



H-W Photo/Michael Kipley

U.S. Sen. Paul Simon, left, met Tuesday with a Quincy group working to preserve the home of 1840s abolitionist Dr. Richard Eells at 415 Jersey. He met

with more than a dozen Quincy-area preservationists including, from left, Jay Gardner, Joel Scarborough, Janet Conover, Ruth Deters and Jane Daniels.

## Simon visits underground railroad site

By John Webber  
Herald-Whig Staff Writer

4-3-91

A century and a half ago, oppressed blacks found freedom at this Jersey Street doorstep.

During the 1840s, the home of Quincy abolitionist Dr. Richard Eells was a key stop along the Underground Railroad, a nearly legendary route to freedom for thousands of slaves lucky enough to escape bondage.

Today, the two-story brick building at 415 Jersey is boarded up, crumbling, vacant and nearly forgotten. For the moment, a local preservation group has saved it from the wrecking ball. Its future is far from secure.

U.S. Sen. Paul Simon, D-Ill., toured the house

Tuesday, and says it's time for government to become more interested in cultural treasures like the Eells house.

"When the shopping centers and the other modern structures are long gone, ... these are the things we'll be remembered for," Simon said as he met with more than a dozen members of the Friends of the Dr. Richard Eells House Inc., a Quincy group dedicated to saving one of the few documented stops on the Underground Railroad.

"It's so easy to lose these things, and once it's gone it's lost forever," Simon said as he gazed at the structure. State historians call it the "second most significant" historic home in Quincy, second only to the John Wood mansion.

(See SIMON, Page 2A)

Simon last year led his legislation through Congress, authorizing the National Park Service to develop an Underground Railroad national historic "trail." The measure establishes an advisory group to tackle the project.

But the project itself could be difficult to research because the path to freedom changed frequently in the years before the Civil War. Harboring slaves was illegal so little documentation exists outlining safe houses along the way.

The house is one of the few remaining homes which formed Quincy's first residential area. Most have been replaced over the years by commercial buildings and parking lots.

The Eells house is considered unusual among historians because it is a documented stop on the Underground Railroad. It received its notoriety when Eells was arrested, tried and convicted in 1842 for helping a man who escaped a Lewis County, Mo., slaveowner and ...