

PRESERVING THE PAST

This lesson plan is designed to help students explore *SAH Archipedia*, a publicly accessible website that features more than 900 of Michigan's most significant buildings. Students will research a building in their community, and write a letter to a public official asking for the building to be preserved.

Grade 4 Lesson Plan

SKILLS

- Persuasive writing
- Historic research
- Verbal presentations

MICHIGAN STANDARDS

P3.3.1 Persuasive Communication About a Public Issue

- compose a brief essay on a public policy issue in the United States
- justify the position with a reasoned argument

P4.2.1 Citizen Involvement

- develop and implement an action plan and know how, when, and where to address or inform others about a public issue

NATIONAL STANDARDS

12. The processes, patterns, and functions of human settlements.

Project Objectives and Goals

Students will understand the significance of historic preservation.

Students will research and present a significant historic building in their community.

Students will create a drawing representing a historic building.

Students will use information from their research to write a letter to a public official that justifies why their chosen historic building should be preserved.

Materials

- Project Overview
- Project Steps
- Historic Preservation Teacher's Guide*
- Examples and Student Responses*
- Preserving the Past* Student Packet
- Glossary* of Architectural Terms

PRESERVING THE PAST

ASSESSMENT POINTS

Historical research of building history and use.

Writing skills that incorporate researched facts and persuasive arguments.

Project Steps

1. Discuss...

- The importance of historic preservation for a community and for historic buildings.
- Discuss the history and purpose of Greenfield Village.
- Discuss the difference between moving a building to a site like Greenfield Village, and preserving it in place in its original community.

Prep: *Historical Preservation & Greenfield Village (T.3)*

Time: 5-10 minutes

2. Handout...

- Worksheet Packet to the class
- Discuss the project and its goals using *Preserving the Past (S.1)*.
 1. Understand the importance of historic preservation in your community.
 2. Discuss a building in the Greenfield Village preservation park.
 3. Research a building in your community that has historic significance.
 4. Write a persuasive letter to a public official arguing that the building should be preserved.

Prep: Print and copy *Preserving the Past* Packet

Time: 5-10 minutes

3. Explain...

- As a class read the sample letter from a hypothetical fourth grader named Jenny (*S.2*).
- Together underline why Jenny feels that the Jones General Store is important.
- Together circle why Jenny feels that the Jones General Store should be preserved.
- Use the example of Jenny's letter (*S.3*) to explain the different parts of a letter.
- Have students practice identifying parts of a letter using Robert's letter about the Smiths Creek Depot. Students may work independently or in groups depending on skill level.

Prep: *James R. Jones General Store and Smiths Creek Depot (T.5-6)*

Students will complete *Greenfield Village (S.2-5)*.

Time: 10-20 minutes

4. Discuss...

- Discuss the range of buildings the students have for writing their letters.
- Explain to whom they will be writing.
- Offer information about the buildings they will be writing about as either a handout or during a field trip.

Time: 15-20 minutes

Students will complete *Preserving the Past (S.6)*.

5. Homework...

- Explain the requirements for the letters.
 1. A greeting addressed to a public official
 2. An introduction of the student and the building
 3. A paragraph explaining the building's importance to the student
 4. A paragraph explaining why the building should be preserved
 5. A conclusion thanking the reader
 6. A closing from the student.

Prep: Provide information on the possible buildings.

Students will complete *Preserving the Past (S.7-8)* outside of class.

Time: 10-15 minutes

HISTORIC PRESERVATION & GREENFIELD VILLAGE

This teaching guide helps you to understand the importance and methods of historic preservation. Below are suggestions on how to discuss the preservation of historic buildings. There are also discussion points about what the students should be learning.

DISCUSSION POINTS

What makes a building worth preserving?

Why is it important to preserve historical buildings?

What can we learn from places like Greenfield Village and other historical sites?

Greenfield Village

1. The Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village make up the largest indoor-outdoor museum complex in America. Nearly one hundred historic buildings were moved to the property from their original locations and arranged in a “village” setting. The museum’s intent is to show how Americans lived and worked since the founding of the country. The village includes buildings from the seventeenth century to the present, many of which are staffed by costumed interpreters who perform period tasks such as farming, sewing, and cooking. A collection of craft buildings such as pottery, glass-blowing, and tin shops provide demonstrations while producing materials used in the Village and for sale. Greenfield Village has 240 acres of land, of which only 90 acres are used for the attraction, the rest comprising forest, river, and extra pasture for the sheep and horses.
2. Most of the buildings that make up Greenfield Village have been moved from their original sites throughout Michigan and the rest of the United States. The buildings were bought and relocated based on their historic value. Many had specific historic significance, such as the Wright Brothers Bicycle Shop, but others, such as the James R. Jones General Store, had local significance for the way that average people lived their lives.

