



SCENIC
OHIO

NEWS

SPECIAL EDITION: HISTORIC OHIO CEMETERIES

Scenic Ohio's mission is to serve as a leading advocate for the development and preservation of Ohio's scenic corridors and landscapes.

Scenic Ohio is a 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofit organization. It is the only nonprofit in Ohio dedicated to protecting and enhancing the visual quality and scenic character of Ohio's towns and countrysides.

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Scenic Ohio
P.O. Box 09816
Columbus, OH 43209

This special edition of the Scenic Ohio News recognizes seven of Ohio's historic cemeteries as treasures to be honored as true "gardens for the living." The important thoughtful planning, restoration, preservation and maintenance of historic cemeteries is work of the highest order. Cemeteries included in this newsletter are exemplary and are important examples of Ohio's historic cemeteries. They include large landmark cemeteries, as well as small cemeteries that have been restoring their historic grounds.

The Scenic Ohio Awards Program recognizes the work of organizations, agencies, and individuals that conserve, restore, maintain and manage Ohio's scenic places.



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This year the Scenic Ohio Awards Program honors 7 Ohio historic cemeteries:

- Ferncliff Cemetery & Arboretum
- Green Lawn Cemetery
- Mt. Tabor Cemetery
- Lake View Cemetery
- Old Burying Ground
- Spring Grove Cemetery & Arboretum
- Stratford Cemetery

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Ohio Historic Cemeteries

Ohio cemeteries are places of great history. They are unique landscapes of ancient forests, cliffs, prairie, waterscapes and rolling hillsides. They are scenic places of art, architecture, sculpture and the fabric of our long history that stretches back in time to Ancient American Indians.

Presidents, leaders of industry, frontiersmen, poets, mayors, artists, veterans of wars from the Revolution, 1812, Civil War, WWI, WWII, and beyond reside in Ohio's famous and modest places of burial. Famous names abound, including Paul Laurence Dunbar, Simon Kenton, Rockefeller, Garfield, Wright, Oakley, J.P. Parker, Longworth, Kroger, Beaty, Bombeck, Firestone, Cy Young, U.S. Presidents and the list could go on forever. Numerous heroic Americans of all races, religions, gender and heritage provide inspiring stories at our Ohio cemeteries. They are the most artful repositories of our communities' founders, growth and accomplishments.

Not to be overlooked are the Ancient American Indian burial areas called Adena, Hopewell and Fort Ancient cultural sites. These ancient Ohio sites were honored by Scenic Ohio a few years ago. Several Ohio cemeteries encompass both Ancient American Indian burials and early settlers' interment.

The Rural Garden Cemetery movement flourished in Ohio with early notable leaders of design, such as Adolf Strauch, the Olmsted brothers, Howard Daniels, John Dick, Ellen Shipman and others. Today's cemetery planners continue that landscape planning legacy with a new emphasis on cremation burial which provides our landlocked old cemeteries with more capacity.

Grassroot efforts to restore small historic burial grounds are a new inspiration growing across Ohio. Volunteers and historians bring new life in these unique historic burial spaces with careful clearing, monument restorations, interpretive signage and careful maintenance practices. These efforts honor and connect the thread of the past into the future with respect.

We honor these large and small scenic places and the grand efforts that elevate our Ohio history.

