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# Preservation News

A publication by  **Preservation Ohio**  
Ohio's statewide advocate for preservation since 1982

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## Preservation Watch List: *News from around the state*

As we enter 2017, there's both good news and bad news about the Buckeye State's preservation efforts over the last year. We hope 2017 brings more successes than failures.

### LOST

**Ironton Russell Bridge** (2016 PO Endangered List, Lawrence County) is being demolished, which is expected to be completed by this summer. The demolition work began after the new \$89 million Oakley Clark Collins bridge opened to traffic in November. Hopefully, the mayor's request to the Ohio Department of Transportation to save a section of the bridge for a city park or display will be



Ironton Russell Bridge

granted so at least not all is lost. A pair of peregrine falcons is also losing their home of a number of years and are being relocated to the new bridge.

According to the Winter 2017 *Preservation* magazine, arsonists destroyed the roof and interior of the 1885 **Lichtenwalter Schoolhouse** in Green, Ohio where

children had been educated until the early 20th century. The building was moved to a farm in 1960 by the owner and later restored in 2000. Because the four walls are still standing, the city plans to reinforce them for possible future reconstruction.

**Madison Freight Depot** (2016 PO Endangered List, Lake County), built in the late 1800s, was demolished in August 2016. Though the owner, Norfolk Southern, had agreed to donate the building if it could be moved, local efforts



Madison Freight Depot

were unable to save this treasured village landmark in time. The Madison Community Improvement Corp. raised about \$10,000 for the building, but still

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*Preservation Ohio had a busy and productive 2016. In recent years, the strategic focus of our organization has been on advocacy – working with local preservationist groups around the state to help them draw attention to important historic sites in their communities that are in danger of being lost forever through demolition, purposeful neglect, lack of funds and support or just plain indifference. There are many preservation heroes in our state. And we need many more eyes, arms and legs and hearts to identify cherished sites that may soon be gone forever.*

*Pursuing our advocacy goals, Preservation Ohio's board of trustees visited several sites that were on the 2016 list of Ohio's Most Endangered Historic Sites. A story in this edition of Preservation News describes our trip to the Sorg Opera House in Middletown, and we recently were hosted by Preservation Dayton. Our board travels the state to help in advocacy efforts, not only to visit sites on our annual list, but wherever we can be of service to local advocates. Please feel free to reach out to us for advice or resource referral or to ask our help in drawing attention to endangered sites in your area.*

*We are now accepting nominations for the 2017 list. The forms are available at [www.preserveohio.com](http://www.preserveohio.com). We will be announcing the list at the Ohio Statehouse on May 24, 2017, during Preservation Month. We hope you can join us by sending nominations, attending the announcement event, becoming a member or making a donation. Thank you for your support for preserving Ohio's heritage.*

Carol Merry,  
President



needed some \$50,000 to preserve it. Madison Village has 33 registered buildings but also lost four historical schools in recent years.

## THREATENED

Some of the properties from last year's list that are still standing remain under threat. Stay tuned for more updates in a future newsletter or on social media, as well as for the 2017 Endangered List. Please nominate a property if you know of one in your area.

## SAVED

Progress continues on the restoration of the 217-year-old **Unionville Tavern**, Lake County (2014 PO Endangered List). The Unionville Tavern Preservation Society, with the assistance of State Senator John Eklund, was awarded \$160,000 of state funding thru the Cultural Facilities grant program in 2016. An additional \$80,000 in required matching monies was also secured via generous private donations. These funds will support Phase 1 of restoration efforts, which includes a new roof, a restored porch, and a functionally restored Veranda Room. Additional



Unionville Tavern

interior stabilization work was completed and foundation work begun. Engineering plans were recently submitted to the county building department and the State Historic Preservation Office for approvals.

With grants from the Ohio Historic Preservation Tax Program, a Marietta firm, Perry & Associates Certified Public Accountants, has restored what was **the first Ford dealership in Marietta owned by George C. Wilderman**. More than a century old, the original building at 313 Second St. is a two-story, flat roofed,

brick building with floor-to-ceiling glass windows so cars could be easily viewed. It had been vacant since 2000. According to the *Parkersburg News and Sentinel*, the renovation cost \$2 million and maintained as much of the original features as possible, including floors and ceilings. New windows matching the original ones were installed in the front of the building. Offices are on the upper floor, with the original open floor plan on the ground floor. Jodey Altier, president and managing partner of Perry & Associates, said she is excited to be able to support the history of the building while providing economic growth for Marietta. She said all employees, who are in their 20s, wanted to be downtown and stay in the firm's founding city.

According to the *Springfield News-Sun*, a historic building, **Myers Market**, may be returned to its original use, a year-round indoor marketplace and commercial kitchen.

