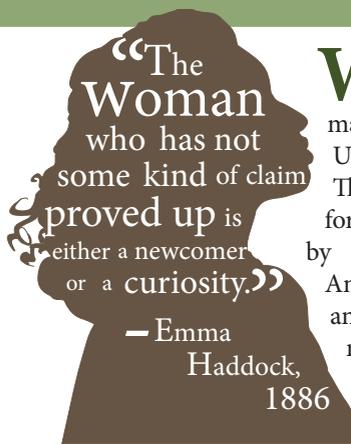




EXCEPTIONAL PLACES

FINDING WOMEN'S HISTORY IN UNEXPECTED PLACES

Mary Feitz



“The woman who has not some kind of claim proved up is either a newcomer or a curiosity.”

—Emma Haddock, 1886

Women make up half of the U.S. population. They were present for and affected by every event in American history and made their mark on every place they went.

Nearly any site can be viewed through the lens of gender—even sites not traditionally viewed as “women’s history sites.” The goal of this article is to encourage you to look for women’s history in unexpected places—going beyond the traditional perception of “women’s history sites.” Digging deeper into the stories of women who lived throughout the Midwest region, history as we thought we knew it takes on an entirely different perspective.

Let’s start by telling one of those stories: In 1901, 23-year-old Juliana, a Volga German, filed a claim for a homestead in North Dakota. Six years later, she “proved up,” or earned the right to permanent ownership on her land, a milestone that fewer than half of all homesteaders achieved. She was the head of her household, taking care of her ailing mother and her younger siblings while simultaneously plowing 25 acres for cultivation, digging sod to build a house, and fending off the forces of nature that caused so many others to relinquish their own claims. Juliana was far from the only female homesteader; in fact in some townships twenty percent or more of all homesteaders were women.¹ Each of their situations varied,

but most were single, widowed, or the heads of their households. Many were immigrants. Fifty years before the 19th Amendment, by being landholders, they enjoyed a level of political and social power of which their peers in the east could only dream. Juliana’s story challenges the notion that homesteading was a man’s job and that women merely followed their ambitious husbands to the west.

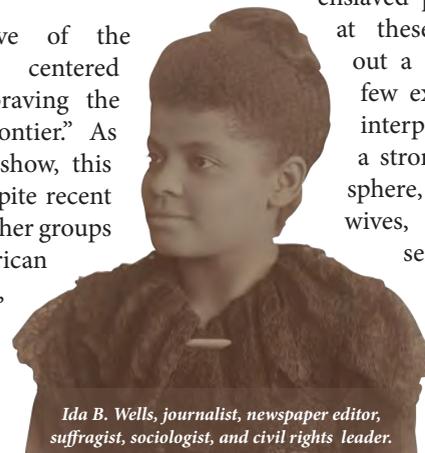
WHERE WE STAND

Historically, the narrative of the American West largely centered on white pioneer men braving the elements to “tame the frontier.” As Juliana’s story and others show, this is not the whole story. Despite recent efforts to tell the stories of other groups living in the region—American Indians, African Americans, Asian Americans, and women of all races—the romanticized image still remains. The National Park Service (NPS) has made many efforts in the past decades to improve the representation of historically underrepresented groups, including women. The NPS has implemented a women’s history initiative that identifies gaps in current interpretation and explores sites associated with women for potential National Historic Landmark (NHL) designation. There have been nearly 20 sites added in the past two decades, but there are many more out there waiting to be discovered!

Strides have been made to combat the underrepresentation of women at historic sites, but there is still so much left to do.

There are gaps in the record that can still be filled, stories that can still be told, entire demographics of women that receive but a brief footnote, if anything at all. We have done well at telling the stories of “women worthies”—that is; rich, generally white women who did something amazing—the Eleanor Roosevelts and Amelia Earharts of the world. In recent years as well, we have begun to acknowledge the importance of interpreting the lives of “the other half”—the domestic servants and enslaved people. Still, just looking at these two categories leaves out a lot of women. Despite a few exceptions, most sites that interpret women’s history have a strong focus on the domestic sphere, portraying women as wives, mothers, daughters, or servants. This is a very important aspect of the site, of course, but the question is: is this the only way that women participated at your site? Furthermore, it is important to think about how women might

have played a role at sites that do not have an obvious women’s history. It is easy to talk about the wife of a famous politician at a historic house, but what about the role of women during a battle or military encampment? How did women play a role in the railroad industry? In the building of canals? In the history of labor? How did women of color



Ida B. Wells, journalist, newspaper editor, suffragist, sociologist, and civil rights leader.

Original photo by Mary Garrity, restored by Adam Cuerden. Licensed under public domain via Wikimedia Commons.

Top Images: L- Hattie Chrisman. R-Ruth Chrisman. These women, with their two other sisters, were homesteaders in Custer County, NE. Center-A woman homesteader in California receives the deed to her land. Images courtesy Nebraska Historical Society.

The History and National Register Programs in the Midwest Regional Office of the National Park Service offer this newsletter as a forum of information for NHL owners and the public we serve. We hope you find our articles helpful and informative, and we welcome your suggestions for future issues.

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Main Street, Mackinac Island, MI. NPS Photo. One of first designated NHLs. October 9, 1960.

Roots of the National Historic Landmarks Program, Part II

Geoffrey Burt

In the last newsletter, part one of this series concluded with the temporary suspension of the National Park Service (NPS) Historic Sites Survey, which was authorized through the 1935 Historic Sites Act. The Survey's postponement came about as a result of the United States involvement in World War II and the necessary refocusing of government mission and operations. Although the Survey had been suspended (per President Roosevelt's recommendation) and staff in the historic program was reduced to a minimum, the President had allowed for evaluation of properties deemed to be "exceptional cases"—for example, Independence Hall in Philadelphia was designated and eventually became an NPS unit. Although the original intent of the Survey continued—to identify and "classify" nationally significant historic properties, and of those identified, further consider their merit as potential additions to the NPS—in reality the ability of the Survey to perform this core function was greatly reduced.