Gary W. Meisner, FASLA
Chairman, Scenic Ohio



Green Lawn Cemetery
Columbus, OH (Franklin County)
Photo: Randall L. Schieber

A Photographic Portrait Of Ohio's Cemeteries and Burial Grounds

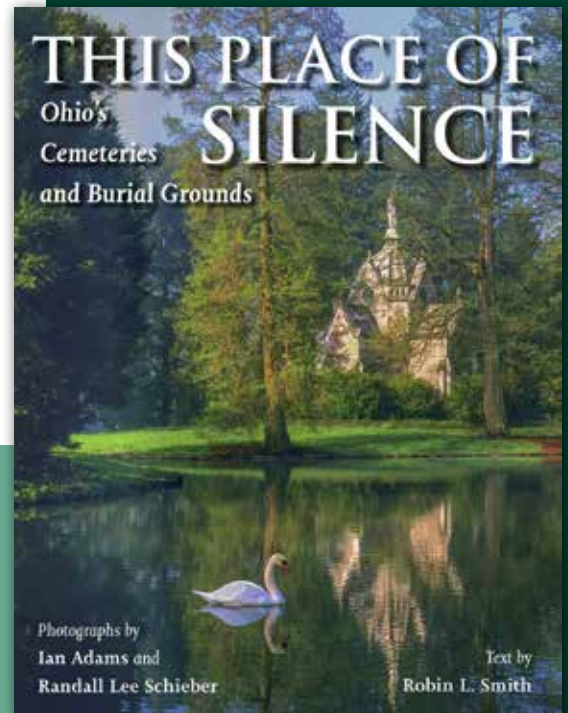
The book, *This Place of Silence, Ohio's Cemeteries and Burial Grounds* by Ohio photographers Ian Adams and Randall Lee Schieber, with text and captions by Robin L. Smith, provides an overview of the history of burial grounds, from prehistoric mounds through modern “green” cemeteries—and many fascinating details about gravestones, mausoleums, statuary, and cemetery landscapes.

The introduction provides an overview of the historical place of burial grounds in our society and of their value today not only as rich sources of history but also as repositories of art, architecture, and nature.

Cemeteries record the history of their communities in their names and dates, but they also tell us how a community wanted its history recorded: How did this community see itself? What was important to that community? Who were the prominent people, and what did they accomplish? Graveyards, especially older ones, are also full of quirky names and mysteries. Who would name a child Nimrod, and where did that name come from? Why would two families build identical side-by-side mausoleums? Who would want a grave marker that looks like a pile of stones?

Chapters cover prehistoric mounds and early European American burial grounds; the evolution from rural cemeteries in the 19th century to modern green burials; art, architecture, and symbolism in cemeteries; cemeteries and nature; military and institutional burial grounds; and distinctive ethnic cemeteries.

The authors highlight and showcase these often beautiful but sometimes neglected pieces of history. Cemeteries are not dark, morbid places to be avoided, but historic landscapes that are full of beauty, hope, and honor for those Ohioans who came before us.



"This Place of Silence, Ohio's Cemeteries and Burial Grounds" Photographs by Ian Adams and Randall Lee Schieber and Text by Robin L. Smith
Swallow Press / Ohio University Press



Get the book.
Scan the QR code for
ordering information.



Photo: Bryan Heinz



Photo: Randall Lee Schieber

Spring Grove Cemetery & Arboretum



Photo: Randall Lee Schieber

Spring Grove Cemetery & Arboretum is a National Historic Landmark in Cincinnati that expands over 750 acres of manicured landscape and undeveloped woodlands. Since its founding in 1845, Spring Grove has served families experiencing the loss of loved ones and connected people with the history and heritage of the Cincinnati area.

Adolph Strauch's landscape plan was developed at Spring Grove in the mid 1800s and it quickly became the model for cemeteries that followed. His influence can be strongly felt and seen in the miles of winding roadways and the extraordinary views of fifteen bodies of water.

Spring Grove's maintained grounds are a horticultural treasure, showcasing thousands of plants labeled for study by the general public and the horticultural industry.

Twenty-six champion trees dot the landscape as the largest of their species in the state of Ohio, with the September elm being the largest of its type recorded in the country. A person can't help but feel connected to the history and legacy of the land as they walk under the 400-year-old white oak in section 101 or the 250-year-old Chinkapin oak near the Dexter Mausoleum.



Photo: Randall Lee Schieber



Photo: Randall Lee Schieber

As Spring Grove Cemetery & Arboretum celebrates its 180th year, the grounds remain vibrant as the cemetery expands with new options for cremation placement, full body green burial, as well as traditional land burial and entombment.

A twelve-acre parcel in the center of the property is dedicated woodland, known as the Woodland Preserve, where no burials take place.

A trail runs through the preserve for the use and enjoyment of visitors. Numerous talks, tours, and public events bring a flurry of activity to the grounds---both day and sometimes night!

