“Preserving people's stories, through the places where they occurred, provides great context for conversations about our relationship to one another and to our past.”

Invariably, when I begin to delve into an area of interest, there will be some Illinois tie. I find our state’s central role in history to be a matter of pride. Preserving people’s stories, through the places where they occurred, provides great context for conversations about our relationship to one another and to our past.

Illinois’ 2018 Bicentennial is an opportunity to elevate our historic places and to show how their stories share common themes with our own daily experiences. Share what you know about an historic site in your community by writing a letter to your local newspaper, or share a tip with a local reporter about the importance of that site.

Landmarks Illinois’ contribution to Illinois Bicentennial programming is two-fold. First, our 2018 Most Endangered Historic Places in Illinois has a Bicentennial theme. Because it is our most widely covered program, the Endangered list gives us a chance to highlight 200 years of stories. Despite this deep history, you’ll see several early Illinois buildings in this extended issue of The Arch that are unconscionably under threat. Read what you can do to take action.

Our monthly, free Snapshots lectures will provide a venue to hear from scholars preserving places of relevance to the Bicentennial. This public education component also fits with our strategic plan goal to provide a platform to tell people’s stories of preserving place. I hope that you were able to join us in early May for board member Jean Follett’s phenomenal lecture about the Sheldon Peck Home in Lombard, one of Illinois’ Underground Railroad sites. Jean is working with local advocates trying to preserve this 1839 site, including an effort to list the home in the National Register of Historic Places.

If you enjoy hearing stories of perseverance in preservation, please join us for this year’s annual member meeting. In the vein of telling people’s stories, we are taking you to the Anthony Overton Elementary School in Chicago’s Bronzeville neighborhood to hear from developer Gian Foreman about his efforts to repurpose this closed former Chicago Public School. Take a tour of the building, which was designed by famed school architects Perkins & Will and completed in 1959. Come hear about the Landmarks Illinois accomplishments made possible through your support, as well as an announcement of the first loan from our new Reinvestment Program. Mark your calendar for Monday, June 25, for this free member event. (If you receive this newsletter, you are a member.) I look forward to seeing you and profiling just some of the 235 historic places we have helped in the last year because of your membership.

Very best regards,

Bonnie McDonald
President & CEO
LANDMARKS ILLINOIS 2018 MOST ENDANGERED HISTORIC PLACES IN ILLINOIS

PEOPLE SAVING PLACES

Landmarks Illinois announced its 2018 Most Endangered Historic Places on April 25 in Springfield. This year’s Most Endangered sites commemorate unique points in our state’s 200-year history in honor of the Illinois Bicentennial. Below, we focus on just a few of these sites – from the State Fairground buildings in Springfield and Du Quoin where hundreds of thousands of visitors gather each year for fair activities that celebrate Illinois’ agricultural history, to an assembly hall on the South Side of Chicago that shaped the social and cultural landscape of the Bronzeville neighborhood. These and the other 2018 Most Endangered sites, are places that represent Illinois’ past as well as its future and require attention so they can live on and continue to tell the story of our state.

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The Stran-Steel House, built of steel and glass, was originally created for the “Homes of Tomorrow” exhibit at the 1933 Century of Progress Fair in Chicago. It was designed for the Stan-Steel Corporation of Detroit to feature the company’s modern product for residential construction. Despite its historical significance, the 1,300-square-foot home, relocated to Wilmette after the Fair, is not protected and was only recently authenticated. The current owner purchased the property with the intention of using the lot to build two new homes, and the Wilmette Village Board has approved the development plan. The owner has offered the home to anyone willing to move it, but time is short as construction is anticipated to begin on the site by this summer.

The Nite Spot Café, located in Fairmont City along Route 66, the Nite Spot Café is an iconic stop for drivers who could purchase on their way home. The café closed in 1984. Today, the vacant space is in need of structural repairs and is threatened with demolition. For more information on LI’s 2018 Most Endangered Historic Places, visit our website www.Landmarks.org.


The Coliseum building in Springfield is among the many state fairground buildings in need of restoration and a new roof. The Nite Spot Café in Fairmont City.

