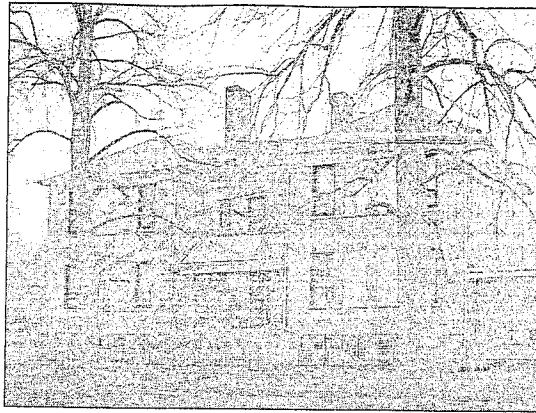


Historic Lincoln School being preserved

BY MARY LIETZ
SENTINEL NEWS STAFF

Denny Corbell, whose grandfather was an original founder of Kaskaskia College, started the Corbell-Denny Foundation in 1999 for "the purpose of encouraging and providing financial support and inducement to individuals and organizations engaged in the furtherance of historical research, preservation, and education in and concerning Fayette County, Illinois."

The focus of that foundation at present is the preservation and restoration, for community use, of the Lincoln School in Vandalia. In 2001, the school district donated the school building to the foundation. Corbell would like to see the school used for cultural, arts, historical and community purposes, with an emphasis on Vandalia community school history, display space for art by schoolchildren, specialty museum displays and areas of interest for tourists. Spaces are available for rent for community functions, the money from which will be used to help provide operational funds.



Sentinel Photo/MARY LIETZ

COMMUNITY CENTER — Lincoln School, which is being restored by the Corbell-Denny Foundation, contains an historical classroom exhibit and has rooms available for special functions.

Corbell began by attempting to contact alumni of Lincoln School to gauge interest in the project and to rally support. Letters were mailed to these alumni in 2001-2002 in a campaign, which raised close to \$4,000. This campaign also netted some volunteer help for the project. In April of 2003, a community auction raised about \$1,400. In the summer of 2003, the foundation succeeded in coming to an

agreement with Kaskaskia College, which utilized portions of the building from 2004-2006. In January of 2004, the foundation received the Vandalia Chamber of Commerce Community Improvement Award.

Between 2004-2006, several upgrades and improvements were made to the school, including the addition of a new boiler for heat and new roofs. Since 2006, the foundation has

continued with building refurbishment and improvements and began to see more requests for rental space. In September of that year, a local union group rented a room in the old part of the building, which they then cleaned up, repainted and agreed to pay a higher rent in order to retain the space. Corbell said that this went a long way towards helping to pay the utilities for the building. The year 2006 also saw the addition of a church in the building's new north wing classroom. That church has since purchased a new building and no longer uses the school.

Recently, the Boy Scouts in Vandalia began having issues with their building, which was located in one of the city's parks, so Corbell offered them space. They happily accepted, and have been using the school regularly ever since. Corbell also offered the school's playground, which is located in the northeast corner of the property, to the city for use. The playground is now a city park.

Corbell's future plans for the school are all hinged

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on the wait for funding and volunteers. He plans to have a classroom restored completely to how it would have looked in 1905, which would include teachers in period clothing, to be used as an exhibit for today's schoolchildren.

"We have all the hardware, the antiques, the desks, everything except the time and the money," said Corbell. He is asking that anyone who has the interest and the time to volunteer to contact him at (866) 668-8108.

The Lincoln School has space available for rent for community use, and typically sees events such as wedding receptions, family dinners and class reunions. Funds received from these rentals go directly back into the foundation to help maintain and restore the building.

To date, the foundation has made a total of nearly \$104,000 worth of improvements to the building including new roofs, boiler, air conditioning and a security system, using donations and rental income.

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