



# News Release

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## HISTORIC PRESERVATION FIELD SCHOOL HELD

**St. Joseph, Mo.** — June 9, 2004—“St. Joseph has the most fabulous stock of old buildings of any city of its size in the world. It’s the perfect learning laboratory for historic preservation.”

That is the opinion of Dr. Bonnie Stepenoff, professor of history and the former director of the historic preservation program at Southeast Missouri State University in Cape Girardeau. Dr. Stepenoff spent three weeks in St. Joseph recently teaching a historic preservation field school, which was coordinated by the city of St. Joseph and Missouri Western State College.

One of the achievements of the field school was the completion of a comprehensive architectural and historical survey of the 152 homes between 22<sup>nd</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> Streets on Felix and Francis Streets, which involved spending time in the neighborhood taking photographs, and researching records at City Hall, the Buchanan County Courthouse and the library. The field school also included tours of several area homes and local guest speakers.

Robert Myers, historic preservation planner for the city of St. Joseph, said the city has had an ongoing program of surveying neighborhoods since 1972, but this survey was the first one taken in a neighborhood east of 22<sup>nd</sup> Street. Besides giving the city a wealth of information, the survey can be used by residents if they choose to nominate their neighborhood to the National Register of Historic Places.

The neighborhood contained a mixture of home structures and income levels, and most of the homes were built between 1890 and 1940.

The 10 students in the field school were as varied as the homes they studied. While several were traditional history majors from Western, the class roster included a woman who lived in a historic home, a realtor and a retired Western professor.

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Penelope Kress was one of the students. She and her husband are renovating their home and own a local restoration company. Kress said she signed on for the field school so she could help her clients get National Register nominations. “I learned so much. I liked that we really looked at the architecture and looked at the pieces and parts. I recommend it (the field school) to anyone who is remotely interested in historical architecture.”

Another student, Devon Thorne, a Western history and government major from St. Joseph, said she learned a lot about local history and how the architecture of homes is related to that history. “It was neat. I thought it was very useful,” she said of the field school.

Dr. Mark Mikkelsen, associate professor in Western’s department of history, geography and philosophy and one of the coordinators of the school, said the idea of a field school in St. Joseph materialized when his department received funds from the college Foundation to explore the possibility of Western offering a class in historic preservation. Dr. Stepenoff visited Western as a consultant last fall to discuss the class, and the idea of a local field school became a reality.

Dr. Mikkelsen said there was a lot of support for the field school, and over \$3,000 was raised for scholarships for the students.

He believed the field school was a success, and hopes another one can be offered in the future. He said the students surveyed “a wonderful old neighborhood, and St. Joseph has a lot of them.”

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*Missouri Western State College is a four-year public institution providing a blend of traditional liberal arts and professional degree programs. The college offers student-centered, high quality instruction that focuses on experience-based learning, community service, and state-of-the-art technology. Western is located in St. Joseph, Mo. and is committed to the educational, economic, cultural and social development of the region it serves.*