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KY HERITAGE COUNCIL

2011 NOMINATION FORM

Ida Lee Willis Memorial Foundation Historic Preservation Awards Program

NOMINATIONS must be postmarked or received in the Kentucky Heritage Council office by Monday, April 11. Entries may also be submitted via email to kyheritage@ky.gov or by fax at 502-564-5820. For each entry, submit a completed nomination form, narrative description and supporting documentation to:

Kentucky Heritage Council / State Historic Preservation Office
300 Washington Street
Frankfort, KY 40601
ATTN: Ida Lee Willis Awards

1. Nominee

Name Robert M. Polsgrove
Title / Organization President, Ky Trust for Historic Preservation
Address 503 Wapping Street
City Frankfort State Ky Zip 40601
Phone 502-223-7793 Email Polsgrove@aol.com

2. Award (check one)

Memorial Award Preservation Project Award Service to Preservation Award

3. Description

Include a brief narrative description of the project(s) the nominee has accomplished. Relate this description to the criteria for the appropriate award.

4. Supporting Documentation

Attach or enclose any photographs, articles, publications or letters of support for the nominee that would assist in the determining the impact of his/her contribution. Before and after photographs should be included for a Preservation Project Award. When submitting by mail, materials may also be submitted on a CD/DVD attached to the nomination form. When submitting via email, please submit all files in one email in PDF format; do not send multiple files. For questions, contact Diane Comer at 502-564-7005, ext. 120, or diane.comer@ky.gov.

5. Submitter of Nomination

Name Anne A. & Milton D. Thompson, Jr
Title / Organization _____
Address 3337 N Street, NW
City Washington State DC Zip 20007
Phone 202-337-1307 Email milton.thompson@yahoo.com

Frankfort address:
205 Capital Heights Dr
502-875-4436

THE NOMINATION OF ROBERT M. POLSGROVE

It is with both pride and pleasure that we nominate Robert M. Polsgrove, known as Bob to all his friends, for the Ida Lee Willis Memorial Award for 2011.

Bob Polsgrove has spent his entire professional life working for historic preservation in Kentucky. He began his career in 1974. Mrs. Willis had just retired as Director of the Kentucky Heritage Commission and Bob was one of five people who succeeded her at the commission's headquarters in the Vest-Lindsay House in Frankfort. He first studied just how federal matching funds for historic preservation were apportioned and then how to develop a competitive application for submittal to the National Park Service. When he accomplished this, Kentucky's apportionment of federal funds for preservation jumped from 40th in the nation to 10th! Then, with the increased funding, Bob managed to expand Kentucky's Historic Buildings Survey and also to start the state's archeological survey. He was able to recruit twenty outstanding professionals to do the necessary work. Bob then went on to implement the Commission's survey and planning grants awarded to those communities which had established local landmarks commissions. As part of the archeological portion of this task, he took the lead in organizing the Archeological Task Force which unified archeologists and their goals across the state.

When the Kentucky Heritage Commission was re-established as the Kentucky Heritage Council in July 1982, Bob was asked to head up the Survey and Planning for the National Register and Rural Preservation programs in the new Kentucky Heritage Council. As the Administrator for the Sites Identification, Planning and Registration Program, he focused on using county wide surveys that resulted in multiple National Register nominations. This effort ultimately distinguished Kentucky by having the third highest number of National Register listings in the nation. This ranking made it possible for the new Tax Credits to be utilized by a large number of the state's citizens. It also kept Kentucky competitive in the effort to get Federal funding support for preservation.

Though Bob left public service in 1997, he did not retire from historic preservation. His long experience in the public sector had made clear that one vital tool to save historic properties was not being utilized in Kentucky. In North Carolina, where it was being used, many historic properties have been saved using the revolving fund approach. What was missing in Kentucky was a private non-profit foundation that could save endangered historic buildings by purchasing them and then finding individuals or groups that would buy and restore them under terms of a Deed Covenant. In 1999, the Kentucky Trust for Historic Preservation was established as a 501 c(3) tax deductible organization. In barely ten years it has achieved remarkable successes with very little money actually being

used. Instead, there have been hours and hours devoted to the delicate art of diplomacy and negotiation in order to save buildings which otherwise would have been torn down. This hard and thankless work in convincing mostly unsympathetic people not to destroy historic buildings, Bob did virtually alone.

