



## **HISTORIC PRESERVATION: THE BACKGROUND**

The first attempts of preservation were government purchases through private funds. Mount Vernon was threatened and the threat led to its purchase for preservation. New York and Philadelphia and the federal government followed suit with purchases of historic sites and structures, such as Civil War sites. Historic preservation slowly evolved into one of the forms used today -- PRESERVATION ORDINANCES.

In 1925, New Orleans created one of the first historic preservation commissions based on the state constitutional rights. Charleston and Santa Fe followed suit. By 1950 a handful of ordinances were in existence. Historic preservation has slowly become legally acceptable as a government regulatory power. More and more cities and states have established historic preservation commissions.

In 1984, the state of Illinois passed the County Historic Preservation Act, which gave counties the right to establish historic preservation commissions. "The purpose of this Act is to identify, protect, preserve, and provide for the restoration, rehabilitation, and continued use of buildings, structures, objects, areas, sites, and landscapes that are of historic, archeological, architectural or scenic significance; to foster education, interest and pride in the beauty and accomplishments of the past; to promote economic development through protection and enhancement of resources important to tourism and business; to conserve and improve the value of real property and the property tax base; to insure orderly, efficient and harmonious development; to encourage cooperation between municipalities and counties; and to promote the general welfare" (Illinois Statute). The Act calls for the establishment of a study committee to determine the need for historic preservation and write an ordinance for preservation. Once this step is completed, the County Board will vote to establish a permanent Historic Preservation Commission or not. The Commission has the right, for example, to nominate landmarks and review any proposed alterations on these structures.

In 1985, the McHenry County Department of Planning and Development completed a survey of the county which documented 4,867 structures of historic age (pre 1945). This study was funded by state and county moneys. Once the study was completed, nothing of historic preservation was pursued until last year. During 1990, the McHenry County Planning Commission recommended the McHenry County Board establish a Historic Preservation Study Committee. Resolution R9005-1200-53 was passed on May 15, 1990, which established such a committee. At this point, nine positions were advertised and interested individuals sent in application. The Chairperson of the McHenry County Board reviewed and interviewed the applicants and nine members were selected. These members represent a variety of specialties from architecture to history to archeology. The Committee was given one year from September 1990 to accomplish the goals set before them. The following report answers these challenges.