

2019 Preservation Awards

In 2019, St. Joseph was host to the Missouri Preservation Conference. The Preservation Awards were presented at the event. The awards set out to showcase the many facets of preservation in St. Joseph to a national audience.

The Reilly Family: After living in the suburban neighborhood of Stonecrest for almost 18 years, Brenda and Paul Reilly took a giant leap and purchased the house of the late Nancy Sandehn, one of St. Joseph's long-time preservationists. This move brought them to Museum Hill and since then the family has been among the most effective advocates for the district and for historic preservation city-wide.

Brenda is a talented creative artist and she brings a flair to her preservation efforts. Brenda sees beauty and potential where others only see decay. Paul is an enthusiastic supporter of all ventures "old house" and has served on the Museum Hill Neighborhood Association board and the St. Joseph Museums Oversight Board. Their children, Nicole and Jordan, took up preservation efforts at an early age. Nicole and her husband, retired military officer Victor, restored a vintage cottage in Ft. Riley, KS before moving to St. Louis with their four children. Vic is renovating a massive riverfront warehouse near the Arch for his new wholesale electrical business.

After settling in at 12th and Charles, Brenda and Paul bought the little cottage behind them – it had a garage! Brenda sold her 36th Street, Wallflowers Frame Shop, and following the completion of their 3rd house under rehab in Museum Hill, she plans to open a shop with a variety of art and antiques.

Jordan is well known for his meticulous research abilities, and for his commitment to excellence in all areas of the preservation crafts. He and his wife Becky live in a colorful restoration in Museum Hill and have since added two new smiling faces to the historic neighborhood.

The whole family exemplifies an unwavering passion for doing the right thing when it comes to preservation of structures, neighborhoods, and cities. The Reillys lead the way in inspiring us, wowing us with tackling the toughest projects, and ending up with beautiful results that show no hint of their extraordinary efforts, sometimes taking years.

The Reeves Family: Driving around Krug Park can be a relaxing thing and might even help change someone's perspective on St. Joseph. The park itself is a special treat St. Joseph can proudly display to out-of-towners. Henry Krug Sr. donated land for the public park in 1890. Henry Krug Jr., following in his father's footsteps, donated the majority of the land which now makes up the park – 100 acres – in the mid-1930s. Donating the land for St. Joseph's Crown

Jewel was not the full extent of Henry Krug Jr.'s civic engagement. He helped to organize the St. Joseph Stockyards located on the Southside. He was also the president of the German-American bank, board chairman of the American National Bank, and honorary president of the St. Joseph Library Board.

Henry Krug Sr. was the great-great grandfather of Jerry Reeves. Henry Krug Sr. and Jr. formed the Krug Realty and Investment Company, the start of several generations in real estate dealings. Henry Jr.'s daughter, Ludelda Krug Calkins, Jerry's maternal grandmother, lived at 1105 Krug Park Place, then moved up the hill to Pine Ridge, where she was a well-known hostess. Jerry's mother traveled in Europe as a young woman and became an early advocate for the preservation of St. Joseph's heritage. She participated in many of the earliest fights to save our buildings with the legendary Barbara Ide, Mary Boder, and David Morton. Among the structures they preserved are Robidoux Row, the Buchanan County Courthouse, and the Downtown Library.

Jerry Reeves started a career in the family banking business, the American National Bank, then spent many years in real estate. He was president of the St. Joseph Board of Realtors. He shares his mother's passion for saving our historic buildings, coupled with a feisty attitude toward preservation. He led the way downtown, converting apartments to loft-style spaces in the Krug Building on Francis Street. He was a founding board member of St. Joseph Preservation, Inc. and he stepped up again many years later to form and serve on the board of Historic St. Joseph Foundation. Jerry remains a tireless promoter of the value of investing in the historic districts and downtown.

Jerry is pleased his children, Caroline Castor and Jeremiah Reeves, carry on with action and investment in numerous historic preservation projects. Notably, Caroline tackled the Horton House, and then partnered with Steve Foutch in creative rehabs of several structures in the historic districts. Jeremiah presents a grand vision for the revitalization of the Krug Park amphitheater and surrounds, finishing the hundred-year-old plan to extend the Parkway System through the river bluffs, restoring the Livestock Exchange building, and readying the Washington School building for a new chapter.

The early Krugs demonstrated a life of civic commitment, investment, development, and volunteerism. Each generation continues to contribute to St. Joseph, making history and saving history.

Cole Woodbury: Another person deserving of a Legacy Award reflecting a lifetime of dedication to historic preservation is Cole Woodbury. Cole is currently service as the Chairman of the Landmark Commission and President of the St. Joseph Historical Society board. He has restored numerous structures over the years, with the former Einbenders building a current (perhaps forever) project. He is a proven skilled preservationists, whose advice and expertise is frequently sought. He is considered one of our top historians, the real go-to guy for questions about our architecture and the people and events of our river city. Recently Cole teamed up with the folks at Uncommon Character to provide us a glimpse of St. Joseph's history with Throwback Thursday posts highlighting historic postcards from Cole's personal collection juxtaposed with the buildings today.

