

# preservation **issues**

NEWS FOR THE PRESERVATION COMMUNITY

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

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## **Missouri's National Health Resort**

**T**he city of Excelsior Springs has a unique and singular history within the State of Missouri. The town was founded, and existed because of, its nationally famous mineral water springs.

Prior to its "discovery" in 1880, the area of Clay County that would become Excelsior Springs was familiar to Native Americans and early white settlers. However, the rough terrain, rocky hills, and heavy vegetation made it a difficult site for settlement, although timber owners were able to utilize some of the natural resources. The resources for which the town would eventually become famous, its waters, were first

*"Within a short night's ride of Chicago, only thirty miles northeast of Kansas City on the main line of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway, Nature has plotted a recreation spot altogether ideal. A green timbered valley — a verdant, undulating countryside which, for all the artful beautification it owes to the hand of man, is still the unspoiled work of Nature — and with it all, water-springs of rare healing — It is the Spa of all America — where people go not only to get well but to stay well — and to have a good time while about it." — Excelsior Springs Chamber of Commerce, 1930*

treated with suspicion. After all, the overflow of one of the springs was colored an iron-rust red.

In 1880, a nearby farmer whose daughter was afflicted with scrofula turned to the waters in desperation for treatment. When a rapid recovery occurred, and other ailments were "tested" and "cured," the word quickly spread of the healing qualities of the water. The owner of the spring, A. S. Wyman, realized the potential for developing his land. Along with a Reverend Flack, he had the land platted, the water analyzed by St. Louis chemists, and started promoting its curative qualities. Flack built a home in the new town, opened the first dry goods store, founded the first church and then turned his preaching abilities to the merits of the waters, which he carried to a number of mid-western states.

The original townsite covered 40 acres, and was platted on September 1, 1880. Within a year, 200 houses were built on the hillsides and valleys surrounding the original spring, while

hundreds of others had to camp in tents or covered wagons. In 1881, Excelsior Springs became first a village (in February), and later a city of the fourth class (in July).

As the "Excelsior" (later Siloam) spring became famous, people started noticing the numerous other springs in the area. The promotion and develop-

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May/June 1995

## Historic Preservation Grants Available Soon

The Historic Preservation Program (HPP) is pleased to announce the beginning of the fiscal year 1996 grant cycle for Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) grants. The HPP will be awarding matching grants to citizens, organizations, local governments and other qualified entities to help identify, evaluate and protect Missouri's historic and archaeological resources.

In FY '96 "survey and planning," "pre-development" and "development" grants will be considered. Eligible survey and planning activities include surveys, nominations to the National Register of Historic Places, planning and promotional or

educational activities. Pre-development activities include the preparation of architectural plans and specifications, feasibility studies and historic structures reports for properties listed in the National Register. Development involves actual construction.

Applications will be judged competitively according to criteria established in conformance with the HPP's statewide preservation planning process. Grant priorities for FY '96 were published in the March/April edition of **Preservation Issues**. In FY'96, special consideration will be given to projects addressing the themes of public build-

ings, women's history, ethnic history and 20th-century architecture.

Grant application packets will be available on July 14, 1995; applications must be postmarked or delivered by 5 p.m. Thursday, August 31. To request an application, call Nancy Faerber at (314) 751-7858.

The amount of HPP's Historic Preservation Fund allocation will not be known until Congress approves the federal budget, probably in the fall. Final grant availability will be contingent upon notification by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, of Missouri's FY '96 HPF appropriation.

— Mark Miles

## Preservation and Heritage Tourism

*"Tourism does not go to a city that has lost its soul."* — Arthur Frommer

An opulent bed and breakfast in an elegantly restored historic mansion...

A quaint historic downtown commercial area in one of Missouri's small towns...

The birthplace of one of Missouri's famous sons or daughters...

These are but a few examples of the role historic resources play in expanding the state's economy through heritage tourism.

There can be little doubt that the tourism industry has become a major player in the nation's economy. Indeed, it is estimated that in 1991, more than \$344 billion was spent in tourism-related businesses in the United States. Some 12.4 million jobs were generated directly or indirectly by the tourism industry. Today, tourism is the second largest retail industry in the United States and is predicted to be the world's leading industry by the year 2000.

