



# Preserving the Future of our History

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By Anna Margaret Barris

It began in 2008, with just few hundred dollars left over from the Old State Capitol's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration. Members of the Old State Capitol Foundation began to consider creative ways to use the funds. Looking to ignite a spark to help preserve other historic landmarks and projects in Springfield, the members established the CFLL Historic Preservation Fund.

Within two years, interest spread to others in the community who also cared about historic preservation. In 2012, the Historic Preservation Fund awarded its first grant. Now, ten years after the initial \$400 contribution seeded the fund, more than \$40,000 has been granted to nonprofit organizations to preserve Springfield's rich history.



Past grants include a \$4,000 award to the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce Foundation for the development of planning concepts that would establish a visual and physical connection along Jackson Street between the historic Abraham Lincoln neighborhood and the Executive Mansion and State Capitol. The renderings funded by that small seed grant inspired the Realtor's Association Illinois Bicentennial Plaza and Jackson Street beautification in front of the newly-renovated Governor's Mansion.

Besides helping visualize what could happen on Jackson Street, the CFLL Historic Preservation Fund has helped restore historic buildings, including the Vachel Lindsay Home, Elijah Iles House, and Edwards Place – home of the Springfield Art Association.

Not every project assisted by the Historic Preservation Fund may have a well-known name attached or be a prominent destination; however, they each carry great value to their neighborhood and to Springfield. A few years ago in the heart of Enos Park, a turn-of-the-century grocery store was in danger of being demolished. A grant from the CFLL Historic Preservation Fund helped preserve the building's exterior while the Enos Park Neighborhood Association rallied awareness and support for revitalization efforts.

This year, the CFLL Historic Preservation Fund has for the first time awarded two grants. The Central 3 Community First Project, Inc., will preserve the First Black Firehouse located at 1310 E. Adams. Built in the early 1900s, the firehouse housed African-American firemen who were the first to respond to the fires from the 1908 Springfield Race Riot. The Historic Preservation grant will be used to help structurally stabilize the first floor for public use and display of the Black Firehouse Museum, preserving this important part of our history for future generations.

Our second grant in 2018 went to the Kidzeum of Health and Science to restore an interior wall that is a focal point when entering the newly-opened museum in downtown Springfield.

The Fund has granted more than \$40,000 in eight years, while creating an endowment that will carry the Fund well into the future. It is a testament to how this community can rally to preserve its heritage. While many come to Springfield to see how the 16<sup>th</sup> president lived in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, those of us who live here know we have many other jewels worth preserving and that Springfield's history neither begins nor ends with Abraham Lincoln.

*Anna Margaret Barris is a member of the CFL Historical Preservation Fund grant committee and serves as project manager at the State Historical Preservation Office within the Department of Natural Resources. To learn more about how to help the mission of the Historical Preservation Fund, visit [CFL.org](http://CFL.org).*