

7. TABULATION OF RESULTS

The survey of the historic urbanized core included approximately 499 acres or 21,733,153 square feet. The survey resulted in 722 survey forms. This represented 197 forms more than the initial project estimate. Most of the properties included at least one outbuilding in addition to a primary building, thus the estimated total number of historic resources documented as a result of the survey was approximately 1,450.

Please refer to the Recommendations section for additional results for each recommended historic district.

8. DATA GAPS

The chief data gap in this survey project was the need to contact local history experts. Because of the scope and timing of the project, the emphasis became the field work on 720 properties, which left little time to consult local experts to the extent that would have been ideal. “Available Materials” listed in the Request for Proposals for this project include “Plainfield Historical Society and Museum” and “Local Volunteers (when possible),” but this did not materialize. “This Old Building,” a form developed as part of this project, in an attempt to solicit property owner knowledge of local buildings, was an unsuccessful attempt to solicit owner information on buildings. None of the forms was returned completed.

In addition to the extraordinary volunteers and historians at the Plainfield Historical Society and Museum, other people throughout the community are knowledgeable of various aspects of the community’s history. When property owner contact was made, this has been noted on the survey form, for future use by the Historic Preservation Commission. One significant example is Art Countryman on the southwest corner of Center Street at Amboy. He provided useful information on buildings on Evans Street being moved by his grandfather. Mr. Countryman died in June 2006. His death is a reminder that we are losing a generation that has a direct connection with the early history of Plainfield.

The village and the Historical Society may wish to consider conducting oral histories from some of these knowledgeable residents, to build a lasting legacy of their expertise and remembrances.

The survey which resulted is more architectural in analysis and eligibility assessments. Additional historic research may result in better understanding of the depth of significance for some of the properties in the village.

9. CHALLENGES

The scope and schedule of this survey project was tremendous from the start. Understandably, the Historic Preservation Commission sought to have the completed survey forms at the onset of the new construction calendar. In addition to the large scope of the project and the level of detail desired on the individual forms, the underestimation of the number of properties to be surveyed, with 200 additional properties, had a tremendous impact on the project as well.

Perhaps the most surprising difficulty was photography. Commonly, survey photography is affected by seasonal changes, leaves dropping from trees to clear building views, then the popular display of holiday decorations to be immortalized in survey photography. Digital cameras are affected by cold weather, so batteries require more frequent recharging and cameras occasionally “freeze.” However the chief photography problem in this case was not the weather, but rather the people. The property owner and occupant responses were extreme, becoming downright mean at times. Important to note is that the highly negative responses had *nothing* to do with historic preservation or this survey project specifically. People were simply angry that their buildings were being photographed. Owner response had been quite minimal during the “clipboard phase” of the project, when the architectural descriptions were being developed. Conversely, more survey handouts were distributed on one single day of photography than in all other field days total. It was clearly the camera issue. One resident yelled from her car, “Do you have PERMISSION to do that?!” Keep in mind, that the surveyor remained on the public right-of-way at all times. No permission is needed. Another property owner actually followed the photographer for nearly a block, firing off a line of questions about how the photographs would be used and who would see them. It was quite clear that property owners and occupants saw the photograph as a infringement on their privacy, perhaps having to do with property taxes. Initially, none of the angry respondents even *knew* what the project was. They were simply responding to a woman with a camera, photographing their house.

Traffic was also an issue with regard to photography. Generally, buildings photograph better from across the street, so as a better angle on the massing and roof line of the building may be achieved. However, traffic on Division in particular, and Joliet Road on occasion, proved to be so severe, at all times and days, that photography from across the street was just not possible.

Because of the huge difference in scope between the urban and rural projects, the contact between the two survey contractors was minimal. Contact was limited to discussion of architectural styles and vernacular building type development, and general report form. Nevertheless, contact was made and an attempt to coordinate was achieved.

Lastly, village staff changes in the middle of the field work for this project had some impact as well. The village was suddenly in a position of being short staffed and the routine of monthly reporting between the consultant and Historic Preservation Commission liaison was interrupted.