Historic Preservation

1. Greenfield Village shows just one attempt at preservation, based on a desire to preserve buildings that might otherwise be destroyed. The buildings are relocated from their original locations, a controversial decision that many historians fear degrades their original communities.
2. Many preservationists instead prefer that buildings be preserved in place. This means preserving not only the building, but its location as well, which retains the building as a part of the community. Unlike Greenfield Village, where buildings are reused for their original purpose, this means that the buildings left in their original communities often find new uses.

JAMES R. JONES GENERAL STORE

This teacher's aid helps you to understand the importance and methods of historic preservation. Below are suggestions on how to discuss the preservation of historic buildings. There are also discussion points about what the students should be learning.

DISCUSSION POINTS

Why would Henry Ford have chosen to include the James R. Jones General Store in Greenfield Village?

Why would the James R. Jones General Store have been an important part of the community of Waterford?

Are there places similar to the James R. Jones General Store in your community that you think should be preserved?

James R. Jones General Store

1. One building that was relocated to Greenfield Village from within Michigan is the *James R. Jones General Store*. The general store was moved from Waterford, and it now serves as a shop within Greenfield Village, offering original products such as groceries, dry goods, boots, shoes, and candy.
2. James R. Jones began working as a salesman in a general store when he was still in his teens. He assumed ownership of his own store in 1882, and ran it until 1888. He needed to be very resourceful in running his business: his store had the first, and for a time the only, telephone in the town, as well as the town's post office.
3. He faced opposition from two to three other stores in the area. It had become easier to get products via the new railroads, so store owners didn't need to stock as much surplus product. In addition, advertising became important as a way to promote products and prices.
4. Because of the wide variety of services and goods offered at the *James R. Jones General Store*, it was a major center for people within the town of Waterford. It served not only as a place to buy food, clothes, and shoes, but also as a means of communication with the outside world through the telephone and post office.

SMITHS CREEK RAILROAD DEPOT

This teacher's aid helps you to understand the importance and methods of historic preservation. Below are suggestions on how to discuss the preservation of historic buildings. There are also discussion points about what the students should be learning.

DISCUSSION POINTS

What makes the Smiths Creek Depot historically more important than other small-town railroad depots?

Why would the Smiths Creek Depot have been an important part of the Smiths Creek community?

Are there places similar to the Smiths Creek Depot in your community that you think should be preserved?

Smiths Creek Railroad Depot

1. One building that was relocated to Greenfield Village from within Michigan is the *Smiths Creek Railroad Depot*. The train depot was moved from Smiths Creek. It now serves as the train depot for Greenfield Village, and until 2006 it also served as a regular stop for Amtrak.
2. The Smiths Creek Depot, like many small town train depots, served as a gateway to the rest of the nation. It provided access not only to travel, but also to manufactured goods from the cities and to faster mail delivery.
3. The Smiths Creek Depot was built by Findly McDonald as a stop for the Grand Trunk Railroad, a Canadian railroad that ran all the way through Canada from Portland, Maine. Like many small depots, it was constructed with living quarters for the stationmaster, which allowed him to monitor the telegraph and meet trains at night.
4. The Smiths Creek Depot also was a stop on the rail line where Thomas Edison sold *Detroit Free Press* newspapers as a boy. He was thrown off the train after accidentally setting fire to the baggage compartment of a rail car. This was where Edison realized the significance of the telegraph to convey news: he telegraphed news of the Battle of Shiloh along the railroad and used the story to drum up interest in his papers.
5. The Smiths Creek Depot also helped transport supplies for the Union Army during the Civil War. The massive amount of food, clothing, and arms needed never would have been available without the speed and reliability of the railroads.

PRESERVING YOUR COMMUNITY

This teaching guide helps you to understand what elements to look for when choosing historic buildings in your city to discuss. There are also suggestions about the type of buildings that are good candidates.

