

The Preservationist

Volume IV, Issue II

Spring 2018

Points of Interest

- Property Tax Assessment Freeze Program
- Community Foundation Grant
- Pilot Township Survey
- Cemetery Preservation Workshop

Kankakee County Historic Preservation Commissioners

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Property Tax Assessment Freeze Program

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources has certified Kankakee County's historic preservation ordinance for the purposes of the Property Tax Assessment Freeze Program that is administered by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

This program has been available to residential properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places, but will now also be available to Kankakee County landmarks.

Owners of properties designated as Kankakee County landmarks pursuant to

this ordinance are now eligible to apply to SHPO for participation in the Property Tax Assessment Freeze program.

Kankakee County landmarked property owners who are considering applying for the program should contact Carol Dyson (carol.dyson@illinois.gov or 217-524-0276), SHPO Chief Architect and Tax Incentives Coordinator, in advance of their rehabilitation project. More information about the program is available at: <https://www2.illinois.gov/dnrhistoric/Preserve/Pages/taxfreeze.aspx>

Community Foundation Grant

The Kankakee County Historic Preservation Commission was recently awarded a \$3,300 grant from the Community Foundation of Kankakee River Valley. The grant was one of several awarded at their 2018 Annual Awards Luncheon held Thursday, May 17, 2018.

The Community Foundation grant will be used in combination with a Certified Local Government grant, a federally funded grant through the National Park Service and administered by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. The funds, in addition to in-kind volunteer hours, will allow the Commission to complete an intensive Historic and Architectural Survey of Pilot Township.

The survey project began in the sum-

mer of 2017, when the historic context of Pilot Township was written and years of plat maps were gathered. The actual field survey work has been completed. Consultants Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates (WJE) are now compiling all the information to complete the project by September 2018.

This survey increases awareness of the rural heritage of Kankakee County by documenting the historic farmsteads and agricultural resources of Pilot Township. The results of the survey will assist the county in making preservation planning decisions for the next decade or more. Surveyed properties will be assessed for National Register eligibility and designation as local landmarks.

Pilot Township Survey

Two members of the Preservation Commission are sharing their personal thoughts in the following articles after their participation in the recent survey of rural Pilot Township

Pat Wagner—



The training for this survey took place on February 24, 2018 with Ken Itle of WJE, Mardene Hinton, Ron Shank and Pat Wagner of KCHPC. Ken Itle explained the procedure for conducting a survey, provided us all with a plot map of the area that we were going to survey and gave us directions as to what information we needed to capture. The first farm that we surveyed had only a few buildings left standing, with no one residing on the farm. Ken took pictures of each building, and we recorded each building with type of

structure (metal, wood, etc.), type foundation (concrete, stone, etc), roof (metal, tile, asphalt), and siding (wood, aluminum, etc. and if it was vertical or horizontal).

The survey officially started on Monday, March 12, 2018 two teams consisting of a KCHPC member and an engineer from WJE. I was on one team and what an experience it was. The engineer I worked with was a young man, Richard Pearson, and what a special young man he was. He was so enthused about our project and kept supplying me with information about each site that we visited. I learned so much from him.

Richard and I did not encounter any residents on our survey that day, as most of the sites we visited were void of houses and, in some cases, not many buildings left on the site, yet all was recorded.

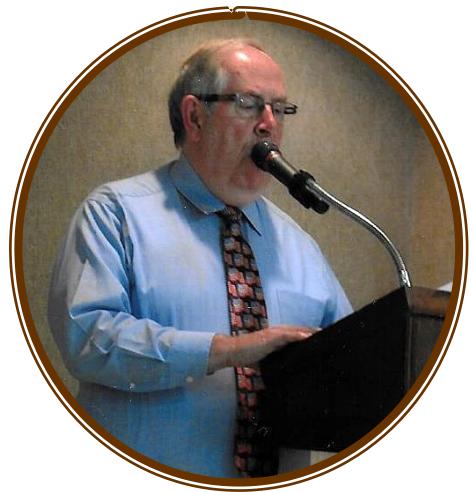
A week later Richard and I went out again, and we did encounter farm home owners. We provided them with a brochure pertaining to the Kankakee County Historic Preservation Commission, explained our mission in capturing the history of the farm and in most cases were very well received. I do believe that the property owners were pleased to be able to have the history of their farms captured.

The engineer from WJE was just a gift. He was so en-

thused to listen to the tales from the farm owners, capturing everything with pictures.

