

MIDWEST OFFICE - HIGHLIGHTS

September 2005

SAVING HISTORIC PLACES

• Recently listed on the National Trust's 2005 11 Most Endangered List, the *Historic Buildings of Downtown Detroit* continue to be under serious threat due to inconsistent policies of the city administration and a callous disregard for Detroit's cultural resources. The demolition of the Madison-Lenox Hotel in May, listed on the 11 Most list in 2004, underscores the imminent danger faced by these irreplaceable downtown anchors. In response to this situation, on August 23rd the Midwest Office (MWO), Preservation Wayne and the Friends of the Book-Cadillac sponsored a **Detroit**

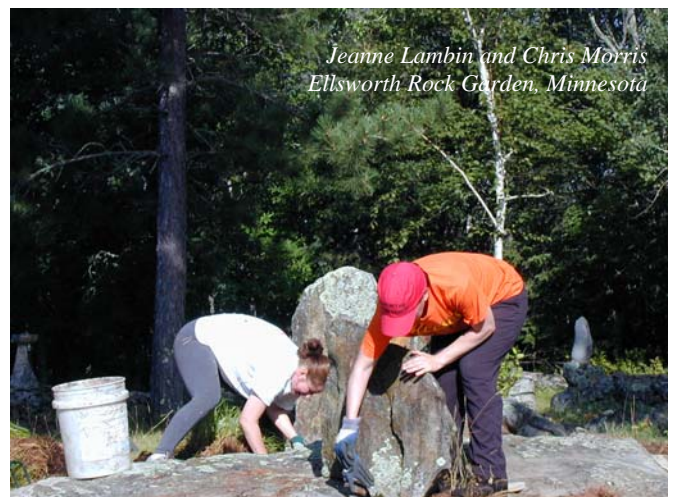


Preservation Summit. The event received notable media attention and was well attended by over 60 representatives from 20 different preservation groups. The outcome of the meeting was the formation of the **Greater Detroit Historic Preservation Coalition.** Representatives from each group will form a task force that will develop a proactive plan to engage the local philanthropic, corporate and political interests in the development of an aggressive strategy for historic preservation and economic development in Detroit.

A protester attempts to halt demolition of the historic Madison-Lenox Hotel in Detroit.

Photo: Claire Nelson

• Located in what is now **Voyagers National Park** in north central Minnesota, just south of the Canadian border, the Ellsworth Rock Garden on Lake Kabetogama is a testimony to the vision and dedication of Chicago contractor Jack Ellsworth who, from the 1940s through the 1960s methodically converted a 60-foot granite outcropping into a formal terraced garden with hundreds of dry-stack retaining walls, water features, sculptures, and seating areas - all crafted by hand. Following his death, his wife sold the property to the National Park Service (NPS) for incorporation into the park. Although the NPS originally intended to return the park to its original glory, over time several buildings were lost or demolished, and the garden fell into disrepair due to neglect, vandalism and harsh weather conditions. With a renewed interest to restore the garden, the NPS now sponsors an annual **"Ellsworth Blitz"**, a week-long work session where specialists lend their assistance for brush clearing, archaeological



*Jeanne Lambin and Chris Morris
Ellsworth Rock Garden, Minnesota*

excavation, and stone conservation. This year, **Chris Morris of the MWO** and **Jeanne Lambin of the WFO** offered their archaeological expertise to the restoration effort. We hope to provide grant support for restoration and training at the site and MWO staff plan to make a return trip for the 2006 Blitz.

- In late July, Royce Yeater, Midwest Office Director, visited **Isle Royale**, a large archipelago in the middle of Lake Superior that was made a National Park in 1940 and declared a Wilderness Park in 1971. Though much closer to Canada and Minnesota's north shore, the island is officially part of the Upper Peninsula in the state of Michigan. In the late 1930s, the National Park Service (NPS) acquired property owned by families who had run commercial fishing camps on Isle Royale since the mid-19th Century and extended them life leases, most of which are now expiring. Although many properties were lost due to abandonment, fires and, in many cases demolition by neglect, a comprehensive survey conducted in 2003 by NPS and the Michigan SHPO identified about 70% of the traditional structures on the island to be eligible for the NRHP. The new superintendent of Isle Royale National Park is interested in completing a Cultural Resources component to their General Management Plan, long identified as necessary but never prioritized. Isle Royale National Park officials are seeking funding from both within and outside the NPS to initiate the process of defining the cultural resources of the park and prescribing policies for their care. The Midwest Office was invited by the Isle Royale Families and Friends Association (IRFFA) and the Park to assist in the planning process and help the families care for their properties in exchange for some rights of continued access. In FY06, MWO staff will provide planning assistance, education, training and volunteer coordination with an initial focus on getting a positive working relationship between the park and residents in order to demonstrate the potential of a collaborative approach to carry out the effort.