Suggested Buildings

Library – A common historic building that your students are likely to be familiar with.

Post Office – Many post offices are historic buildings and serve an important role in your community.

School – Many schools are historic buildings and are familiar to students. If you are unsure about the historical significance of your school refer to *An Honor and an Ornament: Public School Buildings in Michigan* by the State Historic Preservation Office.

Town Hall – Town halls are important and often historic parts of your community and can offer an opportunity for your students to learn about your town's government as well.

Choosing an Historic Building

1. *SAH Archipedia* at <https://sah-archipedia.org/> offers some examples of buildings that are already considered historically significant. If there are some in your area, it may make sense to select it or to use it as an example for students to follow.
2. Other options are to choose other buildings within your community. You may offer students just one building, a small selection, or ask them to choose a building from their own neighborhood.
3. With your building(s) selected, prepare some information for the students. Important facts might include the age, architect, and history of the building, as well as information on how the building is used in the community. Another option is to visit the building on a field trip, or have students visit the building outside of class.
4. If your students are more advanced, consider allowing them to conduct research on their own and present their findings to the class.

EXAMPLES & STUDENT RESPONSES

These examples provide some possible responses to the questions in the student packet. They should not be considered the only acceptable responses. Other examples regarding significant buildings can be found on the *SAH Archipedia* website.

GREENFIELD VILLAGE James R. Jones General Store

1. Underline why the James R. Jones General Store was important to Jenny's family.
2. Circle why Jenny wants Governor Luce to preserve the James R. Jones General Store.



Dear Governor Luce,

I am a fourth grader from the town of Waterford, MI. Almost everyday my parents used to take me to Mr. Jones's General Store. It was very close to my house, and he had lots of different things to buy. I liked that he had lots of different kinds of candy. My mother liked that he had all of the groceries we need, and new shoes and dresses that I got for my first day of school. My father used to go to the store to hear about what was happening in the big cities, because Mr. Jones had the only telephone and the building used to be the post office.

It was a very special place, but Mr. Jones closed his store this year, and I am worried that it will be destroyed. I heard that you are saving buildings like Mr. Jones's store in your new Greenfield Village. I think that it would be a good building to preserve because it was such an important part of our neighborhood. It is a place that everyone in my family thought was important. I would like for other children like me to be able to buy candy there too.

Thank you for reading my letter. There are lots of important buildings to save, but Mr. Jones's General Store is very important to me and other people in my neighborhood. It would be very nice if it were preserved in Greenfield Village.

Sincerely,

Jenny Keats

EXAMPLES & STUDENT RESPONSES

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GREENFIELD VILLAGE Smiths Creek Railroad Depot

1. Underline why the Smiths Creek Depot was important to Robert's family.
2. Circle why Robert wants Henry Ford to preserve the Smiths Creek Depot.



Dear Mr. Ford,

I am a fourth grader from the town of Smiths Creek, MI. One of my favorite buildings in my town is the train depot. It is a very nice red brick building with big arches over the windows and doors. It has two big fireplaces and even acts as a home for the stationmaster.

I have never ridden a train before, but I liked to go to the station with my father to watch the trains pull in. It was always very exciting, and I saw lots of people from many different places. I also liked being able to sit by the fire while we waited for the trains to arrive. My father liked to talk to the stationmaster to learn all of the news from places like Port Huron and Detroit.

It is a very special place for me and my father, but there have been fewer passengers this year and I am afraid that soon it will be shut down. I heard that you are saving buildings like our train depot in your new Greenfield Village. I think it would be a good building to preserve because it is such an important part of our community. The train depot is an important link for our small town to the big cities. In addition, in history class we learned about how important our train depot was for getting clothes and food to the army during the Civil War. It is so important I think it would be good for it to become the train depot in Greenfield Village.

Thank you for reading my letter. I know there are many other train depots like ours, but it is so important to my town I think it would be good for it to be preserved in Greenfield Village.

Sincerely,

Robert Fisher

EXAMPLES & STUDENT RESPONSES

These examples provide some possible responses to the questions in the student packet. They should not be considered the only acceptable responses. Other examples regarding significant buildings can be found on the *SAH Archipedia* website.

GREENFIELD VILLAGE Smiths Creek Railroad Depot

Match the parts of the letter to the correct paragraph.

Why the building should be preserved.

Greeting

Introduction

Why the building is important to you.