With the cessation of hostilities in 1945, the NPS and other government agencies were able to return to their pre-war responsibilities. NPS Chief Historian Ronald F. Lee recognized the importance and value of the Survey in terms of historic preservation and sought necessary funding for its revival. Lee saw the need to rebuild his staff of professionals, many having been laid off or reassigned during wartime. The catalog of data compiled, categorized under a chronological and thematic framework reflecting major periods in U.S. history, indicated that in addition to the nationally significant properties identified, there were also many properties across the country important at the state and local levels. This would eventually have major ramifications for government's role in and its concept of historic preservation.

As early as 1946, Lee and others recognized that the rapid and unprecedented expansion of economic and physical post-war development across the nation carried potentially ominous threats to historic sites. As veterans returned from their military duties, formed families (with the resultant "baby boom"), sought jobs and affordable housing on the outskirts of crowded cities, the context was established for massive changes to the physical and environmental fabric of American society. The increased demand for new, single-family housing situated in outlying suburban developments greatly contributed to abandonment and decay of inner city neighborhoods. Coupled with American's increasing preference for automobiles and

trucks and by extension more and better roads and highways, it soon became apparent to preservationists and concerned citizens across the nation that historic buildings and sites were vulnerable.

Those concerned with the preservation of America's heritage resources perceived a need for a non-governmental, national preservation organization that could carry out a range of preservation actions and administer the additional centralized advocacy that the NPS and myriad disparate local groups were unable to provide. It was recognized that as a federal agency, the NPS faced certain restrictions in its ability to acquire and/or save threatened historic buildings in the years immediately following the war. As a response the NPS, primarily under the leadership of Lee, along with representatives of various cultural and preservation organizations, worked to form the National Council for Historic Sites and Buildings in 1947. This group sought legal recognition through congressional legislation, resulting in the creation of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, a non-profit, non-governmental agency, to act as an advocate and standard-bearer for various historic preservation issues and activities throughout the country. The primary intent in the creation of the National Trust, as stated in the 1949 congressional charter, was to "further the policy enunciated in the Historic Sites Act and to facilitate public participation in the preservation of sites, buildings, and objects of national significance or interest."

As the newly formed National Trust worked to meet the many preservation challenges that arose during its formative years in the 1950s, Lee and his history staff continued to seek necessary funding and approval for the resumption of the Historic Sites Survey. The opportunity finally arose in 1956 with the initiation of Mission 66, a ten-year program intended to improve, upgrade, and expand facilities and visitor services throughout the National Park System. Many of the historic and cultural resources recommended by the Survey and acquired by NPS had deteriorated and required immediate attention. Intended to be completed by the 50th anniversary of the NPS in 1966, Mission 66 was conceived as a means to accommodate the explosion of post-war visitation, improve overall conditions in parks, increase staffing, ameliorate resource management, and establish a master planning process for parks throughout the system.

Continued on Page 11

Exceptional Places

Precedent-Setting Section 106 Consultation at the Taliesin National Historic Landmark

Michele Curran

The Taliesin National Historic Landmark (NHL) is located in Spring Green, Wisconsin, and includes the home, farm, studio and theater that were designed and built by the internationally known architect, Frank Lloyd Wright. All of these sites and the surrounding landscape are part of the NHL.

In April 2013, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) notified the owner(s) and other interested parties that they planned to resurface State Trunk Highway 23, which runs through the middle of the Taliesin NHL. This type of notification is required by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, as amended, for which a project carried out, funded, or approved by a federal agency may affect any property listed on the National Register of Historic Places or designated an NHL. Together, the owner(s) of the property and those interested in the property become the “consulting parties” and will have a seat at the table with the agencies to discuss the project and to develop ideas to prevent an adverse effect.

In addition to the repaving, WisDOT and FHWA planned to install extended guardrails on three different bridges within the NHL to meet current FHWA guidelines. Their latest guidelines require extended guard rails with tiger board signage elevated upwards from the end of each guard rail. The consulting parties conceded the need for extended guard rails for safety and were able to successfully negotiate for wood posts with painted railings, vegetative screening along the rails, and a reduction of the number of signs within the NHL along with a smaller size for some of the signage.

But there was an impasse between the agencies and the consulting parties over the tiger board signage, which measure 1-foot-by-3-feet with bright yellow and black angled stripes.



Midway Farms, Hillside Studio and Theater, and Taliesin sites within the NHL and tiger board (NPS photographs)

While the transportation professionals argued that tiger board signage is required by their departmental guidelines, the consulting parties argued that the tiger boards were a visual intrusion on the tranquil, rural landscape of the Taliesin NHL. Thus, the consulting parties felt the project would negatively impair the historic characteristics of the NHL.

This adverse effect would also violate Section 110(f) of the NHPA, the section of the NHPA that requires agencies “to the maximum extent possible, undertake such planning and actions as may be necessary to minimize harm” to NHLs. As a result, the Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office, the National Park Service and other consulting parties met with WisDOT and FHWA at the Taliesin site, in the Madison offices of the agencies, and via phone conference to discuss design solutions to avoid an adverse effect on the Taliesin NHL.

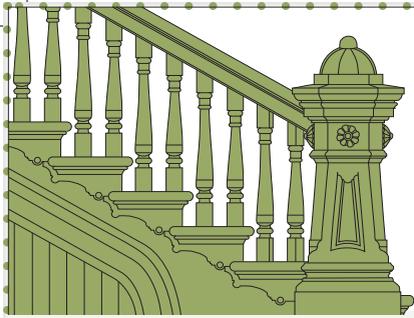
In April 2014, WisDOT and FHWA granted an exemption on the use of tiger board signage within the Taliesin NHL and agreed to use non-elevated, 1-foot-by-1-foot, solid gold-colored signs as terminal ends on the extended guard rails. Thus, one of the more significant characteristics of the Taliesin NHL—its serene landscape—will be less affected by the project. This decision sets a precedent for the preservation of historic landscapes and roads within NHLs and will have an impact on future decisions regarding road projects within state and national parks. ●

An Update from the Chief

Donald L. Stevens, Jr.

The National Park Service is gearing up to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of its establishment in 1916. Our cover story by NCPE intern Mary Feitz offers an engaging challenge to explore the overlooked achievements of women in American history. It is a topic central to the NHL programs Centennial emphasis to recognize exceptional places associated with underrepresented people and groups and to tell a more complete history of America. Along with the Women’s History Initiative, our national NHL program is pursuing American Latino Heritage, Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage, and LGBTQ History Initiatives.

