

REVITALIZE OHIO

WINTER 2026 | A HERITAGE OHIO PUBLICATION

JOYCE BARRETT PRESERVATION HERO AWARD

Governor Mike DeWine



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REVITALIZE OHIO

Winter 2026

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Executive Director Note



The end of a year is a natural time for reflection on the previous twelve months, and I can honestly say that 2025 represents a year of great highs and great lows.

We're heading into 2026, when we'll be celebrating the 250th birthday of the United States of America. You'd think it would come with a natural appreciation for our history, especially our architectural history. Unfortunately, that is not always the case, as more and more communities think "that building is too far gone", and they tear it down. As we travel across Ohio, we're seeing a significant increase in demolition by neglect, which is big time on our radar for advocacy and education in 2026.

Heritage Ohio and friends fought hard this year to save the Ohio Historic Preservation Tax Credit program from being eliminated from the State budget. The program, which has generated billions of dollars of reinvestment and economic development across the State, and has saved over 900 historic structures, is still a perennial favorite for the chopping block. Thankfully, the Ohio Legislature and Governor DeWine agreed to continue the incentive, and even increased it to \$75m annually for the next two years.

Heavy funding cuts at the Federal level have severely limited programs in the arts, humanities, and preservation, and programs under the Historic Preservation Fund, Section 106 review, and so much more are not safe. We continue to stress advocacy for continued funding of these important resources, and we'll be headed to Capitol Hill in March of 2026 for Advocacy Week to meet with Federal Legislators to educate them on the importance of these programs.

At a local level, many of our Ohio Main Street Program communities are thriving, even with the uncertainty of funding and support. Every year, we look forward to seeing the reinvestment statistics reported by our OMSP communities. These key indicators show that the Main Street approach is a proven model for economic impact across Ohio. Programs track data points such as net new jobs created, net new businesses opened or expanded, facade renovations, new downtown housing created, public/private investment in the district, and much more.

The population of Ohio has remained largely stagnant for over twenty years, hovering around 11,500,000 since 2000. However, tracking census data and projections, Ohio Main Street communities have realized a population gain of 4.77%, median family income increased over 22%, and

median home value increased a whopping 77.8%. Main Street programs are largely rural towns, yet they're showing increases in population, income, and value. Why? Because the Main Street approach helps create communities where we want to live, work, and play. They improve quality of life metrics, they promote small, locally owned and operated businesses, unique experiences, comfortable gathering spaces, and welcoming places. That big holiday kick-off event you attended, along with 10,000 other people? That's direct economic impact of roughly \$250,000, most of which stays in the local economy. Small towns = big impact, and we love being part of that magic.

In 2026, Heritage Ohio will continue to offer outstanding training, technical assistance, and professional development for Ohio change-makers. Our OMSP quarterly workshops will be held in Delaware, Tiffin, Troy, and Wadsworth. Our annual conference will be in Hamilton in mid-October. We'll be hosting a National Alliance of Preservation Commissions, Commission Assistance Mentoring Program training in May in Newark, during preservation month, to help train those making decisions that affect historic districts.

If you're reading this, you care about preservation and historic communities, and we want to engage in more meaningful ways with you. Please consider joining us at a workshop, a tour, a special event, or a celebration. Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn, or like our website www.heritageohio.org to stay updated on where we are and what we're doing. If you're not yet a supporter, please consider making a financial contribution to Heritage Ohio at www.heritageohio.org.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt Wiederhold". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Matt Wiederhold,
Executive Director of Heritage Ohio

AI for Nonprofits and Government Relations is the focus of February training

Heritage Ohio's first quarterly training for 2026 will be held in Delaware on February 18. The training will focus on the Organization point of Main Street America's 4-point approach and will feature two different speakers.

The morning session will be a hands-on introduction to the core concepts, tools, and strategies related to AI for Nonprofits. Designed specifically for nonprofit leaders, this workshop will show attendees how to leverage artificial intelligence to streamline operations, strengthen engagement, and amplify the organization's mission impact.

The training will be led by Mark Cardwell. Mark is widely recognized as an advocate for the effective use of artificial intelligence, bringing self-taught expertise in integrating AI into small business and nonprofit operations. His knowledge is grounded in extensive research, hands-on practice, and a deep understanding of how technology can advance mission-driven work.

As the Founder of Cardwell Communications LLC and the Interim Executive Director of the Ohio Association of Nonprofit Organizations (OANO), Mark combines big-

picture leadership with practical, hands-on support.

The second part of the training will feature an in-depth training on communicating with elected officials at both the local, county, and state levels. This session will be led by Main Street America's Senior Director of Government Relations, Kelly Humrichouser. Participants will leave the training with an understanding of what is important to those office holders, how to communicate with them and how to craft your message specifically for elected officials.

Details on the workshop's location and time will be announced soon. Be sure to sign up for Heritage Ohio's newsletter at Heritageohio.org. The remaining Quarterly Revitalization trainings will be held in Tiffin in May, Troy in June and Wadsworth in September.

UPCOMING EVENTS

FEBRUARY 18

Revitalization Series Workshop: AI for Nonprofits & Government Relations

Delaware

MARCH 5

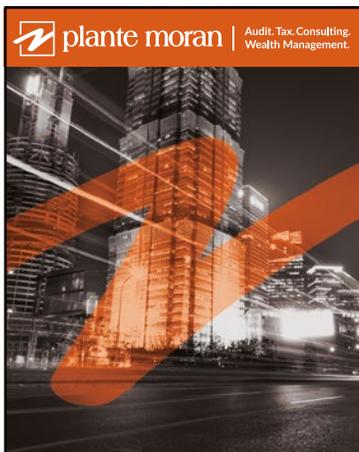
Statehood Day

Columbus

APRIL

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Meet a Main Street Director

Heather Malarcik

Executive Director of Main Street Kent



Where's your hometown?

I grew up in Hudson, OH and have lived in Kent for over 20 years. I lived in San Diego for a couple of years, but much prefer the Midwest.

What do you love most about your downtown?

I love it that there is nothing "typical" about Kent. Things are always in flux, from our population to our public art exhibits, to options for entertainment and festivities

throughout the year. You can always expect interesting things to be happening downtown, but you never know what your experience will be!

Favorite Main Street event:

The Main Street Kent Art & Wine Festival was the first event ever put on by our organization, and it's our key fundraiser. We change things up with different music, food options and artists every year, so it's a new experience for the community and visitors to Kent. Seeing people smile (not just because of the wine, either!) is so rewarding — participants and attendees alike. People come for the event and visit our businesses too, so it's a win-win for everyone.

Favorite building in your downtown:

My favorite building in downtown Kent is the historic train depot on Franklin Ave., along the Cuyahoga River. It is currently the home of a restaurant and private event space, Over Easy at the Depot. The depot's rich history will be commemorated on June 1, 2025 at its 150th anniversary celebration! Learn about this incredible building at www.kentohiohistory.org/collections/railroad.

Favorite place to vacation or dream vacation:

I enjoy exploring beach towns with great seafood and shops.

Anything else you want to share?

I feel fortunate to actually enjoy my career. In college, I looked high and low for a field where I would be a good fit, and it eventually led me to a place where I can be creative, help my community and personally thrive. Main Street is a wonderful, sustainable concept and I love being a part of it.

Max Schaefer

Executive Director of Main Street Lorain



Where's your hometown?

Lorain, OH

What do you love most about your downtown?

Honestly, the people. The folks who are opening businesses and the "regulars" you see at a variety of places is so fun. I love getting to know new people who also care so much about our downtown neighborhood. Being right on the shores of Lake Erie isn't bad either!

Favorite Main Street event:

Our Monster Mash Dash 5k has slowly, but surely become my favorite event that we host! It is a costume fun run & walk in our downtown. Almost every single participant dresses up for it, and we celebrate at the end of the race with snacks & drinks at a local restaurant. The creativity in costumes, the added kids race (Mini Monster 100 Yard Dash), and collaboration with other Fall Events makes it a fun day in Downtown Lorain.

Favorite building in your downtown:

It has to be the historic Lorain Palace Theatre! Built in the 1930s after much of our downtown was destroyed in 1924 by the Lorain-Sandusky Tornado, this single floor theatre, which holds over 1,400 guests, is as visually stunning as any local theatre you will find. It is always a joy to visit to see a concert, comedy show, performance, or movie!

Favorite place to vacation or dream vacation:

I love relaxing in a cabin in the woods! I really enjoy hiking & birding, so that type of weekend trip is typically what I'm looking for in a vacation. I'm not picky where — Ohio, Michigan, Pennsylvania. I think my dream vacation would be a month bouncing around Europe!

Anything else you want to share?

Lorain is a beautiful city, with beautiful people. More than anything, I want to see the people of Lorain thrive and truly embrace our community together. I hope you will consider visiting sometime soon.

When Santa Needed Backup: A Very Main Street Miracle

By Amy Breinich

When Troy Main Street unexpectedly needed Santa coverage this season, the Heritage Ohio Main Street Program Network proved just how powerful and supportive this statewide community truly is. With one quick email to neighboring Main Street directors, leads & contacts to share their own Santas came in. Within hours, we had multiple options from just two emails, reminding us that we're never navigating challenges alone.

Being part of the Heritage Ohio and Main Street America network means belonging to a system of peers who understand the unique work of downtown revitalization. Whether we're troubleshooting an event, sharing resources, or seeking advice, this network connects us with experienced professionals who are eager to help. It's collaboration at its best.

This experience is just one example of why these connections matter. The strength of the Main Street network extends far beyond local borders. We're able to tap into statewide and national expertise that lifts all of us up. From emergency Santa recruitment to long-term community development strategies, the value of belonging to this



network is immeasurable. Together, we create stronger, more vibrant downtowns, one shared solution at a time.



