

THE CASE FOR ESTHETICS

Stated in the simplest of terms, nostalgia sells!

As our population ages, there is more and more interest in what people call the “good old days.” One needs to look no further than some popular restaurant chains which exploit the fantasy. Cracker Barrel, for example, with its rustic exteriors and old-timey, down-home interior décors, makes its clientele feel like “folks.” The Chicago-area Portillo’s Hot Dog chain, with its “factory” exteriors and Prohibition-era interiors, gives a vicarious thrill of living in a dangerous, but bygone era. Fuddrucker’s Hamburgers specializes in Rock-and-Roll motifs that invoke the 1950s and 1960s. All three of these chains add period-appropriate recorded music, making travel to a faraway time and place almost effortless.

Perhaps the best nearby example of careful and thoughtful macro-planning of building façades is that of Galena IL. While its downtown buildings date from before the Civil War to after World War I, their visual impact is one of esthetic, satisfying unity. Our own Dixon IL can likewise boast of many structures that date from the same eras, operated by friendly, competent business people. Once inside such an establishment, a customer will expect modern conveniences such as lighting, climate control, and plumbing, but it is an interesting exterior that first speaks of quality and bids him enter. After that, the merchant can concentrate on consummating a transaction and making a repeat customer who will come again and again.

The Dixon Historic Preservation Commission is dedicated to the belief that preservation of Dixon’s heritage is good for business.