Historian Alesha Cerny invites us to check out the updated NHL website where you can learn more about these thematic efforts and a variety of NHL topics. The “Contact” link will enable you to click on the Midwest Region and access past issues of our newsletter.



Mark Chavez

Splinters from the Dusty Newel Post

“SHOULD I REPLACE MY PLASTER CEILING?”

A Brief History

The term “plaster” when used in an architectural sense (historically there were medicinal plasters), covers a long chronology dating back to cave-dwellers who covered interior surfaces of caves with mud. Later, simple stick shelters were plastered with mud. Today the term “plaster,” and its derivations, is synonymous with a very specific architectural finish for interior and/or exterior applications. Medicinal plasters have gone by the wayside – except as used over layers of gauze in “casting” - leaving the term mostly to building construction; or in some cases, overindulgence. Aside from ancient mud mixtures, plasters were produced from lime, gypsum, and most recently, cement. Because of plaster’s smooth, very hard surface, the sanitary value of plastered interiors was apparent. Plaster was also an excellent fire retardant. Due mainly to the many fires that ravaged London in the thirteenth century, the king decreed that all buildings were to have plastered walls.

Early plasters were lime-based, the processed (burned) lime obtained either from crushed limestone or certain chalks. A “lime cycle” was introduced later by which lime (calcium carbonate) is converted to quicklime by heating, then slaked by adding water which returns it naturally to its original chemical makeup. Mortar is produced by adding sand to the slaked lime. Around 7500 B.C. artisans in Jordan used lime mixed with crushed limestone to cover walls, floors and hearths. Mixed with water, the paste was applied to varying surfaces – mostly reeds or twigs ; and probably also over stones.

Plasterwork has been found in the Egyptian pyramids dating at least four thousand years back. These plastered surfaces are some of the most long-lasting - testifying to plaster’s strength and durability. The Egyptians used a plaster made from calcined (heated) gypsum – much like modern Plaster of Paris¹. Animal hair was added to increase strength. Very early Greek architecture employed the use of fine white lime stucco, and their techniques reached unequalled perfection in the use of this type of plasterwork.

It is from Greece, that we get the word “plaster.” In the ancient Greek language, the word *emplastron* meant “to daub on.”

Lime plasters took approximately two weeks to completely set up. Gypsum plasters set up faster, but the early mining and processing of gypsum was expensive and time-consuming. As a result, gypsum plasters were used primarily for ornamental work and for various imitation marble finishes called *scagliola* – techniques developed in Italy in the 15th century. Modern processing methods introduced in the early 20th century guaranteed that gypsum would replace lime as the primary binding agent for most plasters. Combined with sand and water, gypsum plasters can be built up in layers that take hours (rather than days for lime plasters) to dry.

Two important developments, both originating in England, modernized plastering techniques: Portland cement, introduced in 1824, and Keane’s Cement, a slow-setting but extremely hard plaster made from gypsum and alum, introduced in 1841. Substrates have similarly gone through their own evolution: ancient muds were applied over twigs or reeds; wood “lath” was in use in Europe and surrounding countries as early as the 12th century. Early wood lath was hand-split, narrow (1 to 2-inches max) and thin (a quarter-inch or so). Lath was attached to wall studs in parallel strips leaving a 3/8-inch or so gap between each one. A rough “base” plaster coat approximately 3/4-inch thick was then applied, with the plaster squeezed into the gaps so that plaster “keys” formed. These keys guaranteed the plaster finish would hold well to the lath – even on horizontal surfaces (ceilings). Subsequent coats of plaster are then applied once the base coat has dried, with the final coat consisting of very little or very fine aggregate (sand).



Pieces of plaster molding that have fallen from the ceiling of a historic church. Photo by Mary Feitz.

A skilled plasterer could produce a finished coat of plaster that took on a shine.

With the introduction of mechanized saws, wood lath was eventually produced in uniform sizes. In the late 19th century, metal lath, made up of a lattice of ribbed metal and/or wire was introduced. Gypsum lath – much like modern “sheetrock” – was introduced in the 1930s and modern iterations are still in use today. Contemporary plastered interior surfaces are generally accomplished with a very thin, or “skim,” coat of fine plaster over gypsum lath.

Wood lath has gone to the history books.



A plaster ceiling from above showing lath construction. Photo by Mary Feitz.

Repairs

Entering a building which has been vacant or poorly maintained and contains historic plaster surfaces can be a visual nightmare: uneven surfaces, multiple cracks and missing plaster may be very apparent. And with “modern sensitivities” to “perfection,” the knee-jerk reaction might be to take everything down to the studs and install very flat, very precise sheetrock and paint the surfaces. This compromises historic integrity and wholesale replacement of historic plaster with new plaster is also very expensive. Historic plastered surfaces may look unattractive, but they represent a very special and specialized part of a building’s “fabric” and history. There are many time-honored building techniques which are quickly becoming lost arts; plastering is one of those.

Historic preservation guidelines and standards such as the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards strongly recommend repairs rather than wholesale replacement with modern techniques/materials, but sometimes replacement is warranted. Such cases would involve buildings that moved prior to stabilization, and buildings that have been exposed to long-term moisture problems (buildings left vacant and whose interiors are exposed to the elements).

Continued on Page 10

Exceptional Places

Alesha Cerny

Have YOU Visited the National Historic Landmarks Program New Website?

Check out our new and improved National Historic Landmarks (NHL) Program website, www.nps.gov/nhl, designed to be more user friendly for the public and you, our stewards. Click around the website on the five key words listed below to:



LEARN the benefits that designating a property as an NHL may provide and how local, state, tribal, and Federal governments promote preservation through the use of preservation programs. Read the latest theme studies, special studies, and additional NHL program-related publications. Stay current on our heritage and history initiatives, including American Latino Heritage, Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage, Women's History, and LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer) History as the NHL program engages in an effort to extend our reach to reflect a full spectrum of people and events responsible for building the nation.