Uptown Westerville Fire Suppression Project

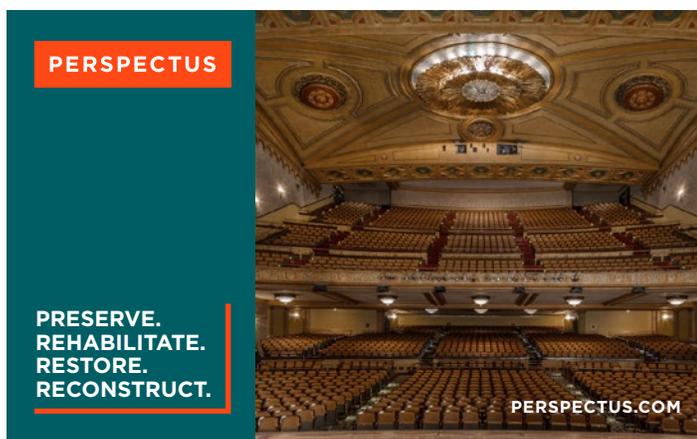
By Lynn Aventino

The Uptown Fire Suppression Project emerged from a shared concern seen across Ohio and the nation: historic downtowns losing irreplaceable buildings to devastating fires. As Uptown Westerville's genuine historic structures have become a defining part of the district's charm, identity, and economic success, the community recognized the need to proactively protect the places that make Uptown so special.

Prompted by this awareness, the City of Westerville began exploring long-term solutions to safeguard the district's architectural heritage. The City developed a plan to provide the necessary infrastructure and water pressure to support modern fire suppression for Uptown's older commercial buildings - many of which predate current safety standards. To ensure widespread participation, the Westerville Industry and Commerce Corporation (WICC), with recommendation from City Economic Development staff, launched a grant program to help property owners offset installation costs and take advantage of this opportunity.

Uptown Westerville Inc. supported this effort by educating stakeholders, promoting the initiative, and reinforcing the importance of protecting Uptown's historic fabric as a community-wide priority. The result is a coordinated public-private effort that enhances safety, strengthens the long-term viability of Uptown's historic buildings, and preserves the character that continues to draw visitors, residents, and investment.

The Uptown Westerville Fire Suppression Project stands as a strong example of how thoughtful planning, local commitment, and shared values can protect historic downtowns for generations to come.



Barnesville Joins the Ohio Main Street Family

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATES IN HERITAGE OHIO'S LATEST DART VISIT

The Belmont County community of Barnesville (pop. 4,008) is a historic market community of Quaker roots dating to 1808 with a lot of promise.

Plans are currently underway to take a major step for a brighter future as stakeholder volunteers begin the serious work of establishing an official aspiring Main Street program for the business district at the center of the Barnesville National Register Historic District.

Local advocates believe Main Street is the major missing "puzzle piece" that will help tie the community together.

The hope is to make downtown Barnesville a destination beyond the single September week each year when over 50,000 show up for the Barnesville Pumpkin Festival.

Foundation elements for this success are already in place. Recently, Ohio Magazine selected Barnesville as one of five "Best Ohio Hometowns 2025-2026". A formal presentation is planned for Dec. 6 as part

of the "Christmas in Ville" downtown holiday celebration and its lighted Christmas parade.

A \$3.2 million Ohio Department of Transportation grant project rehabilitating the B & O Railroad Tunnel under Main



BARNESVILLE
Continued on page 8

MAIN STREET
Now

SAVE THE DATE
APRIL 13-15, 2026

TULSA
OKLAHOMA

BARNSVILLE

Continued from page 7

Street and constructing a trail along present-day Railroad Street is wrapping up. Another state grant will rehabilitate the Memorial Park trail system, while a third will fund a tile roof rehab project for the 1916-17 B & O train station, also on the National Register.

Volunteers are busy with a project to bring the century-old State Theater back to life while others have established a nonprofit news service to fill the when void created when Gannett shuttering of the town's 160-year-old weekly newspaper.

Ohio Hills Health Center, a regional health provider headquartered in the downtown's signature structure, the three-story Richardsonian Romanesque Bradfield Building (1888-91), is returning the top story of the former bank building to productive use for the first time in 94 years. For this, OHHC is slated to receive a 2025 Appalachian Heritage Award at the Ohio Statehouse later this month.

Nearby in the residential section of the historic district is the restored 26-room three-story Bradfield Mansion, a museum since 1968.

Planning beyond the downtown area is also taking place. Working with the Community Improvement Corporation of

Belmont County, an Ohio EPA Brownfield study grant is nearing completion while a recently awarded U.S. EPA Recreation Economy Rural Communities Grant, also spearheaded by the CIC, will result in a plan to tie the downtown and community to Powhatan Point on the Ohio River, along the scenic Captina Creek watershed.

Looking forward as one Main Street stakeholder member recently said, "Barnesville's best days are ahead".



Preservation Across Ohio

Columbus: Columbus Landmarks and German Village Society are facing growing concerns with the City of Columbus regarding project review and Certificates of Appropriateness for City work done in designated historic districts. The City is trying to pass a law that would make them exempt from architectural review, which could compromise the historic integrity of neighborhood character. The organizations launched an advocacy letter writing campaign to City Council, but a final decision has yet to be made.

Cleveland: After decades of financial partnership, KeyBank will no longer participate as a lending institution for the Heritage Home Loan Program through Cleveland Restoration Society at the end of 2025. The program has supported the rehabilitation of hundreds of homes across Northeast Ohio, and losing one of the key partners will hamper the success of the CRS signature program.

Troy: The Troy Historic Preservation Alliance, in partnership with the City of Troy and Troy Main Street, are considering an expansion of their downtown local historic district. Last updated in the 1970s, an increased boundary for the district would make more properties eligible for Historic Tax Credit incentives.

Cincinnati: Cincinnati Preservation, in partnership with Place Economics, is conducting a historic preservation economic impact report to show the value of preservation across the City. They are also working closely with up to 16 neighborhoods to identify local properties of historic importance and to designate those as local landmarks.

Dayton: Preservation Dayton is working hard to save what remains of the historic Wright Brothers Factory, after fires severely damaged the site and caused partial collapse. They are also working to secure a second round of funding through The 1772 Foundation, to expand their revolving loan fund.

Columbus: The State Historic Preservation Office announced its latest round of Certified Local Government (CLG) grants, which is funding six great projects, including an architectural standards update for the downtown Delaware historic district, funding to help save several important houses on Newton Avenue in Cleveland, hosting a historic preservation review board Commission Assistance Mentoring Program training in Newark, the window restoration of the Columbus Engine House #6 window restoration, writing a National Register nomination for Madison Avenue in Lakewood, and lighting upgrades to Greenlawn Abbey in Columbus.

Advocacy Update: Historic Preservation Facing Challenges at the National Level

Rob Naylor, Preservation Action

It's certainly been a challenging last few months for historic preservation and chances are you've seen preservation issues in the headlines more than we are accustomed to. Staff furloughs and funding delays caused by the recent 43 day long government shutdown, marking the longest shutdown in history, strained preservation efforts across the country. While that was happening, the decision from the Administration to abruptly demolish the East Wing of the White House without going through long-standing reviews garnered widespread attention, inserted historic preservation into the national conversation, and helped galvanize support. Preservation advocates are paying close attention as the Administration moves forward with plans to remake the White House grounds, like building a new ballroom or a proposal to paint the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, and pushing back when necessary.

National Historic Preservation Act

Throughout the year we've seen increasing threats to bedrock historic preservation laws like the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). Preservation was again in the spotlight in October when the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee held a hearing to examine the NHPA and the Section 106 review process, which ensures agencies consider the impact of federal projects on historic resources. During the hearing, witnesses countered many of the criticisms presented about the Section 106 process and successfully demonstrated the effectiveness and efficiency of the NHPA. Preservation Action submitted written testimony and provided talking points, encouraging advocates to reach out to their Senators ahead of the hearing. **Thank you to everyone that took action! It's clear your advocacy had an impact.**

While the hearing largely went well, it is clear there is bipartisan interest in reforming the permitting process including reviews like Section 106 and momentum is building for a large permitting reform push. Preservation Action is closely monitoring these efforts, meeting with key members of Congress, and gathering examples of Section 106 success stories.

Historic Preservation Fund

The Historic Preservation Fund is the primary source of funding to carry out historic preservation efforts across the country. This critical funding continues to face challenges and uncertainty. The release of fiscal year 2025 HPF funding was delayed for months and proposals from the Administration would have nearly eliminated the HPF. Luckily, appropriations bills from Congress largely maintained level funding for the HPF. However, the House bill did call for steep cuts to the National Park Service and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Preservation

Action continues to advocate for robust funding for the HPF and other preservation priorities.

In addition to funding challenges, the HPF's authorization was allowed to lapse last year. This causes uncertainty for the State and Tribal Historic Preservation Offices that rely on this funding and urgently needs to be authorized. Luckily the bipartisan Historic Preservation Fund Reauthorization Act (H.R. 3418), introduced in the House by **Rep. Mike Turner (R-OH)** and **Rep. Teresa Leger Fernandez (D-NM)**, would reauthorize the HPF for 10 years and increase the authorized level from \$150 million to \$250 million annually. Preservation Action, along with over 300 organizations, businesses, and agencies from 46 states (including 13 from Ohio) recently sent a letter to congressional leaders urging them to reauthorize the HPF.

Especially as we prepare to recognize the 250th anniversary of America and mark other significant milestones like the 50th anniversary of the HPF and the 50th anniversary of the Historic Tax Credit, we should be preserving and celebrating the places that help tell America's story.

As we take on these challenges, we need your voice!

Here's how you can help:

1. Urge your Representative and Senators Moreno and Husted to provide necessary and robust funding for the Historic Preservation Fund and to protect funding for the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation in the FY26 Interior Appropriations bill.
2. Ask your members of Congress to support efforts to reauthorize the HPF and co-sponsor the Historic Preservation Fund Reauthorization Act (H.R. 3418).
3. Add your organization or business to the HPF Reauthorization sign-on letter. So far more than 350 entities have signed on and we are continuing to gather signatures to demonstrate strong, widespread support for the HPF. Learn more and sign the letter at [Preservationaction.org](https://preservationaction.org).
4. Attend National Historic Preservation Advocacy Week, **March 2-5, 2026** in Washington, D.C! Join Heritage Ohio and others from across the country when we advocate directly with members of Congress for preservation-friendly policies, programs, and funding. Learn more at preservationaction.org.

