Sav ing Gr ac e
Congregations commit to preserving sacred spaces

H o lid ay S p ir it
December tour showcases historic places of worship

Love of Land
Shelby County farm wins Rural Preservation Award
INFORMATIONAL RESOURCES

Director: T. C. Steele

Steele’s artistic contributions to Indianapolis and Indiana are significant. His work reflects the same vision and spirit that characterized the city’s growth and development.

On the Cover

Shelby County’s Melo Farm won the 2021 John Arnold Award for Rural Preservation, recognizing generations of stewardship by the Melo family at the nineteenth-century farmstead, including its 1882 Italianate-style farmhouse.

PHOTO BY EVAN HALE

From the President

Marsh Davis, President

ON THE COVER

Cover

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

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Award-Winning Farm is Work of Generations

IN EASTERN SHELBY COUNTY, GENERATIONS of the Meltzer family have farmed the land for more than 160 years, adapting to technological and cultural shifts, and weathering two pandemics.

For their role in preserving Meltzer Farm outside Shelbyville, siblings Kris Meltzer and Karen Meltzer-Armstrong won the 2021 John Arnold Award for Rural Preservation, presented by Indiana Landmarks and Indiana Farm Bureau in August at the Celebration of Agriculture, hosted by the Indiana State Department of Agriculture at the Indiana State Fair.

Frederick Meltzer moved from Germany to Shelby County in 1857, the first in a long line of Meltzers who’ve farmed the land ever since. Kris Meltzer, Karen Meltzer-Armstrong and her husband, Tony Armstrong, currently oversee production of corn and soybeans on the farm’s 100 tillable acres. Today, the farm includes the original 1850s farmhouse and timber-frame barn, log barns, a log cabin, a one-room brick schoolhouse, gas well, artesian well, an outhouse, a pumpkin patch, and an old growth forest.

“The award committee was deeply impressed by the unique and diverse collection of historic agricultural buildings still in use at the Meltzer Farm,” says Tommy Kleckner, director of Indiana Landmarks’ Western Regional Office and Arnold Award coordinator. “And the commitment generations of the family have demonstrated to preserving and maintaining the farm’s heritage is extraordinary,” he adds.

With a practical, waste-not, want-not approach, the Meltzers have incorporated the farm’s historic buildings into modern operations. The nineteenth-century frame barn houses farm equipment, hay, straw, and occasionally livestock, and the log barns store grain. The original farmhouse has served as a machine shop and time capsule for preserving the family’s heritage. The outhouse remains in working order, nicknamed “The Roosevelt” in recognition of it being one of the millions of sanitary privies constructed during the Great Depression through President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s New Deal. Along with vintage buildings, the Meltzers have preserved vintage farm equipment, including Brady Meltzer’s steam engine and an antique thrashing machine.

Brady constructed three log barns on the farm in the 1940s, reusing timbers dismantled from historic log buildings that other property owners planned to demolish. To accommodate his interest in muzzleloaders and long-range rifles, Brady built one of the log structures to house Meltzer’s Muzzleers, a muzzle-loading shooting club.

Liberty Township School #2, built members of the family in 1875, still stands in its original location south of the farmstead. When school consolidation eliminated the school’s original use, the Meltzers repurposed the building as a machine shop and secured its entry in the National Register of Historic Places. They continue to serve as caretakers of the property. “We’re loaded with Indiana history here,” says Karen’s daughter Vanessa Armstrong, who helps operate the farm.

The family’s love of the land extends to conserving the property’s 60 acres of woods, one of the last remnants of the state’s old growth forest, meaning it contains trees more than 150 years old. In 1928, Brady Meltzer placed the woods in Indiana’s Classified Forest Program, and in 1974 it was designated a National Natural Landmark. To ensure its long-term protection, his son Philip Meltzer partnered with the Central Indiana Land Trust to dedicate Meltzer Woods as a nature preserve, and today the family welcomes walkers and scientists who come to explore and study the forest.