FIND NHLs listed by state and search for the most recent nominations on the state pages or for earlier nominations search via the NPS Focus database. You can also search the current NHL database, but this database is not entirely up-to-date because we are in the process of creating a new database. While it doesn't happen too often, you can browse the list of NHLs that have lost their designation and find out why so this doesn't happen to your property.

APPLY includes information on how to nominate a property for NHL designation. The process is explained in detail from determining eligibility through designation with everything in between including the initial inquiry and information on researching, compiling, writing, and submitting the draft. After this, begins the editorial review process by NHL staff and outside peer reviewers then the presentation to the National Park System Advisory Board Landmarks Committee.

NEWS includes the most recent information and events as well as archived information. Look here for the latest copies of the nominations considered by the National Park System Advisory Board Landmarks Committee and further details about their meetings.

CONTACT information for regional and national NHL program offices can be found by clicking on a region. The Midwest Region assists approximately 450 Landmarks in 13 states that represent the diverse history of the Midwest. Here you can view our regional map that was included in last year's newsletter and view digital copies of our past newsletters.

Battle Mountain Sanitarium Faces Uncertain Future

“ I feel what I get here is mine. That the government owed me a debt, contracted 25 years ago, the consideration for which was the weary march, the desperate fight and the hopeless imprisonment. ”

Penned by Civil War veteran N.A. Hunt in 1891, these words summarized the value countless American volunteer soldiers placed on an institution established by Congress and signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln. Between 1865 and 1930, eleven National Homes for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers (NHDVS), or Homes, would be established across the country to provide for the American soldier, whose numbers had increased by 2500% by the end of the Civil War. Thousands faced unprecedented problems, and modern firearms, disease and trauma took tremendous physical and psychological tolls. At these places veterans could find free medical and spiritual care, a place of residence, opportunities for vocational rehabilitation, education, entertainment, and if necessary, an honorable, burial. The Homes' carefully considered architectural and landscape designs reflected multiple goals. They were to physically represent the Federal government's commitment to its veterans and serve as a source of pride to those veterans. The imposing design of the properties served to generate public respect for veterans, and for both the public and the members, the Homes established a sense of community and security.

The Homes also represented a policy of veterans' benefits that directly influenced the development of a national system for veteran health care in the United States. That system is provided today through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The Homes were a notable departure from the previous Federal focus on care for professional soldiers and officially set forth the concerns and commitment of the Federal government for the well-being of the civilian, or volunteer, soldier. From an initial admission policy directed towards

Union Army volunteer veterans with service-related disabilities, membership at the Homes would eventually expand to all veterans of all wars who could not live independently for any reason, regardless of the nature of their disability. The focus on care also changed over time, shifting from an original goal of quickly re-integrating veterans into society, to geriatric care, to providing medical care for new influxes of young veterans with specific injuries and conditions.

The feelings behind the words written by Hunt in 1891 are being echoed today by many veterans in response to proposed changes to one of the former Homes, the Battle Mountain Sanitarium, in Hot Springs, South Dakota. Battle Mountain was opened in 1907 as the only Home to function as an independent medical facility. Within its collection of striking red sandstone buildings, staff treated musculoskeletal conditions and respiratory ills. The primary complex features a prominent administration center connected to an innovative circular hospital complex that placed wards in rectangular spokes, and used ramps rather than stairs to facilitate accessibility. Battle Mountain Sanitarium was declared a National Historic Landmark in 2011. That same year, the VA proposed a reconfiguration of the Black Hills Health Care System, which is located at the former sanitarium. The proposal entailed construction of a new Community Based Outpatient Clinic in Hot Springs, and closing the existing medical center there. Additional reconfiguration would include construction of a 100-bed Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) treatment center in Rapid City, and closing the remaining buildings at the Hot Springs campus,



where PTSD and substance abuse patients receive treatment.

In May 2014, the VA initiated a planning process in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). The VA cites consideration of quality, safe and accessible health care as reasons for the reconfiguration. The age of the Hot Springs buildings, and accessibility challenges are reasons necessitating the need for a reconfiguration. Other issues are a desire to increase access to care closer to veterans' homes, and to reduce out-of-pocket expenses for veterans' travel. Under NEPA, the VA must develop a range of alternatives to address these issues, and prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that provides a comprehensive analysis of the environmental, cultural and historic, and socioeconomic effects of the proposed reconfiguration of health care services. The VA must also identify reasonable measures to avoid or minimize the environmental harm. Following NEPA and NHPA, the VA must consult with the public, Federal and



Administration building, with one of the wards in the background. Photo by Dena Sanford.

state agencies, American Indian Tribes, key stakeholders and other interested parties. Per Sections 106 and 110 of NHPA, the VA must also identify issues and resources associated with a proposed alternative, identify impacts to the historic resources, and undertake actions to avoid impacting the NHL.

The public scoping process began on June 11, with comments accepted until August 16th. Following additional development of the alternatives, a second round of public meetings is scheduled in the fall of 2014. After a preferred alternative is selected and a draft EIS produced in the spring of 2015, a third public comment period and consultation is to be scheduled, and the final EIS produced in the fall of 2015. Information on the NEPA process is available at the VA's website, www.blackhills.va.gov/VABlackHillsFuture/.

Preliminary proposed alternatives include a variety of actions, including reuse of some or all of the historic buildings; closing the VA campus; replacing services at new or other existing facilities outside

of the community of Hot Springs; and no action. One alternative, derived from the 2012 work of the Hot Springs "Save the VA Committee," entails use of the facilities as a national demonstration project focusing on treatment and research for PTSD and substance abuse, creation of a Compensated Work Therapy program, and a strong partnership with the community for ongoing patient support. The "Save the VA Committee" is composed of Hot Springs citizens, both veterans and non-veterans, who organized in reaction to the VA's 2011 reconfiguration announcement. Members collected information about all aspects of the impact reconfiguration would have on veterans and the community, prepared a counter-proposal, and aggressively networked to bring attention to the proposed closing of the Hot Springs campus.

