Old State Capitol
Foundation Fund

Old State Capitol Fund Set to Preserve the Past in the Future

Preservation needs a plan. For the Old State Capitol, a linchpin to Springfield's historical site tourism, the plan includes the establishment of the Old State Capitol Foundation Fund through the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln.

“This is a big deal for us. I see it as a natural extension of our role in the community,” said Justin Blandford, superintendent of state historic sites. “We are here to save history and preserve it for Illinois residents.”

Preservation of a facility that welcomes 125,000 visitors annually is a long-term process. The Capitol has to follow specific guidelines and stay true to the time period of the original facility, which was completed in 1853.

“Usually when people are thinking about preserving a house they think 10-20-30 years down the road. We want to think 100, 200, 300 years in advance,” Blandford said. “It’s not just primer and a coat of paint. It’s a very thorough process in preserving the property, and it is governed by the guidelines set by the Secretary of the Interior.”
The ability to react to necessary preservation projects is a key component to establishing the Fund. Access to money could make a difference in how big a project becomes or how much damage is done before it can be restored.

“Preservation is so often about timing. Having the chance to act quickly is so very important,” Blandford said. “We are 100 percent committed to taxpayers of Illinois, and this is assurance to taxpayers that we are doing everything we can to be good financial stewards of the Old State Capitol. It’s the right thing to do.”

The Old State Capitol was rededicated in 1968. It has been in the middle of Springfield’s ascendance as a tourist stop for Abraham Lincoln aficionados and the centerpiece for current history, like President Barack Obama’s announcing his candidacy for President and his Vice Presidential nominee. That value comes in the financial impact tourists bring and in the panache of having all the historical sites located in Springfield.

“We’re the capital city of Illinois, and historical sites like the Old State Capitol are very important,” Blandford said. “The first value that resonates with people is economic value. The next layer gets to what people talk about in urban renewal, place identifiers. Historical sites attribute to place identity and place esteem.”

Tourists will be able to donate to the Fund while visiting the Capitol. Also, a yearly fundraiser will likely be held to secure funds.