

MEETING SUMMARIES –Local History and Historic Preservation
Calumet National Heritage Area Feasibility Study
Community Conversations #3 & #4

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Conversation #3: Indiana Landmarks, Northwest Field Office, Gary Indiana. July, 16th, 2014

Conversation #4: Vodak East Side Library, Chicago Illinois. September, 29th, 2014

On July 16th and again on September 29th, 2014 residents and other Calumet region stakeholders came together to discuss the importance of historic memory and historic preservation, and the roles they can play in shaping the region’s future, potentially through the creation of a national heritage area.

The meetings were conducted by staff of The Field Museum, in collaboration with Calumet Heritage Partnership (CHP). CHP board member Tiffany Tolbert hosted the July 16th meeting in her capacity as director of Indiana Landmarks Northwest Field Office. More than 25 people participated in the conversation in Gary. There were 12 participants at Vodak East Side Library. (These counts do not include the facilitating staff, who numbered six in Gary and three in Chicago.)

Upon arrival participants were asked to place colored dots on a large map indicating historic sites with which they or their organization are affiliated. They created labels for these dots on separate cards at the same time. After participants introduced themselves, and a presentation on the heritage area effort, group discussions focused on identifying historic locations that best tell the story of the Calumet region, ranking these locations by historical importance, and identifying those that are most endangered. Discussion concluded with a consideration of emerging heritage themes that might be the focus of a future national heritage area.

Key points from each Community Conversation follow.

07/16/2014 (Gary IN)

- 1) The Calumet region’s mix of major industries has shaped many elements of its built environment that are important to preserve. Some industries demolish and transform their own facilities and infrastructure as part of evolving to stay competitive and profitable, but some structures and landscape features persist, e.g., rail depots that have been repurposed by retail establishments, museums, etc.
 - a. Rail station in Gary is one of most endangered important structures in region.

- 2) Much of the industrial story of the region can be seen within 15-mile radius of Marktown, but Marktown itself is mostly private property being bought by BP and is highly threatened. Landmark easements on some Marktown buildings can prevent their demolition but not drive care or revitalization of the community or structures.
- 3) Schools and churches are important structures that are part of community stories in the region. They are tied to ethnic groups, migration and segregation patterns, historical events, and/or individuals who went on to national prominence. Most these structures are older, but in some cases there are new structures that are tied to historical patterns, e.g., St. Ana of the Dunes is a new church building created by the Lithuanian Community.
- 4) Archaeological sites are not all publicly known so as to discourage their deliberate or inadvertent destruction. One of the really well-known sites in the area is the Hoxie site. It has been excavated since 1950. The site demonstrates the importance of prehistoric settlement in the area, with excavated materials going back well before the 1400s. Part of it is located in the Cook County forest preserves, and part of it has been covered by the widening of the interstate. (See *Chicago Before History* by C.W. Markman, Fig. 2.1 on pg. 22 for a map of Chicago area archaeology. Other sites on the map include Anker, Horton, Oak Forest, and Huber, all in the SW corner of the Cal Region. Does not mean there are not other sites in IN, just the limits of this source.)
- 5) A handful of public buildings were cited by this group as heritage significant, most notably the Lake County Courthouse that served as a place for marriages across ethnic lines that could not take place easily within the communities' religious/social structures.
- 6) Participants cited homes or homesteads that are important to the regions story and most are actively managed currently as heritage resources.
- 7) Participants generated a list of the ten most important and ten most endangered historical structures in the Calumet region -- see below (not comprehensive of all mentioned, but gives an idea).

10 most significant historic sites in region? (In the absence of consensus, 18 are listed)

- 1) Marktown
- 2) Pullman
- 3) State Park and National Lakeshore/The Dunes
- 4) South Shore corridor/South Shore Train [train still running on electric]
- 5) Inland Steel poured the first steel in the state of Indiana in 1902
- 6) Cal-Sag Channel and I&M Canal and Lincoln Highway and Calumet Harbor Area, river as network, how Lake Calumet changed over time as industry came in and filled it in is of interest. [This participant, part of discussion, getting at transit infrastructure more than a place or single component.]
- 7) City Hall in Gary
- 8) Courthouse in Crown Point – people used to always get married there even from Chicago; especially if, for some reason, you couldn't get married in your home parish/community/church.
- 9) Calumet College of St. Joseph site which used to be Standard Oil headquarters
- 10) Gary, because Gary was a company town and is also a story of racism and white flight. The downtown area is a site of local and national significance.

- 11) Michigan City and Michigan City trail creek harbor; was the “go to” place at one time for NW Indiana Hoosiers, pre-Gary and post-Chicago Fire. It was a major economic driver before Indianapolis for living and working, but couldn’t keep the settlement and dirt from filling up the harbor. Michigan City was the big dream and anchor of agriculture before the 1850s
- 12) Indiana Dunes National Park - Bailly Homestead inside the park is there and still preserved.
 - a. Cowles’ Bog, called “the birth place of ecology” (Channing)
- 13) Michael Jackson’s home, not just because of Michael Jackson, but because of all the people from here who went onto the national stage
- 14) Dillinger was an important part of this area’s history: jail house in Crown Point
- 15) The historic portage (across continental divide) as part of river system, truly significant because that was one of the very early identifiers of this place having continental significance because of its ability to connect this place to the Mississippi River system.
- 16) Shrines in Munster (Carmelite Shrine: Grotto of the Holy Mother)
- 17) What about agriculture? Southern Calumet still has strong affinity and ties to active agriculture today. People used to go “take the air” outside of the city...Buckley homestead from 1880s.
- 18) Midtown and Central district of Gary was where African Americans had to settle when they migrated to Gary, which fits with a national early 20th century theme: Roosevelt HS, First AME, St John’s Settlement, Stuart House (part of settlement house movement), very well educated African American community (this is also where Michael Jackson’s house was); change in this area changed the demographic of entire region

Most Endangered Landmarks

- 1) Marktown
- 2) Downtown Gary
- 3) State Line Generator Plant / Power Station (all but gateway now demolished)
- 4) Indiana Harbor
- 5) RR Infrastructure
 - a. When depots move, they are still “saved” whereas working railroads demolish and move track. Moved depots do lose original context.
 - b. Historic infrastructure of South Shore Railroad; some efforts currently underway to create a museum or interpretive experience, but little traction.
- 7) The historic passenger RR station in Gary, visible north of toll road, south of mill.