Historic sites and cultural resources have increasingly become key components in the tourism picture. The reasons for this growing interest are easy to understand. Historic sites and attractions offer a unique sense of place that is truly genuine. This stands in marked contrast to the "plasticized" history in so much of our culture. This search for something genuine may, in part, explain the recent failure of the proposed Disney America theme park in Virginia. Real history and heritage can't be manufactured. It is the natural product of the people and events that have touched a given site. As such, it provides a unique sense of place — a tangible link to the people who have gone before us — an undeniable sense of continuity with them and with their experiences.

Interest in historic sites is also growing because the current generation of Americans is better educated than any previous generation. Television and

movies have helped to expose Americans to the diversity of attractions and experiences that exist in this country. Programs such as "Roots" or the documentary series "The Civil War" have helped to spark this growing interest in our country's heritage.

As the "baby-boom" generation comes to middle age, it is increasingly interested in the education of its own offspring. Boomers tend to want their children to have a better understanding of our history and its architecture. At the high end of the age spectrum, older Americans frequently have the time and financial resources to travel and they comprise one of the largest segments of the tourism market.

Other factors have contributed to the interest in historic resources, as well. Americans increasingly want to stay at "someplace different." The desire to enjoy personalized service and a special ambiance help to explain the rapid

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# MISSOURI

## Historic Architecture

### Lustron\* Houses 1946-1952

#### Characteristics:

- ☐ Houses are small — typically between 1,000-2,000 square feet.
- ☐ Houses were always constructed on a concrete slab foundation.
- ☐ Each house represented an integrated system of design. Constructed entirely of factory-tooled steel parts, any design change required retooling the factory, so each house was identical to others of the same model.
- ☐ One-story modern or "Ranch" styling with a low-pitched gable roof is typical.
- ☐ The structure consisted of exterior and interior steel wall-framing sections bolted to the foundation and to steel roof trusses.
- ☐ Exterior and interior walls were covered with interlocking steel panels with a baked enamel finish in one of four pastel colors — blue, yellow, gray or tan.
- ☐ Exterior panels measured two feet square; interior panels were two feet wide by eight feet tall — from floor to ceiling in height.
- ☐ The house also included enameled steel frames and windows, door jams and doors, gable ends, gutters and soffits, and roof "shingles."
- ☐ Most came with insulation between the wall panels and radiant ceiling heat, accomplished by heating the steel ceiling panels with an oil furnace.
- ☐ Interiors were designed with an open plan and numerous built-in elements — closets, cabinets, bookcases and bedroom vanities and dressers were all included.



*Developed in response to the post-World War II housing shortage, prefabricated steel houses like the Crowley-Snyder house in Excelsior Springs were built mainly in the Midwest during a relatively short period of time. Fewer than 3,000 were constructed. Although there has been no formal survey of this property type in Missouri, Historic Preservation Program (HPP) staff have spotted Lustron houses in Mexico, Marshall, Columbia and Hermann in addition to the Excelsior Springs example. If you know of others, please share this information with the HPP. Send a photo and location to Lee Gilleard, survey coordinator, P.O. 176, Jefferson City, MO 65101, or call (314) 751-5367.*

*\*The Lustron Corporation was the nation's largest manufacturer of prefabricated steel houses during the postwar period, 1946-1950. Although nearly 100 firms had been created for the manufacture of prefab steel houses by 1947, most built only a few houses and some built none at all.*



*(EXCELSIOR, from Page 1)*

ment around these other springs quickly followed, with the most prominent being the "Empire" (later the Regent), Relief, Superior, and Saratoga springs. The springs were popular gathering places for the locals and visitors alike. Twenty separate springs or wells were eventually discovered, releasing four distinct varieties of water.

In only a very short time, small boarding and rooming houses were built to accommodate the throng of visitors. As early as March 1881, the first hotel with 25 rooms was constructed and soon filled with out-of-town travelers. Although rail lines passed nearby to Excelsior Springs, in the early days the community was somewhat isolated. Stage lines had to be brought into operation from nearby railway points, such as Liberty, Missouri City, Kearney and Lawson. When the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad opened up a line between Chicago and Kansas City via Excelsior Springs in 1887, the town truly exploded with development. By the next year, the first Elms Hotel was constructed with rooms for 250 guests.

