

CASE STUDY OLD ST. FERDINAND SHRINE Florissant, MO

Old St. Ferdinand Shrine is a historic shrine and campus dating from the early 1800s in Missouri. The Shrine is on the National Registry of Historic Places and is managed by the nonprofit, Friends of Old St. Ferdinand Shrine. The Shrine and historic site consists of four buildings on their original locations: the 1819 convent, 1821 church, 1840 rectory, and 1888 schoolhouse. Today, the buildings are used for historic tours, religious pilgrimages and special events. Artifacts from virtually every era in Old St. Ferdinand's history are on display in the museum and throughout the buildings.



HOPE FLOATS

In July 2022, record rainfall fell in the St. Louis area and flooded the convent, church, rectory, and school house with almost 3 feet of water. The following are excerpts written by the nonprofit about the restoration project:

July 26, 2022

We were able to get into the buildings around 3:00 p.m. today. About 3' of water got into the convent, shrine, and rectory. We had about 2' in the school house. We have some damage, but our insurance has already been out. We are going to start scheduling appointments for repairs, clean-up and restoration starting this week. As always, thank you to our community and everyone pitching in. We were able to get the first layer of dirt out of the school house and off the buildings and parking lot.

July 28, 2022

The electricity is still turned off until the wires that were submerged in water can be replaced. Generators, fans, and dehumidifiers were delivered last night to get the buildings dried out. Once this is complete, the needed repairs will begin and we will all sleep better knowing the artifacts, artwork, and relics housed in the buildings are in a stable and dry environment. We are so happy to report that all of the exterior items (picnic tables, benches, and whiskey barrels) that floated away have been recovered.

INDUSTRIES:

Faith-Based Facilities, Historical Buildings

SERVICE:

Water Damage Restoration, Contents Restoration



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July 29, 2022

We wait. We are working on evaluating projects, making many, many lists, calling for estimates, and thanking everyone for their support while we wait. For repairs and restoration to start in the Shrine, we need the dehumidifiers and fans to do their work first. Once things are dry, we can start scheduling the work. Drying is estimated to be complete in 2 weeks. We will keep giving updates as we make progress. Thank you everyone for your support, what a week!



July 30, 2022

We cannot thank Steve Gehner at **BELFOR Property Restoration** for his round the clock efforts to get everything drying and getting all the demo started. We are so grateful for his all his hard work.



August 2, 2022

The restoration crew continues to take out what cannot be restored. Other items like statues, artifacts, and other objects have been removed for safe-keeping and cleaning. It is important to keep these items in a stable low-humidity environment ... Thank you **BELFOR Property Restoration** for all your hard work.

August 8, 2022

BELFOR Property Restoration has removed the damaged items, put items to restore in a safe place, and now we continue to wait for the drying to be completed. All trim work has been taken out to allow more exposure into the walls to help out with the drying. We now start the process of evaluating our inventory list of restoration and replacement items. We cannot thank **BELFOR** enough with their round the clock work and everyone in the community that has dropped off donations for the Shrine and food for the workers.



December 2022

The Shrine has reached safe levels of humidity after months of drying out. With stable moisture levels, restoration can begin. The first focus of restoration is opening the school house. This rental space brings in a small amount of income and minimal restoration of the four campus buildings. While all the buildings are actively in restoration, the school house's timeline is moving faster.

While insurance is covering flood damage, we are using the fundraising money to add on, supplement, and finish other projects and repairs. Some items on this list include updating the lights in the school house, refinishing the stairs, and carrying the flooring that the insurance is replacing throughout the building.

In the church and convent, plaster work is ending. With that work complete, the next steps will be putting back the original mill work, paint, repairing the floors, and cleaning statues. The timeline for the School House to reopen will be in April and the convent, rectory, and Church to follow in the summer.



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From BELFOR's perspective, one of the most satisfying parts of the reconstruction work was preserving the wooden floors in the historic church. The original hardwood floors were not only salvageable but they were also restored so well that the finished project exceeded all expectations.



CHALLENGES

- ✓ **LACK OF POWER** - The lack of electricity posed significant challenges. BELFOR partnered with the Shrine's HVAC contractor to install a temporary unit that could help power a climate-controlled display case holding artifacts and monuments from the past 200+ years.

Because of the lack of electricity, the alarm system was knocked out of service so the Florissant Police Department helped provide security measures.

- ✓ **SAVING THE HARDWOOD FLOORS** - Saving the original hardwood floors in the church was a high priority for the customer. The crawl space was vented to the exterior, and it was difficult to dry the floor and affected walls with exposure to the outside. The warped boards were removed so that BELFOR could get conditioned air into the crawl space. BELFOR ran lay-flat from the desiccant dehumidifier to vent the crawl space and set axial fans outside in front of the vents to draw warm dry air through the space and vent outside. This also allowed BELFOR to pull any damp odors out of the building. The process to use hot dry air was slow as to not over-dry the wood plank ceiling or wood altar. This extended the dry time but the process to preserve the original woodwork was successful.



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CONTENTS RESTORATION

The Old St. Ferdinand Shrine is the oldest remaining church built between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains. It was the home of the region's only canonized Catholic saint, Saint Rose Philippine Duchesne. Inside the buildings are historic architecture, stained glass windows, statues and valuable artifacts from Old St. Ferdinand's history. Much of the artwork and artifacts were removed so that it could be cleaned and restored.



SCHOOL HOUSE

BELFOR was able to remove the original slate chalk boards in the School House and reinstall them.



CHURCH CHANDELIER

The chandeliers were relocated to the Shrine from the 1904 World's Fair held in St. Louis. **BELFOR** performed detailed cleaning of dust and replacement of light bulbs once the project was completed.



ARTIFACTS

BELFOR removed and cleaned the church chalices, candle holders and crosses.



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ARTWORK AND STATUES

The Monument display case held the Vestments of Father Desmet who was ordained at The Shrine as well as original Tabernacles. The artwork and statues were removed and cleaned.



The project began in July 2022 and ended in December 2023. **BELFOR** handled both the mitigation and reconstruction portions of the recovery.

For more information on the restoration, visit <https://www.oldstferdinandshrine.org/>.

