



Prairie Land Heritage Museum Institute

1005 W. Michigan – So. Jacksonville, IL 62650

P O Box 754, Jacksonville, IL 62651

To Whom It May Concern:

As you may have read in the newspaper or heard on the radio, Prairie Land Heritage Museum Institute is in the process of reconstructing the bandstand/gazebo that was on display at the Smithsonian Museum of American History in Washington, D. C. from 1984 until last fall. It was built on the Jacksonville State Hospital grounds in 1878 and used by the hospital until it was donated to the Smithsonian. Our organization has received it back from the Smithsonian and we have agreed to reconstruct it and put it back into use for our community.

We are asking businessmen and women in our area to financially help us with this endeavor. The Smithsonian sent along some funds for this reconstruction project but the amount is not nearly enough to get the job done and get it done well. It will take a considerable amount to pay for the concrete foundation, roofing, wood replacement and repair and painting in keeping with the historical look of that era. For the most part we, the members of Prairie Land Heritage Museum are supplying the labor at no cost.

We would appreciate donations and we're asking you to consider donating to this worthy cause. Donations will be recognized and acknowledged with your name engraved on a dedicated monument (\$500+), a 4" X 8" pathway border brick (\$100+), an engraved 12" X 12" clay paver (\$350+) and/or an engraved brick on the foundation of the bandstand/gazebo (\$200+).

To make a donation or for more information, contact any one of the following people: Rod Wellenkamp, Prairie Land Heritage Museum President, 217-473-8464; Butch Watts, Bandstand/Gazebo Reconstruction Committee Chairman, 217-473-9560; Del Jarman, Prairie Land Museum Treasurer, 217-491-1662, and Reconstruction Committee members, Bob Komnick, 217-494-2193, Dean Howard, 217-883-7719, and Chuck Fairfield, 217-243-4515.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter. This is truly a worthy endeavor on behalf of our community and we would like it if you became a part of it.

Members of the Reconstruction Committee

SHORT HISTORY OF THE BANDSTAND

The new bandstand on the west grounds of the National Museum of American History was originally erected in 1878-79 at the Illinois Central Hospital for the Insane at Jacksonville, Illinois. Built of pine and roofed with cedar shingles, the bandstand was one of two of the same design completed at a combined cost of \$1,000. A third bandstand was constructed about 1883.

Known for many decades after its founding in 1851 simply as the Jacksonville State Hospital, the institution was regarded as one of the nation's leading mental health treatment centers. Recreational activities at the hospital, now the Jacksonville Mental Health and Development Center, were from the first considered vital to the mental therapy programs of the patients. Patients regularly participated in musical programs, dramatic presentations, dances, and games.

The hospital band and orchestra—apparently started in the early 1870s—were composed of patients and employees. After veterans of World War I increased the hospital's enrollment, the band reportedly became the only one in the country composed entirely of disabled veterans. Under the leadership of Bernard Strongman, who began as the band's director in April 1925, the Jacksonville State Hospital Band won or placed in several important band contests.

Townpeople thought of the forty-acre hospital park as a part of their community, and shared in outdoor activities such as baseball games and concerts. Originally referred to as "summerhouses," the bandstands were from the start regarded as multipurpose structures. In 1930 this structure and its sister bandstand were placed atop concrete foundations built to accommodate lockers, showers, and rest rooms for adjacent baseball diamonds.

After World War II, the bandstands remained central to outdoor activities at the institution only as long as enrollment remained high. New mental health treatments of the recent past resulted in dramatic decreases in the number of patients, and the bandstands fell into disuse. But much of the original park area has since been turned over to the city, and the two remaining bandstands should see renewed use.

This structure—the East Bandstand—was disassembled in May 1983 and has been rebuilt as originally surveyed. The foundation has been restored to its original appearance and metalwork added to the roof ridges in the twentieth-century has been removed. In addition, the present structure re-creates the original 1879 color scheme: cream for the basic structure, Venetian red trim, blue-gray ceiling, and red-stained shingles. The bandstand's floor is approximately 32 feet long and 24 feet wide across the bays; the height from the floor is 11½ feet to the eaves and 17 feet to the highest ridge.