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2018 MOST ENDANGERED HISTORIC PLACES

| JAMES R. THOMPSON CENTER | Chicago |
| SECOND CHURCH OF CHRIST, SCIENTIST | Chicago |
| THE FORUM | Chicago |
| CHAUTAUQUAS & TABERNACLES | Des Plaines, Freeport and Shelbyville |
| VARSITY THEATER BLOCK | Evanston |
| THE NITE SPOT CAFE | Fairmont City |
| CENTRAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH | Galesburg |
| EARLY SETTLEMENT-ERA BUILDINGS | Geneva |
| OLD NICHOLS LIBRARY | Naperville |
| KINCAID MOUNDS | Pope and Massac Counties |
| ROCK ISLAND COUNTY COURTHOUSE | Rock Island |
| STATE FAIRGROUNDS | Springfield and Du Quoin |
| STRAN-STEEL HOUSE | Wilmette |

STATE FAIRGROUNDS BUILDINGS

Illinois has two State Fairs – one in Springfield and another in Du Quoin, and both sites are home to a number of buildings in need of roof repairs and other restoration work. A building that requires immediate attention is the Coliseum building in Springfield, built in 1901 and designed by W. H. Reeves of the Peoria architectural firm Reeves and Baillie. The building originally was designed for horse and livestock shows, but has been closed since October 2016. Barn 13, built in 1909 and also at the Springfield State Fairgrounds, has suffered water damage and is need of approximately $100,000 in repairs. At the Du Quoin State Fairgrounds, the Grandstand building also needs roof repairs. Although this Art Deco structure, built in 1947, is the largest building on the fairgrounds, no agreement has been made as to how to pay for the necessary restoration work.

STRAN-STEEL HOUSE

The Stran-Steel House, built of steel and baked iron enamel, was originally created for the “Homes of Tomorrow” exhibit at the 1933 Century of Progress Fair in Chicago. It was designed for the Stan-Steel Corporation of Detroit to feature the company’s modern product for residential construction. Despite its historical significance, the 1,300-square-foot home, relocated to Wilmette after the Fair, is not protected and was only recently authenticated. The current owner purchased the property with the intention of using the lot to build two new homes, and the Wilmette Village Board has approved the development plan. The owner has offered the home to anyone willing to move it, but time is short as construction is anticipated to begin on the site by this summer.

THE FORUM

The Forum in Chicago’s Bronzeville neighborhood was constructed in 1893 and served as an assembly hall that, throughout its history, attracted musical greats like Nat King Cole and Muddy Waters. It also was the site of important civil and labor rights meetings. Use of the space dwindled in the 1970s, and by the 1990s, the once vibrant hall sat vacant, suffering from over 40 years of deferred maintenance. Local community development firm, Urban Juncture, Inc., saved The Forum from demolition when it purchased the building in 2011 and has since invested $250,000 toward its stabilization. The Forum still requires significant rehabilitation to return it to a lively community space. Investment dollars for this unique historic building on a retail corridor challenged by decades of disinvestment have been difficult to secure. In addition, the city’s Building Department continues to threaten demolition.

THE NITE SPOT CAFE

Located in Fairmont City along Route 66, the Nite Spot Café is an iconic stop along Illinois’ portion of the “Mother Road” featuring a mid-century neon sign that continues to grab the attention of passersby. In 1947, a local family purchased the one-room building that would become the café and renovated it into a restaurant that catered to tourists and truckers traveling on Route 66. The café also sold personal care items, household goods and gifts that truck drivers could purchase on their way home. The café closed in 1984. Today, the vacant space is in need of structural repairs and is threatened with demolition.

For more information on LI’s 2018 Most Endangered Historic Places, visit our website www.Landmarks.org.


These are places that represent Illinois’ past as well as its future and require attention so they can live on and continue to tell the story of our state.
Landmarks Illinois included the James R. Thompson Center on its annual Most Endangered Historic Places in Illinois in 2017 and again this year in 2018, demonstrating its extraordinary significance.

The building is now one of only four sites that have a repeat appearance on the 24-year-old annual Most Endangered list. At the time of LI’s 2017 listing, the Illinois General Assembly was planning legislation for an accelerated sale of the building. While Gov. Bruce Rauner vetoed the bill, it remains a goal of his administration to sell the building, viewing the site as a valuable asset that could accommodate a new skyscraper in the heart of Chicago’s downtown and bring needed revenue to the state. As the building continues to be threatened, Landmarks Illinois commissioned renderings that visually demonstrate Thompson Center reused as an exciting mixed-use destination, which could include the addition of a super tower at the southwest corner of the block to maximize zoning and revenue on the site.

Clockwise from left: Adding a tower at the southwestern corner preserves the dramatic, public atrium while providing cash flow to underwrite Thompson Center’s revitalization. As proposed by Thompson Center architect, Helmut Jahn, last year, the super tower could accommodate residential and hotel uses.

Thompson Center is renewed by enclosing living and working spaces and opening the atrium to expand public use.

