



The Iowa

# Preservationist

Spring 2008

Volume 18 Issue 2

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## Selling and Preserving Iowa's Classic Houses The Importance of Reaching out to Real Estate Professionals

Sprawl is making an appearance in every Iowa community—urban and rural—and northwest Iowa is no different.

Sheriffa Jones, an architectural historian and historic preservation consultant located in Spencer (she's also an IHPA Board Member), conducted an introduction to real estate agents on the basics of recognizing historic houses in their own community. The hour and half long class was held on April 16, 2008 in Spencer. Jones recognizes the importance of education as a necessary foundation to understand preservation and why it is important to preserve.

This education is especially important for buildings that exist in every community—historic houses. Organized with the assistance of John Goede at Century 21-Jacobsen Real Estate, the “brunch and learn” class was taken for credit by the realtors that attended from Spencer, Estherville, and Spirit Lake. A course packet included information on preservation, sustainability, homeowners resources, and the economics of preservation.

The class agenda included general preservation education; review of architectural styles for houses and character defining features; a class activity on how to write the most

accurate description for a house; modern ways of “fixing” and “updating” houses and better methods to make a house show its true beauty; understand why vinyl siding and window replacements are not appropriate for an old or historic houses; methods of preservation, restoration, and replacing components of houses; and information on monetary resources for projects.

A new topic for many people is to understand that preservation is sustainable. Text from the National Trust for Historic Preservation Richard Moe's recent lecture on sustainability was provided as a part of the course packet. One attendee stated, “I would like to attend another similar class for a longer period of time.” Information was also provided on commercial rehabilitation and appropriate

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IHPA Board Member Sherrifa Jones teaching realtors about preservation. Photo courtesy Iowa Lakes RC&D.

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***"The Iowa Preservationist"***  
is published quarterly as a  
benefit to members of  
IHPA, a 501c(3)  
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## News from the Co-Chairs

Well, spring is springing out all over and after such a long hard winter I'm looking forward to my outside projects. Many of you readers undoubtedly have exterior preservation projects lined up or already started. The IHPA Board has been busy the last month and has a couple of announcements.

The first big announcement is the funding of the Preserve America Grant to our preservation partner, the State Historical Society of Iowa. This federal grant will fund our cooperative project for the survey and documentation of Iowa's great movie houses.

The IHPA board has committed to having a booth at the IDED-Main Street Downtown Conference in August as well as a financial commitment/sponsorship to the state historic preservation conference in September. It is very important to keep our organization highly visible to Iowans involved with community revitalization through historic preservation.

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank all of our members that have renewed for 2008 and remind those who haven't yet renewed their commitment, to please do so this next week. We launched our new membership brochure by at the Community History Day celebrations at the State Historical building on May 19 and you can download it on our website: [www.iowapreservation.org/about.php](http://www.iowapreservation.org/about.php).

Until the next newsletter...

*Contributed by George Wakeman*

## Spot on SHPO

### News from the State Historic Preservation Office

Mega Movers, Monster Moves, Haulin' House. Every time you turn on television, there's another show glorifying how difficult, how dangerous, or how EXTREME! it can be to move a building. Then why is it that everyone thinks it's an easy solution for a preservation problem? What was once a last-ditch way to save a historic building seems to be the first and only option under consideration these days. Even though IHPA made a bridge fly (with a little help from some friends and some incredible members of the National Guard), the successful move of the Hale Bridge involved a lot of thought, consideration, and planning months and years in advance of the big day. But I'm beginning to wonder whether that success (and a plethora of shows explaining how to move things that weren't meant to be moved) sparked a "moving history" trend in Iowa.

During the past year, the State Historic Preservation Office has been part of discussions on no less than a dozen building moves. A few of these have already happened, others will be discussed for a while more, and I suspect discussion on the others will quietly disappear (perhaps along with the historic property). So, when is it appropriate to move a historic building? The curt answer is: never. But we all know that rules are meant to be broken.

Our office is concerned about the increasing number of proposals to move historic buildings because the significance of a historic property lies not just in the materials and design of the building, but also in the location and setting in which the building was built. A country school doesn't feel the same when it's moved into a dense urban area, just as a row house wouldn't feel the same if it were moved away from its adjoining dwellings and into suburbia. Setting and environment are important to telling the building's story. It's so important, in fact, that moved buildings or structures can only be listed on the National Register of Historic Places if they are significant primarily because of their architectural value or if they are the one property most closely associated with a historic person or event.