09/29/2014 (Chicago, IL)

- 1) Participants cited a broad range of types of man-made structures and places as historically important and/or that they/their organization works on. These included structures they associate with communities (industrial towns, churches [Our Lady of Guadalupe], neighborhoods, two schools), historical markers and monuments, historic homes (cited as parts of origin stories/markers of an area’s founding), parks and recreational sites, many industrial sites (including Thornton Quarry), roads and bridges.

- 2) Natural features – rivers, lakes, preserves – cited by more than one person. Multiple importance: unique as nature, attracted the human uses we see, shapes and shaped by human encounter with it.
- 3) Industrial corporations had a presence at more than one location in region: Pullman Works in both states, U.S. Steel, others all bi-state.
- 4) Various kinds of “planned industrial communities,” Pullman and Marktown the most planned by company, Hegewisch also built by company, and Gary land sold to developers by U.S. Steel to build city. Altgeld Gardens - planned industrial housing, planned and built by federal and local govt.
- 5) Participants connected structures/places to themes of regional human history: Churches reflect community make-up and change over time, company hospital shows companies power over workers, roads connect activities and people, mark social boundaries, etc.
- 6) Break Out group rankings of top three places:
 - a. Grp #1: 1.the steel industry, 2. Marktown, and 3. State Line Marker (oldest man made structure within some really long distance). Honorable mentions: historic bridges and Bailly Homestead (pioneer spirit of earliest settlers).
 - b. Grp#2: 1. the geological environment, 2. the steel industry, and 3.transportation (looks to be a theme ranking)
 - c. Combined assessment of historical significance: Ecosystem/bedrock of region #1, Labor history a common denominator important to both groups (no rank written), Transportation (maybe meaning transportation infrastructure) #3, Churches #4
- 7) Key reasons for priorities: See #2 above for nature; steel industry needs some preservation or it won't be visible on the landscape anymore (in Chicago); Union history needs to be preserved and told, for the benefit of future generations, to know what unions do for us; #5 for Churches, some sense not only reflect make up of communities, but heart of communities socially and attracted people; Transportation because there is a strong sense that region is a crossroads with water, rail, roads and that is why it has become human center it is with the activities that we have here.
- 8) Groups' responses to question of the most important man-made structures in the region:
 - State Line Marker: Oldest man made masonry structure with XX(two or three states) distance.
 - All industrial housing
 - Memorial Day Massacre Monument and site because it is a seminal event in labor history as well as steel history
 - Part of a Steel Mill: No one is going to know what a mill is, the parts of it, what was the process of steel making and the structures.
 - 1st Catholic Latino Church of Chicago, Our Lady of Guadalupe, because of its history, her personal interest, and how it has brought a lot of people to the area
 - Skyway Bridge because of it signifies transportation, it is made of steel and it ties people together
 - The new Steelworkers' Park and sculpture
 - Indiana dunes because of their being the geological foundation for the environment, for its biodiversity that reflects human diversity in the area
 - Wolf Lake because it is used for recreation, fishing, and concerts in Indian and Illinois. It is also picture-perfect, includes a state park and connects to settler history.

Rarest or most threatened structures?

- 1) State Line Monument
- 2) Marktown and industrial housing
- 3) Labor history (unions that is what is threatened)

Others that may be or are threatened?

- 1) Historical Bridges, the beauty of the onion dome on 100th catches your eye.
- 2) Grain Elevators: used to be so many now only two.
- 3) Hulett Ore Unloaders: Rode in the cab on the claw once. Only a couple left. One in Erie Pennsylvania.

Comparison Across Conversations:

There was significant consensus across both of the Community Conversations. In both, participants cited geography as a shaping factor in the region's history and importance, linking geography to transit infrastructure. (Both conversations stressed waterways, more stress on rail in the Indiana conversation.) Planned communities and churches as hubs of community life were another common denominator. For instance, Marktown was acknowledged as important in both conversations. And of course at the most general level, industry and industrial urbanization history were seen as important historical themes.

Turning to differences between the conversations, the conversation in Gary put far more stress on the importance of giving Gary its due as a national center of industrial, labor, and race relations history. In the Chicago conversation, steel heritage was seen generally as something disappearing needing to be recorded and remembered. There was much less concern with the complete vanishing of industrial heritage in Indiana, where steel is still made, but there was some concern that mills threaten preservation of their own history. In Chicago, the state line marker was cited more than once as the earliest structure in the area, and important for this, but there was a much stronger feeling in the Gary group that the early history of the area was to be acknowledged as important, even if much of it is pre-industrial. This difference is in part attributable to archaeologists at the Gary meeting, and the large number of agricultural-era homesteads/historic sites across NW Indiana. The natural environment as something in need of preservation itself, was more a theme in Chicago. Another difference was stylistic; Chicago participants talked at the thematic level and less at the specific places level than participants in Gary.