This was a wonderful learning experience for me, and I look forward to reading all of the history that was captured in the two week period in which this survey was conducted. I also look forward to the next township that we visit within Kankakee County.

Ron Shank—



I was not able to spend as much time on this as I would have liked, but I came away with a little different point of view and a new appreciation of what 2018 Pilot Township contains. I went down roads that I had never driven before as well as roads that I had traveled many times but had failed to appreciate what lies along those roads.

It was nice to see a few extant farmsteads well over 100 years old. These sites in-

Pilot Township Survey

(Continued from page 2)

cluded the house, barn, and smaller outbuildings such as milk houses, chicken coops, smaller wooden sheds, and even a wind mill in a couple of cases. Unfortunately these extant farmsteads are disappearing from the landscape. More common were sites where only the house and barn remained. A lot of these dated from the late 1800s and early 1900s. A lot of them are well preserved, and their owners have taken pride in them and wish to preserve them for further generations.

There were also a number of sites where just the house remains. The barn and the other outbuildings are gone. Barns are getting to be an endangered species, but fortunately Pilot Township still contains a number of them. In some of them you can still see the old hand-hewn beams that are the original frame work of the barns. The owners have also done an outstanding job of maintaining many of the old houses. The exteriors have been modified, and additions added in a number of cases. But you can still identify the original sections of the houses and appreciate their beauty and the fact that they have been called home by several generations of Pilot Township families over the years.

Unfortunately there are a number of farmsteads where little remains or no trace of

what was there in days gone by. Gone are all the remnants that this site was once a working farm that was home to generations of farm families. There are places in the township where there are only one or two remaining houses per mile. Two of our goals of this project were to document what is remaining in Pilot Township to increase the appreciation of what is remaining, and to emphasize the need of historical preservation in Pilot Township.

This survey included more than just houses and farmsteads. We documented the locations of churches, including both ones that remain as well as those that no longer exist. We also visited the cemeteries that are a part of the landscape in Pilot Township. We photographed the sites of the one-room public schools that were the beginning of education in Pilot Township. Only one of them still stands in its original location. We also documented the location of the two parochial schools that once existed.

This survey may not seem particularly important or meaningful to a number of people. But, to me areas such as Pilot Township represent the real America. What we are is not best observed in visiting Springfield or even Washington. Places such as

Pilot Township, to me, symbolize the real history of our country and our area. Especially when you consider that these remaining structures represent the lives, struggles and the hard work of many people and families who occupied this area during the past decades of our history. This is what made America great and represent the true history of our area and our country. Hopefully this project will help us to further appreciate our past and not take these things that we see every day for granted. I hope it will also make us realize the need for preservation of these structures before some of them are completely gone, and the next generations will be only able to read about them in a book or recognize them only by a photo that they see in a book. Lastly I would like to thank the residents of Pilot Township who were helpful and kind to us as we worked on this project. They were willing to let us photograph their homes and property. In some cases they shared stories with us about what we were photographing. Without their help and cooperation this project would not have been nearly as successful. This year is the 161st anniversary of Pilot Township, and I cannot think of a better way to observe it.



**KANKAKEE
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Cemetery Preservation Workshop

Kankakee County cemeteries are memorials to the past and offer us a irreplaceable view of the county's history and the people that came before us.

It should be our goal to preserve and protect our cemeteries. To ensure success we must have goals and follow through with those goals. What do you want to do? Does the cemetery near you need cleaning up? Are the markers damaged, leaning or need cleaning? It is important to also make plans for permanent future care.

The Historic Preservation Commission will be sponsoring a Cemetery Preservation Workshop to be presented by, Dawn Cobb, on July 12, 2018, at the Kankakee Public Library. Ms. Cobb has co-authored: Cemeteries of Illinois, A Field Guide to Markers, Monuments and Motifs. She is a bio-anthropologist and has been director of the Cultural Resource Management Program for the Illinois Department of Natural Resources since 2016, and is a Research Associate at the Illinois State Museum.

All interested individuals and especially those responsible for the care of cemeteries are welcome to join us.

Cemetery Preservation Workshop

PRESENTOR: Dawn Cobb

**Kankakee Public Library
Third Floor Conference Room
July 12, 2018
5:00 p.m.**

You are invited
all interested individuals or
those responsible
for the care of

KANKAKEE COUNTY CEMETERIES

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Blooms Grove Cemetery, Rockville Township