

Residents of Delphi value the town's intimate atmosphere as well as its collection of historic buildings, including the 1905 public library. The city's Parks Department has developed a walking tour highlighting the town's residential architecture, providing a short history of each house. For more information visit www.cityofdelphi.org.

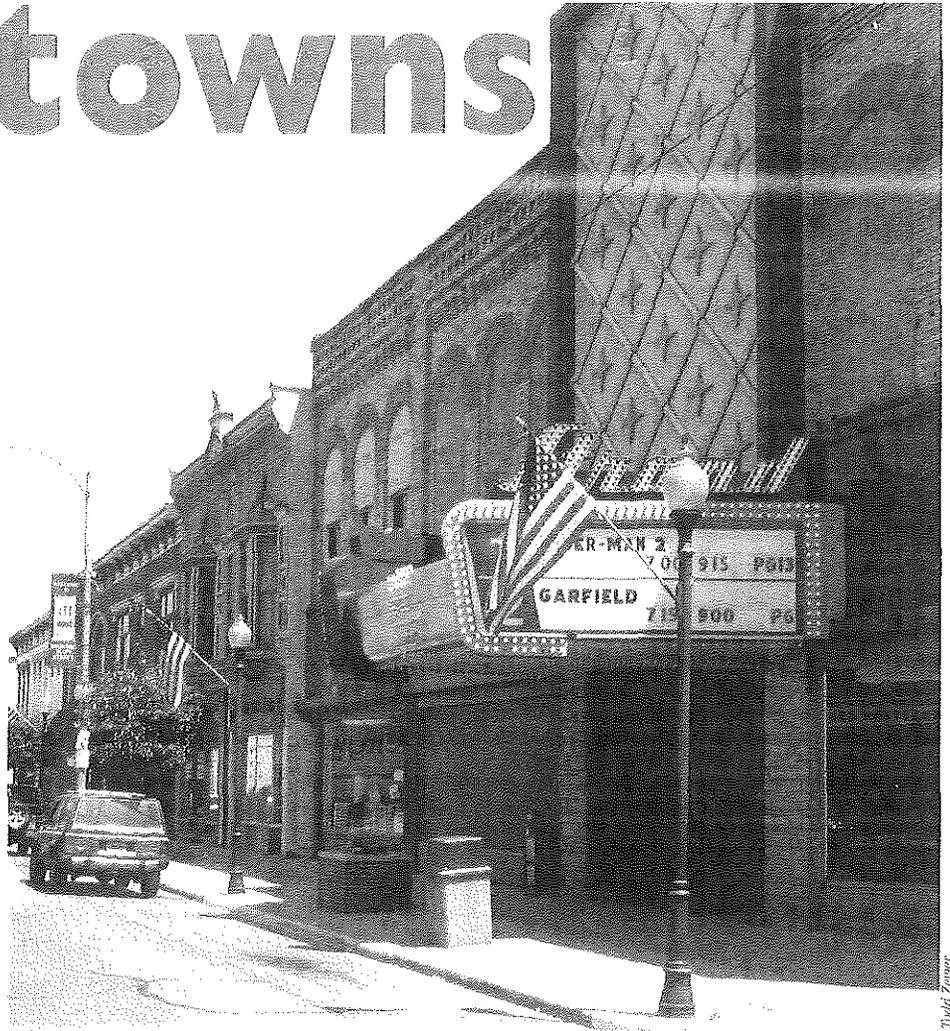
Great



small towns

Ask residents of small towns what makes the place special and you're likely to hear similar answers: a strong sense of community, a slower pace of life, a feeling of safety, the friendly familiarity that comes from knowing almost everyone. Often the appeal is harder to express—a certain "something" about the place, an indefinable quality that derives from the town's rich and varied history, architecture, and leadership.

The towns profiled in this issue all share an uncommon commitment to preservation. All take pride in streets lined with historic buildings that have served generations and represent shared history. The buildings remain because people care about them and work hard to preserve them. In our humble opinion, that's what makes the following small towns so great.



Residents of Kenosha turned a major disaster into the spark for downtown revitalization, capitalizing on historic architecture to draw businesses and customers back downtown.

Best of both worlds in bedroom communities

Contributors: Warren Goodman, Tommy Newnes, J. W. Taylor

As sprawl keeps expanding the limits of cities, more small towns qualify as bedroom communities—attractive places within reach of work in the metropolis but quieter and more intimately scaled. Places where a family can get more house for the money, with good schools, a charming downtown, and an easy commute to jobs in the city.

For example, a majority of the residents in Pendleton work in larger cities to the north, south and east—Anderson, Indianapolis, and Muncie. Cities the size of Bloomington and Lafayette have

bedroom communities too, including Spencer and Delphi respectively. In northwest Indiana, Lowell attracts residents who travel to the *really* big city—Chicago—for work but *really* don't want to live there. However, most who dwell in these towns, even the recent arrivals and commuters, disclaim the "bedroom" terminology. They see their historic communities as uniquely attractive and distinctive places that are primary, not secondary.

