

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the request of the Will County Land Use Department (Will County), acting as liaison for the Will County Historic Preservation Commission (Historic Preservation Commission), Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc. (WJE) has prepared the following report of the intensive survey of existing farmsteads in unincorporated Du Page Township in Will County, Illinois. WJE has previously performed an intensive survey of Wheatland, Plainfield, and Lockport Townships, with a final report dated November 2000. Most of the survey of Du Page Township was performed in April and May 2001, with follow-up survey in August and November 2001, and includes 36 square miles with 27 farmsteads containing 131 individual structures. This intensive survey was performed to update the previous survey of the township performed in 1988, which identified 76 farmsteads with 411 individual structures. Therefore, in the 13 years between the survey efforts a significant number of rural structures, as well as rural character and heritage, have been lost. Of the 27 farmsteads identified, 5 are individually eligible for Will County Historic Landmark status and/or National Register of Historic Places designation; 15 have sufficient integrity to contribute to a potential Will County or National Register rural heritage historic district; and 7 lack sufficient historic integrity to contribute to a historic district. Approximately one-half of the farmsteads in the township are actively engaged in some form of agricultural production. However, although many structures survive on farmsteads in Du Page Township and northwest Will County, they are under increasing threat without the former vitality of the agricultural economy.

Northwest Will County was settled by pioneer farmers of European origin beginning in the late 1820s. Two subsequent historical developments led to an increase in settlement: more land in the region became available after the Treaty of Chicago of 1833 resettled the remaining Native Americans to west of the Mississippi; and the decision to build the Illinois and Michigan Canal, begun in 1836. By the time the canal opened in 1848, the towns of Plainfield and Lockport had been founded (in 1834 and 1836 respectively) and farmers were established in Wheatland and Du Page Townships. The canal promoted the use of Chicago as a port city and reoriented the growth center of Illinois from the southern end of the state to the north. The canal helped farmers move their harvests and livestock to market. Within a few years, the railroad arrived to the region, offering farmers an additional means of transporting their bounty to Chicago and elsewhere. The canal gradually declined in use with the spread of the railroads; however, routing of the Sanitary and Ship Canal in the 1890s parallel to the canal renewed the waterways in the region for shipping purposes. Other transportation arteries included the Elgin, Joliet & Eastern Railroad, established in the late 1880s, and the routing of U.S. 30 through Joliet and Plainfield in the 1910s. Although these transportation arteries also served newly established industries in the area, they served the vital agricultural economy of northwest Will County until its decline in the last half of the twentieth century.

The Rural Structures Survey of unincorporated Will County performed in 1988 identified approximately 21,000 structures, 343 of which were noted to be potentially significant. The 1988 survey documented sites with photographs and survey data on standard Illinois Historic Preservation Agency format cards. For most sites, the data for the 1988 survey was gathered from the public right-of-way. In addition to this survey a report, was prepared examining the overall rural themes present in the county and identifying noteworthy structures. In 1999 and 2000, an intensive survey of Wheatland, Plainfield, and Lockport Townships was performed by WJE. The survey area includes 108 square miles of land, 227 farmsteads and historically related sites, and 890 individual structures. This report incorporates information from the final report November 2000, but with additional historical information obtained during the survey of Du Page Township.

Because of the numerous changes that have occurred in the years since the first rural survey in 1988, the Will County Historic Preservation Commission recognized the need to reassess the agricultural heritage in the region. Northwest Will County in particular is one of the fastest developing areas of the state, and for this reason was selected as the first area in the county to be reassessed. The Village of Bolingbrook has grown to dominate Du Page Township. The boundaries of Naperville, Plainfield, and Bolingbrook

were once several miles apart. Now, through a series of annexations in recent years, all three share common boundaries in the center of Wheatland Township to the west of Du Page Township.

The Will County Rural Historic Structural Survey described in this report was conducted on an intensive level, reconfirming the data gathered in the 1988 survey, and also including additional information such as sketch site plans and identification of more detailed building features. (The intensive level of the survey was possible because only one township was included in the present survey, as opposed to the entire county for the 1988 survey.) Survey work was conducted on farmstead and agriculturally related sites on unincorporated land, although a limited number of significant sites on incorporated land were included as well. Access to each site was sought from property owners to allow for closer examination of structures documented in the survey. This also allowed for photographs taken at close range to be included in the survey data. Rural structures constructed before 1950 were documented, as a minimum age of 50 years is the basic criteria for elements to be considered for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places (National Register). Each of the structures was documented on a separate survey form. Database software was used to organize written survey data for each structure and each farmstead site. Mapping software using geographic information system (GIS) technology was used to plot a graphic database showing the location of each farmstead.

The intensive survey conducted to date of all four northwestern Will County townships determined that there is a large, semi-contiguous region in Wheatland Township and northwestern Plainfield Township with a rich cultural heritage dating back to the first farmsteads established by settlers in the 1830s and 1840s. Spread throughout this region are several extant sites where a local farming competition, the Wheatland Plowing Match, was held almost every year between 1877 and 1976. Within this region are several farmsteads meriting local landmark designation. Centered within this large region of Wheatland and Plainfield Townships is a small settlement, the Wheatland Presbyterian Church rural crossroads, with a rich history and several intact structures. Consideration should be given to nominating the region to the National Register as a Will County historic agricultural district or a National Register Historic District through multiple property designation.

Also present in the four township area, and centered on the Des Plaines and Du Page River Valleys, are several extant buildings constructed of locally quarried limestone. The stone quarrying industry in the Des Plaines River Valley began in the 1830s, with quarrying in the Du Page River Valley initiated in the following decade as settlement progressed to northwestern Will County. As an area with buildings unique to agricultural production, it merits nomination to the National Register of Historic Places as a multiple property district. The survey also identified a select number of architecturally distinctive or historically significant sites and structures not defined by either of the two above categories. These are sites that merit local landmark designation. After additional research is performed to grant local landmark designation, a few of these sites may merit designation to the National Register.

Chapters I and II provide the context in which the surveyed farmsteads were established, grew, and in many cases have been divided into separate properties. Chapter I covers the geological, historical, and architectural contexts of Will County agriculture. Chapter II discusses the historical context of each of the three townships and focuses on historically and/or architecturally significant farmsteads, as identified by the survey, and the families that owned them. Chapter III describes the survey results, and includes a discussion of the National Register and local Will County criteria for determination of historical and architectural significance; a listing of the significant farmsteads in the survey region and potential individual or group designation; tabulation of individual building types; and recommendations for future survey work. Chapter IV contains a description of the survey methodology.

FEDERAL ASSISTANCE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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The activity which is the subject of the "Rural Historic Structural Survey of Du Page Township, November 2001" had been financed in part with federal funds from the Department of the Interior, administered by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of the Interior nor the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation by the U.S. Department of the Interior or the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency.



This is not a moraine. While its overall form may resemble a terminal moraine formed by glaciation, this mound lying along the Lisle Township (Du Page County) and Du Page Township (Will County) border is a landfill. It is located at the southern end of the Greene Valley Forest Preserve of the Du Page County Forest Preserve District.