Thank you for advocating for Ohio's historic places. Your voice is critical. To learn more about our ongoing advocacy efforts and how you can help, check out preservationaction.org.

Saved, Threatened, Demolished

SAVED – D.L. BARNES BUILDING – KETTERINGTON

A former school in Kettering is transforming into a co-working space as well as school district administrative offices. The 1929 D.L. Barnes Building is being saved through a creative partnership between Kettering Schools, the Schiewetz Foundation of Dayton, the City of Kettering and COhatch.



THREATENED – DOWNTOWN MIDDLETOWN BUILDINGS

Buildings that define downtown's character, including the Manchester Inn (owned by the city) remain vacant and underutilized. While the city has committed to preserving empty buildings when it makes economic sense, proposals for redevelopment have been scarce. Unfortunately, a vacant building ordinance meant to spur a redevelopment mindset has not been enforced, leaving scores of downtown buildings susceptible to demolition in the near future. While Downtown Middletown Inc actively advocates for preservation solutions, and select building owners continue to upgrade and invest in their properties, too many downtown stakeholders remain content to leave their buildings empty, nor are they being held accountable for their (in)action.



THREATENED – SUNSET COTTAGE, KENYON COLLEGE, GAMBIER

Sunset Cottage, the historic home of Kenyon's English Department, is once again under of demolition, as the current school administration cites the cost to maintain, and lack of accessibility as too much to overcome. While a 2016 campaign (under different school leadership) to demolish the building fizzled when stakeholders mounted effective advocacy against demolition, the building's future is once again uncertain. Heritage Ohio has offered to help the college work through financing numbers, strategizing end uses that make financial sense, and sourcing artisans to do specialty work needed to bring the building back to vibrancy.



DEMOLISHED – CITY HALL, PEEBLES

After decades of neglect, the former early 1900s City Hall in Peebles was recently demolished. Although the city was successful in using the legal tool of receivership to gain control of the property from a non-compliant owner, the city deemed the building too far gone.



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Pictured: the Carlisle Building in Chillicothe, OH



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Preservation Assessment Workshop

In September, we wrapped up our 13th Preservation Assessment Workshop (PAW) (held in 13 different Ohio communities) since the program began in mid-2024. Although there's no guarantee we'll be able to provide PAWs in 2026, we have a funding request in to the state and hope to continue what is quickly becoming a very popular preservation program of Heritage Ohio.

Consisting of an evening lecture on old buildings and what can go wrong with them, and next day one-on-one assessments, the PAW gives owners of historic buildings access to expertise that would otherwise cost thousands of dollars for a full day of assessments.

Stay tuned to Heritage Ohio for announcements regarding sign-ups for a 2026 season of PAWs.



Ashland PAW: Our one-on-one assessments take us from the top of the building to the bottom, sometimes in very tight settings. It's safe to say that the majority of time on assessments is spent tracking water: how it enters the building, where it's collecting, and what it's doing to the various building materials.



Greenfield PAW: Retired Belmont professor David Mertz has provided the expertise behind our workshops, presenting on historic building maintenance the first night, and then leading the one-on-one assessments the next day.



Kenton PAW: Each building we review brings its own set of challenges: from decades of neglect from former building owners; to poorly executed building alterations; to circumstances completely outside the building owner's control, such as major streetscape projects, which cuts into the bottom line of businesses and building owners alike.

Save Ohio's Treasures Revolving Loan Program

In October of 2024, Heritage Ohio formally launched Save Ohio's Treasures (SOT), our revolving loan program, to fund important bricks and mortar projects that stabilize, rehabilitate, and preserve historic commercial and mixed-use properties across Ohio. The below-market-rate loan program was created with funds provided by The 1772 Foundation, The Turner Foundation, and Heritage Ohio. In 2022, the organization funded a pilot project in Ravenna, known as Riddle Block #9, which was transformative to the downtown historic district. Earlier this year we closed on our first formal Save Ohio's Treasures loan on a Main Street property in downtown Ravenna. The loan is funding roof, window, door, and structural repairs to rehabilitate the property into commercial space on the first floor, and offices/co-working space on the second floor.

Applications to the program are reviewed by a 7-member committee, including Brian Harr, The Commercial and Savings Bank (Medina), Chip VanDette, Croghan Colonial Bank (Fremont), Sheryl Palmer, Huntington Bank (Vandalia), Erin Claussen, Hotel Royal and HO Board

Member (Toledo), Eric Stachler, Huntington Bank and Heritage Ohio Board of Trustees member (Versailles), Frank Quinn, Director of Preservation at Heritage Ohio, and Matt Wiederhold, Executive Director of Heritage Ohio.

Buildings that are 50 years or older and considered historic on their own or as part of a historic district, are eligible for the program. SOT prioritizes placing vacant or underutilized historic buildings into productive use, rehabilitating buildings that are at risk of demolition or catastrophic deterioration, buildings that are located in smaller historic districts, buildings that have the potential of being a catalyst for additional development benefiting a larger historical district, and buildings located in a Heritage Ohio Main Street Community.

For more information on Save Ohio's Treasures, or to make a tax-deductible contribution to help fund the program, please call Frank Quinn, Director of Preservation, at 614-258-6200, or email him at fquinn@heritageohio.org

Young Ohio Preservationists Update

By Abby Marshall

In October, Young Ohio Preservationists attended the annual Heritage Ohio Conference in Canton. A discussion panel was held and moderated by Young Ohio Preservationists representative and Heritage Ohio Board Member, Abby Marshall as she chatted with other young professionals in the Historic Preservation field. Jack Newton with GBX Group, along with Diamond Crowder and Vanessa Gabriele with the Ohio State Historic Preservation Office, discussed why they chose to pursue a career in the historic preservation field, what some of their favorite projects have been, and their thoughts on the general outlook within the field.

One of the main topic discussions surrounded the concerns of losing historic preservation specific educational programs across not only Ohio, but the country. The panel was able to offer their experiences in gaining the education to be successful in the field as well as offer advice to those interested in pursuing a career in historic preservation. A goal of Young Ohio Preservationists is to offer opportunities to young and emerging professionals in the field to network, learn how historic preservation can be used as a powerful economic and community tool, and to develop knowledge and skills in the field. In the upcoming year, Young Ohio Preservationists plan to host events that will allow young professionals to earn experience in historic preservation trades and provide networking opportunities to learn from professionals in the field.

Among the various historic preservation tours and activities, Young Ohio Preservationists will be partnering with Blind Eye Restoration out of Columbus to attend a series of historic window restorations workshops. This series will

include a full day introduction to restoring historic wood windows and be followed by mini sessions that will focus on specific skills such as repairing rotted wood, priming, glazing, painting, learning window anatomy, and removal/reinstallation of historic wood windows. Specific dates and details will be available in early 2026 and details can be found on the Young Ohio Preservationists Instagram at [youngohiopreservationists](#).

The Preservation Action Foundation is accepting applications for the 2026 Bruce MacDougal Advocacy Scholars Program. Those who are selected for this scholarship will have the opportunity to attend National Historic Preservation Advocacy Week in Washington D.C. in March of 2026. This opportunity allows attendees to increase their knowledge of federal historic preservation policies and how they impact diverse communities, participate in briefings and policy discussions that will help shape federal support for historic preservation programs, accompany a state delegation of Preservation Action representatives during Congressional office visits, meet one-on-one with a Preservation Action mentor to discuss your goals and maximize your experience at Advocacy Week, attend the Advocacy Scholars Networking Reception, and join members of Preservation Action and NCSHPO on Capital Hill.

To stay connected, follow Young Ohio Preservations on Instagram at [youngohiopreservationists](#). For other young professionals in the field interested in being involved with this organization, contact Abby Marshall at amarshall@ohiohistory.org.

Heritage Ohio Annual Conference Recap

Heritage Ohio held its annual conference in Downtown Canton, October 14-16, and welcomed over 350 preservation and revitalization professionals and fans for an amazing three days of learning, sharing, and partnering.

Canton was the perfect host community to dive deep into downtown revitalization, adaptive reuse, and historic tax credits, which was the focus of a day-long “How to Save your Downtown” developer showcase on Tuesday, October 14th. The Canton Palace Theatre graciously hosted the Historic Theater Summit, where attendees learned about funding, philanthropy, community engagement and economic development, programming, and restoration. Tuesday evening, we welcomed over 100 friends to the Historic Onesto Hotel & Event Center for the Legacy Circle reception. It was a stunning evening, made more special with live music from a local trio.

The conference kicked into high gear on Wednesday morning, with a rousing keynote address from Erin Barnes, President and CEO of Main Street America. Barnes shared the collective impact Main Streets across the country are making in their communities, government policies, and some important news about the national program and how it’s making great strides in revitalizing local communities. Throughout the day, scores of sessions focused on a wide variety of topics, engaging attendees in meaningful conversations and reinforcing the economic impact potential of preservation and revitalization.

After sessions ended, attendees headed to our Vendor Reception to talk one-on-one with service and materials providers in architectural and downtown rehabilitation services across Ohio. The reception was followed by the exciting Annual Awards and Film Festival, where we announced over 15 award winners and premiered 6



film shorts about the work of Heritage Ohio. The awards ceremony included a very special memorial tribute to Senator Kirk Schuring, who passed in November 2024, and his work in revitalization and tax credit incentives legislation. Governor Mike DeWine received the Joyce Barrett Historic Preservation Hero award for his long-time support of the Ohio Historic Preservation Tax Credit program. You can read about all of the award winners on page 14 of this issue of Revitalize Ohio.

Thursday featured sessions focused on historic home museums, museum partnerships, funding and financing, real estate development, and much more. The conference was a big success, and we're grateful to all of our attendees, sponsors, and exhibitors that truly made this an amazing conference.