The renewed Thompson Center is open at the ground floor as Chicago’s most dramatic public plaza. This design changes removes four, two-story entrance bays at the plaza and similar removals at LaSalle and Lake Streets, creating open connections between the outside and the voluminous atrium.

Thompson Center is a civic landmark that will remain a public amenity while being transformed by the private market. The renewed plaza and open atrium could feature cafes, seasonal food markets and expanded retail space as well as landscaping and public art.

(Credit: visualizedconcepts)
THE STATE OF PRESERVATION

VARSITY THEATER BLOCK EVANSTON
The 1700 block of Sherman Avenue is one of the last remaining historically intact blocks in downtown Evanston. The Evanston Preservation Commission’s 2007 survey of downtown’s historic buildings identified the former Varsity Theater and the building at 1712-22 Sherman Avenue as possessing architectural merit. Evanston’s 2009 Downtown Plan identified three “Traditional Zones,” which included this block. The plan aimed to “Protect and rehabilitate character-giving buildings, that provide historical and architectural context to the downtown.” While a recent proposal to replace the buildings with a high-rise development was withdrawn, multiple high-rise development pressure. Neighbors and the alderman want to see the building saved and reused. Christian Science churches (like so many others) continue to close as their membership declines. Although the building is threatened by demolition, the $1 million-plus price tag makes that an unlikely outcome.

SECOND CHURCH OF CHRIST, SCIENTIST
This significant, 1899 S.S. Beman-designed church is for sale and unprotected. It is in the National Register-listed Lakeview Historic District, which is only honorary. It cannot be landmarked without owner consent. Evanston Lakehouse & Gardens (ELHG), the nonprofit citizens group formed to rehabilitate and reuse the city-owned lakefront mansion, which the city had considered for demolition after a long-time cultural institution vacated. ELHG hoped to convert the building to a multi-purpose venue for environmental education, community events and cultural programming. Since the mansion was included on LI’s 2016 Most Endangered Historic Places in Illinois, the city formed a Harley Clarke Planning Committee, which after a nine-month study, recommended the city enter into a lease agreement with ELHG. In the city’s subsequent Request for Proposals process, ELHG was the only qualifying organization to submit. It is now unclear what next steps the city will take to address the future of this vacant, historic landmark. For more information, go to: http://evanstonlakehouse.org/

HARLEY CLARKE MANSION Evanston
On April 9, the Evanston City Council voted against entering into a lease agreement with Evanston Lakehouse & Gardens (ELHG), the nonprofit citizens group formed to rehabilitate and reuse the city-owned lakefront mansion, which the city had considered for demolition after a long-time cultural institution vacated. ELHG hoped to convert the building to a multi-purpose venue for environmental education, community events and cultural programming. Since the mansion was included on LI’s 2016 Most Endangered Historic Places in Illinois, the city formed a Harley Clarke Planning Committee, which after a nine-month study, recommended the city enter into a lease agreement with ELHG. In the city’s subsequent Request for Proposals process, ELHG was the only qualifying organization to submit. It is now unclear what next steps the city will take to address the future of this vacant, historic landmark. For more information, go to: http://evanstonlakehouse.org/

ROCK ISLAND COUNTY COURTHOUSE
ROCK ISLAND
Serving as the seat of county government since 1897, the Rock Island County Courthouse is threatened by demolition following the completion of a new Justice Center in late 2018. While the authority to retain or demolish the historic courthouse resides with the county board, members of the Public Building Commission have been lobbying for the ability to clear the site for green space. Unsubstantiated cost estimates are frequently cited to support calls for demolition. Yet public support for courthouse reuse remains strong, and evaluating reuse options and cost estimates would be the most fiscally responsible use of taxpayer funds.

MCKEE HOUSE Lombard/Glen Ellyn
The McKee Preservation Group (MPG) recently renegotiated parts of an intergovernmental agreement with the DuPage County Forest Preserve and the Village of Glen Ellyn that gives the Village an immediate lease agreement. This will allow access to the property for MPG, a volunteer group, to do clean-up and condition assessments. It will also help with fundraising efforts. MPG is now raising $165,000 to replace the roof. Citizens for Glen Ellyn Preservation has contributed $10,000, and Landmarks Illinois has provided a $2,000 grant through its Preservation Heritage Fund. McKee House was included on LI’s 2017 Most Endangered Historic Places in Illinois. The 1936, Colonial Revival home built by the Federal Works Progress Administration functioned as a forest preserve headquarters and superintendent’s home. It was closed by the DuPage County Forest Preserve in 2002. MPG welcomes donations, volunteers and potential board members. Contact: McKeePreservationGroup@gmail.com (Credit: Linda Gilbert)

