



In addition, Abbott and Hurd used this grant to expand their work to significant buildings in the mill villages of Vernon Center and Talcottville. In all more than 900 buildings along 50 streets were analyzed, photographed and researched.

Volunteers were necessary to carry out the many tasks involved in the project. Dr. Abbott handled the historical research assisted by volunteer researchers. Mr. Hurd brought his background in architecture to the endeavor. Volunteers from the Society pitched in. Dot Peabody organized the notes that Abbott and Hurd took as they evaluated each building. She filled out a draft of each Building and Structures Survey Form. The final copy of this form was typed out by Nancy Herold. Mrs. Herold, the Mayor's secretary at the time, took the forms home to prepare for the submission. Dr. Abbott photographed each building and developed the prints in her darkroom on the third floor of her house. For the "Significance" place on the form, Dr. Abbott used local city directories and census information to determine who was living in residential buildings in 1900. Other biographical information was added if located. After the survey was submitted and approved, the former City of Rockville was designated by the National Register of Historic Places as a National Historic District in September of 1984. Little did Dr. Abbott and Mr. Hurd know that the entire project would take 5 years.



Dr. Abbott feels that the survey and the subsequent designation of Rockville as a National Historic District increased the visibility of the Historical Society in the community. She and Mr. Hurd would devote one day a week to going street by street to analyze and photograph each structure. They talked to homeowners and passersby as they did their work. Some were Rockville natives who were pleased that their neighborhood was getting some positive attention. Others were newcomers who knew little about Rockville's history.

After the survey was complete, a "circa" date had now been established for each building. The Society sponsored the House Sign Project where building owners could purchase a sign with the building's date. Many buildings on the survey subsequently were marked with dated house signs.

The national movement toward historic preservation started in the 1960s and it was partly fueled by the changes brought to cities through Urban Renewal projects. After older buildings had been torn down, neighborhoods redesigned, and residents displaced, people started to question the wisdom of these radical changes which seem to benefit automobiles more than people. Communities began to recognize the history and beauty of older buildings and the value of livable urban/town spaces. Dr. Abbott firmly believes that the survey raised awareness of Rockville's history and inspired people to preserve/restore their homes and to take pride in their neighborhoods. By the late 1970s, mill building preservation projects, including the Florence Mill in Rockville, established a trend for saving and repurposing historic structures for modern uses.

In the years since the survey was completed, the information in the seven notebooks is still being used for research. Often, new home owners or people wishing to purchase a house in the Rockville Historic District will visit the Society or the Rockville Library to look up their house. Genealogists find pieces of family history on the survey forms as well.



The Architectural Survey is one example of Dr. Abbott's many contributions to understanding and appreciating the local history of Vernon and Rockville. Her work in researching and preserving our past will provide a foundation for future projects that will keep the story of our town and its people from being lost or forgotten.