

International Hands-on Workshops for Architectural and Site Conservation



News

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Positive Change through Historic Preservation: Volunteers Determined to Tackle the Demon of Demolition

Boulder, Colorado and Cairo, Illinois, July 1, 2009 – Heritage Conservation Network and Southern Illinois University at Carbondale School of Architecture and Department of History joined forces in Cairo, Illinois for two weeks in June to show that preservation can be a better alternative than demolition. Thirty volunteers - including students, community members, preservation professionals and others - came to learn wood conservation skills while they actually restored a c.1900 shotgun-style house.

Cairo's steady economic decline has left a city full of vacant and abandoned buildings. For years, city officials have dealt with the problem by demolishing these buildings, even receiving grants to cover the cost of demolition. Demolition has become so pervasive that, for every grant received to restore a single historic building, the city has received several grants covering the expense of demolishing as many as 100 buildings at a time. The resulting gaps in the cityscape have led one group of community members to cry "Enough!" and call for change.

HCN and the SIUC programs are working with the Cairo Vision 20/20 committee to bring about that change, primarily by raising awareness of the value of preservation. As an initial step, they designed the historic shotgun house preservation project, which will not only serve as a highly visible symbol of the "new Cairo", but also create affordable housing for local residents who would like to own a home. In addition, the project is providing training for existing home owners who want to learn how to maintain their historic homes.

The project this year was supported by a grant from Landmarks Illinois and led by Bill Black, Jr. of Ray Black & Son, Inc. from Paducah, Kentucky. If project organizers can continue to generate adequate support, the shotgun house preservation project is slated to continue for the next few years. Students from SIUC will remain working at the site throughout the summer to complete restoration of the first shotgun house by September 2009.

About HCN

Heritage Conservation Network is a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of architectural heritage around the world. HCN's workshops support community-based preservation projects and give volunteers the opportunity to give something back by helping to protect valuable cultural treasures. To learn more about HCN's international workshops and how you can support community-based preservation projects, visit www.heritageconservation.net.

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