



NEWSLETTER / NEWS RELEASE
From the Office of Mayor Thomas P. Schneider

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**“SAVE THE SHRINE” CAMPAIGN BEGINS TO RESTORE AND PRESERVE
HISTORIC BUILDINGS ON THE GROUNDS OF ST. FERDINAND SHRINE”**

The Friends of Old St. Ferdinand, a non-profit organization dedicated to caring for the historic St. Ferdinand Shrine in Florissant, has begun a campaign to raise funds to restore and preserve several buildings on the grounds of the shrine.

The “Save the Shrine” campaign began in September with a goal of raising \$400,000. That is the minimal cost estimated by Shrine supporters to repair Old St. Ferdinand Church and adjoining buildings including the convent and rectory as well as the historic school house.

The St. Ferdinand convent was constructed in 1819 for Mother Philippine Duchesne, who later was canonized by the Roman Catholic Church as St. Rose Philippine Duchesne (one of the parishes in the St. Louis Archdiocese in Florissant is named in her honor). In 1821 a new church was built on the grounds to replace the original log church that had stood since 1789, three years after the Village of St. Ferdinand (now Florissant) was founded by the Spanish Governor of the Louisiana Territory.

A rectory was added in 1840 and the two floors of the school house were built in 1887-88. Floods, lighting strikes and erosion over time have led to some deterioration of the buildings.

“The Historic Old St. Ferdinand Shrine church and convent both are older than the Old Cathedral in St. Louis, and the convent pre-dates Missouri’s statehood in 1821 and may be the oldest building still standing in the Louisiana Purchase territory. I arranged for Ameren UE to illuminate the buildings to protect them and to reflect our rich history.” said Florissant Mayor Thomas P. Schneider.

“For nearly two centuries Old St. Ferdinand has served the Spanish, German, French and Irish communities that have made Florissant one of the biggest and most historic cities in Missouri. We hope that residents in Florissant and greater St. Louis will respond with donations to maintain one of the area’s most important historical institutions for generation to come,” he added.

In 1958 the Friends of Old St. Ferdinand organization was founded to preserve the buildings and grounds at historic St. Ferdinand Shrine, which were significantly damaged by a lightning strike in 1966. Substantial repairs were made at that time, but now renovations are once again needed.

Immediate needs include masonry repairs with cleaning, moisture sealing and tuck-pointing of all brick buildings; repairs and painting of the rectory porch; the convent porch; major window work with some sash replacement, as well as painting and puttying of all others; replacement of the handicap access ramp; repair and painting of church doors; and moisture control problems associated with sump pump plumbing.

The total, estimated cost for all of these repairs is at least \$400,000. This total does not include work that should be done to repair the church ceiling, which will be expensive.

In their effort to raise funds The Friends of Old St. Ferdinand have given donors two options: If donating online they have created a “Go Fund Me” page. Please follow this link: <https://www.gofundme.com/RestoreTheShrine> Please share this link freely with anyone who may be interested in helping. The Friends of Old St. Ferdinand have also created a group called the 200 Club, in honor of the Shrine’s upcoming 200th anniversary in 2019. All donations will be acknowledged by publication of donor names in the Old St. Ferdinand newsletter. Those donating \$200 or more will be recognized with name plates mounted to an honor board outside of the rectory office. Mayor Schneider asks you to join him in supporting the 200 Club.

Checks should be made payable to Friends of Old St. Ferdinand and mailed to Friends of Old St. Ferdinand, #1 rue St. Francois, Florissant MO 63031. Those donors wishing to join the 200 Club should mark “200 Club” in the memo section of their check or in the comment section of the “Go Fund Me” page. Donors are also asked to affix a return address with the name of the donor they wish to be recognized.

For more information call the Friends of Old St. Ferdinand office at 314-837-2110 between 9 a.m. and 12 noon Monday through Saturday, e-mail oldstferdinandshrine@gmail.com or visit its web site at www.StFerdinandShrine.com.