



ILLINOIS STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Old State Capitol • Springfield 62706 • 217-525-4836

January 11, 1973

Box 217, R. R. 1
Bethalto, Illinois 62010

Dear Officers and Directors of the
Illinois State Historical Society:

At a meeting of the Board of Directors last June at Macomb, it may be recalled that Dr. Emmet F. Pearson of Springfield suggested that some method be employed to survey and to encourage the preservation of interesting old barns throughout our state. He had observed that they are becoming extinct and would be lost eventually forever.

We know that this is true and that the disappearance extends to the farm houses themselves and the other outbuildings that were related to the self-sufficient existence of rural living in the old days--which included spring house, smoke house, ice house, chicken house, hog house, root cellar, storm cellar, corn crib, and others. A visit to the Mudge Farm near Grant Fork in eastern Madison County where all these buildings remain in good to fair condition as well as the family burial ground will give proof that these rural units are still around and that it is not too late to encourage others to do the same as the present-day Mudge family has done. However, if one drives from this farm just a few miles to Highland--the old Swiss-German town where Pet Milk Co. had its start--you may witness a different picture, the skeleton remains of an old barn with deep roots in Highland history. It served as the dwelling place for the newly arrived immigrants from Switzerland while their houses were being built on the lots in town. Here you might decide with me that the structure is far too late for preservation and even reasonable restoration.

Our barn study may not be restricted only to the farms. In the horse and buggy days the older Illinois towns and cities had barns of pleasing architectural design to match the houses. In the so-called "Middletown" residential area where many of the wealthy people of Alton lived in 19th century splendor some of the old barns remain in well-kept condition but converted into garages and their lofts made into apartments in a few cases. Here is a blending of the old with the new and the preservation of old-fashioned charm and dignity.

Dr. Pearson has agreed to serve as chairman of the committee. He and Mr. Alderfer have asked me to canvass our board for volunteer committee members who will plan to attend a meeting of the committee at some time during the two-day meeting and Spring Tour of the Illinois State Historical Society in La Salle, May 18-19.

If you are willing to serve please write Dr. Pearson at 701 North Walnut St., Springfield, Illinois 62702, by January 30, 1973, and send any suggestions you would care to make.

Best wishes to all for an enjoyable and profitable year in all the things you do--and especially in those related to you and history.

Sincerely,

Donald F. Lewis
Donald F. Lewis
President