

## University history comes to life through Old Main Project

Written by: [Illinois State University Staff](#) // October 20, 2010 // Comments Off

Once the pride of Illinois State's campus, the Old Main building was constructed between 1857 and 1861 and razed in 1958. Salvage excavation done in 1981 ahead of the construction of a steam tunnel revealed the foundation walls and an intact basement floor of the University's first classroom and office building still exist just below today's flower beds on the Northern end of the Quad.

"I've been walking past the flower beds in the Quad for 19 years," said Professor of Anthropology James Skibo. "Most people just enjoy the flowers, but as an archaeologist I look at the flower beds a little differently, as just a few feet below the surface lies the intact foundation of Old Main, our university's original building."

Skibo joined with Associate Professor of Anthropology Gina Hunter as codirectors of the Old Main Project. Initiated in 2009, the project involves researching the building's proud history through the analysis of excavated remains, oral histories of students and faculty present when the building was still standing, and historical documents and photographs.

Skibo and Hunter are working with the Department of Sociology and Anthropology and the master's in archeology program. Colleagues in Alumni Relations, Milner Library, the Dr. Jo Ann Rayfield Archives at Illinois State University, and the Illinois State Museum Research and Collections Center are providing assistance.

Visit the [Old Main website](#) to learn more.

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