Jo Anne Grey: Whether it's volunteering for Haunted Harris Kemper, Voices of the Past, or dozens of other events; Jo Anne is usually there and quite often, in costume! Not only does she attend, she is often one of the main organizers, and the events always go off without a flaw. Jo Anne is one of St. Joseph's most philanthropic supporters as well. She'll never admit it though! Not only is she a philanthropic supporter of events and causes in St. Joseph, she also took on the restoration of the Pleasant Chestnut House on Francis Street in the Museum Hill Neighborhood district. Jo Anne turned the little 1877 house from modest to a masterpiece. From letting her friends and family stay while they're visiting to hosting open house events, her door is always open. Jo Anne is one of the most enthusiastic supporters of St. Joseph's architecture and history. Her impact on this city will be felt and enjoyed for years to come.

Paul Helmer: A former resident of St. Joseph, Paul Helmer has spent decades advocating for our historic architectural stock. Among his projects was the planning of the renovation of the interior and exterior of the Buchanan County Courthouse, working on a team with four other architecture students. The goal was to prove the 1870 facility could serve the current needs of the county. Two years later, a bond issue – featuring the drawings and information created by Paul's team – was passed for the complete renovation of the amazing structure. During Urban Renewal and the years following, the Courthouse was not the only building Paul advocated on behalf of. For several buildings facing the wrecking ball, Paul provided alternative renderings and models. Having become allied with the owner of the largest structure on 4th Street warehouse row, Paul gave him a scale model and a set of drawings which helped bring the rehabilitation project to success. Today this row of five, Golden Age, Victorian buildings are renovated with restaurants and residential units making this facility, once vacant and derelict, a vibrant part of the St. Joseph downtown scene. And how do you mention Paul Helmer without talking about color? If there's ever a question about what color a house or a building should be, Paul will find a way to incorporate thirty different colors to make the architectural elements stand out. He even developed his own coloring book for the next generation to enjoy.

Olin Cox: Olin Cox, owner of Belle Epoque Café and the Whiskey Mansion, has been transforming our historic architecture from ashes into diamonds. In 1995, the Westheimer mansion suffered a major arson fire shortly before he was set to close on the building. Somehow that didn't stop him. Weeks later, he went through with the purchase and began an even loftier restoration than what he had initially planned. In the meantime, Olin became one of the best advocates for the Harris Kemper Neighborhood and its efforts to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Olin has often advocated for historic designation and the importance of taking advantage of financial incentives like historic tax credits. Today, the Whiskey Mansion Bed and Breakfast is a shining example proving rarely is anything too far gone to save. The

Italianate Whiskey Mansion is a crowd favorite for the Haunted Harris Kemper event for its ambiance. Visitors always feel like they've stepped back in time and traveled to a far away place. Sometimes quite literally. In 2008 it was featured in a movie entitled, "Bonnie & Clyde Versus Dracula." The Whiskey Mansion hasn't been Olin's only project though. The Ryan Block building has seen an amazing transformation as well. For over a decade, Olin tirelessly transformed this building which had once been a grocery store, and later for several decades, an appliance store, from essentially a shell of a building into a wonderful restaurant, market, gift store, and several loft apartments. The most monumental improvement was the recreation of the missing copper dome. Today, the Ryan Block Building is a staple along St. Joseph's main street, Frederick Avenue. For over two decades, Olin has been a community asset to Harris Kemper and now Frederick Avenue. We can't wait to see what he does next.

Mt. Mora Cemetery Preservation and Restoration Association: Mt. Mora Cemetery, established in 1851, is the oldest operating cemetery in St. Joseph. It is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and is an interpretive site of the St. Joseph Museums, Inc. Mt. Mora was once the most fashionable burial place for many of St. Joseph's wealthy and powerful citizens. The boom years of the post-Civil War period, known as St. Joseph's "Golden Age," gave rise to the building of some of the finest residential architecture in the Midwest, and to some of the finest tomb architecture as well. Mausoleum Row, near the main gate to the cemetery, reads like a "Who's Who" of St. Joseph's economic and social elite, vying with one another to build magnificent homes and impressive tombs. Twenty-one mausoleums on Mausoleum Row and nine others scattered throughout the cemetery pay tribute to the great and the good of turn-of-the-century St. Joseph.