## LISTED

A historic Ohio site made the 2016 list of 10 new **National Historic Landmarks** announced by the U.S. Department of the Interior and National Park Service, recognizing the properties as places that possess exceptional value and quality in

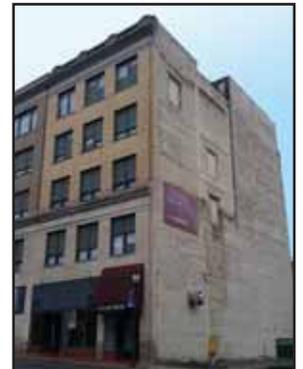


Zoar

illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States. These properties will be added to the National Register of Historic Places if not already. **Zoar** was the only permanent home of the Society of Separatists in the U.S., a utopian society based in one location in the mid-to-late 1800s. The Zoar Historic District expands the understanding of communal utopian societies in 19th-century America by representing a significant and

distinctive community reflecting the traditional landscape design, architecture, and way of life inherent in the Society of Separatists' world view and beliefs.

A downtown Springfield building was added to the **National Register of Historic Places** by the U.S. Department of the Interior. The 1921 **Edward Wren Co. Building**, also known as **McAdams Building**, is located at 31 E. High St. and owned by a real estate division of the Turner Foundation. Wren's department store occupied the property from 1924 to 1939. Wren's moved to the Bushnell



Wren's Building

Building on East Main Street in 1939 until 1984 when it merged with Block's, closing in 1987. The McAdams Building later housed a bank and other businesses after Wren's left. It was saved from demolition when it was purchased in 2015 for \$185,000. The Foundation plans to redevelop the building into a mix of apartments and stores.

**The Springfield Metallic Casket Co.** was also added to the National Registry in 2016. In operation for 90 years, the company was one of Springfield, Ohio's prominent industrial firms and was established in May 1884.

One Ohio site was recently designated **National Historic Landmarks** in 2017. Constructed in 1860 as the Allen's Mill Bridge, **Eldean Bridge** in Miami County, Ohio, is an excellent example of nineteenth-century covered bridge construction and its span is a rare surviving Long truss, a highly significant nineteenth-century timber truss type. Eldean Bridge is the most structurally intact of less than a dozen surviving Long truss covered bridges in the United States.

# A Passion for Preservation

Cyndie Gerken brings interesting experience to Preservation Ohio's board. She first became involved in preservation as a member and trustee of the Springfield Preservation Alliance, an organization established to recognize, preserve, and revitalize the architectural and cultural heritage of Springfield, Ohio.

In 2005, Cyndie was involved in the restoration of the Pennsylvania House in Springfield. The Pennsylvania House Museum, a 19th-century National Road tavern in Clark County, is owned and operated by the Lagonda Chapter DAR. As a member of this chapter, Cyndie was the Secretary and later co-chairperson of the Pennsylvania House Museum Committee. It was in this capacity that she helped oversee the building's restoration.

Cyndie's life-long interest in the National Road (she grew up along the Road in Clark County), inspired her to join the Ohio National Road Association (ONRA), an all-volunteer statewide group. From 2004 until 2014, she served on the ONRA Board as a Miami County representative, and later held the positions of secretary, vice president, and served for a term as

President. After being elected to the executive committee, Cyndie participated in grant-writing, fund-raising, event planning, Board building, marketing, and other projects. She also helped to oversee the creation of an interpretive signage project and an endowment for National Road preservation projects.



Burt Logan, CEO of the Ohio History Connection, presents Cyndie with the award.

After joining the ONRA Board, Cyndie began collecting old photographs, postcards, maps, books, and other information about the National Road. After helping to edit ONRA's Traveler's Guide to the National Road in Ohio, she realized there was much more information that should be

compiled and shared. Cyndie decided there was too much to be incorporated into just one book, so she decided to do topical books on various aspects of the National Road.

Her first book, published in 2015 and titled *Marking the Miles Along the National Road Through Ohio*, was about the 174 stone mile markers along the Road. This book contains more than 300 pages and features more than 75 maps and 400 photographs. Cyndie is currently working on a second book about National Road toll houses. Her work received

some well-deserved recognition in 2016, when Cyndie received the Public Awareness and Education award from the Ohio History Connection's State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). "The award meant the world to me," says Cyndie, "and I was humbled to receive it in the company of so many outstanding individuals and groups who are doing so much good work in the name of historic preservation." Nominated by fellow ONRA trustee Nancy Campbell (SHPO Architecture Transportation Reviews Manager), the award's citation reads: "for her years of dedication to promoting appreciation and preservation of the National Road in Ohio, an outstanding contribution to historic preservation in Ohio."

Cyndie now continues her preservation efforts as a PO Board member, as well as Vice Chairman of the Olive Branch School

Preservation Society, which she helped found. "Preservation is good for the environment as the ultimate form of recycling," she says. "It promotes stability in neighborhoods by encouraging revitalization through rehabilitation and shows respect not only for those who came before us, but also for future generations."

