

## Museum Background Information

By Mary Lou Mittel

It became customary for a developer, in the 1950-60's to set aside land for schools and parks. This was commonly called "green space."

At this time the school district saw a population decline so they had no need for property and so took financial reimbursement instead.

The green space agreement would allow for the preservation of the historical buildings on the Rosenwinkel Farm, plus a one-acre parking area, adjacent to the Museum.

At the 1982 4<sup>th</sup> of July ceremony sponsored by the Wood Dale Lions Club, Mayor Jerry Greer made a formal presentation of a ceremonial deed provided by the developers of Forest Creek to the Wood Dale Historical Society with assurance that the original deed would be forthcoming with the developer's donation of \$500.00.

The following December the Historical Society requested, through their lawyer, the original deed so that it could be recorded, thus assuring the developer the tax relief to which his gift entitled him.

A personal visit by Mayor Greer with Museum Curator Mary Lou Mittel, brought assurance that the developer could claim his deduction and the Society would receive the deed. When he was asked for the \$500.00 donation, she was told that it had been spent for a landscaping plan for the Museum property. The plan was shown but has since disappeared.

In May 1983 a request for Revenue Sharing Funds was made to Addison Township. Roof repair of the barns was eminent if these historic buildings were to be saved. The Board of Trustees looked favorably on the request but questioned the right of the Historical Society to the building either by deed or contract.

A forced meeting by the Society's Board of Directors with Mayor Greer and City Manager Kurt Bressner brought reassurances that the Society could have the deed, but they suggested that the Board consider a long-term lease with the City of Wood Dale as owner of the property. They inferred that this arrangement would allow Wood Dale, as landlord, to seek grants and other funds to assist the Historical Society in their restoration work. When asked for details of such a contract the Society was put off with smiles and requests to "think it over."

The Wood Dale Historical Society Board decided to record the deed in their name and raise the funds through grants and contributions. They felt that although there might not be tax funds available, grants for restoration would be forthcoming. There was a museum tax, which the Society requested half of, because the Park District had claimed the tax for the past ten years for a small display at "The Cabin."

When told of the decision of the Society Board, Mr. Bressner said that the situation had changed, and that he had been informed by the Council that they had no intention of releasing the deed to the Society, but that they would consider a 20-year lease. Provision for the lease was a timetable of property improvements by the Society. Mr. Bressner apologized for the "inconvenience," stating simply that he and Mayor Greer had been mistaken in their actions and offer.

Rather than have the barns destroyed, through either stupidity or negligence, the Board asked that a contract be provided by the City for their inspection. None was forthcoming, although a letter was sent to Addison Township Board of Trustees assuring them that the Society would have control and use of the property and buildings.

There was no official response to request for settlement by the Society Board of Directors, so the restoration work would not be started that summer (1983).

It should be mentioned here why the Society members felt so strongly that the gift Museum not be given to the Park District or the City. The Park District set about to claim the museum tax by purchasing the log cabin, for a most reasonable price, by telling the owners that they intended to "save" the "last log cabin" as a museum and office. Tax claims were based on these claims, although preservation and restoration of the building was not their primary need. The building has little or no historic value since it was not an original pioneer home. Their need was for a storage barn for their equipment.

The City's carelessness and greed has been unpardonable and the Society felt that the Museum Barn would simply become an additional storage facility.

A greater fight for the funds from the taxes should have been made. With the large hotels providing tourist tax, demand for a fair share of the tax should have been made – publicly. It is not too late!

The buildings should be restored, not resided with modern products. This will diminish their historic value and negate a legal tax request. The Society should confer with other societies like Itasca and Elk Grove concerning the furnishings of the Museum.

At the time of the gift Esther Rosenwinkel had but one request – that we not fill her parlor with Victorian furniture. She had a modern building and to that end she donated two chairs and a library table in the black finish of the 1920's. Soon others started giving appropriate furniture: a black record player, an oak piano, and a TV from Channel 5 – a proto-type of future TV's. A museum cabinet for sheet music or records was also received.

Descriptions of gift items can be found in tour information. It is hoped that should the day come when volunteers are not available to keep the Museum shining clean, that money be budgeted for hired help. It is not good to get a reputation for poor housekeeping.