THANK YOU!

To our sponsors, partners, and attendees for making our 2025 Conference a success

Akron Civic Theatre
 Blind Eye Restoration
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 Canton Palace Theatre
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 Cat's Meow Village
 City of Canton
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2025 Heritage Ohio Annual Award Winners Announced

At the historic Canton Palace Theatre in downtown Canton, 13 individuals, organizations, and projects were honored for their contributions to Ohio's preservation and revitalization movement.

Best Main Street Committee Project Award

Junior Mainstreet Piqua
Piqua



In partnership with Piqua High School's Service Learning classes, Mainstreet Piqua launched a Junior Mainstreet Board with seven students who stepped into real leadership roles.

Junior Mainstreet quickly got to work by creating a brand-new Window Decorating Contest for downtown businesses as part of Christmas on the Green. The students recruited participants, designed flyers and ballots, gathered prizes, and ran their own booth during the event.

Junior Mainstreet Piqua is more than a student project—it's an investment in the next generation of community leaders, giving young people the tools, confidence, and experience to keep Main Street thriving for years to come.

The award was presented to Mainstreet Piqua.

Best Main Street Committee Event Award

Scare on the Square
Wadsworth



Since 2013, Scare on the Square and Wadsworth Thriller has become a signature Main Street Wadsworth tradition, drawing thousands of visitors each October. The event features

downtown trick-or-treating and the popular Thriller dance flash mob is now performed by over 300 volunteer zombie dancers each year. In 2024, a WCTV video of the event went viral, topping 1 million views worldwide.

The event creates powerful community connections, engaging multiple generations and driving business downtown. Scare on the Square has become a showcase of Wadsworth's spirit, creativity, and thriving Main Street.

The award was presented to Main Street Wadsworth.

Best Downtown Placemaking Award

City of Bowling Green Downtown Historical Markers
Bowling Green



In 2019, Bowling Green formed its Historic Preservation Commission with a clear mission: to preserve history, educate the public, and foster pride in the city's unique identity.

Bowling Green's story is extraordinary, yet often untold. Once known as "Crystal City" and later a booming oil town, its architecture, schools, churches, and civic buildings all reflect the rise of a community built in the heart of Ohio's Black Swamp. But without visible reminders, much of that history risked being forgotten.

The Commission secured an \$18,000 CLG grant, leveraged city support, and engaged volunteers, local historians, and partners at the Wood County Museum, BGSU, and the public library. Together they researched, designed, and installed 16 interpretive signs telling the story of downtown buildings, vanished landmarks, and the people who shaped Bowling Green.

Best Residential Rehabilitation Award

The Joseph & Emma Smith Home
Kirtland



Built in 1833, this Greek Revival home was where Joseph Smith, founder of the Mormon faith, lived longer than anywhere else in his adult life and where pivotal events in early Latter-day Saint history

took place—including the organization of the first high council and the translation of scripture.

After nearly two centuries of alterations and decline, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints undertook a remarkable effort to restore the home and surrounding landscape to its original 1830s appearance. Guided by archaeology, historic documents, and architectural evidence, the team carefully removed later additions, reinstated the original floor plan, and furnished the interior using historic accounts and period antiques.

The restoration balanced historic integrity with accessibility—incorporating hidden ramps, pathways, and systems so all visitors could experience the site. Today,

the home stands as part of Historic Kirtland, alongside the iconic Kirtland Temple and other preserved sites, transforming what was once a blighted corner into a place of pride, learning, and pilgrimage.

The award was presented to DS Architecture & The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

Best Commercial Rehabilitation in a Small Community Award

Historic Bear's Mill
Greenville



Bear's Mill in Darke County is a true landmark—one of the only mills in Ohio still operating with its original water-powered turbines. But by 2017, its foundation and millrace, which carry the water needed to power the turbines, were deteriorating badly. Without major repairs, the long-term future of the Mill was at risk.

The Friends of Bear's Mill began planning, and in 2020 the site was entrusted to the Darke County Park District. Recognizing the urgency, the Park District took immediate steps for stabilization. During this process, the timing also allowed the Mill's original turbines—untouched since the 1800s—to be refurbished by a local metalworks company, securing their continued operation.

This project wasn't just about repairs—it was about ensuring the Mill can keep working, educating, and inspiring for many years to come.

The award was presented to the Darke County Park District.

Best Commercial Rehabilitation in a Large Community Award

The Dayton Arcade
Dayton



The rehabilitation of the historic Dayton Arcade is one of Ohio's most ambitious preservation and redevelopment efforts. Once vacant for decades, the Arcade has been reborn as a catalyst for downtown revitalization and a hub for innovation, arts, and community life.

The project preserved the Arcade's iconic domed rotunda, original windows, mosaics, terrazzo floors, and decorative metalwork, while adapting more than 500,000 square feet across nine historic buildings for modern use.

Today the Arcade brings together leading organizations—including The Contemporary Dayton, Culture Works, iHeart Media, the Better Business Bureau, and Sinclair College—under one roof. Supported by one of the most complex financing packages ever assembled, the Arcade is not just a preservation triumph; it is the beating heart of Dayton's nine-block downtown strategy, driving jobs, residents, and visitors back to the city's core.

The award was presented to Cross Street Partners and Sandvick Architects.

Main Street Business of the Year Award

The Tippecanoe Gazette
Tipp City



In a time when many communities are losing their local newspapers, Greg Enslin stepped in not only to save the Gazette, but to transform it into a trusted, multi-platform source of local news

and connection.

Through Clock Tower Media, the Gazette now reaches far beyond print—sharing stories, podcasts, and social media content that spotlight downtown businesses, promote community events, and give residents a true forum for dialogue. By publishing diverse voices, the Gazette ensures everyone in Tipp City has the chance to be heard.

The Tippecanoe Gazette is more than a newspaper—it's a champion for small businesses, a storyteller for the community, and a vital part of Tipp City's ongoing revitalization.

Historic Theater of the Year Award

The Holland Theatre
Bellevue



The Holland theatre is a shining symbol of community pride and perseverance.

After more than 75 years in the dark, the Holland's iconic vertical blade and

grand marquee once again light up downtown, restoring the theater's dazzling presence as a true landmark. What began as a dream quickly became reality, thanks to overwhelming community support — funds were raised in less than a year, with help from major donors, small gifts, and even a benefit performance by Dave Chappelle.

AWARDS

Continued from page 15

The new marquee, a meticulous recreation of the original, now glows above Main Street, visible from three directions, proudly promoting upcoming events and symbolizing Bellefontaine's thriving downtown spirit. Its return has literally and figuratively brightened the heart of the city.

Inside, the fully restored 1931 atmospheric theatre continues its mission to engage, entertain, and enlighten through the performing arts. With two to three ticketed events each month — from national acts to local showcases — and four to five community productions by Windmill Productions each year, the Holland welcomes audiences of all ages, often filling every seat. The Holland Theatre is once again the star of downtown Bellefontaine — lighting the way for generations to come.

Young Preservationist of the Year Award

Chris Mowen
Toledo



After shadowing a preservation architect as a teenager in Denver, Chris Mowen knew she had found her calling. She went on to earn her master's degree in architecture from Montana State University and has since dedicated her career to preserving the built heritage that tells our communities' stories.

Now a Historic Architect with Thomas Porter Architects in Toledo, Chris has guided numerous rehabilitation projects through Ohio's Historic Tax Credit program, helping breathe new life into landmarks like the Security Building in Fostoria, the Toledo Club, and the historic Madison and East Side Districts.

Chris's impact extends far beyond design. As Chair of the Bowling Green Historic Preservation Commission, she helped the city achieve Certified Local Government status and established its local designation process. She co-founded Preserve! Toledo, mentors young women through the Women of Toledo's Girls Hub, and serves as the AIA Ohio Licensing Advisor, guiding aspiring architects through their professional journey.

Chris Mowen represents the future of preservation — blending technical skill, mentorship, and advocacy to ensure Ohio's architectural legacy continues to inspire generations to come.

Main Street Volunteer of the Year Award

Vickie Wilkins
Tiffin

Since 2014, Vicky has been one of the most consistent and influential volunteers in the Tiffin Main Street Program. Her creativity, leadership, and long-term dedication have shaped the very identity of downtown, making it more vibrant, connected, and full of life.



Over the years, Vicky has served on nearly every committee. She's a strategic thinker who helped guide the organization's vision through one-on-one planning with every board and committee member. Her work has strengthened both the structure and the spirit of the program.

Vicky's leadership shines through the events she's championed — from Fall Flannel Fest and the Great Pumpkin Drop to the Third Thursday events she founded that has become a summer staple, filling downtown with music, laughter, and community pride.

Main Street Director of the Year Award

George Sam
Medina



Under George's guidance, Main Street Medina has flourished, strengthened preservation efforts, deepened community engagement, and created a more vibrant, connected downtown.

George has secured funding to launch a façade grant and loan program, empowering business owners to preserve and enhance their historic buildings. He's also led the Gateway and Activation Projects in a key district area—revitalizing streetscapes, improving connectivity, and creating a more welcoming environment for residents and visitors alike.

Through strategic planning and committee realignment, George has positioned the organization to operate with clarity, focus, and measurable results. He has introduced innovative tools like Placer.AI to help businesses understand their customers and make data-driven decisions.

And through it all, George's work has strengthened the sense of pride, beauty, and belonging that defines this community.

Spirit of Main Street Award

Lesley Sickle
Kent



The Spirit of Main Street Award is presented to an individual that has shown outstanding leadership in revitalizing and preserving Ohio communities.

Lesley's Main Street journey began twelve years ago as a part-time marketing assistant, but her passion, talent, and relentless drive quickly transformed that role into

a full-time career. Over the years, she's become the heart of Main Street Kent — part artist, part problem-solver, and part superhero — always ready to do whatever it takes to make downtown Kent shine.

Armed with a master's degree in fine art from Kent State University, Lesley has built the Main Street Kent brand into a model of consistency, creativity, and collaboration.