The property took on new significance during the pandemic in 2020, when the family sequestered in the Italianate-style farmhouse built by the first Philip Meltzer in 1882. “We were sheltering in place in the same house where our ancestors sheltered during the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918,” notes Vanessa. “My grandfather Philip shared stories from his deathbed—the same room where he was born in 1926. Listening to him reminisce about his life on the farm and what it meant to him has given me a great appreciation for his lifelong work to preserve the farm.”
Historic Churches Tell Story of a Changing City

SCATTERED ACROSS JUST A FEW BLOCKS IN and around Indianapolis’s Old Northside neighborhood, a collection of 10 historic churches built between 1891 and 1929 served residents who settled beyond the city’s core at the turn of the twentieth century. After World War II, the neighborhood changed rapidly, and churches adjusted to support a community with increasingly diverse religious and social needs.

On December 4, our Holiday Church Tour offers a chance to explore the landmarks and see how they have adapted to change.

Today, Indianapolis faces the same question as other communities across the country: what to do with historic houses of worship when Americans aren’t going to church like they used to. Each of the churches highlighted on our tour illustrates the forward-thinking commitment of neighborhood residents to preserve what their predecessors built, whether through creative reuse, innovative community outreach, or adapting to meet the spiritual needs of new downtown residents.

For Lee Little, who attends the neighborhood’s Episcopal Church of All Saints, the discovery of a 1952 copy of the Indianapolis City Directory sparked a research journey into the city’s historic churches. Whirling down the number to about 300 churches still standing, Little launched the “Old Churches Indy” Instagram account in 2018 to highlight the buildings’ history and architecture. His passion also inspired him to share his knowledge on walking tours and in a recently published book Circle City Steeples.

“Evan Hale’s Circle City Steeples” will be available for purchase, with a portion of the proceeds supporting our Sacred Places Indiana program.

On December 4, Indiana Landmarks’ Holiday Church Tour provides a look at 10 historic churches in and around Indianapolis’s Old Northside neighborhood. The self-guided experience includes still-serving churches such as the Joy of All Who Sorrow Orthodox Church (above) and others adapted to new uses, including the former Central Avenue Methodist Church (left).

On December 4 and costs $20/general public, $15/Indiana Landmarks member, $10/child (age 6-11), and is free to children age 5 and under. Day-of-tour tickets cost an additional $5 per ticket (save children age 5 and under) and will only be sold at Indiana Landmarks Center, 1201 Central Avenue. Ticket holders may check-in at any of the sites open for interior visitation and exchange their Eventbrite receipt for a program. Buy tickets in advance at indyholidaychurchtour21.eventbrite.com.

Get a preview of some of the churches featured on the tour along with other Indianapolis-area sacred places at a talk by Lee Little on November 30 at 6 p.m., offered in-person at Indiana Landmarks Center and online via Zoom. Tickets are $7/general public, free for Indiana Landmarks members, and may be purchased at oldchurchesindytalk21.eventbrite.com.
There’s a reason steeples and church towers dominate the skyline of so many cities and towns. For centuries, churches and temples stood at the center of community life, providing the backdrop for momentous events. As social, spiritual, and physical keystones, historic places of worship merited architectural prominence, too, usually occupying a place of honor among a community’s finest structures.

Maintaining that lavish architecture isn’t easy. As modern congregations shrink, so do resources to preserve and repair stained glass, ornamental plaster, carved stone, and masonry.

To address increasing calls for help from congregations struggling to maintain their historic houses of worship, in 2015 Indiana Landmarks created Sacred Places Indiana, a joint program with Philadelphia-based Partners for Sacred Places supported by Lilly Endowment. Since then, we’ve assisted dozens of churches, giving advice on fundraising, building stewardship, and community engagement.

In South Bend, Indianapolis, and Spencer, three congregations—including two participants in our Sacred Places Indiana program—have shown extraordinary commitment to their historic spaces, undertaking restoration campaigns to repair deteriorating features and ensure their buildings’ futures.