Closing

Conclusion

Dear Mr. Ford,

I am a fourth grader from the town of Smiths Creek, MI. One of my favorite buildings in my town is the train depot. It is a very nice red brick building with big arches over the windows and doors. It has two big fireplaces and even acts as a home for the stationmaster.

I have never ridden a train before, but I liked to go to the station with my father to watch the trains pull in. It was always very exciting, and I saw lots of people from many different places. I also liked being able to sit by the fire while we waited for the trains to arrive. My father liked to talk to the stationmaster to learn all of the news from places like Port Huron and Detroit.

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Thank you for reading my letter. I know there are many other train depots like ours, but it is so important to my town I think it would be good for it to be preserved in Greenfield Village.

Sincerely,

Robert Fisher

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SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS
SAH ARCHIPEDIA



PRESERVING THE PAST

Preservation and Greenfield Village

By _____

PRESERVING YOUR COMMUNITY

You will research an historic building and write a letter to a public official asking for the building to be preserved. You will describe what the building was used for in the past, its significance to the community, and why it is still important today.

VOCABULARY

Greenfield Village – An indoor-outdoor museum that tries to show what life was like at different times in American history. It includes historic buildings moved from different parts of the country.

Historic Preservation – The attempt to save and maintain buildings that have special historical importance.

Project Objectives and Goals

1. Understand the importance of *historic preservation* in your community.
2. Read about the preservation of buildings in *Greenfield Village* in SAH Archipedia at www.sah-archipedia.org. _____
3. Write a persuasive letter to a public official arguing that a building in your community should be preserved.

What to Turn In

- Completed *Historical Preservation Packet* (S.2-6)
- Completed four-paragraph letter to a local official (S.7)
- A picture of your building being used (S.8)

GREENFIELD VILLAGE James R. Jones General Store

1. **Underline** why the James R. Jones General Store was important to Jenny's family.
2. **Circle** why Jenny wants Governor Luce to preserve the James R. Jones General Store.



Dear Governor Luce,

I am a fourth grader from the town of Waterford. Almost everyday my parents used to take me to Mr. Jones's General Store. I liked the big windows that filled the entire front of the building. They allowed you to see all of the things Mr. Jones had for sale.

The general store was very close to my house, and it had lots of different things to buy. I liked that it had lots of different kinds of candy. My mother liked that it had all of the groceries we need, and new shoes and dresses that I got for my first day of school. My father used to go to the store to hear about what was happening in the big cities, because Mr. Jones had the only telephone, and the store used to be the post office.

It was a very special place, but Mr. Jones closed his store this year, and I am worried that it will be destroyed. I would like Mr. Jones's store to become a historic landmark. I think that it would be a good building to preserve because it was such an important part of our town. It was a place that everyone in my family thought was important. I would like for other children like me to be able to buy candy there too.

Thank you for reading my letter. There are lots of important buildings to save, but Mr. Jones's General Store is very important to me and other people in my town. It would be very nice if it were preserved as a historical landmark.

Sincerely,

Jenny Keats

GREENFIELD VILLAGE James R. Jones General Store

Greeting

Dear Governor Luce,

Introduction

Use this paragraph to tell a little bit about yourself and what your building looks like.

I am a fourth grader from the town of Waterford. Almost everyday my parents used to take me to Mr. Jones's General Store. I liked the big windows that filled the entire front of the building. They allowed you to see all of the things Mr. Jones had for sale.

Why the building is important to you.

Use this paragraph to explain why your building is important to you and other people in your community. Explain how people use your building and what makes it special.

The general store was very close to my house, and it had lots of different things to buy. I liked that it had lots of different kinds of candy. My mother liked that it had all of the groceries we need, and new shoes and dresses that I got for my first day of school. My father used to go to the store to hear about what was happening in the big cities, because Mr. Jones had the only telephone, and the store used to be the post office.

Why the building should be preserved.

Use this paragraph to explain why your building should be saved. Include how important it is to your neighborhood and why other people would find it special in the future.

It was a very special place, but Mr. Jones closed his store this year, and I am worried that it will be destroyed. I would like Mr. Jones's store to become a historic landmark. I think that it would be a good building to preserve because it was such an important part of our town. It was a place that everyone in my family thought was important. I would like for other children like me to be able to buy candy there too.

Conclusion

Use this paragraph to thank the person for reading your letter. Include a summary of your main point.