URSULINE ACADEMY Springfield
In March, Benedictine University officials announced they will close the Springfield branch of the university, which includes the historic Ursuline Academy buildings. Two of the buildings date to the 1860s, when the Ursuline order of Catholic nuns opened the all-girls school in Springfield. Landmarks Illinois listed Ursuline Academy on its 2008 Most Endangered Historic Places in Illinois, prior to the school’s closure in 2009. Benedictine University took over the campus in 2009 but has struggled with low enrollment and deferred maintenance, which it says totals approximately $5 million. The 1869 Brinkerhoff Home is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, while several other campus buildings have been determined eligible for listing. Finding a developer with experience in preservation incentives, like the Federal Historic Tax Credit, will be key to achieving a preservation solution for Ursuline Academy.
In 1952, Mies van der Rohe designed a home for Robert Hall McCormick House, planned for later this year. In the early 1990s, the Elmhurst Art Museum purchased the McCormick House and moved it to its current location to become part of the new art museum. The house was physically connected to the existing museum building. The Museum wishes to detach the two buildings and restore the original entry to the McCormick House. With the assistance of the 55,000 Preservation Heritage Fund Grant from Landmarks Illinois, in June 2018, the full exterior of the McCormick House will be visible for the first time in over 20 years, complete with its original carport and new front door, allowing the full design of the house to be better recognized. The Chautauqua Auditorium Preservation Committee has been working recently to determine the specific needs and priorities for the building. The Committee will use the $5,000 grant from Landmarks Illinois, in June 2018, the full exterior of the McCormick House will be visible for the first time in over 20 years, complete with its original carport and new front door, allowing the full design of the house to be better recognized.

SHELBYVILLE CHAUTAUQUA AUDITORIUM Shelbyville, Illinois

The Shelbyville Chautauqua Auditorium, located in Shelbyville’s Forest Park, is a circular-shaped, wood-clad building with 20 sides and a 150-foot diameter clear span with a patented radial roof truss system. The auditorium was built in 1903 and is the largest building of its kind in the world.

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1818 The year Illinois became a state.

34,620 The number of residents in Illinois in 1818.

3 Illinois cities that have served as the state’s capital: Kaskaskia, Vandalia & Springfield.

12.8 million The number of residents in Illinois in 2017.

$18,000 The amount the General Assembly appropriated in 1899 to build the Executive Mansion in Springfield. The home was designed by Chicago architect John M. Van Osdel.

6 Number of State Capital Buildings Illinois has had (3 of them are still standing).

I am very proud of our board and 250 members who volunteer, give financially and show up at public meetings at a moment’s notice! They are our workforce!

MEET LIZ SAFANDA

Liz Safanda is the Executive Director of Preservation Partners of Fox Valley (PPFV), which was founded as Restorations of Kane County in 1974 by a group of dedicated women who organized to save the 1843 Durant House located in the LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve. Safanda began volunteering with the group in 1979 with the restoration of the Beith House in St. Charles, and in 1985, she became one of two of the group’s first paid employees. After 39 years with the organization, Safanda is retiring. We asked Safanda to reflect on the nearly four decades with Preservation Partners of Fox Valley.

“I am very proud of our board and 250 members who volunteer, give financially and show up at public meetings at a moment’s notice! They are our workforce!”

Landmarks Illinois: What do you view to be some of the organization’s greatest successes of which you are most proud?

Liz Safanda: PPFV now operates five public sites. We have successfully operated and maintained these sites both fiscally and with educational programming. Our most successful advocacy campaigns have been the Pure Oil Station and Viking Ship in Geneva, and Frank Lloyd Wright’s Murhead House in the county. We also spend hundreds of hours at historic preservation and planning commission meetings where our presence reiterates the importance of protecting and reusing historic places. I am very proud of our board and 250 members who volunteer, give financially and show up at public meetings at a moment’s notice! They are our workforce!

LI: What have been some of the most disappointing losses and lessons learned?

LS: While the building isn’t in danger of demolition, Campana’s huge need for reinvestment will continue to be a problem since the Batavia City Council voted against a proposal to convert it to mixed-income housing. What is the lesson learned? I don’t know how you defeat such engrained biases. PPFV focused on Campana’s architecture and history, but the campaign aligned us with new partners who care about fair access to affordable housing, transit and good schools, and we all should care about these kinds of life issues.

LI: Why do you view it important for there to be a preservation advocacy organization at the local/regional level?

