

# The Preservationist

Volume II, Issue III

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## Points of Interest

- An Historic House Restored
- Pembroke Tour
- Kankakee County's Historic Preservation Plan
- Meet Newest Preservation Commissioner

## Kankakee County Historic Preservation Commissioners

Mardene Hinton, chair  
John Adams, vice chair  
Dr. James Paul, secretary  
Michael Donahoe  
Shari Ebert  
Jane Johnson  
Terry Johnston  
Ron Shank  
Pat Wagner  
  
Staff:  
Michelle Sadler

In 1898 William R. Hunter (1858-1939) had a splendid house constructed in Kankakee, Illinois, at 825 South Chicago Avenue, which is located in what is now known as the River-view Historic District. Mr. Hunter settled in Kankakee in 1879, after coming to the United

States from Ontario, Canada, when he was 12 years old.

After beginning a career in stenography, he improved the system as his studies progressed. Serving as a court reporter in Kankakee County for four years, he also became an instructor of his craft to others. Hunter studied law under Judge John W. Orr and was admitted to the bar in 1882. Before forming a law partnership with H.K. Wheeler, he served as both city attorney and state's attorney. Two Kankakee women, trained by Mr. Hunter, became successful attorneys. One of those wom-

en, Miss Eva Minor, joined his partnership in 1924 as Kankakee's first female

two years in the medical corps during W.W. I, he came to Kankakee where

he founded the Hattenburg Pharmacy. Mr. Hattenburg served as the mayor of Kankakee for 16 years (1937-1953).

Following Mayor Hattenburg's death, his widow Anne

and daughter, Rita (Hattenburg) Pilote and Rita's family lived in the house. Rita and her husband, Eames, raised their two sons, Greg and John, here. Following Mrs. Pilote's death in 2001, the house was sold to Lisa and Walter Sanford.

During his lifetime, he helped organize the Kankakee Chapter of the American Red Cross, was active in organizing the Y.M.C.A. and worked to establish the Emergency Hospital, now known as Presence St. Mary's.

Mr. Hunter's estate sold the house in 1942 to Anne and Albert Hattenburg. Mr. Hattenburg (1896-1958), was raised in Clifton, Illinois, and studied pharmacy and pre-medicine at Valparaiso University. After serving

and daughter, Rita (Hattenburg) Pilote and Rita's family lived in the house. Rita and her husband, Eames, raised their two sons, Greg and John, here. Following Mrs. Pilote's death in 2001, the house was sold to Lisa and Walter Sanford.

The Sanfords immediately began the preservation and restoration of this magnificent old house, making it the crown jewel of the neighborhood.

Walter recently reflected on the reasons he was drawn to this house. With his California background, Walter was reminded of his favorite



## An Historic House Restored

(Continued from page 1)

city, San Francisco, well known for its Queen Anne "painted ladies." Since the original character of the house had been retained and preserved through the years, was a definite attraction as Walter has always had an appreciation of antiques. The house's proximity to the Kankakee River was also desirable. No major remodeling had been done by previous owners that may have destroyed the original appearance of the house. With historic and decorative features all remaining, it was a good fit!

### So the restoration work began...

The Sanfords began by removing approximately 30 to 40 trees on the lot. Some were inconsequential to the beauty of the yard, while others were removed to open the view from the house to the Kankakee River. A magnificent oak tree was removed in the front yard because it had grown into the house, putting the structure at risk. It was evident from the street that the porch foundation was very much affected by the tree. While that work was taking place outdoors, the interior restoration had also begun.

Walter engaged Tim Jones of Sawmill Construction and his crew of three men to take on the enormous task. All the interior trim was removed and

stored in the basement where it would be refinished. Throughout the house, all electrical wiring and plumbing was removed from the walls and replaced. A Unico high-pressure air conditioning system was added while the old boiler was replaced for the steam heat. All windows were restored. Broken glass was replaced with old wavy glass from the same era, and the old weights repaired when needed.

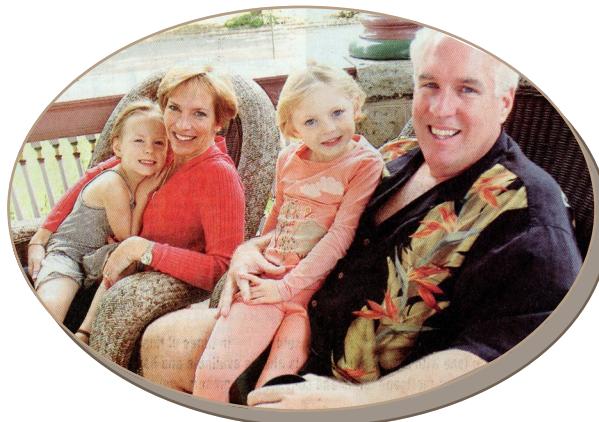
The paint on the exterior of the house was taken down to bare wood and repairs were made before repainting. Walter commented that one of the big mistakes they made was adding a humidifier to the new furnace. It was not good for the outdoor paint, as the big old house began shedding the new paint, which had to be removed and repainted.

It was approximately two years before the Sanford family: Walter, Lisa and their two daughters, Meredith and Abigail,

could move into the house. They moved in without a kitchen, but the work continued. Windows were added to the river side of the house, both in the kitchen on the first floor and to the office on the second floor, all of which accentuated the view of the river.