REVITALIZE COMMUNITIES

- The **Midwest Office** is currently working with Preserve Buildings for Reuse (PBR), the Milwaukee Preservation Alliance and local preservation groups in the creation of development alternatives for the **Pabst Brewery Historic District**. Listed on the National Register and designated as a local landmark, the 21-acre site was once the nation's largest



*Pabst Brewery Historic District
Milwaukee, WI*

brewery and includes twenty-eight large-scale buildings constructed between 1870 and 1969. In 2002, Wispark LLC and its development partners acquired the buildings, which had been vacant since 1996. Wispark LLC's original plan was to rehabilitate and reuse 20 of the buildings for a retail and entertainment complex, named **Pabst City**, and demolish the remaining structures. A more recent proposal was to demolish 14 buildings, while the other development partners restore only eight of the original 20. Tied to this proposal was a \$41 million Tax

Incentive Financing (TIF) district which the City

Council turned down on July 26th. Local preservation groups are concerned that the developers will return to the City Council with an even more aggressive plan to demolish the site thus requiring fewer TIF dollars.

• On June 11, 2005, more than 2,000 people attended a concert in **Sturgeon Bay** celebrating the 75th birthday of Door County's historic **Michigan Street Bridge**. Organized by a dedicated group of advocates, the *Citizens for Our Bridge*, the day-long concert featured local musicians with Jackson Browne as the headliner. Popularly known as the Sturgeon Bay Bridge, the unique Scherzer rolling lift Bascule Bridge is the gateway to Door County but is being threatened with demolition and replacement. In response to a request for assistance from local advocates interested in saving the bridge, the National Trust for Historic Preservation used Section 4(f) to advocate keeping the bridge and, without going to court, put pressure on the state and federal transportation agencies to convince local officials that the structure was a good candidate for rehabilitation. In 2002, after several years of re-evaluation, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation committed to rehabilitating the bridge. Because the rehabilitation project has been delayed for a number of reasons, local advocates viewed the concert as an opportunity to keep the bridge in the public eye, celebrate its history and raise funds to aid in its preservation. Jeanne Lambin of the **WFO** updated the concertgoers about the on-going effort to preserve the bridge and the MWO acted as a pass-through for the benefit, which has raised over \$50,000 for the preservation of the Michigan Street Bridge.



*Michigan Street Bridge
Sturgeon Bay, Door County, WI*

ENGAGE THE PUBLIC

• This year ***Restore-o-Rama***, a three-day workshop for historic property owners featuring workshops, hands-on demonstrations, lectures and tours found a permanent home in the newly formed Shake Rag Center for the Living Arts in Mineral Point, Wisconsin. Launched by the Wisconsin Field Office in cooperation with the Wisconsin Trust for Historic Preservation in 2002, the event has been renamed the *Restoration Symposium*. It will be an annual event at the Mineral Point Living Arts Center. A Restore-o-Rama workshop series is also scheduled in Des Moines, Iowa in mid- September.

• On June 2-4, the **Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois**, our statewide partner, hosted the **Illinois Statewide Preservation Conference** in Joliet, IL. The MWO attended and participated in many of the sessions, with **Midwest Director Royce Yeater** leading a lively discussion on the rehabilitation of historic schools in a session called “Difficult Building Types”. Yeater’s talk focused on strategies for preserving and reusing structures that many communities find challenging. Illinois Field Representative Chris Morris took part in the “Creating an Initiative” session, which explored the identification of emerging preservation issues and how to create an initiative that is responsive to the public’s needs.

LEAD THE PRESERVATION MOVEMENT

• In August, Field Representative Chris Morris joined Michael Koop from the **Minnesota SHPO** for a 5-day, 1,600 mile driving tour that took them across Minnesota to meet with Heritage Preservation Commissions (HPC) in thirteen cities.

The purpose of this excursion was to share information with HPC staff and city administration, to identify towns and sites with high concentrations of historic resources, to gain a better understanding of the issues facing HPCs and to discuss ways to work together on regulatory work and education at the local level. The MWO is working closely with the



MWO's Chris Morris with Paul Bunyan and Babe.

Minnesota SHPO to develop HPC assessment and training tools as part of the Trust's **Preservation Development Initiative** in Duluth. We plan to create tools for HPC training and education that can become a template for standard education materials throughout Minnesota. The tour was crucial to our research and planning for this statewide training program and was a great start in our outreach efforts to eventually visit all 50 HPCs across Minnesota.

FUNDING FOR PRESERVATION BY THE NATIONAL TRUST

- The Midwest Office recently secured a challenge grant from Harry and Virginia Sweatt in the amount of \$100,000 to establish the *Minnesota Historic Preservation Fund*. This fund will provide small grants for preservation projects around the state of Minnesota. The endowment fund is expected to grow to \$250,000 in the next three years with additional fundraising efforts by the Midwest Office and its statewide partners.