Visitors and staff are greeted daily by a variety of wildlife. Whitetail deer, fox, turtles, frogs, fish and nearly one hundred species of birds, including wild turkey and raptors of all types, call Spring Grove home.

A pair of serene swans grace the land and waters of the cemetery. There are even the occasional sightings of bobcat, coyote and bald eagle.

Spring Grove Cemetery & Arboretum is a true gem in the heart of Cincinnati.



Photo: Brian Heinz

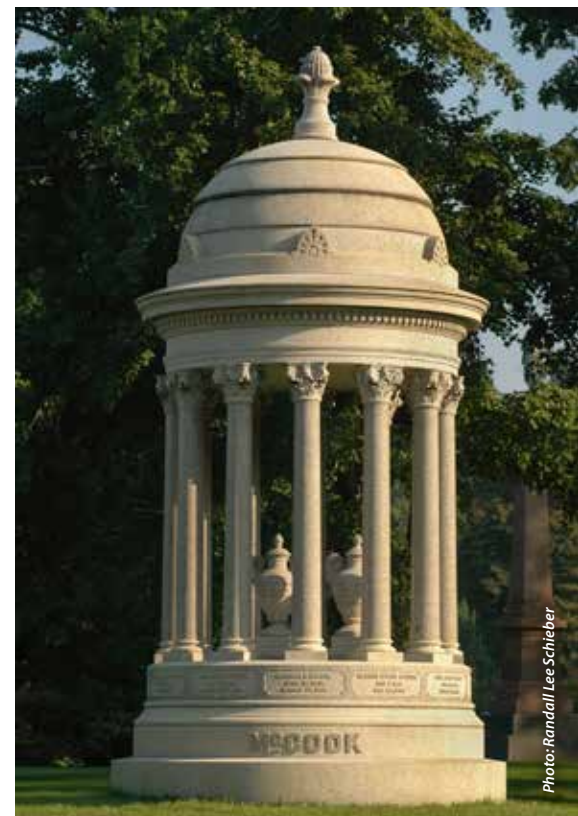


Photo: Randall Lee Schieber



Photo: Randall Lee Schieber



Photo: Courtesy of Salem Township Board of Trustees

Mt. Tabor Church & Cemetery

The Mt. Tabor Church & Cemetery is a historic gem on a hill overlooking the Mt. Tabor Valley in Salem Township, Champaign County. It is located one half mile south of the Ohio Caverns and approximately three miles southeast of the Piatt Castles.

The Mt. Tabor Church & Cemetery are treasured and beloved by many in the area. It is the desire of the Salem Township Board of Trustees to do their due diligence in preserving this lovely, historic church and cemetery setting.

The cemetery at Mt. Tabor surrounds the church on three sides. Veterans of the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, World War I, and World War II are interred in the cemetery.



Photo: Randall Lee Schieber

The first Mt. Tabor Church, a log meeting house, was erected in 1816. It stood on land originally selected by Griffith and Martha Evans to be a graveyard at the death of their daughter circa 1812. Deeds show the Evans family gave two-and-one-half acres of land "for the purpose of erecting a meeting house and establishing a burying site." Camp meetings, religious gatherings popular in frontier Ohio, were held on the hillside west of the meeting house. The log meeting house burned in 1824 and was replaced with a brick church on the same spot.



Photo: Courtesy of Salem Township Board of Trustees



Photo: Courtesy of Salem Township Board of Trustees

Though the cemetery is still active, the church has been inactive for several years, with the exception of a few weddings. The picturesque and serene church and cemetery setting in Champaign County is worthy of every effort to preserve its beauty and historic value.

The cemetery is renowned for its three cast zinc monuments. Far more uncommon than the usual stone monuments, these hollow grave markers, with their distinctive bright gray color, were produced only briefly during the 1880s and 1890s.



Photo: Courtesy of Salem Township Board of Trustees



Photo: Randall Lee Schieber

Ferncliff Cemetery & Arboretum

Nestled in the heart of Springfield, Ferncliff Cemetery & Arboretum is a serene and historic landscape that has provided a final resting place for over 80,000 souls since its founding in 1863.

Spanning over 218 acres, Ferncliff is more than a cemetery—it is a beautifully preserved place of reflection, and a sanctuary of nature and history.

