

# Saving Sandusky's storied structures

*Tim Berkey, Old House Guild of Sandusky treasurer, Sandusky landmark commission chairman  
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*The Johnson House at 417 Columbus Ave in Sandusky.*

Our collective commitment to save our city landmarks is vital to the community. What better way for our children to enjoy it in real-time versus reading or viewing it in a book or on a vintage postcard?

## **Preserving city landmarks**

How many times have you looked at vintage pictures of your community and wished that beautiful architecture of the past had been preserved?

Too often, a decision was made to tear down magnificent representations of artwork from an era

when more attention was provided to the aesthetic landscape.

Over the years, function became the priority, and form took a back seat. The evidence of this is everywhere.

Think of how you feel when you drive through communities and see unattractive structures seated between amazing buildings and homes that were built using trade skills that have long since vanished. And you probably have similar feelings when you examine postcards of buildings that existed and were replaced by ones that simply don't live up to the same standard.

## **Saving our history**

I would make the case that vintage architecture and artifacts may be owned in title, but the history that is associated with those belong to the community.

If you agree and feel passionate, what can you do?

The good news is that a movement to preserve has been underway for years through a commitment of private citizens, community organizations and city government working together. Your contribution is vitally important to these endeavors.

## **The Old House Guild of Sandusky**

The Old House Guild of Sandusky was founded in 1978 as a nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation, restoration and adaptive use of Sandusky's historic structures.

Through early work of the guild, a comprehensive inventory of period architecture was cataloged to allow over 100 homes and businesses inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

The guild is managed by a board that meets to discuss and engage in work contributing to historic preservation. This includes promoting community awareness through an annual Christmas Candlelight Tour of Homes, operation of the Cooke-Dorn Museum and collaboration with other museums and nonprofits.

The guild also recognizes the restoration and rehabilitation efforts of citizens and businesses at the annual membership dinner and provides scholarships to students pursuing careers in historic preservation.

And, most recently, the guild took on their first acquisition of a property through the purchase and rehabilitation of the historic Johnson House next to the library.

## **The landmark commission**

Our city government has been a strong partner in the designation and preservation of historic landmarks. The most recent example is the establishment of the landmark commission to protect the inventory of historic properties and artifacts in the community.

Before a landmark property can undergo any environmental changes, an application must be approved by a special commission to ensure that the proposed alterations are appropriate for the property as well as the historic surroundings. You can learn more by visiting the city website.

## **How to get involved**

There are many ways to express your passion for historic preservation ranging from occasional volunteering to ongoing active involvement.

The Old House Guild needs volunteers to conduct tours of the Cooke-Dorn Museum, help out with annual events, serve on the board and/or committees as well as donate.

If you are considering rehabilitation of a vintage property, the guild is an excellent source for information and advice. Membership is free the first year and includes an invitation to the annual dinner. Information and an application can be found on the Guild's website, [oldhouseguild.org](http://oldhouseguild.org).

### **Our collective commitment**

You can also support our city government efforts by volunteering for membership on the landmark commission as vacancies occur or by simply attending landmark meetings and learning more about current endeavors to preserve our heritage of historic structures and artifacts.

If you own a historic property, whether it be residential or business, you can support local preservation by reaching out to city officials for help, support and advice backed by well-established guidelines and experienced people. You can also encourage neighbors and businesses to do the same.