Most of Pendleton's 3,800 residents work in Indianapolis, Anderson or

Muncie. What makes the town so attractive that it makes the drive worthwhile? For starters, Pendleton displays a distinctive historic appearance. Most of the town is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The downtown and neighborhoods, the parks, and the sense of community together exert a magnetic draw.

Pendleton retains its historical link to Fall Creek. In the 150-acre Falls Park, a plaque commemorates the application of justice that followed the Fall Creek Massacre—the murder of a Native

American family in 1824. The perpetrators were hanged, the first time in American history that white men were executed for killing Indians. The park also includes more lighthearted features, including a c.1928 lighthouse, a locally beloved folly whose Pisa-like tilt was corrected with help from a Historic Landmarks grant.

Historic Fall Creek, Pendleton Settlement Inc., the local preservation group, and others in town are currently battling a threat to Pendleton's historic character. An Indiana Department of Transportation project threatens to damage buildings and destroy the trees that line State Street (IN-38), an essential feature of the town's historic context and one that distinguishes Pendleton from the leafless sprawl of the big city. The depth of Pendleton's commitment to preserving its character shows in its willingness to entertain a drastic solution: to save trees and historic buildings, the town may accept "ownership" of State Street (IN-38) from the state of Indiana.

Ruth Berline, owner of Pendleton's c.1820 Grey Goose Inn, featured in *99 Historic Homes of Indiana*, loves the town for "the mystique of the falls, first-class parks system, the historic ambience and the lingering Quaker influence." She's 100 percent behind the town's willingness to assume responsibility for a thoroughfare in order to maintain that



Jeremy Rosen

Purdue University professor Janet Ayres lives in Delphi and commutes to her job in West Lafayette. She chooses to live in a small town for a number of reasons. "It's being able to make a difference in the community; it's also the peace and quiet—we don't have the traffic or crime of larger cities," she says.

special character and prevent the sprawl that would follow a widened roadway.

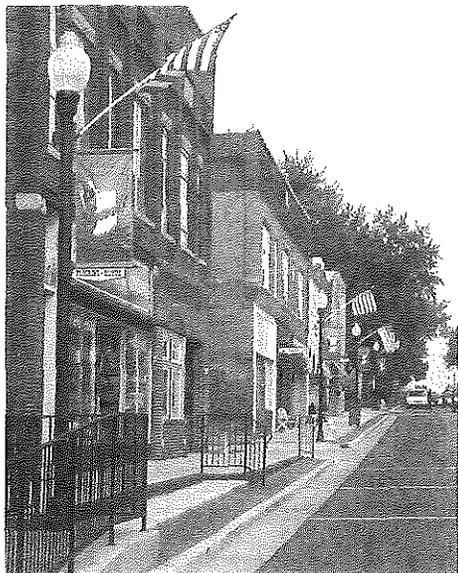
Spencer lies in Owen County, 15 miles northwest of the expanding city of Bloomington. The town retains residents and attracts commuters drawn to the historic character of its downtown square, residential neighborhoods, and churches. Residents and visitors alike quickly point to Spencer's historic courthouse square as the heart of town. The impressive copper dome of the 1911 Neoclassical-style Owen County Courthouse symbolizes the community's tenacious grip on its identity. In the 1990s, the county considered removing the deteriorating dome. Preservationists rallied the town to save and rehab the dome with new copper sheathing, paid for in part by a penny-collecting campaign by Spencer Elementary second graders who asked "Aren't pennies made of copper?"

Owen County Preservations, Inc., an affiliate of Historic Landmarks, keeps a close eye on Spencer's historic treasures and has saved, restored and sold two historic houses. The example set by the

group in these projects fueled additional restorations by individuals. Preservationists are currently battling to save the 1928 Tivoli Theater—the county's only Mission-Revival style building—jeopardized by vacancy and neglect.

Jacob and Jonathan Balash live in Spencer and commute to Bloomington. The pair rehabilitated a c.1850 Greek Revival cottage in Spencer, winning an award in 2002 from Owen County Preservations, Inc. "I like the smaller towns with sidewalks, tree-lined streets and older homes," Jacob says. "Of course, affordability also plays a big part," he notes. Historic houses are more affordable in Spencer than in the high-demand Bloomington market.

A 20-minute trip from Lafayette on IN-25 takes commuters home to Delphi, population 3,000. Early wealth from the Wabash and Erie Canal and



Erica Taylor

With its historic ambience and small-town pace, Lowell provides an escape from the hurried pace of life in larger cities nearby.