Public town hall meetings held between 2011-2012, and the more recent public scoping meetings during the summer of 2014, have generated passionate responses by veterans, local businesspeople, the public, elected officials, and preservationists. Media attendance at the public scoping meetings, held at nine communities in South Dakota, Nebraska, Wyoming and the Pine Ridge Reservation Area, indicate that the majority of public comments did not support closure of the Hot Springs medical facility. A number of veterans gave emotional testimony about the personalized care proved to veterans at the VA campus, and the outstanding services provided by the medical staff. Some noted the increased economic and physical stresses attendant on travel to other, more distant VA hospitals, while others were critical of services that could be provided at local facilities.

They overwhelmingly voiced opinions in favor of retaining medical services at Hot Springs. Hot Springs community residents expressed fear of the impacts closure would mean for the vitality and viability of their town. Tim Jurgens, the newly elected state commander of the American Legion in South Dakota, stated at one meeting that the American Legion does not support the hospital's closure.

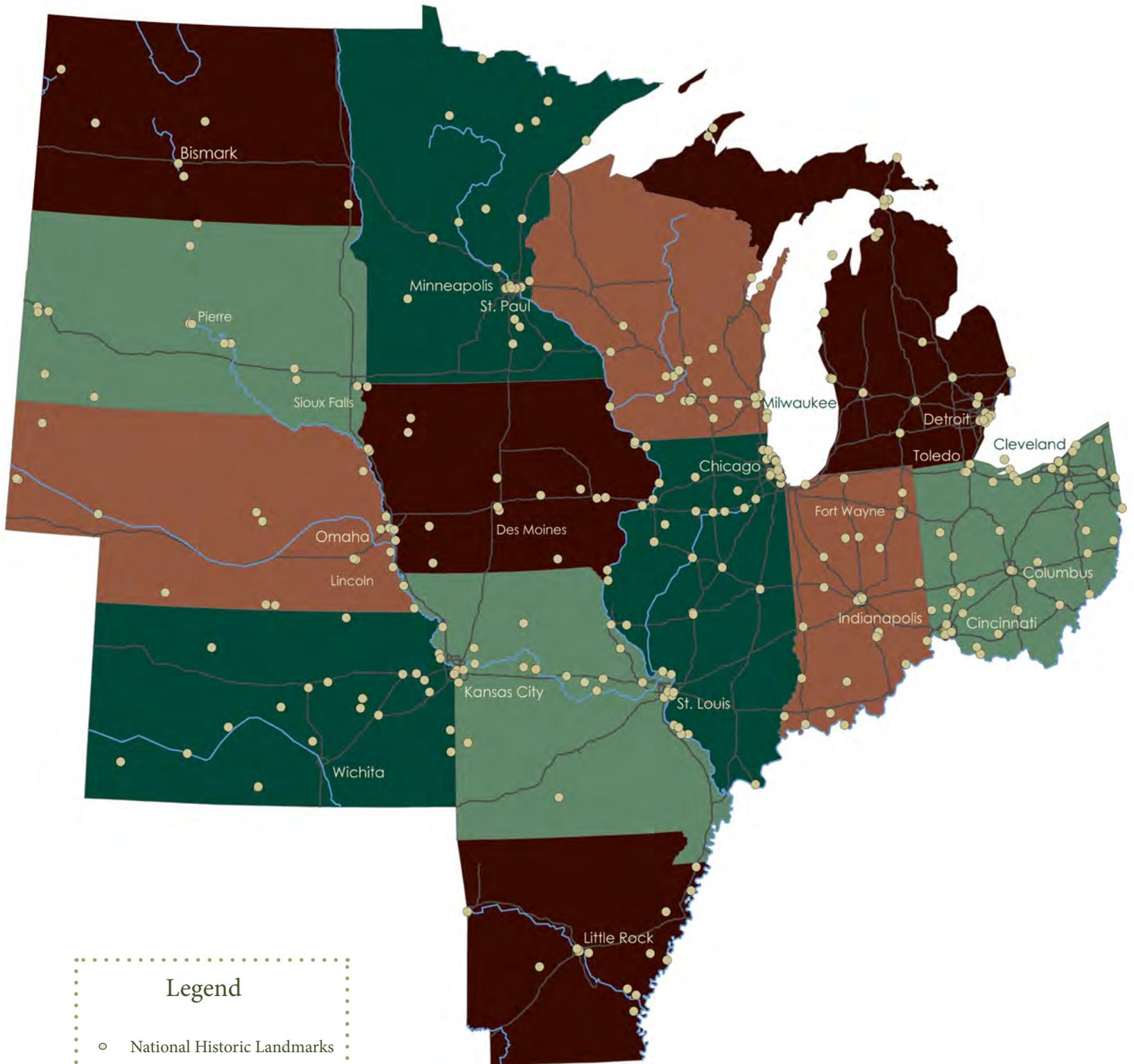
Following the 2011 VA announcement for proposed reconfiguration, elected officials

from three states strongly urged retaining Battle Mountain as a fully operational VA medical campus. On May 17, 2013, South Dakota U.S. Senators Tim Johnson and John Thune, U.S. Representative Kristi Noem, Wyoming U.S. Senators Mike Enzi and John Barrasso, Wyoming U.S. Representative Cynthia Lummis, and Nebraska U.S. Representative Adrian Smith wrote a strongly worded letter to VA Secretary Eric Shinseki. They requested that the VA seriously consider incorporating the "Save the VA" proposal into any final decision regarding reconfiguration. This followed a meeting earlier in the year involving the South Dakota delegation, representatives of the "Save the VA Committee," and Secretary Shinseki to discuss the future of the Hot Springs VA facilities. The South Dakota KOTA television station reported on May 13, 2014, that Senator Thune condemned the VA decision to move forward with the NEPA process, given recent revelations on national reports of secret VA wait lists and preventable deaths. Senator Thune introduced Senate Bill 2316 the previous day, to require the VA's Inspector General to report on national veteran wait times, "and prohibit the VA from proceeding with any closures." He continues to raise concerns about how the Hot Springs VA closure would impact wait times, quality of care, access to specialized health care services, access to rehabilitation programs, travel distances, and access to medical care for tribal veterans.

The South Dakota KELO radio station reported on June 24, 2014, that Senator Johnson has held meetings with VA officials and in Congressional hearings, actively fighting against the VA's proposal to realign the VA Black Hills Health Care System. Senator Johnson observed that "The Battle Mountain Sanitarium is a prime example of living American history and must remain open for our veterans' health care needs and for insight into our nation's past." Senator Johnson's conviction that services should remain in Hot Springs has prompted him to include language in the Fiscal Year 2015 Senate Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Bill to put the closure of the Hot Springs VA on hold.

