

# NORTH CENTRAL OHIO PRESERVATION NEWS

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## Malling the City

"What I'm scared of is that we're going to create another downtown and destroy the one we have now." Those words of warning, heard all too infrequently from local elected officials these days, were spoken by Charles Smith, a city councilman from Pittsfield, Mass. His concern is a proposed \$100 million shopping mall in the middle of downtown Pittsfield that would obliterate half of the city's existing retail space and a quarter of its office space.

In Red Wing, Minn., the threat to downtown is from a mall not downtown but rather in the suburbs. Writing in the *Red Wing Republican Eagle*, Tom Lutz, director of the Downtown Development Association and former assistant director of the National Trust's Midwest Regional Office, wonders if the residents of Red Wing are fully cognizant of the cost of the proposed mall. A suburban mall, he points out, brings new development and higher public expenditures for schools, roads and services. But there's even more: The flow of money will change. "With its outside management, its fleet of imported franchises and its sources of private capital," Lutz wrote, "the mall will insure that large portions of locally derived profits are diverted to economic opportunities elsewhere, and as soon as possible."

Washington urban affairs columnist Neal R. Peirce wrote in August

that the federal government has inadvertently contributed heavily to the demise of downtowns: It has encouraged large, new regional malls by funding construction of interstate highways and interchanges and by offering federal funds for water and sewer line extensions. That policy is now under review by the Carter Administration's Interagency Coordinating Committee, he wrote. The new policy "would flatly commit the federal government to discourage proposed regional malls when it's clearly shown they would undermine city business districts and seriously increase gasoline demand," Peirce reported.

That's a fine first step to encourage downtown rebirth. There are, however, problems with the federal government's primary current approach to solving the downtown problem, urban development action grants from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. In too many instances recently, HUD has been lax in requiring grant recipients to conduct environment impact reviews. And that takes us back to Pittsfield, where the downtown mall is to be aided by \$14.2 million HUD grant for 3,000 parking spaces. Extensive citizen opposition can result, as it has in Pittsfield, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation is now reviewing that project.

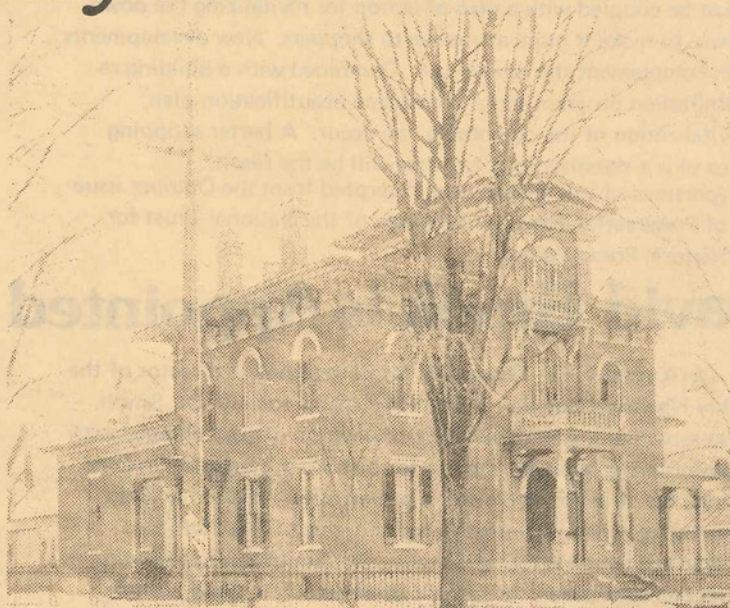
Continued on Page 2

## Old Wayne County Jail is Saved

by Wendy Leigh Barlow

The Jailhouse Blues need not be sung anymore as the impending demise of the Old Wayne County Jail, located in the northwest section of Wooster's downtown, has been miraculously avoided. Since last November, the wreckers ball has loomed over the building as preservationists, led by Wooster Mayor Robert Anderson, sought and won a series of last minute delays until a sympathetic buyer could be found to restore the building. The old jail was built in 1864 after a fire destroyed an earlier structure built in 1839. During its time the jail was proclaimed, by a Wayne County historian to be "one of the finest edifices of its kind in the state". Today, the brick, stone and iron building and its immediate area have appeared to have been altered and deteriorated enough to discourage some citizens from viewing the former sheriff's residence and county jail as architecturally significant. Still, the early Italianate jail, characterized by brackets, window hood mouldings and decorative porches, stands in muted grandeur as the exterior and the interior have been declared structurally sound. The exterior is in good condition and with proper rehabilitation techniques and appropriate landscaping, the jail will return to its picturesque state.

A year and a half ago Mayor Anderson became personally interested in preserving the structure. At this time the County Commissioners were seeking parking spaces for the newly constructed Justice Center west of the jail. Demolition was slated for the more than 100 year-old jail to provide the parking space, and clearly the County Commissioners convinced their decision was the only possible and sane solution.



