

## **The Foundation has a permanent home**

Due to the generosity of a donor with a passion for historic building preservation, the Foundation has a permanent home at 181 South Main Street.

The Foundation staff moved into the Queen Anne Victorian brick home on January 20, 2015. The renovation project began in December 2012 when the Foundation received the William Ritter House as a donation along with monetary support to build a boardroom addition and renovate the existing house.

While the new location provides increased exposure of the presence of a community foundation in Richland County, the decision to relocate was rooted in the Foundation's strategic plan:

- Create a positive first impression to visitors entering Mansfield.
- Be a leader in the transformation of a declining neighborhood.
- And most importantly, demonstrate the Foundation's commitment to its slogan: For Good. For Ever.

When it was acquired, the house had been neglected for several years and was devoid of woodwork and a staircase.

Dan Seckel of Seckel Group Architects used photographs to plan the restoration to its original grandeur. Julie McCready of McCready Interiors and Norwalk the Furniture Idea researched the color palette, flooring and furnishings. With the help of many workers, Mr. Seckel and Ms. McCready created a beautiful home that serves as a functional, professional environment for a nonprofit organization.

Engwiler Properties of Mansfield was the general contractor with Junior Wood as the project manager.

Again using old photographs, Bill Vidonish of Vidonish Studio in Lexington recreated the stained glass window over the main staircase. Other artisans crafted the custom-made woodwork, staircase, two porches, windows and floors.

Parts for the main staircase including spindles, finials and newel posts were found in a Chicago resale warehouse. The mantles were purchased from warehouses in Ohio.

Foundation President Brady Groves said, "The restoration of the Ritter House is a permanent investment by the Foundation in the community. It's indicative of what we do for donors, create endowments for lasting change."

The house was built in 1891 by William Ritter, (1834-1906), son of Joseph and Magdaline Eberly Ritter. William was associated for a number of years with his father's firm, Jos. Ritter & Sons, Co., dealers in leather and findings. He was also active politically. In 1860, he was elected City Clerk and served until the beginning of the Civil War when he resigned and enlisted for three months. In 1861, he was elected County Clerk and served at this post for six years. In 1877, he began his association with the Mansfield Water Works. His positions included trustee, superintendent, secretary and president of the Board of Trustees of the Water Works.

The house was built for a man of some importance within Mansfield during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. One would view this house as being a physical reminder of the tastes of the city's middle-upper class. But, its location on South Main Street is an anomaly in that individuals who could afford such a house at the time of its construction were generally building to the west of downtown. It remains as an architectural landmark.

In 1908 James Calvert purchased the home and it stayed with his descendants through 2001. James Calvert's daughters, Leona Calvert and Clara Woodard, lived in the home for several decades.

On December 7, 1976, the property was determined to be eligible for listing on the National Register by the Secretary of the Interior.