Through the all-volunteer organization, the Mt. Mora Cemetery Preservation and Restoration Association has helped to fund numerous restoration projects throughout the grounds. Suzanne Lehr discovered many of the records of who is buried at Mt. Mora were lost in a fire. After realizing this could very well happen again, Suzanne and Barbara Turner started making the records available online. A project she thought would take a couple of weeks took over five years. They recorded over 16,000 records. In 2003, Suzanne thought it would be fun to start telling the stories of those who were buried at Mt. Mora. She developed the award-winning "Voices of the Past" where living history characters in appropriate costume tell true stories of their lives and the impact they had on the city.

In October 2006, devastating vandalism was done to many headstones in the cemetery, including Missouri Governor Silas Woodson's. It was front-page headlines in the St. Joseph News-Press. The community was crushed, but Mt. Mora came back even stronger with the help of highly skilled artisans. Through partnerships with St. Joseph Museums, Missouri Western State University, various churches, businesses, and dedicated volunteers who regularly cut the grass, Mt. Mora Cemetery Preservation and Restoration Association has demonstrated the extraordinary success which can occur when a community works together.

St. Joseph Public Library: In March 1902, the Central Library opened its doors to the public. The building still stands today as the Downtown Library, a wonderfully ornate structure designed by St. Joseph's E.J. Eckel. In 2003-2004, under the leadership of Director Mary Beth Revels, the Downtown Library underwent extensive restoration work including bringing the beautiful terrazzo lobby floor back to its original luster after being carpeted for 50 years. However, the St. Joseph library is not only dedicated to history and preservation within the confines of its own walls. In 2017, the Library realized the need for a focus on the city's history and created a dedicated position to further the mission. Jennifer Sanders-Tutt, M.A. History, serves as the Local History Librarian. The position focuses on the preservation of the library's historical collection, as many items are nearly as old as St. Joseph itself! An oral history project was established in 2017 to preserve community members' personal histories for future generations. As the Local History Librarian, Jennifer also organizes programs such as History Speaks, a monthly showcase of local topics focusing on history and preservation. This year the library will celebrate the second annual Founders Day and Local History Week with hopes many in the community will take the time to appreciate our city's long and unique history.

The Coffman Family: Chris and Todd Coffman have invested in several buildings, both residential and commercial, in St. Joseph and downtown. Their shop, Nesting Goods, specializes in locally handmade artisan pieces and antiques. It's a great place to find one-of-a-kind items. The Coffmans serve as stable and attentive landlords of their buildings, creating a valuable space for tenants to live, work, and create; thus, further contributing to the community. Their investment goes beyond financial; they are physically and emotionally invested in St. Joseph and its revitalization.

Isobel McGowan: Ever wanted to scrape paint off the interior woodwork of a 9,000 square-foot mansion? Nobody else wanted to either. . . except for Isobel McGowan. With grit and determination, she is inspiring St. Joseph to roll up its sleeves and dust off its many architectural treasures. Isobel not only educates her guests about the marvels of the E.J. Eckel architectural design of her house, the Shakespeare Chateau, but implores them to join the fight to preserve the history of St. Joseph. For years, Isobel had been a frequent visitor to St. Joseph and fell in love with the city's opulent architecture. In May 2012, she took a leap of faith and moved away from her home in Denver, Colorado to pursue the restoration project of a lifetime. Walking from room to room through the main floor of the Shakespeare Chateau, you are confronted with a striking stained-glass window in the Victorian ladies' parlor. Athena, Greek goddess of wisdom and war gazes down from above, her right hand propping up a spear, her left hand clasping the lamp of learning. Isobel points out our city's history hinges on adaptive reuse and this house is no exception. Over the years, it has weathered the changes from a single-family home, to an apartment building, and now a bed and breakfast, as well as a striking venue for weddings,

dinner parties, and elegant meetings. It has even taken a star turn in a recent movie,” Christmas at the Chateau”! Isobel works tirelessly to promote her vision for the preservation of St. Joseph. She served as chair of the Landmark Commission, started the Old Town North Neighborhood Association, and is the president of the Historic St. Joseph Foundation. In addition to the Chateau, she owns several other historic properties and advocates consistently for the “Jewels” of St. Joseph. One of her recent projects is a collaborative effort to create a coloring book highlighting the architecture of historic St. Joseph.

City of St. Joseph: In 2002, at the urging of the Landmark Commission, the City created the Save Our Heritage Grant. Riverboat gambling funding was set aside to fund historic preservation efforts in the city. This fund helps property owners – big or small, commercial or residential – to fund projects of all scales. The City is also the owner of several historic buildings and administers a capital improvement program which helps fund projects like sidewalks and parks, but also underwrites renovations on buildings like the Missouri Theater and the Wyeth Tootle Mansion. Recently, Governor Parsons signed a bill creating St. Joseph’s Land Bank. This is just another arrow in our quiver to combat blight, zombie properties, and abandoned houses in the historic parts of the city.