*Continued next page.*

## Spot on SHPO

(continued from previous page)

When our office is brought into discussions about moving a building, we always ask why a move is even on the table. In many cases, demolition is eminent and concerned preservationists are trying anything they can to save the building—usually at the eleventh hour. This was the case with the Wetherby cottage in Iowa City and two buildings in Des Moines (the Henshie Briggs Row House and the Murillo Apartments) this past winter. Without the people who orchestrated these three moves in record time, these buildings would already be rubble. So we did what we could to help preserve the buildings at the last minute.

Often, though, demolition is not eminent. The move may be under consideration because a property owner no longer wants to deal with the historic building (often abandoned) on their property; they want the land for new construction or just want the building out of their way. Or, on the opposite end of the spectrum, someone wants to bring something historic to their property because they think it will make their land more special. In these cases, the motives for the moves need to be carefully considered.

If you are considering moving a historic building, ask yourself a few questions first: Is the move the only way to preserve the building; or are there alternatives yet to be considered that would keep the building in its original location? How important are the building's existing setting and location? Is the new location's setting or environment similar to the existing, allowing the building to continue conveying its significance? Will the building still be considered "historic" in the new location? The answers to all of these questions will affect whether or not a historic property can remain listed on or be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and may also affect your ability to obtain historic preservation grants or tax credits for the move and rehabilitation of the building. Most importantly, however, the answers to these questions will let you know whether or not the move is appropriate in the first place.

The Hale Bridge is a wonderful example of how to save a historic property slated for demolition. But not because it was featured on national T.V. or because enormous Chinook helicopters cautiously lowered the three long spans onto targets a teensy fraction of their size. It's a wonderful example because a historic bridge that could no longer serve its original function was repurposed through intense (dare I say EXTREME!) and thoughtful consultation between preservationists, landowners, the public, and local, county, state, and federal officials. The bridge is still is considered "historic" and is being re-nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. That's what made it a "mega-moving" project worth supporting.

*Contributed by Barbara A. Mitchell*

### Recent Actions on the National Register of Historic Places

**Baker--DeVotie--Hollingsworth Block (Boundary Increase), Des Moines, Polk County. Listed 01/10/2008.**

**Sioux City Linseed Oil Works, Sioux City, Woodbury County. Listed 01/10/2008.**

**Franklin Regular Baptist Church, near Seymour, Appanoose County, Listed 02/20/2008.**



The National Preservation Conference is the premier preservation conference in the United States for professionals in preservation and allied fields, dedicated volunteers, and serious supporters. For more information, visit [www.PreservationNation.org/conference](http://www.PreservationNation.org/conference) or e-mail [conference@nthp.org](mailto:conference@nthp.org).

## Coralville School Becoming Schoolhouse Museum Johnson County Historical Society Serves as Steward of Historic Building

Coralville was growing quickly when it decided to build a new schoolhouse in 1876. Builders of the new school used the fossil-filled limestone from the banks of the Iowa River nearby in the foundation of the two-story, brick structure. Although located within the city of Coralville, the school operated as part of the Johnson County rural school system. By the late 1940s, Coralville had outgrown the brick school. A new school was built and the two-room schoolhouse that served the community for over 70 years was closed.

The Johnson County Historical Society has been the custodian of the historic building since 1983 when it opened the restored school as its offices and first permanent museum. As the Society also began to outgrow the schoolhouse as the center of its activities, plans were formed to make a schoolhouse museum that would interpret the history of the school, Coralville, and the history of one-room schools in Johnson County. In 2001, the first floor classroom was restored to the years 1877-1882, the first decade it was used as a school. A curriculum “Be a Guest of the Past” directed toward 5th grade classes was developed by a group of local teachers. The award winning curriculum includes pre-visit lessons where students learn about one-room schools and life in the 1870s culminating in a day long visit to the 1870s classroom where they assume the character of a 1870s student.

In 2007, thanks to an HRDP-REAP grant, the second stage of the reorientation of the schoolhouse from an exhibits-based museum to a schoolhouse museum has been realized. This included creating a 1940s classroom (the last decade the building was used as a school) on the second floor, giving visitors an opportunity to experience a one-room school classroom in two different eras. In addition to the 1940s classroom, the project included installing an accessibility lift so everyone will be able to access the first floor of the building. Because the stairs to the second floor are too steep for a lift, a disguised television was also purchased for the first floor so that a televised tour of the 1940s classroom can be shown.

