

# The Preservationist

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**H**ave you ever driven along the rural roads of Kankakee County or any Midwestern rural area and noticed that the barns are falling down or have been torn down? Is it because the land on those farms is being bought up to increase a farmer's land holdings? The land is valuable, but the barn and other out buildings are no longer needed and the farmer doesn't want to pay the property taxes.



Unger barn as it looked before restoration

built a new house, but soon after they gained possession of the property, the first project would be restoration of the barn that would eventually



That was the case on what is now known as the Unger Farmstead. The photos here show a deteriorating barn thought to have been built c1900. Nora and Shawn Unger purchased the property, located near Chebanse, Illinois, in July 2016. The property was purchased exclusively for the barn. The Ungers eventually



Shawn Unger working to remove old flooring  
(Construction photos courtesy of Nora Unger)

be used to shelter their sheep. Both of the Unger children, Lilian, 10; and Conner, 8, raise and show sheep through their 4-H memberships.

According to Nora, both the barn exterior and interior were in bad shape. The Ungers removed the flooring, dug trenches to add water lines and then poured new concrete floors. At the ground floor, sheets of old plywood were removed from the walls and ceiling to expose the original barn

## Restored Barn Given New Life



Trenches dug for water lines

wood, and beams. Dutch doors were added at the entries and old windows were replaced with new ones. Individual sheep pens were installed, along with a feed room and an area to wash and shear the sheep. An office will soon be completed within the barn. The lean-to shed on the east side of the barn serves as a



storage area for the family. And the hay loft, pictured above, is the absolute grandest place in all old barns.

Although the exterior siding has been covered with metal making it ineligible for landmark status, the Ungers should be very proud that they have saved one historic barn in Kankakee County. The restored barn pictured below has a new life and will stand for many more years to come.



Above: Three of the Unger sheep in the barn.  
Below: One of the barn cats sitting near Nora in the hay loft..



## Preserving History Through a 4-H Project

by John Adams



Charlie Kaack

This year a local history project was introduced to the 4-H program in Kankakee County. The purpose of the project was to create an interest in history and its preservation for the youth of the county.

A wide variety of topics were researched by 4-H members for judging and displaying at the county fair. Various sections

of the county were represented in the presentations.

On display for public view were "The Wright House", "Grandpa's English Barn", "Clarke City", "An Antique Tractor", "The Tea Pot House", and "Great Grandpa's Farm in Yellowhead Township."

Pictures, with written information about the structures or artifacts, were displayed on tri-fold posters.

Charlie Kaack did a lot of research through the county offices using census records, plats, and several history books to develop his narrative presentation.



Pictured L to R: Charlie Kaack, Kolton Hisel, Kaleigh Ladehoff, and Kylie Adams with posters that they made.

## Preserving Historic Church Interiors

taken from the National Park Service Preservation Briefs—No. 6

The appropriate rehabilitation of a historic structure must always preserve significant interior spaces, features and finishes. Large, multi-story interior spaces are often found in theaters, school auditoriums and gymnasiums, meeting halls, and religious buildings. These spaces characterize such building types and should be preserved in rehabilitation projects.

Redundant churches have often been rehabilitated for other uses, some more successfully than others. In historic churches, architectural fea-

tures such as stained glass windows, choir lofts, altars, and large open spaces are important in defining the historic character of the building. Libraries, museums, and historical societies, performing arts centers, community centers, and artists' studios are often appropriately selected as new uses for historic churches, as there is no need to introduce major architectural changes into the sanctuary space. However, the conversion of churches into apartments, shops or offices may not be as successful since these new uses are likely to require too many changes that are not com-

patible with the historic character of these interiors. Alterations which compromise or destroy these spaces or which cause the removal of distinctive architectural features and finishes, or which subdivide these two-story spaces and that result in compromising the integrity of these significant spaces, will not meet Standards 2 and 5 (compatible Use and retention of Historic Character), and, in some cases, also will not meet Standards 1 and 10 (Preservation of Distinctive Features, Finishes and Craftsmanship & Reversibility of new additions/alterations).



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**Landmark Plaques Now Available**

In October, the Kankakee County Historic Preservation Commission presented a Landmark Plaque to the Kankakee County Courthouse. Photos below show some of those present at the dedication of the plaque.

At this time there are four Kankakee County Landmarks. The court-



Plaque that has been installed at the Kankakee County Courthouse



Andrew H. Wheeler, County Board Chair; Michelle Sadler, Office Manager, County Planning Dept., Mardene Hinton, KCHP chair; and Chief Judge, Michael Kramer.



KCHP Commission: Terry Johnston, Michelle Sadler, Mardene Hinton, Jane Johnson.



George R. Letourneau House



Durham-Perry Farmstead



Limestone (Hawkins) Cemetery

If you have property that you wish to be considered for county landmark status, please contact Michelle Sadler at the Kankakee County Planning Department.

The first step is filling out a Historic Landmarks Pre-Qualification Form. On this form you will identify the property, tell us why it is significant to the history of Kankakee County and give us a brief history of the building, site, farmstead or district.

The Commission is always happy to help individuals with the forms required for landmarking a property.