Lesley is also a bridge-builder, connecting Main Street Kent with organizations like Kent City Schools, the Kent Free Library, Neighborhood Bridges, and the Girl Scouts — creating partnerships that strengthen the fabric of the entire community.

In 2022, she helped establish and now leads the Kent Public Art Board, guiding the creation of vibrant, inspiring public art projects that celebrate Kent's spirit. And in 2024, she was recognized with the Kent Citizen Award for her leadership, passion, and unwavering dedication.

The Joyce Barrett Preservation Hero Award

Governor Mike DeWine



Accepting the Preservation Hero Award is Megan Wood from the Ohio History Connection

Heritage Ohio recognizes Ohio Governor Mike DeWine for his outstanding leadership and unwavering commitment to historic preservation across the state of Ohio.

Governor DeWine has demonstrated

exceptional stewardship and care for Ohio's historic and cultural heritage, from his thoughtful preservation of the Governor's Residence and Heritage Garden to his deep respect for places that tell Ohio's many stories.

Through initiatives such as the Appalachian Community Grant Program, Governor DeWine has advanced projects that celebrate and protect significant historic sites, including landmarks such as the Ulysses S. Grant Boyhood Home and Schoolhouse and Serpent Mound, among many others.

He has been a steadfast supporter of the Ohio History Connection through funding, letters of support, and by personally hosting and attending events that elevate the importance of our shared history. Governor DeWine has also warmly welcomed tribal partners with ancestral ties to Ohio, ensuring that their voices and perspectives are integral to the preservation of sacred and cultural sites.

Under his leadership, the Ohio Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program has continued to be a proven and essential economic development tool, revitalizing downtowns large and small, repurposing historic buildings, and creating vibrant communities that make Ohio a great place to live and work.

In 2024, Governor DeWine championed the creation and opening of Great Council State Park in Xenia, honoring Ohio's Shawnee and pioneer history through a world-class

interpretive center and the preservation of a culturally significant landscape. He also supported the nomination and inscription of the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the first of its kind in Ohio.

Governor DeWine's consistent advocacy and respect for the many layers of Ohio's history reflect his belief that preserving the past is essential to shaping our future. We are proud to recognize him with this prestigious award.

9 Honored at Appalachia Heritage Luncheon

On December 16th, the 14th annual Appalachia Heritage Luncheon honored 9 individuals and organizations that have embodied the essence of Ohio's Appalachian region and culture.

Honoree: Sam Miller, Development Director - Buckeye Hills Regional Council

County: Athens, Hocking, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Noble, Perry, & Washington

Sam Miller has dedicated her professional career to improving the Appalachian region in which she lives, works, and plays. Her work has been carried out through years of engagement with local leaders, nonprofits, and residents, ensuring community voices shape development efforts. Sam has overseen and supported projects funded through a braided mix of federal and state grants, local government contributions, and private partnerships. Her ability to align diverse funding streams has maximized impact and ensured no opportunity to benefit the region is overlooked.

Honoree: Belpre Farmers Castle Museum- Underground Railroad Exhibit

County: Washington

The Underground Railroad exhibit at the Belpre Farmers Castle Museum was conceived as a way to preserve and honor the stories of freedom seekers who passed through Washington County, Ohio, and the brave abolitionists who aided them. The exhibit has had a significant impact on both the local community and visitors from outside the county. It has become the most comprehensive Underground Railroad collection in Washington County, offering an accessible and educational experience for families, school groups, and heritage tourists.

Honoree: Old Burying Ground Restoration

County: Highland

Project conceived by John King and Scott Anderson from their interests in local history, preservation, community renewal, and honoring those who are buried in this cemetery. The work has been carried out them and other volunteers. They have

9 HONORED

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9 HONORED

Continued from page 15

beautified Greenfield's original cemetery, renewed interest in the community's history, and people who founded the community. Families seeking their own ancestors now have a resource map, and it lifts up the importance of maintaining other historic elements of the community.

Honoree: Pike Heritage Museum

County: Pike

The Pike Heritage Museum has been an active force for showcasing and highlighting Pike County's history and heritage, and they have made outstanding progress in a variety of creative and unique projects to protect the museum, originally an 1860 German Evangelical. The museum has been a valuable partner and collaborator in multiple efforts in Pike County in recent years. The future of the Pike Heritage Museum is bright. The museum is now in its 43rd year, and is making strides in updating, preserving, and modernizing its content to better tell the story of Pike County and to provide a better experience for visitors to the museum.

Honoree: Steve Free Folk Music

County: Scioto

A lifelong resident of Appalachia with Shawnee and Cherokee roots, Steve Free and his music embody the enduring spirit of the Southern Ohio hills. Steve Free is a singer and songwriter who has worked independently for decades in Scioto County. His band has featured different members throughout the years, but one constant is his wife, Susan, with her enchanting harmonies and instrumental solos. Steve hosts remarkable educational entertainment programs for children which include sing-a-longs of catchy tunes and an introduction to Native American language, culture, and attire. He is an Ohio Arts Council and Midwest Arts Council "Ohio Artist On Tour."

Honoree: Hidden Hills Orchard

County: Washington

Hidden Hills Orchard is a high-density apple orchard with over 5,200 dwarf trees. The orchard property has been a farm since 1895. Originally a dairy farm and later hay fields, it was purchased from the Long family in 1998. Cider production began in 2004, and it has received first place awards in 2004, 2013, and 2016 in the Ohio Apples cider contest. Tom and Kathy Burch took over operations in 2011, expanding U-pick and adding more apple varieties. Tom and Kathy's son, Dan, and his wife, Katie, fell in love with the orchard and wanted a lifestyle that centered around getting to be together as a family. In March of 2021, they moved to the orchard and made it their full-time work.

Honoree: Ohio Hills Health Center (OHHC) Bradfield

County: Belmont

Ohio Hills Health Center (OHHC) has developed critical healthcare resources for vulnerable populations throughout the Ohio Mid-Eastern Governments Association (OMEGA) district. OHHC's multiple centers provide

region-wide access, and as a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), they accept all patients, regardless of their insurance status or ability to pay. The Barnesville-based headquarters, serving the public at the historic Bradfield Building, continues to be a high-traffic location that also provides a prominent physical presence for the organization and the greater Barnesville community.

Honoree: Artist Colony of Zanesville

County: Muskingum

In 2004, bronze sculptor Alan Cottrill called a meeting with the Zanesville-Muskingum County Chamber of Commerce, Convention and Visitors Bureau, Zanesville Downtown Association and the Muskingum County Community Foundation and suggested that it would be a good idea to start an artist colony in downtown Zanesville to broaden arts awareness, enrich student arts programs and help to revitalize the downtown area. Funding to start the Artist Colony was received by a grant from the Muskingum County Community Foundation, community and in-kind donations and the proceeds from an inaugural art auction. To this day the Artist Colony of Zanesville receives funding from events, private donors and local foundations.

Joe Burrow

Sam Jones Model Citizen Award

When Joe Burrow was selected as the 85th winner of the Heisman Memorial Trophy, in his acceptance speech, his mind and his words focused not just on football, but on people he knew who were underprivileged and underserved where he grew up in Appalachia.

With that night as a springboard, Joe and his parents, with business and community leaders from Ohio and Louisiana, founded the Joe Burrow Foundation. The primary focus is helping children with mental illness and those experiencing food insecurity as well as providing resources and support to the underprivileged and underserved in a variety of ways. The Joe Burrow Foundation promises to bring to these children the same passion, dedication and creative energy displayed by Joe on the football field. As Joe has repeatedly said, "Everyone has a responsibility to do good."

The Joe Burrow Foundation's Do Good Grants have funded over \$2 million to a variety of organizations in Ohio, Louisiana, and Kentucky that are dedicated to hunger relief and youth mental health. In the coming year, the Joe Burrow Foundation plans to build on its efforts by funding more innovative projects through Do Good Grants, launching new community kitchen initiatives, and expanding youth support programs, like Handle With Care, to reach additional communities.

To find out more about Joe's tremendous work, visit joeburrow.org.



Understanding the Standards: When to Restore and When to Rehabilitate

Last issue we discussed the place of using newer materials when rehabilitating a historic building, but this issue we're going more big-picture. What happens when we have a historic building we want to restore, instead of rehabilitate?

When it comes to rehabilitation, Standard 4 makes it clear: Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved. That could mean a Greek Revival house that received a Craftsman style porch in the early 1900s, or an Italianate commercial building that received a fashionable Art Deco storefront in the 1930s. According to Standard 4, we should preserve these character-defining elements. However, what if the building owner instead wanted to restore that Greek Revival home back to its original appearance when it was constructed in the 1850s? Is it ok to remove historic materials in the name of touting the historical "purity" of the property?

A recent example of the sometimes problematic question of whether to restore or rehabilitate was played out at one of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's properties, Montpelier, the former home of James and Dolley Madison. First constructed in the 1760s, owners throughout the building's history continued to make alterations to the building well into the 1900s. It's important to note that many changes to the buildings happened when it was under ownership of William and Annie DuPont (yes, that DuPont family) and they made important contributions to American history, so it might stand to reason that their alterations have "acquired historic significance in their

own right" and deserve to be preserved. However, the National Trust decided to restore the building to its appearance as of 1820, erasing (at the time the project began) more than 180 years of collected built history at the property, while better telling the story of one of the country's founding fathers.

Is that the right approach? Was that wrong? As preservationists, we can advocate for telling the whole story of a property just as legitimately as we can advocate for telling the story of a property as it existed for one moment in time. Thankfully, the Standards that exist don't just cover a Rehabilitation approach. Standards have also been developed for Preservation, Restoration, and even Reconstruction of historic resources. As you might imagine, the Standards for Restoration permit the removal of materials, even historical materials, from the building (provided they are documented).