Members of the Johnson County Master Gardeners also created a country school garden. Within the garden there is a “Country School Legacy Brick Patio,” where those who attended or taught at a Johnson County one-room school, or those who want to remember a family member who did, can purchase a brick with their name and school.

In addition, grants from the Community Foundation of Johnson County supported a project whereby Coralville Central 5th graders conducted oral histories with former students of the Old School and the creation of a photo timeline, which leads visitors from the 1870s classroom to the 1940s one. Photographs of the school and school classes



Coralville Public School. Photo courtesy State Historic Preservation Office, State Historical Society of Iowa.

over time are fit into a timeline of national, state, and local events as well as rural school history.

The Johnson County Historical Society is excited to be close to its goal of creating an historic site campus that preserves the story of the schoolhouse and serves as an interpretive and education center where visitors can come and learn about Johnson County’s one-room schools. Find out more online at [www.jchsiowa.org/programs/sites](http://www.jchsiowa.org/programs/sites).

*Contributed by Leigh Ann Randak*

**EDITOR’S NOTE: LEIGH ANN WILL BE A PRESENTER AT THE NINTH ANNUAL COUNTRY SCHOOL CONFERENCE IN AMES, IOWA THIS FALL. SHE WILL BE SPEAKING IN A SESSION ABOUT GETTING TEACHERS AND 4-H CLUBS INVOLVED WITH YOUR COUNTRY SCHOOL. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE ON THE NEXT PAGE AND ONLINE AT [WWW.IOWAPRESERVATION.ORG](http://WWW.IOWAPRESERVATION.ORG).**

## Annual Country School Conference, October 10-11 “Perceptions of the Country School” to be held in Ames

The ninth annual Iowa country school preservation conference will be held October 10 and 11, 2008, in Ames. This year’s conference, *Perceptions of the Country School*, will feature Dr. Pamela Riney-Kehrberg, ISU Director of Graduate Education, Program in Agricultural History and Rural Studies. Learn the pros and cons of restoring a country school to a specific time period, how to create a website for your country school museum, and how to beautify your country school’s grounds appropriately. The agenda also includes a session on program resources for country schools, information on the country school grant program from the State Historical Society of Iowa, and much, much, more!

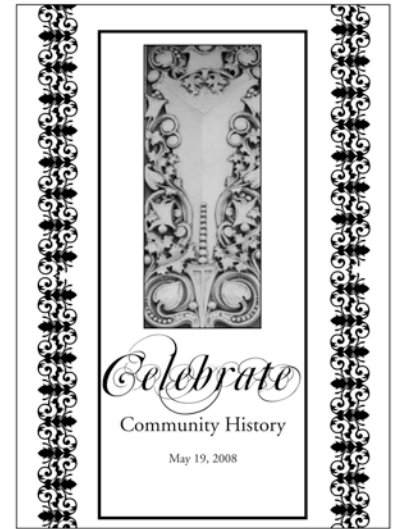
On Saturday, learn about the Lincoln Highway as you tour Nevada’s historic village, Colo’s Reed-Niland restored gas station and motel, and country schools in State Center and Marshalltown.

The conference registration is \$30 for the educational sessions on Friday and \$30 for the bus tour on Saturday (includes lunch both days). For more information download the brochure from our website ([www.iowapreservation.org](http://www.iowapreservation.org)), or contact

Bill Sherman at 1-800-434-2039 or [wsherman@networkiowa.com](mailto:wsherman@networkiowa.com). The conference is sponsored by the Iowa Historical Preservation Alliance, Ames Historical Society, Story County Conservation Commission, Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC), Iowa State University Department of Agriculture History and Rural Studies, and Iowa State University Department of Education.



Last year’s conference attendees enjoy the Smith Creek School Museum in Wellman. Photo courtesy Susan Fineman.



## Celebrate History!

The Iowa Historic Preservation Alliance presented our annual “Preservation at its Best” awards during Celebrate Community History Day at the State Historical Building in Des Moines, on May 19. Our next newsletter will provide detailed information on the award winners.

The event recognizes properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places, National History Day Kids Count! awards, and the State Historical Society of Iowa’s history and publication award winners. This year’s workshops included: Care & Feeding of Your Historic Property, Funding Possibilities Roundtable, and “Lincoln in Iowa” with Grant Veeder.