Additional changes to the kitchen area included the removal of a butler's pantry and a very small breakfast room. A built-in ice box was removed from another small room off the kitchen and taken to the basement, which turned that area into a pantry. A bright new kitchen now overlooks the Kankakee River, with a sunroom to the south. A garage and sun deck were added to the lower level of the house using limestone from the same Joliet quarry that was used during the construction of the house. This all connects to the basement where a cistern was removed and turned into a wine room. The basement also contains a sitting/reading room, workout room, mud room, laundry room and a furnace room. The attic, which is so large it was once used to play basketball, has been fitted with plumbing for a bathroom and for steam heat. It will eventually have seasonal closets and a bedroom.

Walter said it was a labor of love to find furnishings from the 1890-1920 era to fill the house. Such items as light fix-



The Sanfords Family  
(taken from an Oct. 14, 2007 Daily Journal article.)

## An Historic House Restored

(Continued from page 2)

tures, turn-of-the-century tile for the fireplaces and hardware where needed. The fireplaces were converted from coal to gas, while floors and original hardware were all refinished. A smoking room was eliminated upstairs to expand the Master bedroom.

This house, at 118 years old, has not only been given new life, but it should easily be around for another 118 years. Drive by the house and notice the land-



scaping, which is also a work of art, with the plantings and historical yard art complimenting

the completed restoration. I guess a restoration is never complete, as Walter says, "There is more to do."

The Hunter-Hattenburg House is a contributing property to Kankakee's Riverview Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, August 22, 1986. The National Park Service also recognized it individually, January 31, 2008.

## Pembroke Tour

As part of the Preservation Commission's efforts to become acquainted with historic properties and sites of Kankakee County's 17 townships, one of the community forums was held in Momence this past January. The attending residents of Pembroke expressed the most concerns about the preservation of the Savanna Nature Preserves. Subsequently, in June Commissioners Shari Ebert and Mardene Hinton went on a tour of Pembroke Township, guided by local resident John Howard.

The tour was very thorough and included the following sites: three Pembroke Savanna Nature Preserves, which are all beautiful areas untouched by development; several churches, including the Greater St. Paul Baptist, which is the oldest one in the township; a lovely and well cared for area known as

the Bible Witness Camp; Boots and Saddles Ranch; a gas station and ice cream shop, which is now closed; an abandoned canning company; the Guiding Star Memorial Cemetery.

The residents of Pembroke Township live in one of the most beautiful natural areas of Kankakee County. The beauty that they enjoy is attributed to the fact that much of the area has not been developed. Consequently, it has remained untouched for generations.



Photos: Carl N Becker Savanna Nature Preserve, wild flowers, Greater St. Paul Baptist Church, and the gas station.





**KANKAKEE  
COUNTY  
HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION  
COMMISSION**

189 E. Court Street  
Room 201  
Kankakee, IL 60901

Phone: 815.937.2940  
Ext. 5555

E-mail: [msadler@k3county.net](mailto:msadler@k3county.net)  
[www.k3countyhistoricpreservation.com](http://www.k3countyhistoricpreservation.com)

**[www.k3countyhistoricpreservation.com](http://www.k3countyhistoricpreservation.com)**



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**The Preservationist**

**Kankakee County's Historic Preservation Plan**

The Kankakee County Historic Preservation Commission has made great progress toward our goal of establishing a Preservation Plan for Kankakee County. After the historic context of the county was completed last year, six public forums were held in the first five months of this year in various locations throughout the county. The Commission would like to thank all residents who attended the forums held in Momence, Manteno, Aroma Park, Herscher, Bourbonnais and Kankakee. The infor-

mation shared with the Commission will be added to past surveys, producing a more thorough documentation of the historic structures and sites in the county.

As we prepare to set future goals, we have started photographing those properties. Those photos will be added to the documentation, which will help complete our survey.

In August, the Commission and Steering Committee will meet with our consultant, Kenneth Itle of Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc.

At this meeting we will begin to prioritize the future activities of the Preservation Commission. Goals, policies, and implementation strategies will be set for the coming years, as we work to protect the heritage of our community.

The work of preparing a Preservation Plan for Kankakee County, by the Kankakee County Historic Preservation Commission, is made possible through a CLG grant received from the Illinois State Historic Preservation Agency and a grant from the Community Foundation of Kankakee River Valley.

**Meet Newest Historic  
Preservation Commissioner**

Michael R. Donahoe has recently been appointed by the Kankakee County Board to serve on the Historic Preservation Commission, filling the required position of an attorney.

One of seven brothers, he grew up on the Southside of Chicago, earning his BA from Loyola University Chicago and a law degree from Chicago-Kent College of Law.

While Michael has his own law practice, he also

works in the Kankakee office of Robert LaBeau, whose office is located at 200 East Court Street. In his free time, Michael has

enjoyed playing hockey and currently trains with cage fighters at the Genesis MMA gym in Bradley.

Michael and his wife Lisa are residents of Bradley. They have three adult daughters: Maura, a nurse at the University of Indiana Medical Center, Monica, a colorist at a salon in the Chicago Merchandise Mart, and Nicole, manager at Binn's Beverage Depot.

Please welcome him as a member of the Commission.



Michael R. Donahoe