In combination with its now relatively easy access, the City of Excelsior Springs owed a good deal of its developmental growth at this time to the Relief Springs and Land company, later the Excelsior Springs Company. It was founded by H. C. Fish, who had interested a group of Kansas City capitalists in investing in the community. They eventually acquired 1,000 acres within a radius one mile west and south of Fishing River, including Siloam, Regent and Relief Springs. They built the Elms Hotel; platted Central Park, Forest Park, and Beacon Hill additions; erected the Music Hall; graded Dunbar, Old Orchard and St. Louis Avenues; laid the first trunkline sewer; and donated lots to many church congregations and the first public school, among others. The company was also responsible for discovering the saline water when drilling for a well. This water was also heavily promoted, as it was much

rarer than other mineral waters.

Recognition of the waters at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893, the increasing use of the city as a convention center and additional train lines were among the many factors that spread the fame of the city and increased visitation. The community responded with an ambitious program of municipal improvements. Gas, water, and electric franchises were granted; miles of concrete and macadam roads were laid, as were concrete sidewalks; a parks sys-

tem and 36-hole golf course were developed; and many large public use buildings were constructed. The Interurban Electric line gave easy access to Kansas City, and later bus lines made access even more available for the nearby metropolitan area.

Although the town had a resort and vacation town atmosphere, it was the healing aspects of the water that were always promoted. That is the reason that the depression did not hurt Excelsior Springs as much as other commu-



*The ca 1905 Albany Hotel once provided the only accommodations for black visitors to Excelsior Springs.*



*The ca 1898 Royal Hotel had a physician on staff and offered "expert massages" in addition to seven different types of mineral baths.*



This ca 1910 boarding house is typical of the many such tourist accommodations in Excelsior Springs. Most boarding houses were two stories tall with double gallery porches.

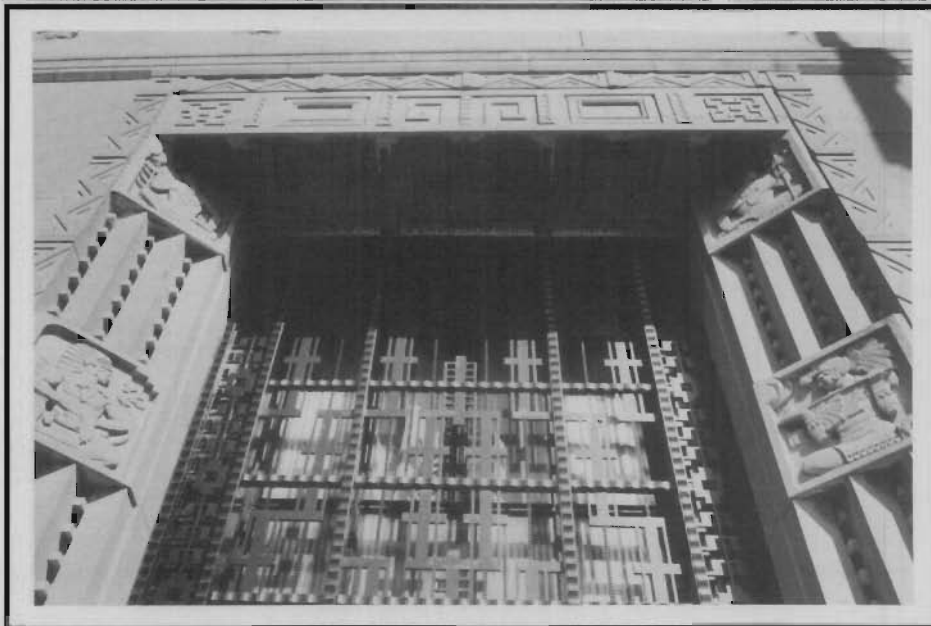
nities. Although people were not able to afford the luxury of vacationing during this period, they still required "cures" for their various ailments. Although some of the smaller businesses were somewhat hurt in the 1930s, the bigger clinics, such as the Ball, McCleary-Thornton Hospital and the Excelsior Clinic survived, as did the larger hotels. Also, two large Works Progress Administration projects – the Hall of Waters and the expansion of the Veterans' Administration Hospital helped the local economy.

Until the early 1960s then, the town prospered solely on the fame of its waters. However, legislation was passed in 1963 that prohibited the clinics from advertising cures for conditions such as arthritis and rheumatism. In addition, unfavorable articles began appearing about mineral water clinics. In 1967, the Hall of Waters closed for

*(See EXCELSIOR, Page 8)*



*The Hall of Waters is the product of the Depression-era Works Progress Administration. The Art Deco style building features exterior and interior Mayan Indian Design details representing water and water gods.*



(TOURISM, from Page 2)

increase in the number of historic inns and bed and breakfasts that have opened across the country. In recent years, Americans have also discovered the delights of regional American cuisine and cooking. This has helped to prompt increased visitation to many historic districts and sites.