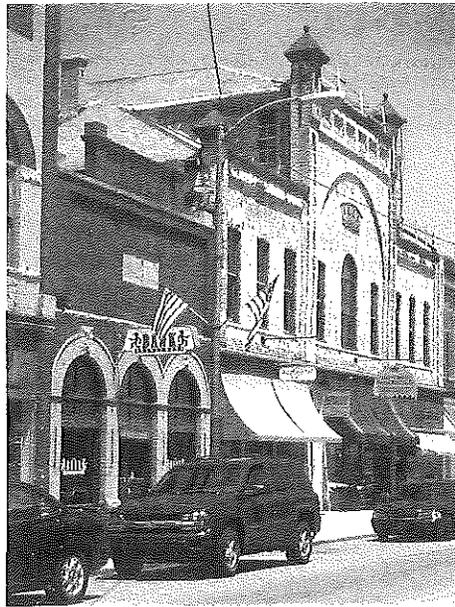
three railroad systems left the Carroll County seat with an impressive collection of imposing historic homes in a variety of architectural styles unusual for a city of its size. The 1916 Renaissance Revival-style Carroll County Courthouse, recently listed in the National Register, anchors a commercial square surrounded by impressive mid-nineteenth century buildings.

Paul Brandenburg, Chairman of Historic Landmarks' Historic Spans Task Force and member of the Delphi Preservation Society, places a high value on small-town living. "My wife and I lived in Indianapolis for a while and never anticipated living in a town of 3,000 people. We love the small town atmosphere. You get to know your neighbors and develop a relationship with the community."

Development sprawling into Northwest Indiana from Chicago creeps ever closer to small Indiana communities that provide a respite for people who work but don't want to live in the metropolis. So far, in Lowell—less than 50 miles from Chicago—not much has changed in the last century. The city boasts a historic downtown and vintage neighborhoods. Formerly an unsung farming community, Lowell now attracts residents looking for affordable real estate within easy commuting distance to Chicago and other nearby cities.

Founded in 1848, Lowell's fortune and appearance improved with the completion of the Louisville, New Albany and Chicago Railroad in 1881. Not only did the railroad bolster commerce, it also provided stimulus for new architecture. Two-story frame and brick commercial buildings began to line the town's main thoroughfare, East Commercial Avenue.

After a fire in 1898 destroyed 20 downtown buildings, the two-block section was rebuilt in brick Italianate and vernacular-



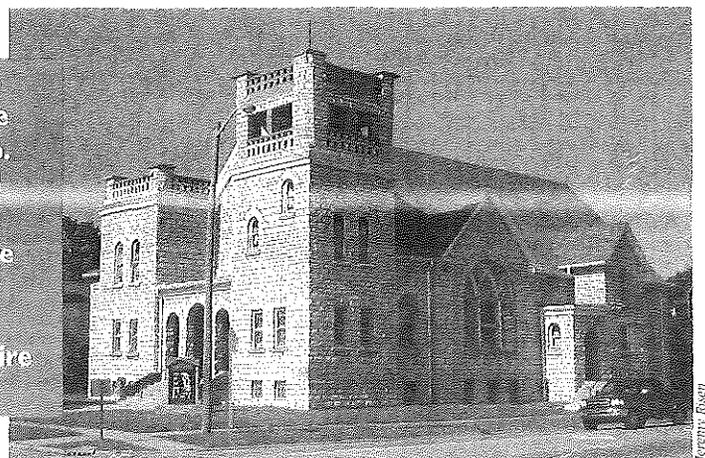
Wayne Goodman

style buildings of architectural importance. Because of this turn-of-the-century rebuilding—with little exterior modernization since—Lowell's downtown displays a remarkable visual continuity.

Lowell's historic commercial district, added to the National Register in 2004, recently underwent a revitalization led by the Lowell Main Street Association and the town government. "What makes Lowell unique is that there hasn't been much change or modification—we're basically the same as we were 100 years ago," says local business owner and Lowell Main Street President Daylene Welty.

Though metropolitan areas continue to grow, sometimes swallowing smaller communities in their ceaseless expansion, it's a fair bet places like

A distinctive building material—St. Genevieve stone—helps give Spencer its special visual stamp. Municipal buildings, houses and churches, including the 1907 Spencer Baptist Church, feature the light-colored rusticated limestone in everything from foundations and porches to entire buildings.



Jessie Riser

Pendleton residents work hard to maintain their community's historic ambiance, pointing out proudly that nearly the whole town is listed in the National Register.

Pendleton, Spencer, Delphi and Lowell—places that have worked hard to preserve the things that make them special—will remain individual towns with distinct identities resistant to the sameness spawned by sprawl.

If you go...

Pendleton. Visit the Pendleton Historical Museum in Falls Park to learn more about the Fall Creek Massacre and Pendleton's past. For a tasty bite, stop by The Bank, a restaurant located in a historic savings and loan.

Spencer. Take a walk around the square and drop in the antique shops on the north side. Have a family-style dinner at the Hilltop Restaurant on SR-231 north. Just two miles east of Spencer, visit McCormick's Creek, opened in 1916 as Indiana's first state park.

Delphi. Stop by Canal Park and the Wabash and Erie Canal Interpretive Center. The northeast end of the canal features the c.1874 Paint Creek Bridge. When your stomach rumbles, head for the Solano Kitchen on Main Street.

Lowell. East Commercial Avenue offers a variety of unique retail shops including Wild Thyme and The Vault, an antique store housed in a former bank where John Dillinger reportedly made an unauthorized withdrawal. Stop by Nellie Jayne's Cafe, a Victorian tearoom where guests can enjoy a good cuppa.