. One of the residents reported that the house was used as a seminary in the 1930's.

4606 The Turner Camp, located near Algonquin, is the home

base for the Turner National Gymnastics team. The Camp was started across the river near Cary in 1904 and moved to it's present location in the 1920's. The dining hall is the only structure that was actually moved - it was cut into four parts and floated across the river on beer barrels. Other old structures include a men's club house, a ladie's club house, and an activity center. The 300 or more cottages on the property were built at various times. For many years all cottages were required to be identical in size (14' x 20') though in recent years additions have been permitted. THIS SITE SHOULD DEFINITELY BE CONSIDERED FOR NOMINATION TO THE NATIONAL REGISTER.

4751 The Recharge Resort was in operation until the late 1960's. It is a series of small cottages built in a row up a steep hill. Some type of clubhouse appears to sit at the top of the hill.

4781 Camp Algonquin (on the Fox River) was founded as a summer camp for under privileged children and their mothers from Chicago. The Chicago Tribune Charities constructed several buildings in the 1920's. The camp is still in operation today.

4684 T.C. Industries, formerly American Terra Cotta Corporation, was once one of the largest manufacturers of terra cotta in the United States. The terra cotta used on many of the Louis Sullivan buildings came

from American Terra Cotta. Little remains of the original structures and therefore, little potential exists for National Register nomination. The MacMillan House which is now used as office space by T.C. Industries may be a good National Register candidate. The MacMillan house is a brick Greek Revival structure constructed on a cobblestone foundation in 1851.

4696 This wood silo is rapidly deteriorating. The residence on the property has been demolished, and the barn appears to be abandoned.

Photographs of Significant Structures follow (next 16 pages):

12



70



110



263 —

21



80



214



263



272 —



290



337



366



272



332



365



410



416



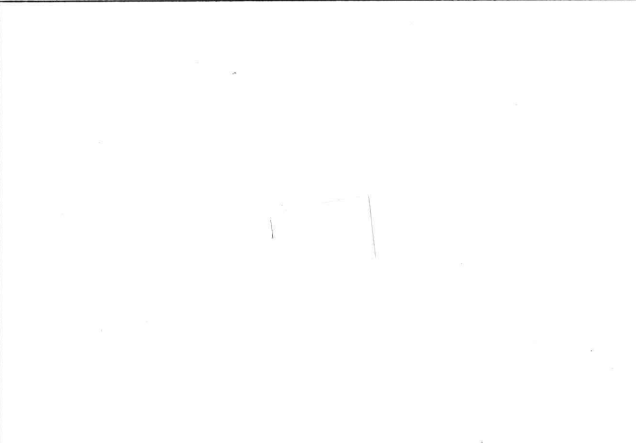
526



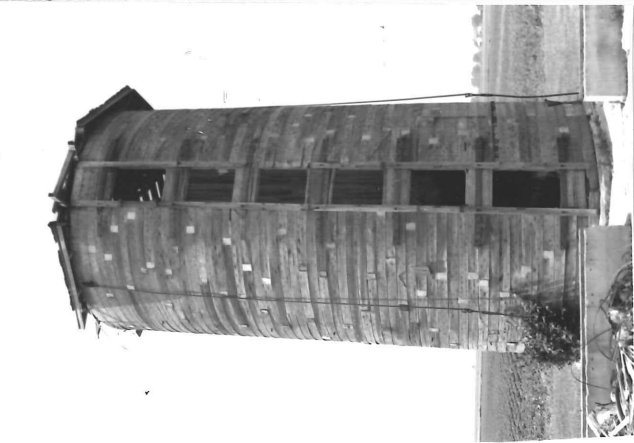
543



559



619



646



725 -



725



730



791



1000



1084



1269



1396



1524



1534



1540 —



1540 —



1540



1579



1543 —



1543



1638



1639



1771



1874



1790 -



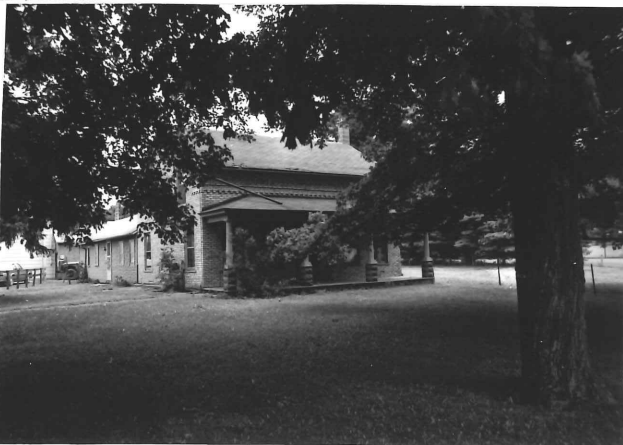
1790



1925



2058



2140-



2140



2167



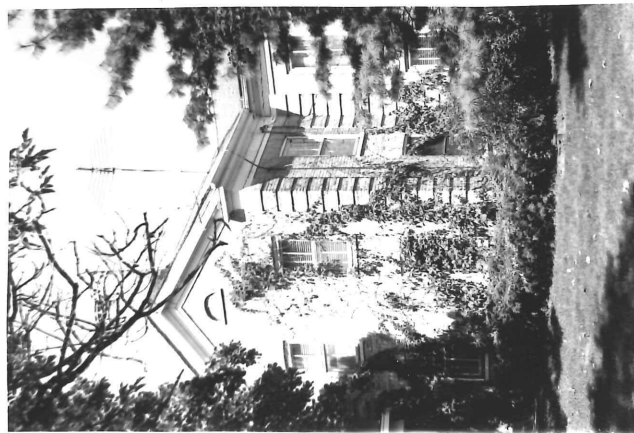
2170



2173



2132



2716



2716



2-314



2314



2732 —



2732 —



2732.



2777



2741



2741



2764



2764



2777



3052 -



3053 -



3054 -



3055 -



3056 -



3057 -



3058 -



3059 -



3061



3079 -



3081 -



3060 -



3062



3080 -



3082 -



3083 —



3084 —



3085 —



3086 —



3087 —



3088 —



3089



3129 —



3130 —



3131 —



3132 —



3133 —



3134 —



3134



3143



3339



3401



4606 -



4606 -



4606 -



4606 -



4606 -



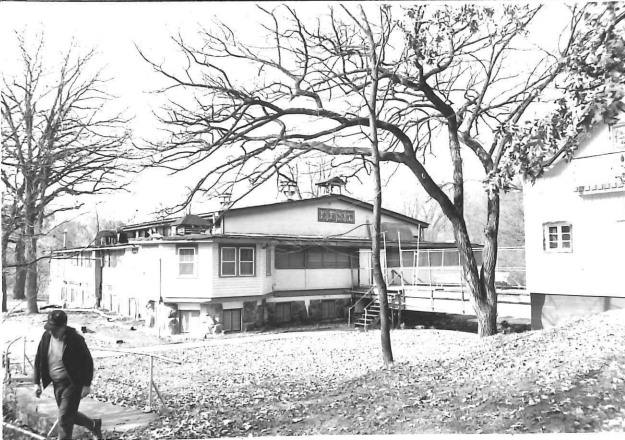
4606 -



4606 —



4606 —



4606 —



4606



4751 —



4751 —



4751 —



4751



4781 —



4781 —



4781 —



4781 —



4781 —



4781



4684 —



4684



4684



4684



4696



4696