

The Foundation has a permanent home

Due to the generosity of donor John Fernyak, who has 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.

The house was built in 1891 by William Ritter, son of Joseph Ritter, owner of Joseph Ritter & Sons Company. It is listed on the national historic registry. The location on South Main Street was out of the ordinary at the time because larger homes were built on Park Avenue West.

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.

Exterior work will continue this spring and summer including the landscaping.

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."