

## CHAPTER 1

### BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

#### Background

As requested by the Village of Plainfield, this report has been prepared as an updated and expanded version of the survey report compiled in 1999–2000 by Jeffrey Koerber of Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc. (WJE) for the Will County Land Use Department and the Will County Historic Preservation Commission, entitled *Rural Historic Structural Survey of Wheatland, Plainfield, and Lockport Townships, Will County, Illinois*. The field work and photography for that survey report were performed in August and September 1999. The final written report was completed in September 2000. The present study and written report draw heavily upon the text, research, and photography prepared for the 1999–2000 study. Where appropriate, this report makes note of additional information contained in the 2000 report, which is not repeated herein to avoid unnecessary duplication or inclusion of information that is only tangentially related to the Village of Plainfield. However, much text has been repeated verbatim herein so that the present report forms a complete study of the rural vicinity of Plainfield.

Due to the intensive new residential, commercial, and industrial development which has occurred in and around the Village of Plainfield over the past decade, and the potential for even greater development pressures over the next decades as formerly agricultural properties are subdivided and urbanized, the Village has commissioned this survey of the historic (pre-1955) rural structures and properties located within the urban planning boundaries of the village, as defined in the Village's Comprehensive Land Use Plan and boundary agreements with adjacent municipalities.

The objectives of the study are to provide comprehensive information on all historic rural structures located in the area; to assess the eligibility of rural districts or individual buildings for designation as local landmarks or nomination to the National Register of Historic Places; to inventory the existing structures in the area for future study; to provide background on significant architectural styles and rural structure types common to the Plainfield area; and to provide background history of the development of the area. The present study has been developed to meet the requirements and standards of the Certified Local Government program.

#### Survey Methodology

##### **Survey Team**

The survey team from WJE consisted of Kenneth Itle, Sarah Lowe, and Deborah Slaton. Mr. Itle served as Project Manager and developed the summary report and performed some field survey work. Ms. Lowe performed field survey work. Ms. Slaton was the reviewer of the summary report.

##### **Background Research**

Work on the rural survey of began in August 2005. Background research was performed at the State of Illinois Library, Springfield; the University of Illinois Libraries, the Joliet Public Library, the Plainfield Public Library, and the Oswego Public Library. In addition, extensive historic research materials compiled in 1999–2000 for the previous report were available.

##### **Field Survey**

A project initiation meeting was held on 26 July 2005 by Kenneth Itle of WJE and John Kersh of the Village of Plainfield to discuss the project approach and scope. Field survey work proceeded in August, September, and October 2005. The field survey in Oswego and Na-Au-Say Townships, which were not included in the 1999–2000 work, began with a reconnaissance survey to identify existing farmstead sites.

Following the identification of sites, an intensive survey was performed of each site. The survey team first approached the primary residence on the site to request permission of the homeowner/tenant to conduct the survey on the farmstead site. At sites where no one was home, or where owner permission was not provided, the site was surveyed from the public right-of-way. Typically each structure on the site was photographed individually using a digital camera. A sketch plan of the farmstead was prepared. Written notes for each building included a listing of exterior materials, overall condition, and estimated decade of construction based on structural type and style. Any history information provided by the owner, such as dates of construction or names of original owners, were also noted.

The survey in Wheatland and Plainfield Townships consisted primarily of an updated reconnaissance survey and photography. Each site documented in the 1999–2000 survey was revisited. If all historic structures on the site had been demolished, this was noted. If the property survived, new photographs were taken from the public right-of-way, and any obvious changes, such as replacement of siding materials or the demolition of individual structures, were noted. Also in Wheatland and Plainfield Townships, a limited number of previously excluded farmsteads were surveyed at an intensive level. These few farmsteads had been excluded from the previous study because they fell within the municipal limits of Plainfield in 1999, and therefore could not be included in the 1999 survey per the instructions of the Will County Land Use Department.

### **Database and Base Map Preparation**

Mapping for the survey was prepared using ArcGIS.<sup>1</sup> Baseline mapping showing roads, railways, streams, township boundaries, etc., as well as aerial photography of the survey area, was downloaded from the Illinois Natural Resources Geospatial Data Clearinghouse internet site.<sup>2</sup> For Will County, full color 2005 aerial photographs were made available in May 2006 and have been incorporated into the final maps. For Kendall County, black-and-white aerial photograph from 1999 was used; it is anticipated that updated color photography will be available online later in 2006. Mapping data for the current municipal boundaries of Plainfield was provided by the Village. Individual points were added to the baseline map at the location of each farmstead site surveyed. Each point represents a particular record in the Microsoft Access database. The database contains all field survey information; historical information specific to each property, such as names of previous owners based on historic atlases and plat maps; and the assessment of historic significance. On the database forms, the “notes” field typically contains other miscellaneous observations of the project team from the field work. Rarely, this field contains verbal information from the resident or another source; these are so noted.

Prior to inserting the digital photographs into the database, the photograph files were converted from color .jpg files to reduced size black-and-white .bmp files. The Microsoft Access database was used to generate the property lists included in this summary report, as well as the individual survey forms. The ArcGIS software was used to generate the maps of the survey area included in the appendix.

### **Presentations**

WJE attended a preliminary meeting of the HPC to discuss the scope and intent of the project on 11 August 2005. The results of the survey were presented to the HPC at a meeting on 9 February 2006. Village staff and the HPC also reviewed draft versions of the written report and the individual survey sheets. Based on comments received from the HPC and Village staff, the final report and survey sheets were prepared.

### **Report and Submittals**

The summary report was prepared using Microsoft Word. As noted above, the text of this report draws heavily upon the *Rural Historic Structural Survey of Wheatland, Plainfield, and Lockport Townships*

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<sup>1</sup> GIS stands for geographic information system, a computerized methodology for organizing data geographically.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.isgs.uiuc.edu/nsdihome/>

prepared by WJE for Will County in 1999–2000. Wherever possible, new 2005 photographs have been used to illustrate this report; the few exceptions where 1999 photographs have been included are noted in the captions. The Village of Plainfield was provided with the following final materials: printed copies of the final summary report; printed copies of the individual property survey forms; digital photographs as original color .jpg files; ArcGIS mapping files; Microsoft Access database file; survey sheets as .pdf file; and report text as Microsoft Word file and .pdf file.

## **Survey Gaps and Future Research**

The present study is not meant to be a definitive review of the history of each property surveyed; rather, based on historic research and field survey, the relative significance of each property has been assessed. In the future, as new development or renovation work may affect particular properties, the history and significance of the particular property should be researched in detail, using the present survey as a starting point.

The present study focused on architectural features of the survey region. Other studies could be undertaken to assess the archaeological potential of the survey region; to identify and assess cultural landscape features such as fence rows, hedges, and earthworks; to study historic transportation infrastructure and routes in detail; or to study particular architectural themes, such as limestone masonry construction, in greater detail.



*Above: One historic limestone bridge abutment exists along the DuPage River just west of Illinois Route 59 north of downtown Plainfield. The road originally curved to the west to cross the river more nearly perpendicular; the road was straightened to its present-day alignment in the 1930s. Below: The Spring Banks bridge at Renwick Road at the DuPage River is the only known steel truss type bridge in the survey area. It was constructed circa 1912 and is listed as a Will County Landmark.*

