

PASFIELD HOUSE INN

**525 S. PASFIELD STREET
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS 62704**

Contact: Tony Leone, Historian
217-525-3663
pasfieldhouse.com

For Immediate Release
January 10, 2011

Illinois Historic Preservation Coalition Seeks to Link Old Capitol, Civil War Museum and Lincoln National Heritage Area in Civil War Heritage Trail

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (Jan. 10, 2011) – A Central Illinois historic preservation coalition is presenting a strategic plan for a Civil War museum, interpretive center and heritage trail, to preserve and promote Civil War era history in Illinois. The coalition is led by Illinois historian Tony Leone, owner of the Pasfield House Inn in Springfield.

Coalition plans include a public-private partnership to establish a Civil War museum and interpretive center as a hub within the Old State Capitol in Springfield. The interpretive center would tell the story of the American Civil War from start to finish. The site would also link several other key historic sites within a 42-county region. The region is designated as the Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area (ALNHA), managed by the Looking for Lincoln Heritage Coalition.

In September of 2010, the coalition held four public hearings in cities throughout the region to present their plan to Illinois business and municipal leaders and other interested parties and stakeholders. Leone presented the proposal at hearing locations in Quincy, Jacksonville, Bloomington and Decatur.

Leone reported receiving positive feedback from local historians and from those promoting local, regional and state tourism.

“To be successful, this Civil War Heritage Trail will need cooperation from both public and private sectors,” Leone said. He hopes to raise private and public funds.

Leone, a trustee for the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, traveled as a private citizen to speak before these gatherings and assess the interest in the endeavor.

- More -

“In the mid-1800s, as our country began expanding toward the west, Abraham Lincoln and Illinois were the focus of widespread public attention,” said Leone, a self-proclaimed Civil War enthusiast. “In 1860 and again in 1865, the Illinois Capitol on the old courthouse square was the site of events that drew the attention of our entire country, along with foreign leaders worldwide, to Springfield.”

Leone noted that 150 years ago the issue of federal dominance over states’ rights was in the forefront. “Historians are fascinated that less than 100 years after the American Revolution this young nation could become so divided that it had its own rebellion.

“There is one historic site within the United States – the Old State Capitol in Springfield – that best depicts *both* the beginnings of the struggle and its tragic closure, with Abraham Lincoln as its central figure.” He noted that events occurring at the Old State Capitol “figuratively bookend the beginnings and end of the American Civil War.”

According to Leone, the endeavor capitalizes on renewed interest in the cultural and historical past of Springfield, surrounding the 2011 Civil War Sesquicentennial. “In 1860, our country was splintered on the issue of slavery,” he said. “Today, the President of the United States is African-American. This coincidence was not lost on the then junior Illinois U.S. Senator, Barack Obama. He selected the Old Capitol as the background for launching two of the most symbolic aspects of his own successful presidential campaign.”

Leone plans to work independently in cooperation with the Illinois Historic Preservation Board and the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum.

Legislation enacted by Congress and signed by President Bush on May 10, 2008, designated the Looking for Lincoln Heritage Coalition (LFL), a non-profit 501c3, to manage the ALNHA. In covering the 42 counties of Central Illinois, both the LFL and the ALNHA share a mission to preserve, interpret, develop, and promote the heritage and culture of the region in the context of Abraham Lincoln’s life in Illinois. Existing National Heritage Areas have been established to inform, educate, develop and interpret visitor-ready sites, create living history experiences, chronicle the evolution of the area’s landscape, and extend those opportunities to the largest audience possible.

Tony Leone is a trustee for the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency and owner-proprietor of the Pasfield House Inn in Springfield, which is on the National Historic Register. Leone was also appointed to the Advisory Board of the Illinois Capitol Historic Preservation Board.

###