Visitors to historic attractions represent an attractive market. Demographic research indicates that visitors to historic sites stay a half day longer and spend an average of \$62 more than other visitors. In 1993, the Travel Industry of America found that 35 percent of all travelers planned to visit a historical site and 29 percent expected to take part in a cultural activity.

Despite its economic benefits, the rapid growth and expansion of tourism in a given area can cause real problems. Without careful planning, the very special features and unique qualities that made an area an attraction in the first place can easily be overwhelmed and lost. It may be difficult for a historic site to maintain its context and sense of place when surrounded by a forest of shopping malls, fast food establishments and souvenir shops. Communities seeking the tourist dollar need to realize that the tourism industry is a highly competitive, sophisticated industry. And while generally a clean and non-polluting industry, increased visitation does place extra demands on a community's infrastructure and public services.

Recognizing both the opportunities and challenges posed by heritage tourism for historic properties, in 1989 the National Trust for Historic Preservation began a three-year demonstration program in four pilot states to help strengthen the ties between heritage and tourism. Out of this initial project, certain basic principles have been developed to help make heritage tourism work:

**Focus on authenticity and high quality** — The desire of the traveller to experience "real" history and heritage is clearly evident. Attractions should be

presented in a sensitive and appropriate manner and should be presented so that the unique qualities of the attractions are highlighted. Tourism is a highly competitive industry and quality presentation of an attraction in terms of advertising, signage, and interpretive materials is essential in attracting the visitor. Cheap, low-quality, amateurish promotional materials that are not in keeping with the quality of the historic resource will not be effective.

**Preserve and protect historic and cultural resources** — Basic preserva-

tion planning tools, such as identification, evaluation, registration and protection, can be critically important in ensuring that the features that make a historic attraction unique or special are not lost. A historic community facing increased tourism growth and development should take a hard look at its zoning legislation and should pass a preservation ordinance, conduct a survey of historic resources, designate significant resources and take steps to see that these resources are protected in coming years.

## Landmark Listings

### *Missouri Historic Preservation Revolving Fund*



### *Paterson House For Sale*

**L**ocated in Smithville, just ten minutes north of Kansas City and minutes from Smithville Lake, this fully restored historic house would make a fantastic bed and breakfast or a great family home. The Paterson house is currently occupied by the owner and is in "move in" condition.

This 107-year-old house has three (could be four) bedrooms, one and one-half baths, formal dining room, living and parlor rooms, updated kitchen and baths, hardwood floors, transom windows, original woodwork and staircase, shutters, new wiring and plumbing.

This house is loaded with historic ambiance and must be seen in person to be appreciated.

Price: \$119,500

Square feet: 2,375 (approximate)

Lot size: three acres (landscaped)

Contact: Tim Dougherty, REMAX of Kansas City, 7020 Northwest 83rd Terrace, Kansas City, MO 64152, 1 (800) 869-7981.



**Make sites come alive** — Historic sites have the potential to tell the visitor wonderful stories about their past. A key element in promoting or interpreting any historic site or the historic resources of a community is understanding and clarifying what those stories are. Knowing the message makes it easier to attract the visitor.

**Find a fit between community values and tourism** — Without local community support, any heritage tourism effort is doomed to failure. It is vitally important that key players in the community understand the importance of tourism and are prepared to take necessary steps to create a climate where tourism efforts can be successful. Conversely, those interested in promoting tourism in a community need to be sensitive to the needs and desires of the local community. Keeping lines of communication open between all segments of the community can help to eliminate some difficulties and misunderstandings that can occur with increased tourism development.

**Collaborate** — Effective promotion of historic sites and resources can be improved through cooperation and collaboration between other groups and partners. By forging alliances, human and financial resources can be maximized. Joint promotion and marketing between local, regional, state or national groups can be valuable means of maximizing the limited dollars available to promote an historic attraction.

To get started in developing a local heritage tourism program, a community should realistically assess what the community has to offer in terms of attractions, visitor services, organizational capabilities, ability to protect resources and marketing.