The name Ferncliff signals the beautifully unique fern-grown cliffs located along Buck Creek near the Plum Street entrance. Then, as now, Ferncliff stands unequalled in its beauty, landscape and constant care.

Ferncliff is renowned for its rolling hills, majestic trees, tranquil ponds and thoughtfully curated landscapes. Ferncliff is home to diverse plant species, enhancing both its ecological and aesthetic appeal. The cemetery's historic mausoleums, unique statuary and architectural features add to its timeless charm, making it a place where history, beauty and remembrance intertwine.

Ferncliff continues to evolve with the changing needs of families, offering traditional burials, cremation memorialization, and soon, a new green burial area for those seeking environmentally friendly options. Committed to preservation and innovation, Ferncliff remains a pillar of the community, dedicated to maintaining its breathtaking landscapes while embracing forward-thinking cemetery practices.

Believing that every family member deserves a peaceful place of rest, Ferncliff offers Whispering Memories Pet Haven for the furry friends who have brought so much joy to their human companions. Whispering Memories Pet Haven is a serene space for quiet reflection, where the gentle whispers of nature create a sense of peace and remembrance.



Photo: Randall Lee Schieber



Photo Credit: NarrativesShots by Terri & David Norris Courtesy of Ferncliff Cemetery & Arboretum



Photo Credit: NatureShots by Terri & David Norris Courtesy of Ferncliff Cemetery & Arboretum



Photo Credit: NatureShots by Terri & David Norris
Courtesy of Ferncliff Cemetery & Arboretum



Photo: Randall Lee Schieber



Photo Credit: NatureShots by Terri & David Norris
Courtesy of Ferncliff Cemetery & Arboretum

Receiving the Scenic Ohio Award is a testament to Ferncliff's ongoing efforts to provide a space of beauty, peace, and enduring legacy. As both a historic landmark and a vital part of the Springfield community, Ferncliff Cemetery & Arboretum remains a place where nature and remembrance come together in harmony.

For more information about Ferncliff Cemetery & Arboretum, please visit: www.ferncliffcemetery.org



Photo Credit: NatureShots by Terri & David Norris
Courtesy of Ferncliff Cemetery & Arboretum



Photo: Randall Lee Schieber



Photo: Courtesy of Green Lawn Cemetery

Green Lawn Cemetery

Green Lawn Cemetery was founded in 1848 and opened in 1849 to replace existing public cemeteries in Columbus. Green Lawn was a new concept as a private, rural cemetery, owned by an association of the lot owners.

It was designed by prominent landscape architect Howard Daniels and originally contained 84 acres of mixed oak forest along a glacial ridge.

Today, it is Ohio's second-largest cemetery, encompassing nearly 360 acres, with over 25 vintage family mausoleums and the Huntington Chapel, designed by Frank Packard and decorated by Louis Comfort Tiffany in 1902.

Green Lawn is expected to remain an active cemetery (selling spaces) for another 100 years and has been adding wide ranging options for cremation placement and options that are more environmentally conscious.

- Green Lawn is a certified arboretum and Audubon Important Bird Area.
- A vast collection of statues and memorials cover the cemetery, which was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2024.
- The cemetery has designated sections for three local synagogues, a Greek Orthodox section, a section for Catholic burials, and numerous institutional and fraternal sections
- Seven military sections date from the Civil War to present
- Noted burials include presidential families, Ohio governors, Medal of Honor recipients, notable actors, civil rights leaders, artists, and even a few infamous criminals among the 160,000+ interments.
- The grounds host plays and music events, an annual Day of the Dead celebration, 5K fundraisers, and various tours and other events.



Photo: Randall Lee Schieber



Photo: Randall Lee Schieber

Green Lawn Cemetery contains the plot of the Thurber family, which includes the grave of famous writer James Thurber. The plot includes a sculpture of "Muggs," an Airedale terrier who was the Thurber family dog.



Photo: Randall Lee Schieber



Photo: Randall Lee Schieber

This memorial to five-year-old Georgie Blount, who died in 1873 after an accidental fall at his family's American House Hotel, is one of Green Lawn's most beloved. Visitors often leave toys or tokens of affection and sometimes provide Georgie with a hat or coat during cold weather.