The rescued properties include:

The Governor William Owsley House, circa 1813, is located on West Main Street in Frankfort. After a disastrous fire gutted the house, it was donated to the Kentucky Trust, which with Bob's leadership, raised the money necessary to stabilize the building and replace the roof. Four years later, a qualified buyer was found who restored the house for commercial use.

The James Trabue House, circa 1785, is located in Bourbon County, and is Kentucky's only "Germanic" log house. Immediately adjacent to it was a circa 1790 **log barn**. To save them both from destruction, Bob persuaded the Ruddles Mills Church to donate the house and barn to the Trust. Bob then found new owners and both the house and barn were then moved across the road and restored with the assistance and oversight of Bob and the Trust.

The Six Mile Meeting House, an early 19th century structure, is located in Pleasureville in Henry County. It is a rare "Low Dutch" timber-framed church and assembly

hall. The owners wanted to clear the lot to build a new barn. With Bob's leadership the owners, rather than destroying it, donated the structure to the Trust which then moved it across the road and sold it to a couple who have restored it and use it as a crafts center.

***The Abner Gaines House**, circa 1810, is located in the City of Walton on the border of Boone and Kenton County. It was saved and restored due to Bob being able to successfully advise the city in obtaining a Transportation Enhancement Grant.*

***4 commercial properties**, circa late 19th century, is located on the Main Street of Millersburg in Bourbon County. Directly through Bob's efforts, these properties were donated to the Trust. Bob then helped the new owner obtain a community development block grant to restore them for an arts related non-profit studio enterprise.*

***The John Barret House**, circa 1815, is located in Greensburg, Green County which with the help of Bob and the Trust was sold to a couple from Texas who restored it.*

***Lower Howard's Creek Settlement**, circa 1770, is located in Clark County. Bob and the Trust assisted the Clark County Heritage Commission in obtaining \$1.6 million grant to begin restoration of this very early community of six to eight stone buildings.*

The General Evans House, circa 1810, is located in Flemingsburg, Fleming County. Under Bob's leadership, the house, with funding from the Trust and a local bank, was acquired and then sold it to a new owner for restoration and future residential use.

The Daniel Curry House, circa 1857, located in Harrodsburg, Mercer County. The owner of this Gothic Revival, board and batten style structure asked Bob and the Trust to find a preservation minded buyer. This task was accomplished and the house was sold to a man from Seattle, Washington who restored it.

The Mud Brick House, circa 1848, located in Greensburg, Green County, is the only mud brick house known to be in Kentucky. A local church wanted to tear this house down to build a parking lot. With help from local citizens, Bob and the Trust stopped the demolition and then encouraged the town to restore it.

The Historic Alexander House, circa 1805, is located on Main Street in Paris, Bourbon County. Bob successfully convinced the owner, the Paris Baptist Church, to preserve the house rather than demolishing it for a parking lot.

Also, it should be noted that Bob has put his own money where his mouth is. Bob and his wife live in a late nineteenth century house on the "Site of the Love Tavern" in the Frankfort's famous Corner of Celebrities. They have

also restored two houses in the South Frankfort historic district: one is on Capitol Avenue and the other is on Shelby Street. And with his wife and two sons, he is restoring Kentucky's oldest golf club, the historic Woodford County "Clifton Country Club". In addition to this work on these historic properties, Bob also has served a term on Frankfort's Architectural Review Board, and was active in Frankfort's Main Street program for twenty years, including three as president. Bob was also a leader in Frankfort's Fort Hill preservation effort to restore the Civil War armory emplacements.

Finally, it is important to note that Mrs. Willis saved the historic Vest Lindsey House by intervening in a state government decision to tear it down and build a new office building and parking lot on the site. Mrs. Willis saved the house and saw its glorious restoration. Bob Polsgrove learned from Mrs. Willis. Under his leadership the Kentucky Trust has intervened and saved several very important Kentucky buildings which would have been lost to demolition. The state is the richer for his work. For this reason in carrying on the tradition of Mrs. Willis, we are proud to nominate Bob Polsgrove for this year's Ida Lee Willis Award.