When deciding to restore, there isn't a lot of room for conjecture. The owner needs solid documentation of what existed once upon a time, especially when replicating lost elements for restoration, in order to provide an accurate presentation of the building as it existed previously. Furthermore, the owner needs to consider the importance of tangible building "history" being erased, weighed against the significance of that property during one slice of time. And taking our Montpelier example above, a true restoration to 1820 means removing modern conveniences such as indoor plumbing, electricity (sorry, no wi-fi), and air conditioning. Given these realities, it's plain to see why aiming for a Rehabilitation standard works for 99% of the projects involving construction on historic buildings, but a more nuanced approach needs to be considered for the other 1%.



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Stone Garden Farm and Village

By Judith Khaner

I learned about the hidden gem known as the Stone Garden Farm and Village from a photographer friend. On a warm Sunday afternoon in October, I investigated and photographed much of the property. I was a stranger to the agricultural way of life; then I met farmer Fry.

After driving up a steep, short unpaved driveway on Southern Road, I was greeted by the barking family dogs and the cordial farm owner, Jim Fry. He was standing outside a blacksmith shop, working on an antique wooden-handled metal pick tool. After encouraging me to pet the dogs to calm them, he began to explain his procedure to renew the tool's metal. The restoration process involved eliminating the rust and then applying oil. He proudly displayed a similarly reconditioned metal tool that sparkled. I was impressed.

Jim then remarked that he needed a break from work. He spoke of his life and the farm as we sat on old, comfy, wooden chairs just inside the blacksmithing shop. I discovered that the mostly self-sufficient farm has organic and permaculture vegetable gardens and sells a multitude of items including eggs, beef, fresh farm milk, soaps, teas, honey, maple syrup, crafts and other seasonal goods. There are animals too. (I later noticed Jersey cows, La Ranch milk goats and Jacob sheep in fenced-in areas or pastures. I even talked to two caged family rabbits.)

Jim shared that he renamed part of the farm The Museum of Western Reserve Farms and Equipment. His goal was to have a working 1820's-1920's village revealing life involving every shop and trade. Currently, forty historic buildings are at Stone Garden, carefully relocated from several northern Ohio counties. Special tools, a windmill and non-electric antiques are present. Jim's dream is an ever-evolving work of love.

Genealogy naturally placed the Fry family in Richfield. He stated that his Amish ancestors were Richfield farmers. Long ago, his relative, General Anthony Wayne, came through the Richfield area as he and his soldiers created a trail from Fort Pitt, PA to Fort Wayne, IN.

Jim summed up his life as a Richfield farmer, husband, father, historian and teacher. He received a BA degree in history and education from the University of Akron. At one time, Stone Garden Farm had the country's biggest Hereford herd. He raised oats, bailed hay and operated one of Ohio's largest organic produce centers. Along with receiving awards, he has given lectures on American history, made TV appearances and been featured in newspaper articles.

Several Fry children are home schooled by Jim and his wife Laura, a Southern gal, who mastered how to "use the earth" after moving to Ohio and marrying Jim. She teaches soap, cheese and butter making. Fiber arts and animal husbandry are among her many teachable talents. Their "Roots and Shoots" drop-in plant classes for area children, ages 4-16, are popular.

With Jim's background information in mind and camera ready, I embarked on my one hour self-guided village farm tour. I remember Jim saying, "There are a lot of tools. I hope you like tools." My overall impression from my village walk around was that there was an unusual order and serene beauty in this living museum of accumulated tools and artifacts. I must return soon to the Stone Garden Farm and Village.

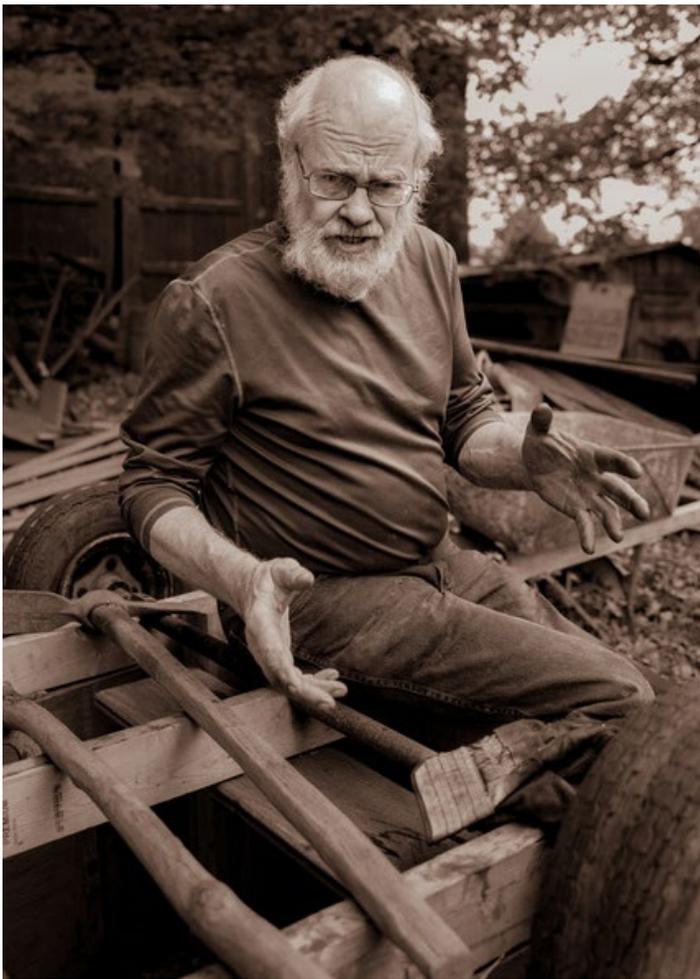
Here are short summaries concerning some of the key village structures that characterize the village, taken from the Stone Garden and Village website.

The one-room schoolhouse at Stone Garden is an iconic representation of rural education in the 19th and early 20th centuries. It's a place where generations of children were taught reading, writing, arithmetic, and civics in a single room by a single teacher. The schoolhouse is furnished with old desks, chalkboards, and educational tools, giving visitors a taste of what education looked like in simpler times.

The general store is a vital part of any 19th-century village, providing everything from food and clothing to tools and supplies for the local community. At Stone Garden, this historic building showcases an array of goods from the period, including antique jars, tin containers, and items that were once staples in every household. The store serves as a reminder of the importance of these establishments in rural life, offering a wide variety of goods for sale to visitors today.

The post office, originally located in Randolph, Ohio, and dating back to 1825, is one of the oldest buildings in the village. It stands as a testament to the importance of communication and connection in rural communities. Inside, visitors can find old postal equipment, envelopes, and stamps, as well as learn about the development of the postal service in Ohio and its vital role in connecting isolated communities.

The blacksmith shop, originally located in Independence, is one of the most interactive spots on the farm. Here, visitors can see blacksmithing demonstrations, where



the wagons that were essential for transporting goods and people in the 19th century. Inside, visitors can see examples of wooden wheels, wagon frames, and tools used to keep these vehicles in good working order. It's a unique opportunity to understand how people relied on skilled tradespeople to keep their everyday lives moving.

The bakery at Stone Garden is where visitors can experience the old-world methods of bread-making. With its wood-burning stove and antique baking tools, the bakery offers a hands-on experience where guests can learn how bread was made in the past. It's a deliciously educational stop for anyone interested in the culinary arts of the 19th century.

The harness shop is a key part of the farming trade, providing the equipment necessary for harnessing horses and oxen. This building is filled with antique harnesses, saddles, and tools used to maintain these important implements. It's a fascinating look at the intricacies of animal-powered transportation and labor.

The cycle shop is a nod to Ohio's industrial heritage, especially the legacy of the Wright brothers, who were from Ohio and invented the first successful airplane. Here, visitors can see early bicycles and the tools used to repair them, offering a glimpse into the growing transportation revolution that took place in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Interested in a visit?

Stone Garden Farm and Village, 2891 Southern Road,
Richfield, OH 44286
www.stonegardenfarm.com
www.ohiofarmmuseum.com
email: stonegardenfamily@yahoo.com

tools, horseshoes, and household items are forged with traditional methods. The smell of burning coal, the sound of the hammer striking iron, and the glow of the forge make this building a fascinating step back in time.

The dairy barn at Stone Garden represents the backbone of Ohio's agricultural economy—dairy farming. This barn houses the farm's cows and is used to teach visitors about the milking process, animal husbandry, and the history of dairy farming. Visitors can learn about the various breeds of cows that once helped sustain small farms, as well as how dairy products were processed before the advent of modern technology.

The wagon repair shop showcases the craftsmanship needed to build and maintain



A Look into the Hilltop, Columbus's Frequently Misunderstood Neighborhood

Emi Chongsirawatana, OSU Creative Writing intern

On the west side of Columbus, Ohio, just a few miles from Downtown, is a large neighborhood called the Hilltop. The Hilltop plays a unique part in central Ohio's history; it once housed the Central Ohio Lunatic Asylum, the largest building in the U.S. before the Pentagon, and was the neighborhood where Jesse Owens lived before Black students were permitted to live on the Ohio State University campus. Both are notable instances of the Hilltop's complex socioeconomic history. Today, the Hilltop is associated with crime and economic issues, and people tend to overlook the underlying reasons behind its struggles. To understand the origin of the Hilltop stereotype and what the future holds for one of Columbus's oldest neighborhoods, I spoke with someone who knows the community personally: Danny Peterson, the Executive Director of Hilltop RISE, an economic community development corporation.

Exploring the Hilltop

Hilltop RISE is an organization dedicated to the intentional economic development of the Hilltop. I met Danny at Third Way Coffee House on West Broad Street, and within the first few minutes, two people who knew him walked by, and they exchanged smiles and waves. "The sense of community is one of the things I love most about the Hilltop," said Danny, who is an established regular at the coffeeshop. Later, Danny and I took a drive around the Hilltop so I could learn more about the neighborhood. In the Hilltop's Highland West neighborhood, we checked out the Highland Youth Garden, a quaint garden space where gardening lovers and community members work with Hilltop youth. The garden program offers free produce, helps residents establish their own gardens, and is open 24/7, 365 days of the year. The welcoming space, which fosters learning through the common joy of growing produce, struck me as unique; it demonstrated strong community engagement and a genuine desire to support neighbors in need. We continued to drive around the Hilltop neighborhoods, where I saw a mix of well-kept and dilapidated homes, shuttered businesses, and brightly muraled buildings. Jennie Keplar, a community historian and Hilltop resident, later helped me understand the history behind why parts of the Hilltop look so different than others.