The PO Board is very lucky to have Cyndie as a member and looks forward to her efforts in the name of historic



A mile marker featured in *Marking the Miles Along the National Road Through Ohio*

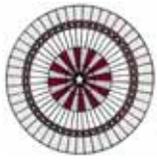
## Land Banks and Preservation

Some say that all preservation, like all politics, is local. Challenges also result from state and federal policies that fail to recognize the power of historic resources to transform neighborhoods, downtowns, and communities. In the first decade of the 21st century, much of our educational heritage was lost through a program skewed toward new construction; in the present decade, demolition of thousands of buildings harkens back to the days of urban renewal. As of 2015, all Ohio counties now have the authority to create land banks. County land banks are nonprofit organizations whose stated mission is to strategically acquire properties, demolish or make them available

for rehab, and improve quality of life. While touted as a tool for renewal and the clearance of "blight," these efforts are only as good as how they are designed and implemented.

Unfortunately, few counties in our state have taken the time to develop a comprehensive land bank program which takes history into account. In one major Ohio city, a historic preservation ordinance has been rendered largely useless after multiple demolitions have left little neighborhood cohesion. In most communities, land banks have worked without consideration for historic resources.

This past October, the Ohio Historic Preservation Office made a presentation at the Ohio Land Bank Conference entitled, "Moving Toward Rehabilitation - Historic Preservation for Land Banks." Available at this location online: <http://www.wrlandconservancy.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Moving-Towards-Rehabilitation-10-26-2016.pdf>, the material promotes survey work, awareness of tax credits and other financial incentives, Certified Local Government grants, and opportunities for community partnerships. If Preservation Ohio can assist you in evaluating options, please reach us at: [preserveohio@gmail.com](mailto:preserveohio@gmail.com).



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Founded more than 30 years ago, Preservation Ohio is the oldest, statewide non-profit organization working to provide a future for Ohio's collection of historic resources. From single buildings to entire downtowns and neighborhoods; from dense, urban areas to rural, county seat towns – we're dedicated to making a difference for Ohio's past.

**BOARD MEMBERS:**

- Carol Merry – Columbus – President
- Alex Bobersky – Warren – 1st Vice President
- Cyndie Gerken – New Carlisle – 2nd Vice President
- Marian Vance – Delaware – Secretary
- Mo Orsatti – Lewis Center – Treasurer
- Ralph Johnson – Ottawa Hills
- Larry Frimerman – Ashtabula
- Laurel Sheppard – Hilliard
- Bruce Goetzman – Cincinnati
- Larry Snyder – Canton

**STAFF:**

- Thomas Palmer - Executive Director

## Sorg Opera House

On September 17, 2016, Preservation Ohio held its Annual Meeting in Middletown, OH, where we had the pleasure of visiting one of our 2016 Most Endangered Historic Sites - the **Sorg Opera House**. Designed by Samuel Hannaford, the Sorg debuted its first opera in 1891, and over the years it evolved from live performances to show early forms of moving pictures. From 1947 until the late 1970s it was a movie theater known as "The Colonial."

In the 1980s, a community group known as Friends of the Sorg brought live performances back to the opera house. But the building was sold in 2007 and after suffering damage from a broken water main, it was closed for good in 2010. Now under the control of the Sorg Opera Revitalization Group (SORG), the building has undergone preliminary renovations and along the way, some interesting history has been uncovered. During our tour we learned, for instance, that when the 1940s drop ceiling in the second balcony was knocked down, it exposed rows of steep wooden bleachers hidden for decades. The Sorg had been a

segregated theatre, and those seats were for segregated patrons who also had to use a separate entrance and exit to the theater.

The plans for the Sorg are ambitious, but according to SORG Chairman Chuck Miller, 2016 was an amazing year, laying the foundation for what promises to be a bright 2017. They're staged for roof repairs, bathroom work, the remaining fire doors and the sprinkler system. Thanks to their volunteers, the SORG held several open house events and have made much progress on the theater, including:

- Ongoing fundraising and grant writing efforts
- Removal of all of the old movie theater seats
- Bringing in the "new" seats from Music Hall
- Cleaning and painting the floors of the theater and 1st balcony
- Removing the false ceiling
- Installing the "new" seats and fire escape doors
- Repairing the roof



Sorg Opera House

- Opening up for a few events
- Hosting a wedding
- Decorating for both Halloween and Christmas

In addition, a "Get the Doors Open" challenge in December raised more than \$1,000. The SORG Board is working toward temporary occupancy permits in order to have a benefit this year, maybe as early as July.

Preservation Ohio truly enjoyed our visit to Middletown, and we commend the SORG and the City of Middletown for all their good work!