



# HISTORIC SCHOOLS

## *S u c c e s s S t o r i e s*

### Edward Lee McClain High School

*Greenfield, Ohio*

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The renovation of the Edward Lee McClain High School has created a new sense of pride in the town of Greenfield, Ohio. The school was a 1914 gift to the community by Mr. Edward Lee McClain, a local inventor and entrepreneur. This unique school houses a vast art collection, including paintings, murals, statues, Tiffany lamps as well as a Skinner pipe organ and rooftop gardens. Due to significant renovation costs, the school was slated for demolition. This led to a preservation movement by the community, architects and School Board, which resulted in the Ohio School Facilities Commission (OSFC) overriding the two-thirds rule.

When the OSFC decided to demolish and replace this Georgian Revival style school, the local citizens worked hard to convince the Commission to reverse its decision. In a landmark case, this was one of the first two cases in which the OSFC decided to waive its two-thirds rule, which essentially forces a school district to build new if the cost of renovation exceeds two-thirds of the cost of building a new school. Even now, the OSFC grants these waivers only begrudgingly.



Equipping the students with 21st century technology was viewed as a priority during renovation undertakings. Technical high capacity wiring was added to each classroom. The school's renovation has received numerous achievement awards, including the National Trust for Historic Preservation "Historic Neighborhood School" honor award. The preservation of McClain High School has had a significant impact on the neighborhood. The school once again serves as the hub of the community and as people travel from all over the United States to see the artwork collection that is housed in the renovated school, the community's tourist market has increased.

### Architect/Builder

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### Description of Project

#### Project

**Address:** 200 North 5th Street  
Greenfield, Ohio 45123

#### Status

**Local, state, national designation:** The state recently granted a Historical Marker to the school.

**Architect:** W.B. Ittner from St. Louis (Mr. Edward Lee McClain, an inventor and entrepreneur, absorbed 100 percent of the construction cost).

**Date of construction:** 1915

**Date of renovation:** TRIAD Architects completed the renovation in the spring of 2001. This renovation included adding a second story to the elementary school building.

**Date of previous renovation:** In 1957, the original elementary school was changed to a middle school. During this same year, a one-story elementary school was added.



### Use

(McClain serves as a high school, middle school and elementary school)

**Size:** 203,771 square feet (total existing building size) 45,887 square feet (total addition size)

**Student/teacher ratio:** 20:1

**Alternative uses:** McClain High School contains a community-learning center for Greenfield citizens. For more than ninety years, the school has served as a venue for public meetings, civic affairs, workshops, music and art classes and recreation and sporting activities.

### Location

**Historic district:** No

**Walking distance:** The school is located in the center of the community.

**Bussing vs. walking:** Due to its central location, students, parents and teachers can easily walk to the school.

### Cost

**Total renovation cost:** \$17,828,457.00

**Per square foot:** \$66.00

**Per student:** \$11,163.72

**Source of funding**

**Local:** 18% funding

**State:** 82% funding

**Federal:** None

**Private:** None

**Tax credits:** None

**Cost estimates for new school construction:** \$125 per square foot



### Problems and/or Threats

**Close the school building:** No

**Raze existing building in order to build a new facility:** The State of Ohio's aggressive initiative to improve school facilities advocates the construction of new schools. Community members feared that McClain High School would be demolished.

**Policies promoting the construction of school sprawl in outlying areas:**

**Acreage standards:** No

**State funding biases:** The total cost to renovate the school was more than two-thirds the cost to build a new school. The community feared that state funding would be forfeited to maintain or renovate the school.

**Inadequate government funding:** While funding did not cover the total renovation costs, stakeholders managed to work within a budget.

**Acceptance of donated sites for new school construction:** No

**Inflated school renovation cost estimates:** No

**Poor or bad renovation job:** The community was disappointed by the 1957 renovation. Community members viewed the new addition as a detraction from the grand campus. Throughout the years, further renovations to the building has been similarly unwelcome. In addition to covering marble tiles with new walls, air conditioning ductwork had been exposed on the exterior of each building.

### Resolution

**Strategies or state/local polices utilized to achieve success story:**

The Ohio School Facilities Commission overrode the two-thirds rule, which enabled the school to be renovated.

### Renovation Success

#### Undertakings

**Classroom size and circulation:** The average classroom size was satisfactory prior to renovation undertakings.

**State-of-the-art facility:** Yes

**Computer technology:** Equipping the students with 21st century technology was viewed as a priority during renovation undertakings. Technical high capacity wiring as well as additional plugs were added to classrooms. Meets education programmatic needs: Yes

**Building codes:** Since there were no structural alterations or changes to the use of the building, there was no need to meet new building codes.

**Life safety codes**

**Asbestos:** State funding paid for the removal of asbestos.

**Fire safety:** The building has abundant nonflammable materials.

**Air quality:** None

**Handicapped accessibility:** Numerous elevators were added to the school.

**Parking:** In regards to parking, the school was neither up to code before or after the renovation.

**Playing fields:** The football field was not encroached upon during the renovation.

## Awards Granted

**Achievements/Recognition:** The school's renovation has received several achievement awards, including the National Trust for Historic Preservation "Historic Neighborhood School" honor award.

## Future Endeavors

**Maintenance plans:** The school's mission is to be as cost effective as possible for future endeavors.

**Maintenance funding:** Tax money will be used to maintain the school for the next 23 years.

## Description of Outcome

### Community Response

**Neighborhood stability:** The school has always served as the hub of the community. It would have been an embarrassment to the community if the school had continued to deteriorate and not renovated.

**Safety:** Yes

**Community reinvestment:** Since the school was never closed, community reinvestment has neither increased nor decreased since the renovation.

**Economic growth:** The community's tourist market has increased from the increase in visitors to the renovated school.

## Community Benefits

### Students:

**Increased academic achievement:** There is belief that increased academic achievement at McClain since the renovation is due to improvement of physical facilities.

**Independence:** No

**Teachers:** Teachers feel that they are able to be more efficient following the renovation.

**Parents:** Parents are thrilled and have expressed pride in the school's renovation.

## Quotes

"It's an excellent compromise of what it was and what it will be in the future."

—Phillip Cornett, Greenfield Superintendent

"Greenfield's efforts have caused Ohio to re-think its demolish and new construction blueprint for school 'improvement.' Ohio is now embracing the restoration and renovation of older historic school buildings."

—David King, Member of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.



*McClain hallways before and after renovation.*