A Dive into the Hilltop's Past

The Hilltop was first settled in 1795 by Lucas Sullivant, a surveyor from Virginia. After serving as a Union army camp during the Civil War, the east side of the Hilltop was settled by Quakers, and farming became the primary industry. When the Great Flood of 1913 in the neighboring Franklinton neighborhood brought thousands of residents to the elevated Hilltop area, demand for housing jumped. Increased housing demand brought growth to the west side of the Hilltop, which helped establish neighborhoods such as Westgate. From then on, the Westgate area became home to the more



affluent residents of the Hilltop, including business owners and community members with local political influence. This distinction marked the division between the east and west sides of the Hilltop, with Hague Avenue being the dividing line between the two. Exclusive networking gatherings were hosted primarily for white residents and those from the Westgate community, and Black residents were typically not welcome. These gatherings were famously known for serving beans, eventually earning them the name "bean dinners".

During the Great Depression in the 1930s, redlining practices deepened the racial and economic divide between the predominantly white and politically influential Westgate area and the people of lower socioeconomic status on the East side. Outside investors swooped in and purchased property east of Hague Avenue, leading to a significant increase in rental properties and often trapping residents of color in specific Hilltop neighborhoods. Meanwhile, Columbus politicians and those with economic and political leverage in Westgate failed to acknowledge the struggles of residents in other parts of the Hilltop. As a result, the Hilltop has faced a sharp divide between the wealthier areas west of Hague Avenue and the other parts of the Hilltop. Hilltop RISE seeks to bridge this gap between Hilltop neighborhoods by guiding community-led socioeconomic growth.

Where the Hilltop is Headed

Hilltop RISE supports a vision of the Hilltop that acknowledges and preserves its history while allowing the community to evolve into a vibrant space. They do so by forming relationships with property owners, businesses, and residents, putting them in a unique position to support local businesses, bridge communities, and advocate for investments in the Hilltop. In September 2025, Hilltop RISE was granted 1.2 million dollars from the City of Columbus to redevelop two buildings on West Broad Street. Danny and I took a walk down the block to see the buildings, and although the buildings needed improvements, they had clearly served many generations of Hilltop residents well. One building housed a business called Beck & Orr Book Binding, a family-owned book binding company founded in 1888. For 135 years, Beck & Orr preserved the art of traditional bookbinding, repairing family Bibles and binding countless academic theses. The business, which had been run by the father-son duo of Ron and Skip Bowman, closed in the spring of 2025 following Ron's passing and Skip's

retirement. Beck & Orr was a business that valued history, tradition, and family. The loss of this business will be felt heavily, but a bright future awaits the space. Now that Beck & Orr has closed, Hilltop RISE intends to fill both buildings with locally owned businesses that will continue to serve future generations of Hilltop residents.

Hilltop RISE's vision for the two buildings is to house local businesses in the lower level and rent out the upstairs residential units as affordable housing. These two buildings showcase the organization's direction for the community, especially amidst rapid growth in Greater Columbus; many neighborhoods are experiencing gentrification, resulting in significant changes to the landscape, culture, and demographics. While Central Ohio continues to see a development boom of luxury apartment buildings, Hilltop RISE firmly advocates for the Hilltop by guiding its intentional development while still honoring the neighborhood's history. Through the care and intentionality of community members like Hilltop RISE and Danny, the Hilltop's identity as a socioeconomically diverse community continues to evolve.

Study Completed to Take Stock of Franklinton's Historic Religious Structures

The Franklinton Religious Resources History and Architecture Study was completed by Schooley Caldwell Associates and Nathalie Wright, through Heritage Ohio in partnership with the Ohio State Historic Preservation Office and Homeport. Funding for this project was provided by Homeport as a Section 106 mitigation initiative stemming from the demolition of the West Side Spiritualist Church in Franklinton.

The Study identified, surveyed, and documented religious related properties in the Franklinton neighborhood and placed them within a larger historic context. The survey of the neighborhood was conducted for the purpose of identifying historic religious resources (Christian, Jewish, non-denominational, Muslim, etc.), and it identified fifteen buildings in the project area. Constructed (or remodeled) from 1882 to 1975, the fifteen inventoried buildings include a variety of building types, scale, and architectural style. The style most commonly observed among the churches is the Late Gothic Revival, with five examples noted.

As the initial settlement in what would become Columbus, Franklinton has a depth of history that reaches back to 1797, when it was founded. It remained a separate community until 1870, when it was annexed into Columbus. Since the first log church constructed in Franklinton c.1807, the neighborhood has had dozens of congregations established and dozens of church buildings constructed. Many of these congregations were short-lived and many church buildings have been demolished. With the exception of the Holy Family Church, most first-generation churches were torn down to make way for larger buildings for growing congregations. Some were lost to commercial development pressure, such as the 1856 Heath Methodist Episcopal Chapel, which was demolished

for a commercial building on W. Broad Street. Others quietly disappeared, such as the Central Avenue Chapel of the Church of God. Among the extant Franklinton churches, there are several buildings built for worship purposes, as well as some examples of other building types permanently converted to a sacred function, all representing a rich religious heritage within the community.



Chitlin' Circuit

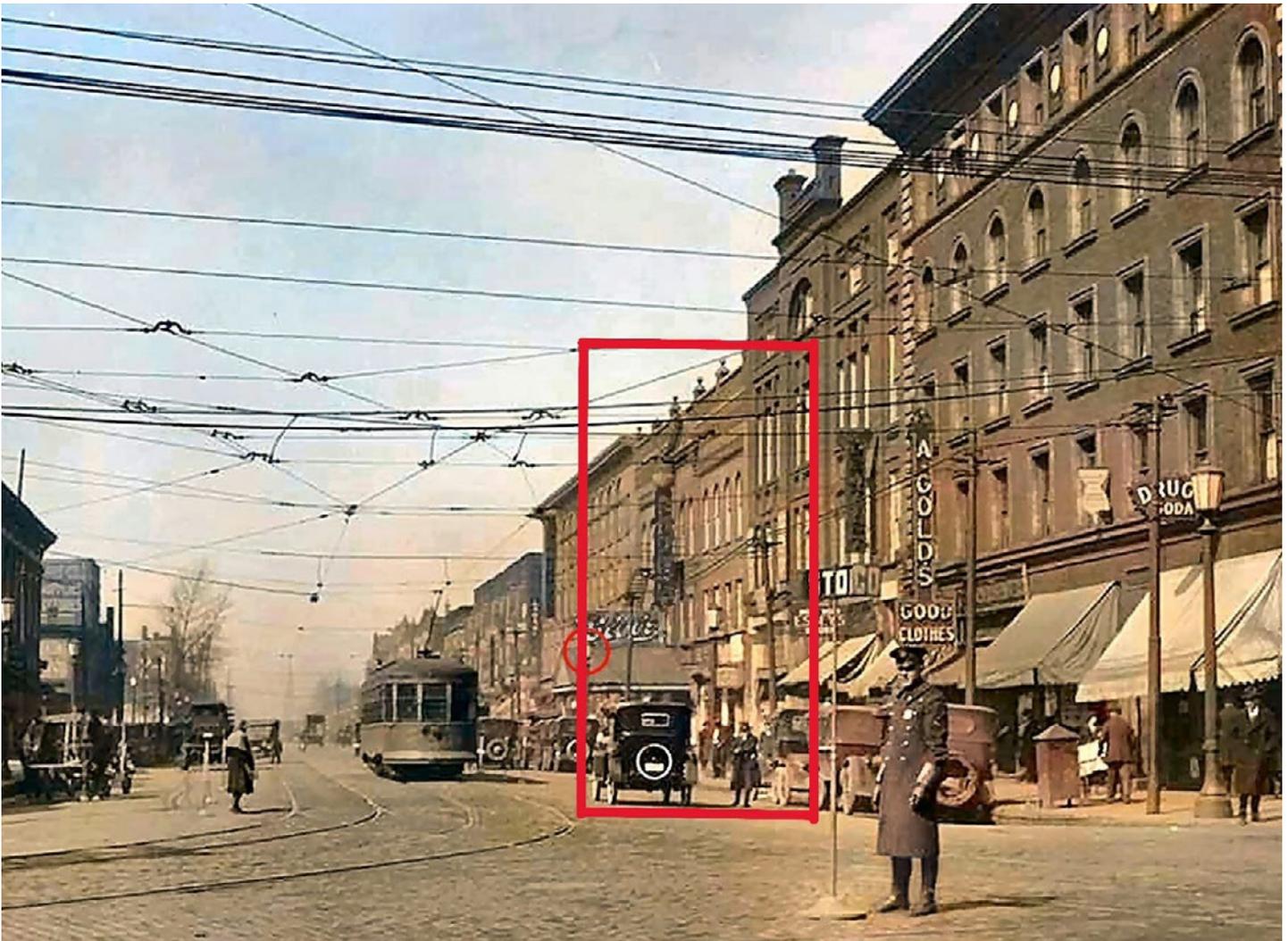
Julia Molnar, OSU creative writing intern

Vaudeville was once inescapable across America. Dance, comedy, music, acrobats, and more were all standard features of a Vaudeville show. It was only upon the invention and newfound popularity of moving pictures that Vaudeville lost its standing as one of the most popular forms of entertainment in the country. Out of the Vaudeville tradition grew a variety of performance styles. One of the most culturally significant was the Chitlin' Circuit, a performance circuit created by and for Black performers who were not welcome in the mainstream Vaudeville circuits governed by the Theater Owners' Booking Association, or TOBA. Chitlin' Circuit theaters and dance halls spread throughout the United States and across Ohio, including Gleason's Musical Hall in Cleveland.

