

**LA CROSSE COUNTY HISTORIC SITES
PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

LA CROSSE COUNTY, WISCONSIN
Administrative Center 400 4th Street North
La Crosse, Wisconsin 54601
Telephone (608)785-9563 Fax (608)789-4821



February 26, 2010

Joe DeRose
Wisconsin Historical Society
816 State Street
Madison, Wisconsin 53706-1482

RE: 2009 Annual Report

Dear Mr. DeRose,

This communication has been approved by members of the La Crosse County Historic Sites Preservation Commission as its required CLG annual report to the Wisconsin Historical Society.

Commission Members: Bev Mach, County Board Supervisor
Harriet Schuppel, citizen member: Onalaska representative
Richard Bedessem, citizen member: Bangor representative (no longer a member)
Kent Sween, Holmen Area Historical Society
King Holley, real estate broker
Vicki Twinde-Javner, archaeologist
Barbara Kooiman, architectural historian

Commission Member
Contact Person: Vicki Twinde-Javner, Chair
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Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center
UW-La Crosse
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La Crosse, WI 54601

The La Crosse County Historic Sites Preservation Commission held ten monthly meetings in 2009 (February, March, April, May, June August, September, October, November, and December). The Commission continuously looked at possible sites for its local listing of historic sites, and nominations for two buildings were brought forth to the Commission in 2009. The first building to be nominated was the Palmer Octagon house near West Salem. This nomination was submitted by a member of the West Salem Historical Society. This house is currently on the National Register of Historic Places. Although the Commission feels this house should also be on the County historic sites list, it was felt the nomination was lacking in specific detail about the unique architecture of the house, including its Octagon shape, and the Commission referred it back to the West Salem Historical Society for additional information. The second site was the John and Rayze Wright (historic name) farmhouse in the

Township in Medary. This nomination was brought forth by a Commission member with the assistance of the property's current landowner. The house was nominated as a historic site because it retains unique features, including English running bond stone construction and an elaborate roof design, with rounded corners over dormer windows, and it remains as it was built in the 1930's with no exterior modifications and minimal interior alternations. This site was approved by the Commission as a historic site, and was subsequently approved by the Planning Resources and Development Committee for listing also. It has been approved by the County Board as a site, and has been recorded at the Register of Deeds as such, and will be added to our list.

Each year, since 1995, with the exception of 2004, the County Board has provided some money to be administered by the Commission as a Preservation Grant. All non-profit county societies which fit the criteria are notified of the grant money, which varies from year to year; they are invited to submit proposals for projects which would make use of the money. Currently, the amount of available for grants each year is \$1000. One grant application was received in 2009, which was from the Bangor Historical Society for repair to the museum entrance. Although the Bangor Historical Society asked only for \$450 and would provide matching funds, the Commission awarded them the total \$750 cost for the project, since they were the only applicants, and the Commission felt it was a worthwhile project.

To better inform the public on the purpose of the Commission, we pursued construction of its own website working with the County IT department. The website was created, and contains information and forms pertaining to what the Commission does, nomination forms, photos of historic sites and brief summaries, applications for grants, copies of brochures and other publications put out by the Commission, contact information for the Commission, etc. The website is <http://www.lacrossecountyhistoricsites.org/>. The Commission also printed approximately 25,000 bookmarks for public distribution. These bookmarks highlight four significant structures in our community, and information on the back of the bookmarks highlights the purpose of our Commission, and our website address.

The Commission submitted an application for a survey and planning grant through the Wisconsin Historical Society. This grant would be for a National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Oehler Farmstead district, which includes two farmhouses, mill, cave, cemetery, and other contributing buildings. The Commission received notification in February 2010, that their grant is going to be awarded.

The Commission also worked on re-evaluating its ordinance. Currently, the ordinance does not give the Commission much say in demolition or re-modeling of historic buildings. The Commission had proposed some ordinance changes a few years ago, but decided to wait until the County's Comprehensive Plan was completed, as historic preservation was a part of this plan. In 2009, the Commission began again to revisit these proposed changes to the ordinance and discussed further changes and revisions, and had meetings a County Zoning and Planning representative and the County's Corporation Council to discuss the feasibility of these changes.

This report briefly sums up the activities of the La Crosse County Historic Sites Preservation Commission over the year 2009, as it sought to continue its service to the community. If you have any questions concerning this report or the activities of the commission, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Vicki Twinde-Javner, Chair
La Crosse County Historic Sites Preservation Commission