



ILLINOIS STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Old State Capitol • Springfield 62706 • 217-525-4836

Donald F. Lewis
Box 217, R. R. 1
Bethalto, Illinois 62010

Jan. 29, 1973

Jack H. Mudge, Jr.
224 St. Louis Street
Edwardsville, Illinois

Dear Judge:

The enclosed letter, ^{paragraph 2,} which was sent out to all those persons printed in dim print on the back of this sheet, ~~paragraph 2,~~ will indicate my purpose in writing to you. At least, it will provide an introduction. I hope you will not object to my mention of Oakdale farm without your permission. I had to send the letter quickly to Springfield in long hand to be typed and zepoxed for mailing - otherwise I would have sought your permission first. I could think of no other farm that presented the old time farmstead with all its details. The fact that I am writing now and looking upon p. 41 in Banks' Illustrated Encyclopedia of Madison County, 1873, a mere 100 years ago, serves to emphasize the wisdom of my reference to the Mudge farm. If your objection would be influenced by the possibility of an invasion of nightseers I would say this isn't likely in the immediate future. When this does happen we will know that our proposed frozen has ~~soared~~ soared to a phenomenal success and by that time you may retire from law practice and sit at the gate collecting admission fees! But this will not be soon. Some of the business of our society - particularly in introducing a few innovations - is done with glacier-like speed.

But now I do have two favors to ask of you. First, if Bill Alderfer, the State Historian and Executive Director, and Dr. Emmet Pearson, committee

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chambers, give their approval, I would like to see the full page spread of Oakdale Farm reproduced - it would zip well since it is a steel engraving, for distribution to the committee. I think the Society itself has all the facilities for doing this. Since it makes no emphasis on an old type barn I would like to suggest that a page be made up of at least 4 barns that would relate as well to the subject as this one does.

Second, this might be asking too much. In view of the fact that the Mudge family has succeeded in preserving the old family farm in the fashion that sends history enthusiasts into some form of nostalgic ecstasy, I would appreciate your getting down any suggestions that come to you which might give you added encouragement to continue. I would suppose that there are times when you wonder if the support of family tradition becomes an ever increasing luxury and expense. In fact, I heard this from a man who owned an old James River plantation in Virginia two years ago. The increased cost of up-keep during these inflationary days and high priced labor tended to make him almost ready to give everything back to the Indians. Starting out as we are, what practical



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suggestions would you make toward making the survey (which should be the easier part it seems to me) and the encouragement of people to retain the old that typifies what we would like preserved? The latter seems the more difficult phase. If we succeed in the first phase we will have accomplished that much. Certainly a fine illustrated book could be the result. But we would like some degree of success in preservation.

If subsidizing were feasible this monetary assistance would be a basic encouragement, but I don't see much chance for funds right now. I foresee in the immediate future a severe crack-down on subsidies - in fact, there won't be any gray train money ^{left} to hand out. Tied in with providing employment - some form of WPA, PWA, putting the unemployed to work might be possible. But the day of grants for squandering is coming to an end. Is there anything that will encourage others to do what your family has done other than offering money? I have noted that the Illinois Department of Agriculture gives attractive citations (for farming) to those families whose farms have been in their family for 100 years (Centennial farms). The Porseys at More are very pleased by this.

Sometimes I think we people who don't preservation from those who possess something to preserve by don't give our expense and labor - for some one else's enjoyment - are like hitch hikers. We enjoy the history but we are not paying for the ride. I think you will agree that preservation of houses, buildings, etc depends upon the structures themselves carrying them over. This accounts for the multiplicity of antique shops, restaurants featuring old motifs, curios

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shops like St. Charles, Mo., section of the old Capitol, the old part of Albuquerque, the French Quarter in New Orleans, etc. In Michigan I've seen old farm houses made into popular eating places with all the charm of the old day. I do think you might have some ideas that might be helpful.

I, for one, am deeply appreciative of the assistance you gave the Madison County Historical Society during our days of adjusting to the new museum committee of the County Board. I agreed with you at the outset that our entire existence is based upon the County Museum Trust administered by a political committee. The old one as you well know was not ^{of} likely white purity I suppose, but at least the relationship with our group was less dogmatic. The new men obviously ill-advised, and appearing to think that the museum could be used for political patronage appointments, behaved like bulls in a china shop. I suspect Bridgewater was the one who steered them wrong. Ignorance was probably the chief source of the trouble. One never knows what can blow up next, but relations have been harmonious now for several months.

As you might now, the State Historical Society's membership and Board represents all types of historical interests including college and university professors and writers of history as well as many laymen interested in their own areas. This farm project is one with considerable ~~affair~~ respect from the non-academic and will prove of great advantage to the entire membership in my opinion.

Yours very sincerely,
Don Lewis