After the demise of the TOBA in the 1930s due to the Great Depression, "Denver and Sea Ferguson, two African American siblings based in Indianapolis, Indiana, formed the Ferguson Brothers Agency, whose national network of venues directly booked performers." The establishment of

the Ferguson Brothers Agency represents the beginning of the Chitlin' Circuit, and despite the dissolution of the agency in the late 1940s, the relationships founded through the Circuit between Black-owned venues and Black performers were long-lasting. Beyond escaping the prejudices within the TOBA, the Chitlin' venues in the Northern United States provided Black performers with an escape from the Jim Crow practices of the South that segregated them from their White counterparts.

Some of the most iconic Black performers of the 20th century spent time on the Chitlin' Circuit: Sam Cooke, Fats Domino, Ella Fitzgerald, Aretha Franklin, Diana Ross, and hundreds more of the most famous performers of the time. Adrian Miller explains that "Chitlin Circuit,' as a coined term, floated around in Black culture for decades until it went mainstream in the late 1960s thanks to syndicated newspaper interviews with Black artists such as B.B. King, Lou Rawls, and Ike and Tina Turner." Despite the numerous celebrities who got their start on the Chitlin' Circuit, it



Woodland E 55th Cleveland globe theater outline red.





Gleason's Tiny Grimes ad.

Crow practices” while employing major stars such as James Brown and Tiny Grimes.

William “Jap” Gleason, the owner/founder of the venue ran things uniquely. For example, Gleason’s “challenged social norms by being an interracial venue.” Furthermore, Gleason set a dress code for both patrons and musicians at Gleason’s. Through policies like these, Jap Gleason helped cement a legacy not just amongst the Chitlin’ Circuit, but in Cleveland history. His management of Gleason’s helped set a standard for performance and music in Cleveland, which would eventually become one of the largest centers for music in the United States. One notable guest at



Gleason's Musical Bar ©1977.

led to a varying level of success for many other performers. For some, these performances were a way to make ends meet, as Miller describes the circuit as a “rite of passage” for Black performers of the time, with some eventually reaching stardom in the mainstream.

The name of the circuit: “Chitlin” is a testament to its role as a rite of passage. The name originates from the dish “chitterlings”, made of fried animal intestines. Miller explains the significance of the name as a “fantastic and meaty metaphor for the ad-hoc collection of churches, jook joints, nightclubs, restaurants, and theaters.” that made up the circuit.

The Chitlin’ Circuit played a role in Ohio history as one of its strongholds stood at the corner of Woodland Avenue and East 55th street in Cleveland as the Gleason’s Musical Bar. Gleason’s found major success in the 1950s and 1960s as a stop on the Chitlin’ Circuit, one of 3 venues in Cleveland on the circuit. Adonees Sarrouh explains that “By providing a welcoming place for black musicians to break their talent, Gleason’s played an important but seldom cited role in enabling Cleveland to assume its eventual reputation as the home of rock and roll.” Cleveland played a role in the Chitlin’ Circuit as one of the major Northern cities which provided Black performers with a “safe haven from Jim

Gleason’s was radio host Alan Freed who “recruited Gleason’s performers to play on the WJW radio station.” Freed is even credited for coining the term “rock-and-roll” to describe these performances. However, the work put in by Gleason was not enough “to overcome an emerging trend in the music industry”, and Gleason’s Musical Bar was closed in 1962. The eventual decline in popularity for Gleason’s is representative of the Chitlin’ Circuit as a whole. An article from Case Western Reserve University explains that by the 1960s, a racial gap in music had emerged, with “white musicians had taken over rock ‘n’ roll and the black population was listening to the new Motown sound.” Despite its eventual decline in success, the Chitlin’ Circuit remains an essential stage in the history of African American performance. The circuit provided a starting point for hundreds of Black performers, many of whom have become legendary in the American cultural lexicon, giving them a place to shine outside of the white-owned TOBA and segregated Jim Crow South.

Three African-American Historic Sites to be Nominated to National Register of Historic Places

In the winter of 2024, the National Park Service awarded Ohio's State Historic Preservation Office an Underrepresented Communities Grant to nominate three African American properties to the National Register of Historic Places. Building on previous initiatives, SHPO continues to build awareness in identifying, documenting, and honoring African American historic sites in Ohio. SHPO staff member Diamond Crowder will prepare nominations for the Nelson T. Grant house in Zanesville, Union Grove Baptist Church in Columbus, and the Pee Pee Settlement in Ross and Pike counties.

The three nominations reflect broader themes that highlight Ohio's contributions in the Underground Railroad, Great Migration, and the Civil Rights movement. They illustrate the significance of Black entrepreneurship, the central role of the Black church, and early Black settlements in Ohio in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Preparing the three nomination contributes and deepens our understanding in the role African Americans played in Ohio, broaden documentation of the Underground Railroad, and demonstrate the legacy of individuals such as Black entrepreneur, Nelson T Gant whose efforts supported African Americans seeking freedom from slavery. It will also broaden documentation on how the Black institutions like Union Grove Baptist Church served not only as a place of worship but also as a hub for education, social reform, political organizing, and mutual aid. Finally, one nomination will document Ohio's early Black settlements like Pee Pee Settlement and how it developed into a self-sufficient and thriving community.

By nominating these properties to the National Register of Historic Places, it demonstrates the contributions of African Americans to Ohio's history and SHPO's efforts to recognize and preserve this shared history. Additionally, the nominations will help the property owners raise awareness about the significance of their properties and plan for their preservation through potential funding and other opportunities.



Nelson T. Grant house



Union Grove Baptist Church



Pee Pee Settlement

East Mount Zion Baptist Church's Legacy is Set in Stone

By Emi Chongsiriwatana, OSU Writing Intern

Cleveland, Ohio, is home to a strong network of historically Black churches. After the Civil War in the mid 19th century, African Americans began moving north in search of freedom and jobs, forming Black communities often centered around faith and church. Many congregations grew during the Great Migration in the 1900s, when millions of African Americans from the South migrated North in search of economic opportunity and freedom from Jim

Crow laws. Many eventually settled in Cleveland, Ohio, and the Black congregations within the city grew. As white communities were moving out of Central Cleveland in the 1950s-1970s, historically Black congregations were purchasing architecturally significant church buildings to grow their congregations. These churches were safe havens for Black communities amidst racial prejudice and segregation.



East Mount Zion's role in political and social change

Among Cleveland's important historic Black congregations is East Mount Zion Baptist Church (EMZ), founded in Cleveland in 1908. In 1955, the congregation had the opportunity to move into the former Euclid Avenue Congregational Church, which is notable for its green serpentine stone exterior. The move was historically significant because of Euclid Avenue's identity at the time; the avenue was known as "Millionaire's Row", and it was dominated by wealthier white people. EMZ was the first Black church to move to Euclid Avenue, breaking segregation barriers and signifying economic mobility for Black Clevelanders. The church had a strong identity as a community gathering spot; during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 60s, people gathered there for civil rights organizing and social programs. The church also hosted NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) drives and events. Carl B. Stokes, the first African American mayor of a major U.S. city, campaigned for the mayoral election at EMZ in 1968. His election marked a significant political moment for Black communities. Today, the church continues to play a significant role in the community, partnering with non-profits such as Lifeline Ministry and the Cleveland Clinic to provide resources to families in the Greater Cleveland area.

A long-term legacy, a short-lived building stone

EMZ continues to play an important role in the Cleveland community today, but it can only continue to serve people if the building itself remains functional and updated. The structural integrity of the building has long faced challenges due to the green stone exterior, which is composed of a mineral called serpentine. While the material is beautiful and eye-catching, serpentine is not a commonly used building material for good reason. The mineral is relatively soft compared to most building stones, and it tends to absorb water due to its porosity. It also tends to be platy or fibrous. With this combination of factors, the stone is very susceptible to weathering and water damage.

Serpentine's mineral characteristics make it inherently unsuitable for construction, but it was a popular building material in the late 19th century due to its unique green color. Some serpentine buildings from that period have since undergone restoration to replace the stone; for instance, Broad Street United Methodist Church in Downtown Columbus was constructed with serpentine stone in the late 1800s. In 2006, all serpentine was replaced with a synthetic cast

stone. A similar restoration process will eventually be necessary at EMZ to maintain the architecturally and historically significant church building.

Beginning restoration work

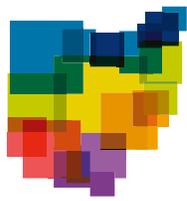
Full restoration of EMZ will eventually require replacement of the entire serpentine exterior, but before replacing the exterior, repairs on the roof and support beams must be



completed first. EMZ, in partnership with the Cleveland Restoration Society, received a

\$750,000 African American Civil Rights grant from the National Park Service to complete the project. The remainder of the budget was covered with grants from Partners for Sacred Places and the State of Ohio Capital Budget. Once the roof has been repaired, EMZ will turn to replacing the stone façade in stages, eventually leading to a full replacement. Cases like EMZ, where the façade cannot hold up long-term, indicate a strong need for grants to support capital improvement projects across many church communities in Ohio.

The Cleveland Restoration Society (CRS), dedicated to historic preservation in Cleveland, addresses the challenges EMZ and many other historic Cleveland churches face. Through the Sacred Landmark Support Initiative, CRS assists churches in preserving their historic buildings, focusing on the construction aspect of restoration. They do so by guiding churches in the grant application process for capital projects and bringing in experts to provide technical input on problems such as degrading roofs, windows, and heating systems. EMZ worked closely with CRS to assess the needs of the building and secure its grants from the National Park Service and Partners for Sacred Places, exemplifying a need faced by many churches: many of their historic buildings are deteriorating due to a lack of financial resources and shrinking congregations, so the need for grants supporting construction is more important than ever. Church facilities must be supported to properly function, especially to continue playing a role in their local communities and keep serving those in need. Guided by the help of organizations like CRS and the support of its congregation and community, EMZ's lasting legacy is sure to live on for years to come.



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