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MIDWEST NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS



Legend

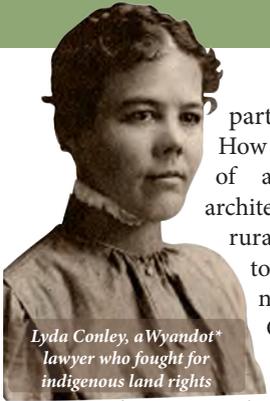
- National Historic Landmarks
- Major Rivers
- Major Highways

Data Sources: NPS Data, ESRI Basemap
(States, Hydrology, Roads, Cities)

0 150 300 miles

FINDING WOMEN'S HISTORY

(Continued from Page 1)



Lyda Conley, a Wyandot* lawyer who fought for indigenous land rights

Courtesy Wyandotte County Historical Museum, Kansas. Curator, Jennifer Laughlin.

participate? How about in the construction of a bridge? A mundane architectural feature like a simple rural stone bridge might seem to be a reasonably gender-neutral example. In Baldwin City, Kansas, however, such a bridge is a tangible memento of an era when women controlled the town. In 1889, more than 30 years before the 18th Amendment, the all-female Baldwin City Council was elected in what was called “an overwhelming defeat of the masculine power.”² Among other social reforms such as prohibiting the sale of alcohol, the women facilitated the building of a bridge and sidewalks in the town. Most of the ordinances that the women passed were repealed in 1890 with the election of a new (male) mayor and city council, but the “Women’s Bridge” remains as a reminder of their term. The moral of this story is that writing off a property as “having nothing to do with women” could be leaving out very important details.

OPPORTUNITIES

There are so many topics out there that can still be discussed regarding women’s history. Furthermore, there is an opportunity to talk about the broader concept of gender relations—stories that encompass general societal notions of “masculine” and “feminine” as well as those who do not fit into the rigid gender binary. There are opportunities to further expand and research issues of health, sexuality, pregnancy, aging, race, fashion (as fashion can both reflect and have an impact on social mores), immigration, labor, housing (the role of architecture in reflecting and defining gender norms has been under-represented), religion, technology, medicine, etc. As women have always been half of the participants in history, any topic can be a women’s topic. Keeping an open mind to these topics and finding women’s history in “unexpected places” can lead to a richer visitor experience that resonates with a broader audience.

There are understandably many challenges to overcome when seeking to tell or expand upon a narrative on women’s history. Limited time, money, and resources are issues for every historic site. Finding information can be a challenge because many women, especially poor

women and women of color, left few records to tell about their lives. Furthermore, not every visitor will be interested in the history of gender relations; many will want to hear the more traditional story of the man of the house or see the antique furniture. That does not mean there is no room for new angles of interpretation. By sharing multiple stories from different perspectives, visitors are more likely to find something in the site that resonates with their own situation.

INTERPRETATION

The most important thing is to get the information out there so that it can inspire and educate. In instances where very little information can be found about women’s roles at your site, keep in mind that sometimes silence speaks louder than words. By asking questions like “why don’t we know much about the women at this site?” or “why weren’t these individuals included in the record?” the lack of information can be turned into a learning experience for visitors.

That said, there are plenty of places to look for answers. Certain types of primary sources are more likely to yield information about women. First, newspapers do a good job of expressing societal attitudes of the day and often have letters or comments written by women. Second, diaries and letters provide an intimate look at women’s daily lives. Women’s social clubs typically published pamphlets, bulletins, and kept minutes; looking in these sources can reveal positions on key issues like suffrage and civil rights. Even basic census or legal records—birth, marriage, baptism, and death records, city directories, deeds, wills, property inventories, and building permits—can reveal a wealth of information on women. In the Midwest, homestead records and land claims can also add to the story. Oral histories are a valuable resource, especially for the often-invisible sides of the story.

A RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

The goal of this article is not to suggest that every site should reinterpret their story through

a feminist lens; not every site can claim a compelling or necessary story of gender relations. The goal is merely to get people thinking and asking, “whose story are we telling and why?” “Are we telling a complete story? If not, how can we?”



Mary Skubitz, leader of the “Amazon Army,” a group of women who protested working conditions at 63 Kansas mines

Courtesy Pittsburg State University Special Collections

Don’t be afraid to ask new and challenging questions. Asking questions is the first step to understanding what is missing. Listen to the public; conduct surveys that ask them whose stories they think are missing or ask them what other questions they have about the site. It also helps to have allies who are historians or members of academia who are willing to take on the challenge of interpretation.

Communication is also important both within the historic property’s internal management and between sites. There will inevitably be historic sites that have done the same kind of research or are asking the same questions. It’s not a matter of reinventing the wheel; it’s a matter of taking inspiration from what others have already done and expanding upon/altering it to fit with your site’s unique story. Organizations like the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH), National Council on Public History (NCPH), and the Organization of American Historians (OAH) can be very helpful for sites independent of the National Park System, and the Park Service itself is a valuable resource for any National Historic Landmark. The most important thing to remember is that, like anything, researching women’s history takes determination. The answers may not always be obvious, but the fact that the questions are being asked is valuable in itself. ●

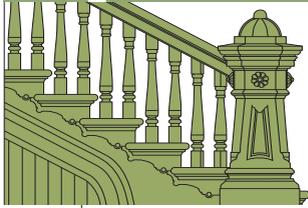
¹ Lindgren, H. Elaine, “Ethnic Women Homesteading on the Plains of North Dakota” (1989). *Great Plains Quarterly*. Paper 454.

² Alicia Henrickson, “Historic Baldwin Bridge Getting a Makeover,” *Lawrence Journal-World*, May 19 2005.

* Spelling vary for the name of this tribe but during Conley’s time the KS tribe spelled it “Wyandot.” The county in NE Kansas spells it “Wyandotte.”

Is there an unlisted or under-loved site near you that tells a compelling story about a broad theme in women’s history? If so, consider nominating it to be a National Historic Landmark! We are always looking for more sites that focus on women.

