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*Howard and Mary Senn
of Fort Collins, CO*

**Best Neighborhood:
Daniel Island
In Charleston, SC**

Compiled by Maureen L. King

Main Street Awards Cite 5 Revitalized Towns

A former railroad hub in Virginia, a coastal “city of ships” in Maine and a renewed cultural district in Iowa are among the 2012 winners of the Great American Main Street Awards. Given annually by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, a nonprofit organization working to protect historic places in the U.S., the awards recognize a handful of communities for accomplishments in revitalizing their commercial districts. These towns were selected based on criteria including broad community support for their revitalization efforts, innovative solutions to significant problems, commitment to historic preservation and successful small business development.

The organization announced the selection in April during the National Main Streets Conference in Baltimore, citing the winning cities’ excellence at boosting economic development and retaining their historic character. For the complete list of finalists and semifinalists, as well as an index of previous recipients, visit www.preservationnation.org.

Here are the 2012 winners, along with contact and relocation information for the towns.

Bath, ME (pop. 8,514): The Main Street program of Bath, tucked along the Kennebec River off the Maine coast, has strengthened locally owned businesses and preserved the historic architecture of downtown while spotlighting the



The Culpeper County Courthouse, built in the 1870s, is a landmark of the historic Virginia town.

town’s shipbuilding heritage. Information: (207) 443-8330 or www.cityofbath.com.

Culpeper, VA (pop. 16,379): Since its formation in 1987, Culpeper Renaissance Inc. has restored the historic downtown, where a broad

range of architectural styles includes a renovated train depot from the 1800s that now houses city government. The town is roughly 70 miles from Washington, DC. Information: (888) 285-7373 or www.culpeperchamber.com.

Jacksonville, IL (pop. 19,446): When a failed urban renewal movement in the 1970s threatened Jacksonville’s business district, Jacksonville Main Street pushed back. It revitalized the original 44-square-block area of the west-central Illinois community into a vibrant town square of unique shops and outdoor dining spots. Information: (217) 479-4600 or www.jacksonvilleil.com.

Valley Junction/West Des Moines, IA (pop. 56,609): Despite obstacles ranging from a farm crisis to major floods, the Historic Valley Junction Foundation helped the Valley Junction/West Des Moines downtown evolve from antique shops and flea markets to a premier arts and cultural district. Information: (515) 222-3600 or www.wdm.iowa.gov.

Washington, MO (pop. 13,982): Downtown Washington Inc. has tackled projects in this community, about 50 miles from St. Louis, since 1989, including preserving its oldest structure, an office building from the 1830s, and restoring the Old Main Post Office. Information: (888) 792-7466 or www.washmo.org/chamber.

— Kimberly Garza

Make History With 1940 Census Community Project

This spring, the National Archives and Records Administration released digital images of the 1940 U.S. Federal Census, unlocking valuable information previously sealed. “This is the sort of data genealogists live for,” says Bob Loyd, a retired analyst for Chevron Phillips Chemical Co., who is a member of the Bay Area Genealogy Society outside Houston.

To help create a free, searchable online index for the public, Bob has joined more than 100,000 nationwide volunteers transcribing documents for the 1940 U.S. Census Community Project.

The 1940 census is the most comprehensive record on the 132 million people living in the country then, providing more personal information than previous tabulations. For the first time, the questionnaire asked for the highest educa-

tional level achieved, details on income and occupation and the place of residency five years prior. Millions of people recorded in that census are still living today, thus the data can be significant links to family history.

The project, a joint initiative of NARA, Archives.com, Family Search.org, findmypast.com and ProQuest.com, is seeking volunteers. Participants install the Family-Search indexing program,

Java software designed for both PC and Mac operating systems, and then download a batch of census images to begin transcribing.

“It’s very straightforward,” Bob says, estimating that each page takes 30 minutes. So far, he has entered details such as name, marital status and age of 2,600 Texans. “It’s actually sort of addicting,” he says. He found

new details about his family tree.

Traditionally, genealogy research could entail combing through library books or wandering cemeteries, Bob says. But the process has become much easier since he began documenting his ancestry 15 years ago. “The more data we can get online and searchable, the better it’s going to be,” he says.

As of early May, about 28 percent of the census had been indexed, or 987,867 of 3,554,888 pages. Records for several states are searchable by name, location and family relations, with more added frequently.

The project website, www.the1940census.com, has links for searches and information on volunteering, with instructions and video training. The project is expected to be done by year-end, but there are other indexing opportunities, including worldwide ones noted at FamilySearch.org.

— Alexis Loyd