Photo: Courtesy of Green Lawn Cemetery



Photo: Ian Adams



Photo: Ian Adams

Lake View Cemetery

When the founding trustees of the Lake View Cemetery Association stood on 285 acres in the countryside of Cleveland, they knew they had found the tranquil setting for what would become Lake View Cemetery. Their vision was bold: create a peaceful, beautiful final resting place that would also serve as a space for the living to enjoy. In 1869 their vision came to fruition and is still true today.

Modeled after the Victorian and Edwardian garden cemeteries of France and England, Lake View is filled with dramatic natural landscapes, curved roadways, artful plantings and carefully designed monuments. It was designed as a rural retreat for urban dwellers to reconnect with the beauty and healing qualities of nature.



Photo: Ian Adams



Photo: Ian Adams

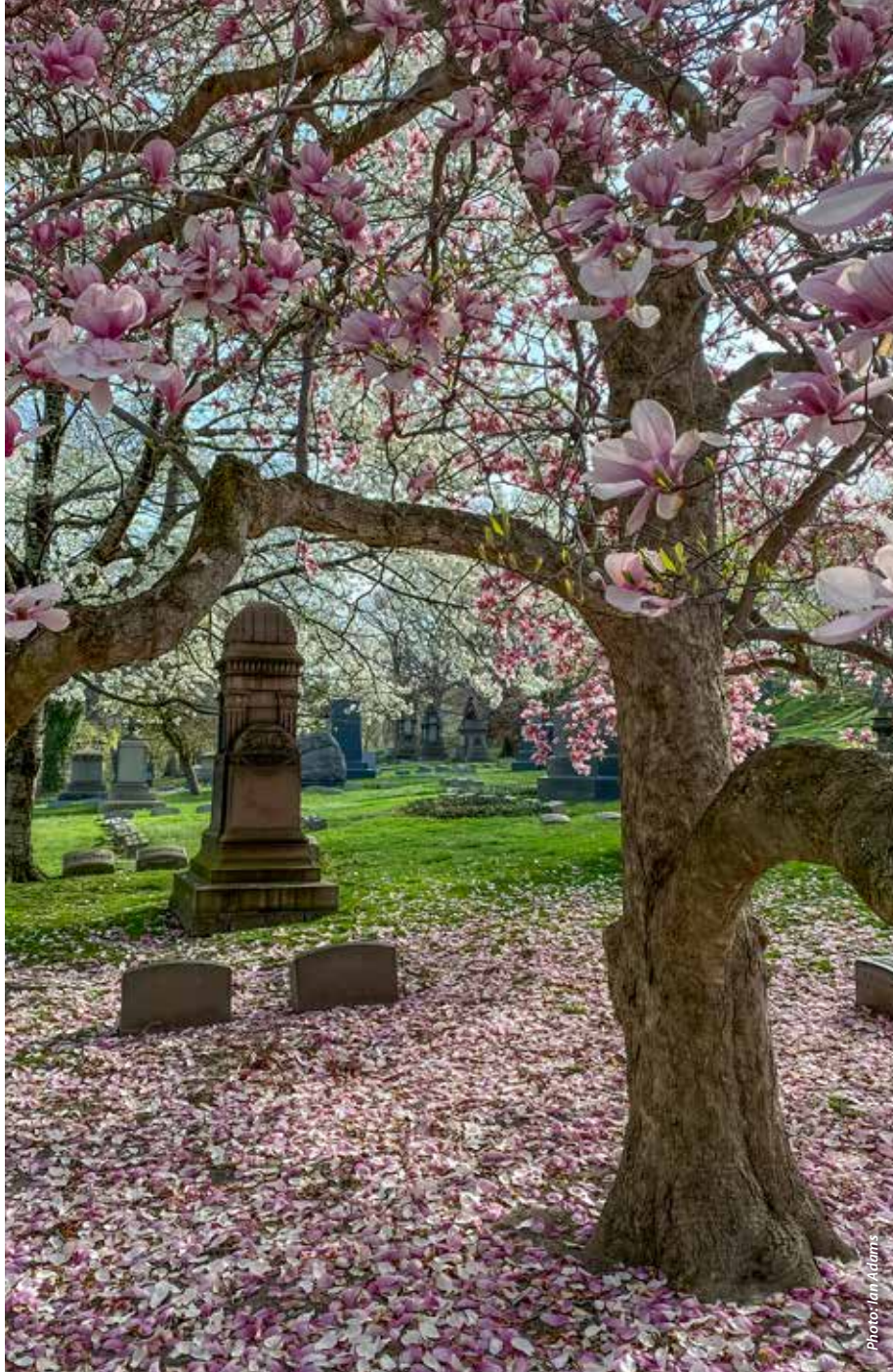


Photo: Ian Adams



Photo: Ian Adams

Two sites within Lake View Cemetery are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The first is the James A. Garfield Memorial, erected in 1890 as the tomb of assassinated President James A. Garfield. The second is Wade Memorial Chapel, which began construction in 1898 and was completed in 1901. It honors the memory of Jephtha Wade, one of the cemetery's co-founders, and was donated by his grandson.

Visitors are welcome to explore 285 breathtaking acres of natural vistas, horticultural gems and historical landmarks.

Throughout the year Lake View hosts events for visitors of all interests, including music, art, history and horticulture.



Photo: Ian Adams

Harvey Pekar (1939-2010) was an American underground comic book writer, music critic and media personality. His gravestone features his quote "Life is about women, gigs, an' bein' creative." Fans have decorated the gravesite with multicolored pens and pencils driven into the ground.



Photo: BillionGraves.com



Photo: BillionGraves.com

Old Burying Ground

The Old Burying Ground (a.k.a. Pioneer Cemetery) is located in Greenfield, Ohio, and is the oldest of the three Greenfield cemeteries. General Duncan McArthur, founder of Greenfield in 1799, gave the land for the cemetery. There are almost 900 burials in the cemetery.

The earliest known birth year is 1760 and the last known burial occurred in 1988. War veterans buried here are from The Revolutionary War, War of 1812, The Civil War, Spanish-American War and WWII.