Thank you for reading my letter. There are lots of important buildings to save, but Mr. Jones's General Store is very important to me and other people in my town. It would be very nice if it were preserved as a historical landmark.

Closing

End with a closing like "sincerely" and sign your name.

Sincerely,

Jenny Keats

GREENFIELD VILLAGE Smiths Creek Railroad Depot

1. **Underline** why the Smiths Creek Depot was important to Robert's family.
2. **Circle** why Robert wants Henry Ford to preserve the Smiths Creek Depot.



Dear Mr. Ford,

I am a fourth grader from the town of Smiths Creek. One of my favorite buildings in my town is the train depot. It is a very nice red brick building with big arches over the windows and doors. It has two big fireplaces and even acts as a home for the stationmaster.

I have never ridden a train before, but I liked to go to the station with my father to watch the trains pull in. It was always very exciting, and I saw lots of people from many different places. I also liked being able to sit by the fire while we waited for the trains to arrive. My father liked to talk to the stationmaster to learn all of the news from places like Port Huron and Detroit.

It is a very special place for my father and me, but there have been fewer passengers this year and I am afraid that soon it will be shut down. I heard that you are saving buildings like our train depot in your new Greenfield Village. I think it would be a good building to preserve because it is such an important part of our community. The train depot is an important link from our small town to the big cities. In addition, in history class we learned about how important our train depot was for getting clothes and food to the army during the Civil War. It is so important I think it would be good for it to become the train depot in Greenfield Village.

Thank you for reading my letter. I know there are many other train depots like ours, but it is so important to my town I think it would be good for it to be preserved in Greenfield Village.

Sincerely,

Robert Fisher

GREENFIELD VILLAGE Smiths Creek Railroad Depot

Match the parts of the letter to the correct paragraph.

Why the building should be preserved. —

Dear Mr. Ford,

Greeting —

I am a fourth grader from the town of Smiths Creek. One of my favorite buildings in my town is the train depot. It is a very nice red brick building with big arches over the windows and doors. It has two big fireplaces and even acts as a home for the stationmaster.

Introduction —

I have never ridden a train before, but I liked to go to the station with my father to watch the trains pull in. It was always very exciting, and I saw lots of people from many different places. I also liked being able to sit by the fire while we waited for the trains to arrive. My father liked to talk to the stationmaster to learn all of the news from places like Port Huron and Detroit.

Why the building is important to you. —

It is a very special place for my father and me, but there have been fewer passengers this year and I am afraid that soon it will be shut down. I heard that you are saving buildings like our train depot in your new Greenfield Village. I think it would be a good building to preserve because it is such an important part of our community. The train depot is an important link from our small town to the big cities. In addition, in history class we learned about how important our train depot was for getting clothes and food to the army during the Civil War. It is so important I think it would be good for it to become the train depot in Greenfield Village.

Closing —

Thank you for reading my letter. I know there are many other train depots like ours, but it is so important to my town I think it would be good for it to be preserved in Greenfield Village.

Conclusion —

Sincerely,
Robert Fisher

PRESERVING THE PAST Your Neighborhood

What building in your neighborhood would you like to preserve?

Who are you going to write about preserving your building? _____

Describe how your building looks.

Give two reasons why this building is important to you and your neighborhood.

1. _____

2. _____

Give two reasons why this building should be preserved.