Soaring above New Jersey Street in downtown Indianapolis, the twin spires of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Catholic Church have conveyed the landmark’s solid standing since it was dedicated in the Lockerbie Square neighborhood in 1912. More than 100 years later, St. Mary’s congregation embraced the features as an emblem of their efforts to preserve the building into the next century.

Divine Intervention

At Indianapolis’s St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Church, a Gothic Revival stand-out and anchor in the city’s Lockerbie Square neighborhood, the congregation embarked on a $2.1 million campaign to address deterioration and restore sculpture and ornament on the 1910 structure’s limestone facade.

PHOTOS BY PAT LONG AND EVAN HALE

TOWERING INSPIRATION
Launching the Save the Steeples campaign to raise $2.1 million for repairs in its first phase.

German immigrants founded St. Mary in 1858 and started construction of the current church building in 1910 in the neighborhood then known as Germantown. Designed by German-born architect Hermann Gaul, the Gothic Revival church incorporates features reminiscent of the Cologne Cathedral. Anti-German sentiment during World War I prompted the congregation to remove original interior German design elements and reach out to residents of all ethnicities to join them in worship. St. Mary’s emphasis on serving parishioners of diverse backgrounds endures today, with Spanish language masses and bilingual staff ministering to the church’s significant Latino membership.

A building assessment conducted by Anese Engineers in 2015 showed the scope of deterioration on the church’s limestone façade, where steel attached to the stone had started to rust and break down and separate the limestone. The stained glass and slate roof required attention, too, along with crumbling images over the main entry. Through the campaign, the congregation raised $1,811,000 for the first phase of restoration.

The second phase, estimated to cost $900,000, began in 2019, focusing on restoring sculpture and ornament on portal entries and pediments on the church’s west façade. Though erosion had damaged some elements beyond repair, salvaged pieces will help create new ornament to fill in the gaps. A matching grant from the National Fund for Sacred Places is aiding work on the spires, towers, and west façade.

**Saint Paul’s Memorial Church has been an anchor in South Bend’s West Washington National Register Historic District since its construction in 1901— the congregation’s third location since its inception in 1872. Clement and Ann Studebaker donated funds for the distinctive Romanesque Revival-style building, envisioning a community space that could serve the neighborhood.**

Inspired by their travels to Germany, the Studebakers commissioned 53 stained-glass windows from Munich’s Mayer Glassworks for the church, including a grand window depicting Clement and his African American valet, Thomas, who traveled with them. Though Clement died before construction was complete, the church retains the ancient baptismal font constructed from a Roman column and presented by J.M. Studebaker in memory of his brother. It is believed to be the oldest baptismal font still used in the United States.

In 2016, St. Paul’s became one of the first participants in our Sacred Places Indiana program, learning how to prioritize repairs and brainstorm ways to maximize use of the building. "It’s a monument that’s too spectacular to let get away from the city of South Bend, and we were determined to save the building," says member Howie Emmons, whose background in construction made him a natural choice to oversee rehab.

Regularly, the church upgraded its kitchen, allowing start-up culinary businesses to use the space. The next project proved even more ambitious: a half-million-dollar campaign to restore the historic pipe organ, tapping into a trend toward more traditional music and positioning the church to host special concerts.

Among other improvements, the building got a modern climate control system, replacing an early form of air-conditioning that utilized ice dumped through a grate in the sidewalk and a fan system to draw cool air into the building. "The running joke was that we had the first air-conditioning system in South Bend, but no one knew it was bringing in the ice to run it," says Pastor Emeritus Tom Thews.

Workers also installed a new roof, repaired the stained glass, and replaced skylights. Generous gifts from members and the Studebaker family and traditional fundraising supported the work. "Back when we started, I never dreamed it would go as far as it has," marvels Thews. "There’s hardly a place in church not restored to its former glory."