## Staffing Changes at the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) New Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Named

On March 10, 2008, Barbara Mitchell assumed the duties of Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer at Iowa’s historic preservation office. Lowell Soike served in the position for the past eight years and is assuming new responsibilities for research and writing related to Iowa history, including completion of the final portions of the historic preservation office’s Underground Railroad research project.

You may recognize Barbara’s name. Since she returned to Iowa in 2002 she has served as the SHPO’s architectural historian and as an IHPA board member, writing articles for *The Iowa Preservationist* over the last several years. With her new title, she will assume a non-voting, ex officio position on

the IHPA board. While you probably won’t see too many changes in the SHPO’s existing services, Barbara hopes to expand the public outreach and educational offerings. To that end, Kathy Gourley returned to the office this past winter and now serves as the Cultural Districts Program Manager and Outreach Coordinator. Kathy most recently managed the grants program at the State Historical Society, which is now being run by Kristen Vander Molen.

As part of the SHPO’s staffing changes, Berry Bennett and Doug Jones will take on additional responsibilities managing the statewide historic property inventory and the review and compliance program, respectively.

## Calendar of Events

### June 2008

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
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29	30					

### July 2008

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27	28	29	30	31		

### August 2008

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31						

### September 2008

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28	29	30				

### June 2008

Jun 1 ■ Landes Preservation Fund for Iowa Grant Deadline. For additional information, contact Jennifer Sandy at [jennifer\\_sandy@nthp.org](mailto:jennifer_sandy@nthp.org) or 312-939-5547 extension 37225.

Jun 6 ■ Save Our History Grant Deadline. View Additional grant information online at [www.history.com/minisites/saveourhistory/](http://www.history.com/minisites/saveourhistory/).

Jun 7 ■ Cemetery Preservation Workshop: Steuck Prairie Land Cemetery, Hartley, Iowa. For additional information, contact Sheriffa Jones at the Iowa Lakes RC&D, [sjones@iowalakesrcd.org](mailto:sjones@iowalakesrcd.org) or (712) 262-2083.

Jun 14 (8:00 am - 5:00 pm) ■ CAMP (Commission Assistance and Mentoring Program), Dubuque, Iowa. For more information, contact David Johnson at the City of Dubuque, [djohnson@cityofdubuque.org](mailto:djohnson@cityofdubuque.org) or (563) 589-4210.

Jun 16-20 ■ Department of Defense Historic Buildings Conference, Kansas City Airport Hilton, Kansas City, Missouri. View additional information online at [www.npi.org/DoD.html](http://www.npi.org/DoD.html).

Jun 30 ■ Preserve America Grant Deadline. View additional grant information online at [www.nps.gov/history/hps/hpg/PreserveAmerica/](http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/hpg/PreserveAmerica/).

### July 2008

Jul 20-26 • RAGBRAI (Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa). This year's route begins in Missouri Valley, travels through Harlan, Jefferson, Ames, Tama/Toledo, North Liberty, and Tipton, before ending in LeClaire. View additional information online at [www.ragbrai.org](http://www.ragbrai.org).

Jul 25 • DCA Small Operating Support (S.O.S.) Grant Application Deadline. SOS grants are target to arts, history and cultural organizations. View additional information online at [www.culturalaffairs.org/funding/sos\\_grant\\_program/](http://www.culturalaffairs.org/funding/sos_grant_program/).

### August 2008

Aug 7-17 ■ Iowa State Fair, Des Moines, Iowa.

Aug 8-10 ■ Iowa Lincoln Highway Association River to River Motor Tour, Iowa. View additional information online at [www.lincolnhighwayassoc.org/iowa](http://www.lincolnhighwayassoc.org/iowa).

Aug 15 (9:00 am - 3:30 pm) ■ National Register of Historic Places Workshop, State Historical Building, 600 East Locust, Des Moines, Iowa. View additional information online at [www.iowahistory.org/preservation/](http://www.iowahistory.org/preservation/).

Aug 26-27 ■ Downtown Summit, Charles City, Iowa. View additional information online at [www.iowalifechanging.com](http://www.iowalifechanging.com).

### September 2008

Sep 5 (9:00 am - 3:30 pm) ■ National Register of Historic Places Workshop, Cantril, Iowa. View additional information online at [www.iowahistory.org/preservation/](http://www.iowahistory.org/preservation/).