1. _____

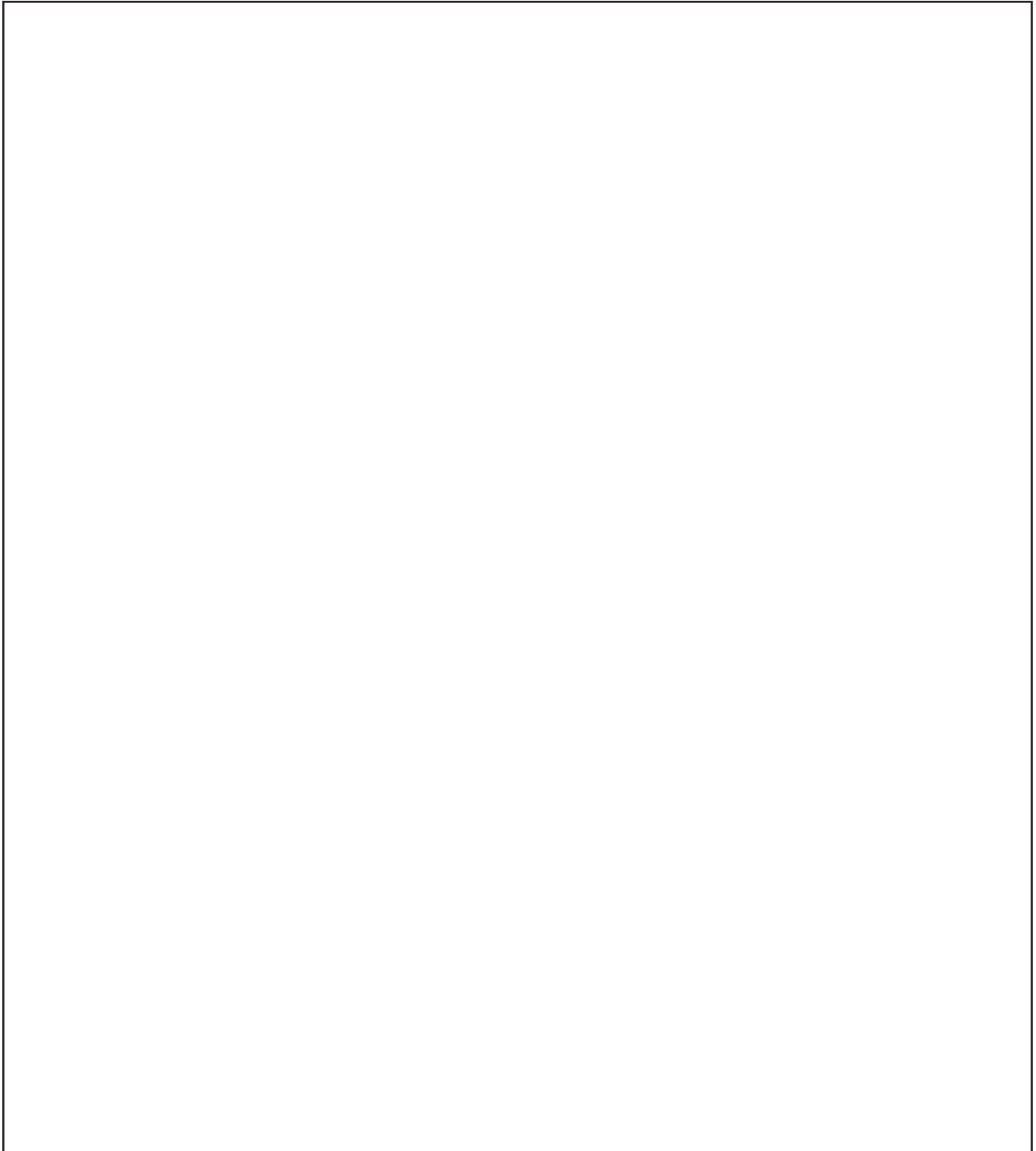
2. _____

PRESERVING THE PAST Your Neighborhood

Write a letter to a public official using the answers from your worksheet and Jenny’s and Robert’s letters as examples. In your first paragraph explain why the building is important to you, and then in your second paragraph explain why you think it would be a good building to preserve or save.

PRESERVING THE PAST Your Neighborhood

Draw a picture of your building to include with your letter. In your picture show how people in your community use the building that you are writing about.



GLOSSARY Architectural Terms and Definitions

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| HISTORIC PRESERVATION | <i>The attempt to save and maintain buildings that have special historical importance.</i> |
| GENERAL STORE | <i>A small store that sells many different things, including food, clothes, and other items.</i> |
| GREENFIELD VILLAGE | <i>An indoor-outdoor museum that tries to show what life was like at different times in American history. It includes historic buildings moved from different parts of the country.</i> |
| LANDMARK | <i>A building or place that a city, state or country says is special and should be preserved.</i> |
| RAILROAD DEPOT | <i>A building that served as a stop for trains, and provided passengers with tickets and access to services like mail delivery and communication by telegraph or phone.</i> |

Preserving the Past was created by Kelly Lyons for the Society of Architectural Historians (SAH), a professional, scholarly association with an international membership that promotes the study, interpretation and conservation of architecture worldwide. Learn more about SAH at www.sah.org, and learn more about American architecture at www.sah-archipedia.org.