Next, the community should plan and organize. Effective use of finite human and financial resources is essential. Without an organization in place that can manage tourism efforts and that has a clear understanding of the direction its efforts will take, time and resources will be wasted. The importance of planning cannot be over-em-

phasized. Setting priorities and measurable goals is essential and successful planning and organizational efforts will be a key component in preparing a community for visitors. Planning will also be essential in developing an effective marketing strategy for the community. — *Mark Miles*

*Additional information and assistance on Heritage Tourism can be obtained by contacting the Heritage Tourism Program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, 910 16th Street, Suite 1100, Denver, CO 80202 (303) 623-1504 or the Missouri Division of Tourism, Department of Economic Development, P.O. Box 1055, Jefferson City, MO 65102-1055 (314) 751-4133.*

# Missouri Tourism: Facts and Figures

**T**ourism, one of Missouri's top three revenue-producing industries, is also one of the fastest growing elements of the state's economy.

Spending by tourists in Missouri approached \$7.8 billion in 1991 and the travel/tourism industry supported more than 250,000 jobs. Over \$513 million in tax revenue was generated through tourism that year. The goal is to keep Missouri tourism growing as we move toward the 21st century, when travel and tourism is predicted to become the largest industry in the world.

Those responding to a 1984 survey indicated that the Ozark Mountain Region was the first choice for a Missouri travel destination, picked by 25.1 percent of the respondents, with Lake of the Ozarks Region, St. Louis and Kansas City following closely. The favored activities in the state were as follows: visiting theme parks (15.6 percent), historic sites (14.2 percent), shopping (11.1 percent) and big city activity in general (8.2 percent).

Fortunately, travel activity continues to grow in Missouri, and the state has enormous potential for further development. Our varied topography, thousands of acres of water, big cities, open countryside and friendly people should enable us to support year-round recreational growth for years to come. Tourism has become one of Missouri's most profitable renewable resources.

The economics of tourism are attractive because we suffer little, if any, depletion of our natural inventory due to repeated sales. By its nature, the industry is service oriented and labor-intensive, employing a large percentage of unskilled or low-skilled workers. Tourism is a retail (tax-producing) industry consisting mainly of small businesses. Also, much of the income derived from tourism is "imported" from other states or areas, with no significant "export" (or loss) of tangible goods. — *Missouri Department of Tourism*

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(EXCELSIOR, from Page 5)

repairs, and in 1971, the state health agency ordered the city to stop bottling mineral water.

Although the economy of the community has suffered in recent years due to its dependence on the mineral waters, lately there has been a renewed interest in the history of the community. A historic preservation ordinance was passed and the Excelsior Springs Historic Preservation Commission was formed. This commission has expressed a great deal of interest and enthusiasm for preserving and promoting the unique historic resources of the town. — *Deon Wolfenbarger*

*Deon Wolfenbarger is a survey and National Register consultant and the owner of Three Gables Preservation in Kansas City.*

## Dates to Remember

**Missouri Advisory Council on Historic Preservation meeting**, May 12, Perryville. For details, call Maggie Barnes (314) 751-5365.

**National Preservation Week**, May 14-20. This year's theme, "Real People, Real Places, Real History." Check media for events in your area and statewide.

**Great American Home Awards** contest deadline June 30. For more information or an application call Joel Cadiz at (202) 673-4283.

**Heritage Partnerships: The Concept and Tools to Make It Happen!**, May 9-12, Fort Wayne, IN. Call (312) 939-5547 for more information.

## Fairgrounds Design Charrette Scheduled

The Missouri chapter of the American Institute of Architects has announced a Missouri State Fairgrounds design charrette on August 11-13, 1995 at the historic fairgrounds in Sedalia. Participants will be challenged to develop master plans for the preservation and improvement of the National Register historic district.

Five-member, multi-disciplinary

teams of professionals, students, and faculty in architecture, planning, landscape architecture, visual arts and historic preservation will develop their plans during the three-day event.

The 215-acre fairgrounds historic district includes 66 buildings, structures, objects and sites. Most of the older buildings were designed by Sedalia architect Thomas Bast. The

original master plan was by nationally prominent Missouri landscape architect George Kessler.

If you are interested in participating in the charrette or would like more information, call David Sachs at (816) 235-1726, Pat Riner Amick at (314) 635-8555 or Doris Danna at (314) 822-7350.

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