Let us know!



But even in these extreme circumstances, it is not necessary to expose the studs: the damaged plaster alone could be removed and the lath (usually wood) exposed and cleaned up. New multiple-coat plastering could then be accomplished. A typical three-coat plaster system is very practical in that it is extremely durable, fire resistant, and reduces sound transmission.

If the wood lath is too deteriorated, sections of new wood lath can be installed and if extensive lathing is required, metal or gypsum lath could be used. A skilled plasterer can proceed with a multiple-coat plaster finish. A severely damaged ceiling could be also be replastered by installing 1 x 3 wood furring strips and metal lath right atop the historic plaster – without removing the older finish and substrate. Replastering in this way saves time, produces much less demolition debris and dust, and gives added fire protection.

In specialized circumstances where plaster surfaces are pretty much intact, but the plaster has pulled loose from the lath, a technique requiring highly skilled craftspeople can be employed to establish new plaster keys. This requires access to the back sides of the wood lath, and the services of a very skilled conservator. The technique is described in Preservation Brief No. 21,

After dampening the old lath and coating the damaged area with a bonding agent, a fairly liquid plaster mix (with a glue size retardant added) is applied to the backs of the lath, and worked into the voids between the faces of the lath and the back of the plaster. While this first layer is still damp, plaster-soaked strips of jute scrim are laid across the backs of the lath and pressed firmly into the first layer as reinforcement. The original lath must be secure, otherwise the weight of the patching plaster may loosen it.²

Because of the high cost of this technique, it is employed primarily when the goal is to conserve decorative surfaces or historic wallpapers while leaving the plaster intact. Ceilings are probably the most accessible, but sometimes a wall can be similarly accessed (such as from a closet). First the existing plaster surfaces are very gently pushed back to the lath. Wood blocking/bracing with dense foam to protect the finish surfaces is employed to push and then stabilize the plaster while repairs are made.

Cracks (hairline or larger) are the easiest to repair, but the building must be stabilized first. Hairline cracks are repaired with a patching compound. For cracks that keep reappearing due to seasonal humidity changes, the crack is widened with a sharp metal tool, then the crack is filled. If movement is more persistent, the crack can be bridged with a fiberglass mesh tape embedded in wet plaster, and plastered over. Additional information on these types of repairs, and additional repair methods may be found in National Park Service Preservation Brief No. 21: Repairing Historic Flat Plaster Walls and Ceilings at: <http://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/21-flat-plaster.htm>

A Final Aside

Why is “plastered” a term for “very inebriated?” Contact the Midwest Region NHL Team with your best answer, and we’ll post the most “intriguing” in our next issue! ●

¹ A large gypsum deposit at Montmartre in Paris resulted in the widespread use of this term.

² National Park Service Preservation Brief No. 21: Repairing Historic Flat Plaster Walls and Ceilings, p. 6.

Battle Mountain Sanitarium (Continued from Page 6)

The Rapid City Journal reported on June 24th that Representative Noem wrote a letter to Representative Jeff Miller, Chairman of the House Committee of Veterans Affairs, formally requesting a field hearing at the Hot Springs VA hospital. Representative Noem cited data discrepancies on VA information and unanswered requests from Congress on additional data. “Many have also raised concerns,” she wrote, “about the systematic reduction of services provided at the hospital, which could later be used to justify closure.”

Her colleague, Congressman Adrian Smith, R-NE, Co-Chair of the Rural Veterans Caucus, has also written letters of concern regarding the impact a reconfiguration would have on Nebraska veterans. He hosted an open house in July for veterans to voice their concerns about the potential closing of the Hot Springs facility. A compilation of these and other media reports on the proposed action can be found at www.theveterantown.com/breaking_news_15.html.

Organizations and agencies concerned about Battle Mountain’s preservation have also spoken out against the facility’s closure, and are involved in the NEPA/NHPA consultation process. In addition to the efforts of the “Save the VA Committee,” the South Dakota Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has voiced its opposition to closure of the facility, as has the National Park Service (NPS) Midwest Regional Office. On February 8, the Rapid City Journal quoted Ted Spencer, Director of Historic Preservation for the SHPO, that “Battle Mountain Sanitarium has a rich history of serving our nation’s veterans, and the long line of veterans that have passed through those doors represent all that is good and honorable about our state’s service and treatment of veterans.” The NPS has repeatedly encouraged continuing use of the historic resources, following rehabilitation guidance provided by the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards to successfully address accessibility issues. Bringing additional focus to the Hot Springs facility, the National Trust for Historic Preservation named the Battle Mountain Sanitarium NHL among its 2014 “Eleven Most Endangered” list, signifying the property as one of the most endangered historic resources in the nation.

In the fall of 2013, the Trust produced a report on VA historic properties that garnered national attention. Entitled “Honoring Our Nation’s Veterans: Saving Their Places of Health Care and Healing,” the report described a crisis in the condition of hundreds of neglected or deteriorated historic buildings owned by the VA, including the Battle Mountain Sanitarium. The report recommended a strong commitment from VA leaders to save its historic buildings, expand its two-member VA preservation staff, and to work with private developers and preservationists to better reuse and protect buildings.

Both the NPS and the Trust have suggested application of existing authorities to achieve historic preservation goals. The VA’s Enhanced-Use Lease authority and the VA’s Building Utilization Review and Repurposing Initiative support the VA’s goal to end Veteran homelessness. Success with an earlier version of the Enhanced-Use Lease authority has been demonstrated at the Western Branch of the NHDVS (the Dwight D. Eisenhower Medical Center) in Leavenworth, Kansas, and at the Northwestern Branch of the NHDVS (the Clement J. Zablocki Medical Center) in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Also available to the VA is the leasing authority as established in Section 111 of the NHPA, which authorizes Federal agencies to lease or exchange

historic property to any person or organization, if the agency head determines the lease or exchange will adequately ensure the preservation of that property. Other preservation successes, such as at the award-winning Henry Ford Health System in Detroit, Michigan, and the Northern Arizona VA Medical Center in Prescott, demonstrate that rehabilitation of historic hospitals can be undertaken in a manner that achieves the dual goals of quality medical care and historic preservation. ●

NHL Roots (Continued from Page 2)

Mission 66 also provided a means to reactivate the Survey, with funding per congressional budget approval. Unlike the original purpose of the Survey in the 1930s—to identify nationally significant historic properties and to keep the results of the Survey confidential—this time the intent was to release the results of the Survey to the public, more thoroughly identify properties to reflect all historic themes in American history, and encourage individuals, organizations, communities and states to preserve and protect historic properties. Lee reiterated the various benefits of publicizing the list of nationally significant properties, primarily as a means of protection by offering increased awareness of the diverse array of properties important to all Americans. Although the intent remained to identify properties that met the strict criteria and seek potential approval for those possessing exceptional significance for inclusion in the NPS, now the larger goal of the Survey was to encourage preservation by others.

