

Whole Place Conservation

Awareness of how special the Thiebaud farmstead is continues to grow. A look at some other preservation projects gives perspective to the Switzerland County Historical Society's Agriculture Museum Center and the strength of its many assets.

A recent issue of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's *Forum Journal* focused on "Bridging Land Conservation and Historic Preservation," discussing the need for preservationists and conservationists to recognize their common goals and obstacles and work together for whole place conservation.

Examples were given of historic properties that were preserved but the sense of place was gone due to the loss of the appropriate setting that gave meaning to the architecture, or the inverse of a natural setting conserved without the preservation of the built environment that had become part of the rural landscape.

The Thiebaud house is currently the center of attention of a capital campaign. Frederick and Harriet Thiebaud were courageous immigrants who arrived from Switzerland in 1817 to the property that would be home for three generations of the Thiebaud family. Research has revealed that in 1850 under the management of Justi Thiebaud, the farm produced food for export including 300 pounds of butter, 70 pounds of honey and 35 bushels of honey.

A hay press barn is being reconstructed on the property as the farmstead once had a hay press barn that yielded pressed bales of hay totaling 30 tons in 1857, 39 tons in 1860 and 80 tons in 1870.

Swine increased from 13 to 45 in 1880, thus the significance of the stone smokehouse adjacent to the house. Sheep increased from 13 in 1850 to 32 in 1880, probably due to the Vevay Woolen Mills. Stone fences and check dams along the creek are evidence of farm management.

While the agriculture census reports revealed no grape production, an archeological survey of the property conducted by Dr. McCullough and Dr. Strezewski of Indiana University-Purdue University at Fort Wayne concluded that terraces above the house were labor intensive to construct, and since there is no indication they were needed to grow other crops, they were likely created to grow grapes and later abandoned for more conventional crops.

So the 165 acres surrounding the Thiebaud house is part of the cultural setting that is the Thiebaud farmstead. The "whole place conservation" will include stone fences, the smokehouse, terraces and check dams. Hiking trails will be part of the development of the property so visitors to the Agriculture Museum Center will have access to the built environment that is part of the rural landscape that connects the natural setting to the lives of some of the county's early settlers. We have a story to tell and look forward to the time when the public will be able to part of the Thiebaud family homecoming.

The Switzerland County Historical Society is forever grateful to Dow Corning for their vision in gifting this significant property to us, and for understanding the importance of keeping the property intact. We thank them for their patience as we research, plan and raise the funds necessary to do it right.