

MIDWEST OFFICE – HIGHLIGHTS

December 2006

ELEUTHERIAN COLLEGE UPDATE

Eleutherian College, founded in 1848 in Lancaster Village, Indiana (pop. 200), was listed as one of the **National Trust's 11 Most Endangered Places in 2005**. That listing has played a vital role in the College's ability to attract attention and financial assistance, according to Jae Breitweiser, founder and president of Historic Eleutherian College, Inc.

People from across the nation have been drawn to the landmark site by its unique and important story, donating their time, talents, and money. Hampton Hotels' *Explore the Highway with Hampton(R) Save-A-Landmark* program provided \$15,000 for site improvements and 20 employee-volunteers from Indiana, Ohio and Kentucky to help with the work. Schoolchildren from Madison Consolidated High School history classes and students at Southwestern wrote letters of support for Eleutherian College's successful application for State of Indiana grant funds. A local African American construction firm jumped at the chance to act as general contractor for the project, although this was an expanded role for the firm, and many subcontractors have submitted pared down bids just for the opportunity to work on such an outstanding site.



Eleutherian College was established by an abolitionist group known as the “New England Settlement,” which operated a busy Underground Railroad Station that helped slaves fleeing north. They believed in education, equality and the arts without regard to race or gender even before the Civil War.

The College, a National Historic Landmark, was constructed in 1854. This important example of mid-19th century institutional architecture served as a teachers' training school from its beginning until 1888, when it became a grade school, serving in that capacity until 1938. It has been vacant since that date. In addition to being a National Historic Landmark, Eleutherian College has been recognized as a Station to the Freedom Center in Cincinnati, Ohio, a Network to Freedom Site by the National Park Service, and a Save America's Treasures site.

The College building was bought in 1990 by two women (allegedly without the knowledge of their husbands) who made it their crusade to preserve it. They created a non-profit organization, Historic Eleutherian College, Inc., to raise the money needed to restore the site. One of these visionary women, Dotti Reindollar, died tragically of a heart attack several years ago while running from her burning home in the middle of the night. The death of her close friend keeps Jae Breitweiser even more passionately dedicated to preserving the buildings.

Historic Eleutherian College, Inc. is a very small group dedicated to restoring and preserving the College. While the College building is surprisingly intact, it suffers from years of water damage, neglect and inappropriate repairs that must be corrected. The cost to restore the College building alone is \$2 million. That number rises to \$3.5 million when all costs to make the entire site operational are taken into consideration.

The members of Historic Eleutherian are determined and tenacious. This dedicated group has already managed to raise \$1,000,000 to complete Phase I of the building's restoration. The building has been stabilized and the entire exterior of the building will be completed in October 2006. Through their frugality and the willingness of workers to discount their normal charges just for the opportunity to participate in restoration of this landmark building, \$85,000 remains from Phase I which will be used to begin work on the chapel interior.

While Eleutherian is halfway toward the projected \$2 million cost of renovation, another \$1million is necessary to finish the restoration of the College and an additional \$1.5 million is needed to finish restoration of the remainder of the site.

CHICAGO SUBURBAN ALLIANCE

The Chicago Suburban Alliance is a group of 90 representatives from 30 different communities in the Greater Chicagoland Area who have been drawn together, without any advertising or promotion, to share information with each other on how to manage the problem of loss of community character as a result of teardowns and infill development. Several communities in the **Chicago Suburban Alliance** have completed, or are in the process of conducting, citizen surveys to determine the level of resident dissatisfaction in the communities. Others are proposing changes in zoning codes in an attempt to control

the size of the “monster houses” or “McMansions” that are being built to replace the smaller homes being demolished.

ADDING WITHOUT SUBTRACTING: Sensitive Design and Historic Properties

On October 20th, leaders in the field of historic preservation from New York City, Chicago, Washington and all across the nation joined with local activists and design professionals for the *ADDING without Subtracting: Sensitive Design and Historic Properties* seminar. The **Midwest Office** sponsored the day long symposium that explored the standards established by the National Park Service to guide design work involving designated historic sites and analyzed additions to historic buildings and neighborhoods. Speakers included: **Paul Spencer Byard, FAIA**, Director of the Historic Preservation Program at Columbia University in New York City; **Steven Semes, AIA**, Associate Professor of Architecture at Notre Dame University, **Sharon Park, FAIA**, Chief, Technical Preservation Services, National Park Service; **Chip Brown III**, Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office. Case studies from Wisconsin communities, presented by independent reviewers, served as the basis of dialogue and debate among all attending.

The symposium was underwritten by a grant from the **Jeffris Family Foundation of Janesville, Wisconsin**. Funding also was provided for twenty-six scholarships that were awarded to help participants from five states (including Wisconsin) attend the conference.

Co-sponsors included the American Institute of Architects, Wisconsin Southeast Chapter; University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee School of Architecture and Urban Planning; University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Design Council; American Planning Association, Wisconsin Chapter; Wisconsin Department of Commerce, Main Street Program; Wisconsin Historical Society, Division of Historic Preservation and Public History; Wisconsin Association of Historic Preservation Commissions; Wisconsin Trust for Historic Preservation; and Milwaukee’s Historic Third Ward Association.

GREATER DETROIT PRESERVATION COALITION

After the the *Historic Buildings of Downtown Detroit* were listed as one of the National Trust’s 2005 11 Most Endangered Places, *the Midwest Office*, Preservation Wayne, and the Friends of the Book-Cadillac sponsored a series of Detroit Preservation Summits. After the initial meeting, over 60 representatives from more than 20 different preservation groups formed the *Greater Detroit Historic Preservation Coalition*

and committed to develop a *Vision for Detroit*, a strategy that proposes to make the reuse of historic buildings part of Detroit's plan for the revitalization plan for the city. The *Vision for Detroit* document is now completed and endorsed by all the participating organizations. Representatives of the *Coalition*, along with the *Midwest Office* are now sharing this aggressive strategy for incorporating historic preservation into the plans for the economic development and revitalization with Detroit's corporate, philanthropic, community and political leaders.



*Historic Hotel Statler
Detroit, MI*