

# Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Martha Downey

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library  
*IHPA Legacy* Oral History project

Interview # HP-A-L-2017-044

Martha Downey, site manager for the Bishop Hill Historic site, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *IHPA Legacy* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: Jun 21, 2017      Location: Bishop Hill Historic Site, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Pete Harbison, ALPL volunteer

Transcription by: \_\_\_\_\_

Edited by: \_\_\_\_\_

Transcript  
being processed

Total Pages: \_\_\_\_\_      Total Time: 1:25 / 1.42 hrs

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on January 17, 2018.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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# Abstract

## Martha Downey, *IHPA Legacy*, HP-A-L-2017-044

**Biographical Information Overview of Interview:** Martha Downey was born on September 22, 1954 in Princeton, Illinois. She graduated from Illinois Wesleyan College with a degree in American Studies in 1976. Downey received a Masters of Arts in Historical Administration in 1978. Her first job in the field was at Lincoln Log Cabin outside of Charleston in 1978. She accepted a position as site manager at the Vandalia State House in 1978. Her next move was to Bishop Hill State Historic Site in 1981, where she remains as site manager at the time of this interview. Bishop Hill is a village in west-central Illinois founded in 1846 by Swedish immigrants affiliated with the Pietism movement led by Erik Jansson. At the start of her career, historic sites in Illinois were managed by the Department of Natural Resources. In 1985, oversight for the sites were moved to the newly created Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (IHPA). One month following this interview, IHPA was dissolved and the sites were moved back to DNR.

The interview covers Martha's career, mostly focusing on Bishop Hill, including the moving of a barn back to the village, the building and opening of the Bishop Hill Museum, and renovation of the Colony Hotel. Downey discusses her relationship with the Bishop Hill Old Settlers Association and the Bishop Hill Heritage Association. The interview covers her interaction with IHPA staff in Bishop Hill and Springfield, as well as Department of Conservation personnel she worked with prior to 1985. She also discussed the difficulties associated with budget cuts in the 2000s, and the upkeep of an historic site.

**Subject Headings/Key Words:** Bishop Hill Historic Site; Colony Hotel, Bishop Hill Historic Site; Bishop Hill Heritage Association; Illinois Historic Preservation Agency; Illinois Department of Natural Resources; Bishop Hill Old Settlers Association; Lincoln Log Cabin

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