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Today, St. Paul’s members continue to share their magnificent house of worship with others, including opening their building to an Anglican congregation for its services.

**Faithful Stewards**

In many historic churches, stained-glass windows provide artful illumination filtered through symbolic and figural designs. In 2017, as members of Spencer Presbyterian Church sought ways to raise money to repair the building’s nearly century-old stained glass, they found answers in the windows themselves.

“One of the things we learned in participating in the Sacred Places Indiana training was looking for unconventional sources for raising money,” says church member Sylvia Dyer. “Our congregation is small, so for us to embark on a significant restoration project, we needed something to get people excited.”

Each stained-glass window in the sanctuary includes a dedication to an early church member, so Dyer began a herculean research effort to find their descendants. She scoured the genealogy section of the local library, searched church records and obituaries, and bought a premium White Pages subscription to track people down, then mailed them information about the rehabilitation project, along with pictures of the stained-glass window connected to their ancestors. The effort netted more than half of the donations needed for the $30,000 project.

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The congregation of Spencer Presbyterian Church (above) embraced outside-the-box thinking to raise money for restoration of several nearly century-old stained-glass windows in the building’s sanctuary, contacting descendants of early church members to support the project. The effort yielded more than half of the $30,000 required for the windows’ restoration.

Photos by Sylvia Dyer and Rose Werner.
Caves of Wonder

Since ancient times, grottos have carried mystical connotations, associated first with early pagan deities and later with Christian churches. The construction of man-made grottos spread after Bernadette famously saw the Virgin Mary in a natural grotto at Lourdes, France, in 1858. In Indiana, most grottos date to the twentieth century, built by religious institutions as places for spiritual meditation rather than miraculous healing. Executed in fieldstone, colorful mineralizations, crystals, concrete, even geodes, Indiana’s historic grottos still offer light candles and pray in the quiet space before football games, during final exams, and at annual services for graduating seniors. In 2019, the University undertook improvements at the grotto, refurbishing and reinstalling a fountain added in 1943, and improving the surrounding landscape to make the shrine more accessible.

When demolition loomed in recent years at the Mother of God Grotto in Jasper, a group of residents rallied to save the historic site. In the 1950s, Father Phillip Ottavi, director of St. Joseph’s Providence Home—a care facility for mentally disabled men—envisioned creating something spiritual on the site of the home’s demolished handball court. An Italian immigrant, Ottavi also based his plan on the famous Lourdes shrine, using a large supply of geodes from a Lawrence County creek for its construction. Rough on the outside with beautiful crystals inside, he believed geodes presented a nearly perfect representation of man’s body and soul.

Working with a crew of Providence Home residents over 12 years, Father Ottavi constructed the St. Joseph and Mother of God grottos on four city blocks along Bartley Street. Equal parts sculpture, folk art, and landscape architecture, the site offered the community a restful retreat. But in 2016, Memorial Hospital purchased 4.5 acres on the site’s north end for construction of a medical residency building, threatening the St. Joseph Grotto. Volunteers quickly formed the nonprofit Friends of the Grotto group to preserve as many pieces as possible. Cathedral Health Care, owner of the south lot where the Mother of God shrine is located, donated the property to the group. Volunteers set about removing, storing, and relocating many of the threatened objects.

Over four years, the Friends relocated 32 geode planters and structures from the north lot to the remaining grotto. In 2018, the Friends hired a Bedford stone mason to re-create the plaster statue of St. Joseph holding the infant Jesus, and in June 2019, the statue—along with the previously dismantled St. Joseph Shrine archway—were installed in the Mother of God Grotto, reuniting the Holy Family.

In Munster, shrines cover the grounds of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Monastery, including one to Saint Maximilian Kolbe, a martyr of Auschwitz. But the site’s most jaw-dropping features are its grottos, including an enclosed shrine with blacklight-illuminated scenes depicting the end times. Understandable perhaps, since its creators were Polish Carmelites who probably felt all too close to the end of the world. After serving in Poland’s Free Army during World War II, the Discalced Carmelites were banished to Siberia, eventually making their way to northwestern Indiana, where they began ministering to a large Polish-American community around Chicago.