LS: Landmarks Illinois is a great resource and ally on so many of our efforts, but we can’t expect their involvement on every issue. PPFV plays the important role of being a local advocacy voice and we are the grassroots – we know who to recruit, who to lobby, who to engage on an issue because this is our community. Then we can call in LI for help when we view it necessary.

LI: What do you hope for the organization’s future?

LS: We need to build a younger generation of supporters and doers, I am hopeful. A board member’s son has attended our events since he was 7 years old. Today he is 13 and wants to be an architect. Our new interim staff member at the Fabyan Villa is a young woman who began volunteering with her family at the Durant House when she was 9. She went on to major in Museum Studies at University of Illinois, work at the Museum of Science and Industry and now she has returned to us. We need them to continue the mission of preserving our past for the future.

“...
Harriet and Sheldon Peck arrived in Chicago from upstate New York in the fall of 1836 when Chicago was a rough town of fewer than 4,000 people. Sheldon had been an itinerant portrait painter since the 1820s, traveling up and down the Erie Canal plying his trade. Harriet raised merino sheep to provide a steady source of cash from the farm.

The Pecks spent their first winter in a passionate devotion to all three. Harriet raised merino sheep to provide a steady source of cash from the farm. Sheldon had been an itinerant portrait painter since the 1820s, traveling up and down the Erie Canal plying his trade. Harriet raised merino sheep to provide a steady source of cash from the farm.

After the Civil War, the little house by the railroad continued its busy life, as the town of Lombard grew up around it in the early decades of the 20th century. Everyone knew the Pecks as a founding family and, when it came time, there was no question that their house must be saved. With the city taking ownership in 1996, a full-scale rehabilitation plan was prepared while local researchers began painstakingly documenting the house and its stories. Thanks to their work, the Sheldon Peck House has emerged as one of the best documented Underground Railroad sites in Illinois.

This house still stands today—one of the oldest houses in suburban Chicago. As the Peck family and the town grew, their homestead was soon hosting important Abolitionist speakers and serving as a stop on the Underground Railroad, in defiance of federal law.

The Pecks spent their first winter in Chicago. The following spring the family headed west, to a piece of high ground along St. Charles Road in the young settlement of Babcock’s Grove. In November of 1839, they moved into their newly built, two-room house on 80 acres.

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2018 Legendary Landmarks Celebration

Landmarks Illinois held its 13th Annual Landmarks Celebration on March 8, 2018, at the Hilton Chicago. The event attracted over 830 guests, who helped LI honor the 2018 Legendary Landmarks: Daniel Levin, Founder and Chairman of The Habitat Company; Toni Preckwinkle, Cook County Board President; and Berglund Construction. LI supporters also helped raise more than $850,000 to fund LI’s Advocacy Program, the heart of our work. Thank you to everyone who joined us at the 2018 Celebration! To view photos, read more about the Legendary Landmarks and learn more about this annual event, visit our website:

$25,000 & $24,000

Ant Bauknecht, Inc.
M. L. Berglund Construction Company
The Richard H. Driehaus Chicago Trust

$10,000 & $9,999

Blair Construction
Butler & Boeckum
Bunting & Associates
Carmen Construction

$5,000-$9,999

Andrew Allworth
City Flats
Clark Eastman
Tischman Construction

$1,000-$4,999

Mary & John Andrews
Mark & Adrienne Ackerman
Barbara, Allen & Simon Ackerman
Adrianne & Mark Adams

$500-$999

Bob & Susie Addis
William A. Alles, William A. Alles
Alphawood Foundation
Alphawood Foundation Chicago

Sponsors

SAVE THE DATE

June 8, 2018

Skyline Council Pub Crawl
Chicago Loop

More details soon!

CONTRIBUTIONS

THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS

December 16, 2017 – March 24, 2018

Through its membership, civic, contributions, event sponsorship and grants, Landmarks Illinois is able to preserve, protect and promote Illinois historic buildings and sites. Through our Directors, Board of Trustees and volunteers, we sincerely thank all our contributors for their support. However, space allows us to list only the following:

$100,000 & $99,999

William B. Addis, President Emeritus,圪hicago Title Insurance Company
Kathleen, Stan, & Nick Aloumpis
Paul Allen 圪halleluwah
Arden Anderson
Carrison, Nick

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Robert A. Anderson
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More details soon!
LI is now taking nominations for the 2018 Richard H. Driehaus Foundation Preservation Awards. Nominations are due June 1, 2018! Find out more about the awards program, project eligibility and how to submit nominations at our website: www.landmarks.org.