In 1959, NPS Director Conrad Wirth approved a memorandum outlining the means “to utilize most effectively the results of the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings.” The memo summarized the status of the Survey and highlighted the substantial progress made prior to the outbreak of the war. The memo recommended that in order to fully utilize the results of the Survey, a new category of historic properties be established, known as “Registered National Historic Landmarks.” The majority of these landmarks would remain in non-Federal ownership. Certificates signed by the Secretary of the Interior would be issued to the participating owners, and inscribed, bronze plaques would be offered to those who desired one and acknowledged certain conditions.

The NPS National Historic Landmark (NHL) Program, established in early 1960, assisted individuals, organizations, communities and states in the preservation and protection of nationally significant historic properties. The NHL Program was portrayed as a feasible and sensible alternative to federal acquisition of historic properties,

thus reducing pressure on the NPS to acquire new sites as park units. Only those evaluated as possessing superlative or exceptional national significance would be considered for inclusion in the NPS, primarily to fill gaps in the thematic framework.

The first NHL to be designated by the Secretary of the Interior under the new program, the Sergeant Floyd Monument in Iowa, occurred on June 30, 1960. Subsequently, ninety-two NHLs were designated and publicly honored on October 9, 1960, for their contribution to and illustration of American history. Representing an array of historic themes, this initial group of NHLs included Williamsburg Historic District in Virginia, the Erie Canal in New York, and San Xavier del Bac in Arizona. NHLs in this first announcement from the Midwest Region included Mackinac Island in Michigan, St. Genevieve in Missouri and Tippecanoe Battlefield in Indiana. The huge backlog of historic properties identified, documented and certified by the Survey were given their much deserved appreciation at long last, and hundreds more were announced in the next several years.

The public recognition of nationally significant properties did help raise awareness at a time when various federal programs were increasingly responsible for destruction of historic sites and buildings throughout the country. However, despite the successful initiation of the NHL Program, preservationists recognized that an additional, more all-encompassing congressionally authorized system was required that would identify, honor, and protect historic properties of national *and* state and local significance.



Felix Valle House, Ste. Genevieve Historic District, MO. NPS Photo. One of the first designated NHLs, October 9, 1960.

The passage of the seminal National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) in 1966 came about in this context and was seen as a response to many of these concerns. Viewed as a logical and necessary extension of the 1935 Historic Sites Act, the NHPA mandated the “expansion” of the NHL registry, in the form of the National Register of Historic Places. Initially composed of designated NHLs and

historical units of the NPS, the National Register provided a means to nominate and list properties of state and local significance. Similar to the 1935 Act, the NHPA assigned the NPS with substantial responsibilities within the realm of historic preservation. The 1966 Act also created a network of State Historic Preservation Offices that function as critical partners in the national historic preservation program.

Prior to the NHPA, the NHL program provided the primary means for the identification and recognition of nationally significant properties across the nation, and the program continues to perform this vital function. The NHPA built upon this foundation by authorizing a more inclusive means of listing and protecting properties of all levels of significance, reinforcing a revised preservation approach that also embraces aesthetic, environmental and community values. Most importantly, it established a national preservation program predicated on a wide-ranging partnership among the federal government, States, Indian Tribes, Native Hawaiians, local governments, nonprofit organizations and the private sector. *To be continued next time...* ●



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 MIDWEST REGION
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In This Issue

Finding Women's History in Unexpected Places	1
Roots of the NHL Program, Part II	2
Precedent-Setting Section 106 Consultation at Taliesin	3
Splinters From the Dusty Newel Post- Plaster Ceilings	4
NHL Program Website	5
Battle Mountain Sanitarium	6
Midwest NHLs	8

READ ALL ABOUT IT: KUDOS TO YOU!

A \$500,000 Federal Highway Administration Grant has been awarded for improvement of the *St. Croix Boom Site NHL*, located near Stillwater, Minnesota. The Washington County Board will assume responsibility as oversight agent for dispersal of the funds, which are to be used to plan, design, and restore the site associated with 19th- and early 20th-century lumbering in the region. Initial restoration work is slated for the summer of 2015.

Congratulations to the staff at **Boys Town NHL**, in their quest to find historically accurate roofing tiles. A major hailstorm that hit the NHL several years ago impacted the majority of the historic structures on campus, including four 1930s-era dormitories. After an unsuccessful search of U.S. and South American firms, a manufacturer in Turkey was identified that could produce the same type of tile. Original, undamaged tiles are being retained for possible use in other restoration projects.

Congratulations to the Honolulu House in the *Marshall, Michigan, Historic District*, winner of a 2014 Michigan Historic Preservation Network "Historic Preservation Award." The award was given for the meticulous historic documentation and exquisite craftwork by local artisans to recreate the ornate fence that formerly surrounded the house--one of Michigan's, and the country's, outstanding historic structures.

Outstanding preservation activity at two NHL districts in Leavenworth, Kansas, garnered the attention of the Kansas Preservation Alliance, Inc. At the *Western Branch, National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers*, five former domiciliary buildings have been leased to the Eisenhower Ridge Association, for use as low-income veterans' transitional housing. For their work, the project team received an Honor Award for Excellence in Rehabilitation. At the north end of town, KPA bestowed similar honors: The U.S. Army and its project team received an Honor Award for Excellence in Rehabilitation for work on the *Fort Leavenworth Post Hospital/Hospital Corp Barracks*, and the same award for rehabilitation of the Bachelor Officer's Mess Hall.