



S8. Describe any other local, state, or federal historic designations, records, signage, or plaques the site has.

The Old Slave House was listed on the National Register under the name Crenshaw House in 1985. Historically, the Crenshaw family knew the house as Hickory Hill, a name since given to the hill that it sits on, a church and school, both of which have disappeared, and the Crenshaw family cemetery northeast of the house.

At the present time Illinois has not formally dedicated the house as a state historic site, using either the Old Slave House or Crenshaw House name. The latter name is only a few decades old. The site is better known as the Old Slave House. The legislative history of the state's acquisition also includes both names in the various resolutions, bills and notices used since 1997. The support group organized to reopen the site is known as Open it NOW! Friends of the Old Slave House. They feel that the slave house name better places the focus on the victims rather than the Crenshaw name that narrows the focus on one individual.

The site was listed as an integral feature of the Ohio River National Scenic Byway when the region first applied for the designation along Route 13 immediately north of the house. As of the summer of 2004, the Gallatin County Tourism Commission is working to develop a spur down Route 1 to the house.

S9. Is the site open to the public, and under what conditions?

At the present time the house remains closed to the public due to the agency's budget constraints. The Sisk family lived in the house and began to provide visitors access to third floor in 1926. In an effort to discourage visitors the grandfather of the last private owner began charging admission in 1930 – a dime for adults and a nickel for children. Three generations of the family operated the site until the last owner George M. Sisk, Jr., retired and closed at 5 p.m. October 31, 1996.

At the time admission cost \$4 for children and \$5 for adults and visitors had access to front hallway on the first floor and the entire central hallways on the second and third floors. In addition, Sisk had period furnishings placed in the southeast corner room on the first floor and the four corner rooms on the second floor to illustrate what like might have been like for the Crenshaw family in the 19th Century. On the third floor, visitors could walk into some of the empty rooms of the main corridor, while others were block off, usually to display additional items inside the room. The Sisk family sold the site to the State of Illinois in December 2000, and nearly all of the associated antiques on display to the state in May 2003.

S10. Describe the nature and objectives of any partnerships that have contributed to the documentation, preservation, commemoration, or interpretation of the site.

The modern era of research on the house began about six weeks before the site closed. Mr. Sisk approached Ron Nelson of McLeansboro and asked if he would delve into the home's history. At first Nelson declined, but by that afternoon had decided he would do it. A founder of the Hardin County Historical Society as well as a Baptist minister, Nelson had two decades of experience in researching southeastern Illinois' history, both in terms of church history as well as outlaw history. Nelson teamed up with Gary DeNeal, publisher of *Springhouse* magazine. Again, at first DeNeal hesitated, but called Nelson back and agreed to work on the project with him and publish his findings in his magazine. Jon Musgrave, the preparer of this application worked at *The Daily Register* in Harrisburg and covered the closing of the site. He joined Nelson and DeNeal within a week of the closing and wrote the first research findings for the December 1996 issue of *Springhouse*.

At least part of the effort to research the house was to lay the groundwork for the state to acquire the site based on its history. John G. Mulcaster's work in the 1930s had been for the Illinois State Historical Society with a similar purpose. The Southern Illinois Historical Society in the 1940s likewise backed the site's acquisition and development as a state historic site. Since the site's closing numerous members of the public and area agencies have called for state efforts in developing the site. A grass-roots effort called Open it NOW! Friends of the Old Slave House organized in 2003 calling for the state to



work with a new regional non-profit group to operate the site. Although those efforts have been frustrated to date, the Gallatin County Board, the Equality and Ridgway village boards, the Gallatin County Tourism Board, the Gallatin County Historical Society, the Saline County Board, the Williamson County Board and the City of Marion, among others, have endorsed the group's proposals. At the present (July 2004), the group is waiting for the legislature to pass a FY 2005 state budget to see how bad the Historic Sites Division of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency will be impacted.

SII. Additional data or comments. (Optional)