

**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 21, 2011

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
Anne Loomis, citizen 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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La Crosse, WI 54601

The La Crosse County Historic Sites Preservation Commission held eight monthly meetings in 2010. (Two additional meetings were attempted, but the Commission did not have a quorum of members attend to conduct an official meeting). The Commission advertised in several newspapers for a member of the public to replace Dick Bedessem who had resigned from the Commission in 2009, and the newest member of the public, Anne Loomis,

joined the Commission in 2010.

The Commission continuously looked at possible sites for its local listing of historic sites, and a nomination for one building was finalized in 2010. The Palmer/Lewis Octagon house near West Salem had been nominated by a member of the West Salem Historical Society in the 2009 calendar year. This house is currently on the National Register of Historic Places. Additional information was requested from the West Salem Historical Society from their 2009 nomination, and this information was provided in 2010. 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 historic site, and has been recorded at the Register of Deeds as such, and has been 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. Four grant applications were received in 2010. The Commission voted to split the \$1000 into two awards. Five hundred dollars was awarded to the Onalaska Historical Society for assessment and maintenance of textiles from the Mary Jane Skaff Estate, and five hundred dollars was awarded to the West Salem Historical Society for painting of the exterior of the Palmer/Lewis Octagon Home museum and tourist center.

The Commission continued to update its new website <http://www.lacrossecountyhistoricsites.org/> to help better educate the public on the Commission's mission and purpose. The Commission also printed approximately 20,000 bookmarks for public distribution. These bookmarks were re-prints of the 2009 bookmarks the Commission distributed of four significant structures in our community, with information on the back of the bookmarks highlighting the purpose of our Commission, and our website address. The 25,000 printed from our 2009 budget were very popular and distributed by late Spring of 2010, so the Commission felt it was pertinent to re-print these same bookmarks with our 2010 printing budget.

In 2009, the Commission submitted an application for \$7500 for a survey and planning grant through the Wisconsin Historical Society. This grant would be for a National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) 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 we were to receive the grant. The Commission received four letters of interest from the Wisconsin Historical Society of historians interested in working on the grant. We sent out letters to these four parties discussing when interviews for us to choose who would do the work be, and three interested persons showed up for the interviews. The Commission ultimately chose Tim Heggland to work on the nomination. Mr. Heggland's estimated cost for the work was approximately \$4,000, which left an additional \$3,500 left in grant money. With permission from the Wisconsin Historical Society, the Commission pursued a possible second nomination of the Lake Neshonoc Dam and Powerhouse with the additional \$3,500. Since this property had only one owner, the Commission wanted to make sure they were agreeable to a NRHP nomination before we pursued it. Barb Kooiman talked with people there at length, and although the owners, North American Hydro, seemed interested at first in the NRHP nomination, they ultimately decided not to pursue it. Therefore, the Commission will not be using the full \$7500 in grant funds 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 with a County Zoning and Planning representative and the County's Corporation Council to discuss the feasibility of these changes. In

2010, the Commission sent the ordinance changes to the County's Planning Resources and Development Committee chair for his review, and he sent a detailed message indicating his concerns about how to facilitate and enforce many of the proposed changes. Based on these helpful comments, the Commission decided that we would need to re-visit our proposed changes and asked the County's Corporation Council to hold off on reviewing them further until the Commission could discuss and revise.

This report briefly sums up the activities of the La Crosse County Historic Sites Preservation Commission over the year 2010, 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