In 1954, the Carmelites began constructing the Holy Mother Grotto. An elaborate three-level catacomb built entirely above ground, the grotto consists of 250 tons of sponge rock painstakingly set in place. Other rock ornamentation, marble statuary, stained-glass windows and accents of fluorite, dogtooth calcite, dolomite, and rose quartz complete the décor. The nearby Grotto of the Lord’s Tomb features an apocalyptic scene of Jesus and Gabriel raising the dead, with gold crosses representing Christian martyrs set in fluorescent stones across the ceiling. The Holy Mother Grotto and Grotto of the Lord’s Tomb are typically open to visitors on Sundays between Easter and November 1.
Planned Gift Fuels Our Vision

DECADES AFTER LOGANSPORT NATIVE

Dennis Gilman moved to California, his home state—and preservation of its historic places—remained foremost in his heart. A longtime Indiana Landmarks member, Gilman passed away this year, but conveyed his continued support of Indiana Landmarks through a gift made through estate planning—proceeds of the sale of his California home.

“Even though Dennis had no intention of returning to Indiana, he left us his house because he believed in us,” says Indiana Landmarks President Marsh Davis. “His vision will help fuel our ability to carry out our vision.”

After spending his formative years in Logansport, Gilman went on to work in South Bend and Chicago. He returned to his hometown in 1979 and purchased an 1860s Victorian in the city’s Bankers Row Historic District. A hands-on supporter of preservation efforts, Gilman chaired the neighborhood organization and the city’s historic district review board, as well as Indiana Landmarks’ Affiliate Council. When Bankers Row landed on Indiana Landmarks’ 10 Most Endangered list in 2005, Gilman supported our efforts to rescue the street from dilapidation, conducting research on the history of the houses and the people who had owned and lived in them.

Even after retiring to California, he remained a faithful contributor to Indiana Landmarks and shared his passion through gift memberships, inviting friends with an appreciation for heritage and history to learn more about the organization’s efforts. Asked about his support of Indiana Landmarks (then Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana) in 2008, Dennis said, “One of the reasons I give the bulk of my charitable donations to Historic Landmarks is because they spend it wisely. Most of us aren’t rich, so when we give the money, we need to know that it is being spent for the purpose it’s intended. With Historic Landmarks, you save old buildings.”

Help Indiana Landmarks achieve even more by:

- Renewing your membership
- Making a donation in addition to membership
- Including Indiana Landmarks in your estate plans

For more information talk to Sharon Gamble, 800-450-4534 or visit indianalandmarks.org
IT’S EASY TO SEE THE MARK OF STINESVILLE’S limestone industry in the historic buildings lining Main Street. At one time, the town bustled with social activity and commerce fueled by four local limestone quarries. Now, however, a group of five historic limestone buildings is the only intact remnant of downtown. Four of the buildings have been vacant for decades, but working with Indiana Landmarks, town officials are turning to a new strategy to revive them: offering the group of structures for $1 to a party who will stabilize and restore them.

A small community located northwest of Bloomington, Stinesville developed in the 1850s as the limestone industry was taking hold in southern Indiana. By the 1890s, it was a boom town of nearly 1,000 residents, with stone workers and carvers arriving from all over the world to work in the quarries that supplied limestone to build the Monroe County Courthouse, the Indiana State Capitol, Indianapolis’s Soldiers and Sailors Monument, Chicago’s Tribune Tower, and the Masonic Temple in Washington, D.C.

The Town of Stinesville is partnering with Indiana Landmarks to find a new use for four historic limestone commercial buildings, offering them for sale for $1 to a buyer who will stabilize and restore them. Photo by Joshua Biggs

Between 1884 and 1894, a two-story I.O.O.F. Lodge and four limestone-faced commercial buildings were constructed in a row on Main Street. Their permanence represented the town’s belief that the prosperous times would continue. However, a 1916 fire destroyed Stinesville’s stone mill, and the quarries closed altogether by the 1960s.