Sep 19-20 ■ Statewide Historic Preservation Conference, Sioux City, Iowa.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE YOUR EVENTS ON THIS PAGE AND OUR ONLINE CALENDAR? EMAIL THE INFORMATION TO US AT [EVENTS@IOWAPRESERVATION.ORG](mailto:EVENTS@IOWAPRESERVATION.ORG)

## Selling and Preserving Iowa's Classic Houses (continued from page 1)

methods of rehabilitating those properties.

The highlight of the class was the group presentation. The activity required the students to work with a photo that was provided and using architectural style guides to determine the style of the house, its date of construction, and which architectural details determined its style. After completing this first task, the second part required them to write a description in order to list the house. They did this by incorporating the correct architectural description as well as the usual listing information. Finally, each group presented to the rest of the class. In the end, Mrs. Jones gave each group the correct information; many of the groups were quite close on their determination of style and date of construction.



Realtors work to identify and describe a historic house as part of a “brunch and learn” preservation class in Spencer. Photo courtesy Iowa Lakes RC&D.

Future classes will likely be longer and eventually develop into a full-day of class. Additional material may be added to include: a tour of local historic houses; discussion of local architectural styles; an overview of tax credits; and tax abatement programs. All of these are selling points for old houses. Expanding the class to include appraisers is also important as many people, including realtors, are concerned about the bottom line.

Jones originally got the idea from a news article from the National Trust for Historic Preservation. It highlighted the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation and the class that they have taught for the past two years, its so-called “Real Estate School.” Their class operated as a full-day program at several sites. Connecticut is not the only state teaching classes to real-estate agents. Other states include: Maine, Arkansas, New York, Kansas, and Georgia.

*Contributed by Sherrifa Jones*



Photo of restored Reddy neon sign in Sioux City courtesy of the State Historic Preservation Office, State Historical Society of Iowa.

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PRESERVATION CONFERENCE  
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SEPTEMBER 19-20, 2008  
DETAILS WILL BE POSTED SOON  
WWW.IOWAHISTORY.ORG



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Help us preserve Iowa's historic resources by renewing your membership or by becoming a member for the first time. Simply fill out the information below and send us your check today! Any amount over \$10 is deductible.

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- \$100 Cornice
- \$500 Cornerstone
- \$1,000 Schoolhouse
- \$5,000 Skyscraper

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- I'm interested in serving on the
- board of directors
  - communications committee
  - membership committee
  - fundraising committee
  - advocacy committee

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (am): \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (pm): \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### Return to:

**17718 120th Street  
Anamosa, Iowa 52205**



Iowa Historic Preservation Alliance  
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[www.iowapreservation.org](http://www.iowapreservation.org)

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## Take Action! Update Barn Bill Left Unfinished in Legislature

In 1986, when Iowa first established the barn rehabilitation property tax exemption, we used the date of 1936 to determine whether a barn was eligible. This date was erroneously established in confusion about the Federal 50-year rule for historic designation. The law allows a barn owner to apply to the assessor after the rehabilitation of a barn to have property taxes permanently fixed at the pre-rehab rate. This is a real incentive for barn owners to complete renovations. We now know that the 50-year age of a structure is very important to the rehabilitation needs of commercial and residential properties. The challenge to this policy is that many Iowa barns built after 1936 are historic, and the law discriminated against those barns by not allowing them to be included in this property tax incentive program.

During the 2008 session, Senator Fraise (Chair, Senate Agriculture Committee) introduced legislation to change the eligibility for barns to 50 years of age. We seemed to be sailing right along until an amendment was proposed that would exclude modern factory-style pole barns from the program. This stalled the legislation until the first funnel date. Once the Agriculture Committee finally approved the legislation it had to go to the Senate Ways and Means Committee, which deals with all tax measures. We were at the second funnel date for the Legislature by the time the legislation passed

Ways and Means and came to the full Senate for debate. The measure passed both committees and the full Senate without any opposition, but by the time it arrived in the House, Legislature was embroiled in final budget negotiations and appropriations. The bill died in the House Ways and Means Committee.

We hope to resurrect and reintroduce the legislation early in the 2009 session as new legislation. We will need all of our members and supporters to advocate for the swift passage of this legislation next year. Stay tuned!

*Contributed by Rod Scott*



The Mulcahy Barn in Story County.  
Photo courtesy the State Historic Preservation Office, State Historical Society