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## History marks the spot for city homes

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WAUKEGAN -- If the walls could talk at 410 Hickory St., the Midwest farmhouse-style home could speak of being constructed before the Civil War and housing a young man who would become an Illinois attorney general.

It could also tell you how it survived an encounter with a runaway truck.

"It was hit by a truck a few years ago," said Tom Barrett, who has lived there for the last 17 of the home's 150-plus years. "I guess the guy was drinking a little, and it flew up on our parkway and hit the porch."

The home -- from roof to coach house -- has since been repaired to its original appearance, and this week found Barrett making another improvement: Affixing a historic marker from the Waukegan Historical Society.

One of five such signs that have gone up in recent weeks under the new program, the green-and-ivory marker informs passersby that it was constructed around 1850 by John McKey for the family of Ashbel Smith, the aforementioned state official.

Historical Society President Harry Came said the program is intended to educate the public about "older buildings with architectural significance," including private residences, businesses and public buildings.

"This is something that is done in other historic communities," Came said. "We've got a wealth of (historic buildings) in this town, and we just want to point them out."

Came added, "We're not trying to be elitist, where you only find them on the very finest homes. We're looking for any building that predates World War II that has a historic significance."

Along with Barrett's home, other markers have been erected outside the family home of former Mayor William Durkin on North Avenue and the home of Civil War field surgeon Dr. Moses Evans at 606 N. Sheridan Road.

Successful applicants are asked to pay a \$75 fee for the 12-by-18-inch markers, which are being constructed by Waukegan's Pronto Signs Inc. out of such non-historic matter as enameled aluminum and polyvinyl chloride.

"Unfortunately, they had to be made of man-made materials so they can survive the weather," said Came, whose 134-year-old home on North Genesee Street is also among the first to feature a marker.

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