The cluster of historic buildings appeared on Indiana Landmarks’ 10 Most Endangered list in the 1990s. Since then, the historic lodge has been partially rehabbed to house the Stinesville Mercantile and post office.

With handsome limestone facades and large storefront windows, the four vacant commercial buildings hold potential for any number of creative reuses, including live-work space, an event venue, restaurant or retail, or maker space for artisans or craftspeople.

Each building is one story with a full lower level, collectively enclosing approximately 9,000 square feet. The former lodge is not part of the request for proposals. The group is listed in the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Stinesville Commercial Historic District, a designation that makes them eligible for rehabilitation tax credits.

Rehabilitation proposals are due by 5 p.m. EST, Monday, November 15, 2021. Access full details on our website, indianalandmarks.org/stinesville-commercial-buildings, or contact Mark Dollase, Indiana Landmarks’ vice president of preservation services, mdollase@indianalandmarks.org with questions.
Tours & Events

November/December 2021

Visit indianalandmarks.org/tours-events or call 317-639-4534 to RSVP and receive information on upcoming events.

All times are eastern unless otherwise noted. Please note that some events are in-person, and others are virtual.

Cummins: Engines, Architecture, and Innovation
Nov. 4, Indianapolis and online
Cummins Heritage Center lead archivist Lori Lindberg, historian Steve Butler, and restoration manager Bruce Watson present an illustrated talk on the Indiana company’s history of automotive and engineering innovation, its outsized influence on architecture and preservation in Bartholomew County, and its future as a world leader in power production technology. Program begins at 6 p.m. at Indiana Landmarks Center with brief highlights from our Indiana Automotive affinity group, followed by talk and Q&A. $10/Indiana Landmarks member, $10/child (age 6-11) in advance, with all prices increasing by $5 on day of tour. Presented in partnership with Old Churches Indy and local congregations. See p. 6.

Architecture in Indianapolis, 1880-1920
Nov. 8, Indianapolis & online

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN Dr. James Glass leads a pictorial journey through Indianapolis architecture from 1880-1920. Glass’s illustrated presentation will take attendees through decades of design evolution shaped by developments in transportation, from the late-nineteenth-century steam railroad era to the advent of the automobile. Based on a forthcoming book by Glass, “Architecture in Indianapolis, 1880-1920,” is an official event of the Indianapolis Bicentennial. 6 p.m. $7/general public, free for Indiana Landmarks members. Join in person at Indiana Landmarks Center or watch online via Zoom.

Indiana Landmarks Emporium

Order online at bit.ly/RescuedRestored (link is case sensitive) or call 800-450-4534

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Contact Jennifer Hawk at jhawk@indianalandmarks.org or call 800-450-4534

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Indianapolis, IN 46260
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MADISON WAS A WORKING RIVER TOWN LONG before it drew attention for its dense collection of nineteenth-century houses and commercial buildings. The Eagle Cotton Mill was one of the workhorses, producing twine and fabric that shipped down the river. Built in 1884, the mill had been vacant for three decades when it landed on Indiana Landmarks’ 10 Most Endangered List in 2013. The bleak picture changed when Riverton LLC, the City of Madison, and the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC) put together a plan to revitalize the mill as an amenity designed to boost the entire region.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony in July, city leaders, residents, and members of the development team gathered to mark the mill’s $22 million transformation into an 85-room Fairfield Inn and Suites boutique hotel and conference center. The hotel is the first Fairfield Inn housed in a historic building, and designers embraced the opportunity to incorporate elements of its industrial character. More than 200 huge windows illuminate the interior, where original beams support soaring 12-foot to 15-foot ceilings, offering one more reason to linger in the charming historic Ohio River city.

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