Mayor Anderson began his campaign to persuade people that the jail was worth saving by commissioning a feasibility study. This study, financed by a Community Development Block Grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, concluded "renovation of

Continued on Page 2

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In North Central Ohio, the cities of Wooster and Coshocton are battling plans by outside developers for large scale shopping centers on their outskirts. In Wooster, a development corporation that has planned many Ohio regional malls, including the Richland Mall near Mansfield, has acquired a site outside of the city limits and is planning to build an enclosed regional shopping mall. City officials have tried to interest the developers in building their mall in downtown Wooster, but were met with demands to provide a 35 acre cleared site, larger than the present downtown area. Downtown businessmen, realizing that a mall near Wooster would cripple downtown business, have begun to organize. The current strategy is for the city of Wooster to deny the developers the needed services for the proposed mall.

Coshocton has formed a downtown revitalization committee aimed at improving conditions in the downtown, with an emphasis on historic preservation. The group is trying to encourage new development in the downtown but is opposed to large scale commercial developments on the outskirts of town. A study was recently prepared by a consulting firm from Baltimore. Their major recommendation was improvement and rehabilitation of the existing buildings with smaller scale new construction as "infill". Plans were recently prepared for restoring several storefronts. A concerted effort is being made to keep the J.C. Penney store in downtown Coshocton instead of relocating to a new strip development.

Community leaders in cities such as Pittsfield, Red Wing, Coshocton and Wooster realize that regional shopping malls can have a devastating impact on the city's downtown. And since, in most cities, the downtown provides more tax revenues than any other part of the city, bankruptcy or dramatically increased local taxation can be the end result. Even cities which have had malls locate within their corporation limits find that the added revenues are offset by the increased cost of city services to the new facility and by the loss of revenues in the downtown. Yet opposition to new development will not solve the problems in downtowns. Opposition to these regional shopping malls and commercial centers outside the downtown must be coupled with a plan of action for revitalizing the downtown, to make it more attractive to shoppers. New developments can complement the downtown. Combined with a building rehabilitation program and a streetscape beautification plan, revitalization of the downtown can occur. A better shopping area plus a stabilized city tax base will be the result.

(portions of this article were excerpted from the October issue of Preservation News, publication of the National Trust for Historic Preservation)

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the property would provide 10,000 square feet of usable space at a cost of less than \$300,000". A proposal was advanced for housing county offices now in rented quarters in the old jail. The County Commissioners were still not convinced of the merits of the project and their hesitation was based on economic feasibility, the need for additional parking spaces, and a general impression that the old building could not be made suitable for county offices.

Utilizing the said land for parking spaces fit into the "scheme of things", while the renovated jail "did not fit into the scheme of things" a County Commissioner was quoted. One Wooster citizen suggested the City of Wooster "donate the entire building as a gift to the Italian Historical Society". However, public interest was increasing and Elizabeth Pastor from Ashland sent her sympathies and hoped Wooster could learn from their mistake. The Ashland County Jail Building had recently been demolished after a similar campaign to preserve it had been unsuccessful.

In May of 1979 the contract for the jail's demolition was awarded and the last ray of hope for the jail's survival was but a mere glimmer. By the end of the month that glimmer intensified as Richard L. Buchanan of Hudson Properties, Inc. of Cleveland proposed an exchange of properties for the old jail. Such an exchange would involve trading three lots which were closer to the Justice Center and adjacent to the existing parking lot, for the old jail building across the street. Thus, the county commissioners got their parking lot in a more convenient location and the jail was saved, using no public funds.

In July a contract for the purchase option was signed by Buchanan, and by August the sale of the property was awarded to the Olde Jail Ltd., a newly formed Ohio Corporation, for \$103,000...the exact amount of the three properties. The jail would now be rehabilitated and a restaurant, shop, and offices were being planned. The exterior will be restored, removing a later front porch and restoring several windows. Inside, the grand open stairway, which rises to the third floor tower room, will be completely restored, as will many interior rooms. New business attracted to the renovated jail will add to the City of Wooster's income, and more importantly it will reinforce the downtown which is threatened by the construction of a shopping mall. Mayor Anderson is "most pleased that the jail has not been demolished and restoration plans are being formalized. I am confident the results will be good, and the adaptive reuse of the fine building should reinforce the downtown and raise the consciousness level of the community". He concluded by stating, "Wooster has many fine buildings that deserve similar treatment".

## David Brook is Appointed State Preservation Officer

On August 1, Dr. Thomas H. Smith resigned as director of the Ohio Historical Society. As director of the society, Dr. Smith also served as the state historic preservation officer, charged with administering federal programs for historic preservation in Ohio. Under his direction the historic preservation program in Ohio was enlarged and upgraded to become one of five divisions within the Ohio Historical Society. Dr. Smith served as a very effective spokesman for historic preservation in Ohio, visiting many Ohio communities to promote preservation. He also served as vice-president of the association of State historic preservation officers and played an active influential role in this national body. Shortly before his resignation, Dr. Smith appeared in Mansfield to lend his support to local efforts to

preserve the Mansfield Public Library.

David L. Brook is a professional preservationist and lawyer who has served as chief of the historic preservation division of the Ohio Historical Society. Mr. Brook also bore the title of Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer. By appointing Mr. Brook to succeed Dr. Smith as state historic preservation officer, Governor Rhodes has recognized the need to have a professional non-political figure in charge of historic preservation in Ohio. Mr. Brook is a native of southern Ohio. Prior to his role as chief of the preservation division he served as regional preservation officer for south central Ohio, centered in Chillicothe, where he played an influential role in encouraging historic preservation.