

Introduction

The Winneshiek County Historic Preservation Commission (WCHPC) was formed in 1986 when the County passed a historic preservation resolution to become one of the earliest historic preservation commissions in Iowa. A state where there are now more than 90 (city and county). The broad purpose of these commissions is to develop a variety of programs to identify, recognize and attempt to preserve, record, and research buildings, archeological sites and districts that have demonstrated historic importance on local, state, and national levels. A variety of approaches including public presentations and education are available to undertake these tasks.

Programs of this nature are developed and administered by an unpaid, volunteer, citizen commission appointed in this case by the Winneshiek County Board of Supervisors. Nine members comprise the WCHPC. The main office is located in the historic Old Winneshiek County Jail on the Winneshiek County Courthouse campus.

The WCHPC usually meets the second Saturday of the month 10 months out of the year at 8:30 a.m. in the recently remodeled County Annex or the Old Winneshiek County Jail. This date and time may change and the Commission traditionally does not meet in July or December.

Background

In 1966, the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, set up a decentralized partnership between the federal, state, and local governments nationwide. One of the features of this Act was the creation of the Certified Local Government (CLG) program to encourage local governments to undertake local historic preservation efforts in the form of historic preservation commissions.

The purpose of the CLG program in Iowa, as outlined in *Iowa's Certified Local Government Program: How To Apply For and Maintain CLG Status*, is as follows:

- 1) Encourage historic preservation at the local level.
- 2) Encourage local governments to follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation in developing and administrating their local historic preservation

- programs.
- 3) Provide technical assistance through the state's historic preservation office (SHPO) to cities and counties participating in the Certified Local Government Program.
 - 4) Provide participating cities and counties with funding to underwrite various historic preservation activities.

Differences between a Historic Preservation Commission and Historical Societies and Heritage Organizations.

Historic preservation commissions should not be confused with historical societies or heritage organizations even though they may share common goals and funding. Typically, historical societies and heritage organizations are private, not for profit corporations or organizations with voluntary, dues paying members. A historic preservation commission is a governmental body, comparable to other City or County boards and commissions.

Historical societies and heritage organizations may operate out of a historic property and be responsible for its care. They often focus on the curation and preservation of historic records; microfilm, letters, photographs, and other documents or artifacts, providing archives for researchers as well as assistance. The Winneshiek County Historic Preservation Commission does not curate documents, photographs, microfilm, or artifacts, maintain archives, nor own historic properties.

Historic preservation commissions have a focus that covers a broad range of historic properties, public education, research, and associated methods of documentation/recordation/interpretations (oral histories, ethnohistories, National Register nominations, surveys, testing, evaluations, research, etc.). As administrators of the county historic preservation programs, the WCHPC seeks to locate funding through grants and other sources while providing technical assistance on historic preservation issues, evaluations, and projects.

A historic preservation commission uses resolutions or ordinances, directives from elected officials and input from residents, city or county comprehensive plans, and their by-laws to guide their operation and determine their goals and activities. Historical societies or heritage organizations operate under their specific articles of incorporation and by-laws. The members, not local elected officials or local legislation, determines the direction of these types of organizations.