In 2013 two volunteers attended a day-long cemetery preservation workshop in Warren County, Ohio. This led to the first formal work session at the cemetery in 2014. To date, there have been over 100 volunteer sessions and over 1,800 volunteer hours of work.

Because there was no real map showing specific burial locations other than the historical list provided in "Cemetery Inscriptions of Highland County, Ohio," photographs of the gravestones were taken by section and uploaded to the BillionGraves.com website and a map of the cemetery was completed.

In 2025, restoration and maintenance efforts by the Old Burying Ground Preservation Project are planned to continue, including cleaning, repairing and straightening gravestones and beginning the repair of over 50 above-ground box tombs.



Photo: Courtesy of John King



Photo: Courtesy of John King

Prominent Abolitionist and minister Samuel Crothers is buried near the site where he gave the first sermon against slavery.



Photo: Courtesy of John King



Photo: Courtesy of John King



Photo: FindAGrave

The Stratford Cemetery

If you've ever had the experience of stumbling upon a weathered pioneer cemetery, your mind probably became filled with all sorts of questions. Who is buried here, and what stories could they tell?

For the people interred in such burial grounds, life was perilous and a gamble. They could have been killed by an American Indian arrow, cut a finger and died from what was then called "lockjaw" (tetanus) or simply not survived childhood.

Stratford Ecological Center, an educational farm in Delaware County, is trying to piece together some of the stories about the pioneers buried in the cemetery hidden deep in a woods on the farm. John Tetz, an educational guide at Stratford Ecological Center, has been one of the biggest advocates for the cemetery, both in cleaning it up and conducting research on its history. He is also a great promoter of the cemetery's importance. John is joined by many other hearty souls who give their time for the cause of history and caring for this place that matters.

Veterans of the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Mexican-American War and the Civil War are buried here, as well as 13 children 6 years old or younger. Dates of deaths on the stones range from 1816 to 1888, and 59 souls are buried here, according to records.

Restoration includes cutting down saplings and trimming larger trees in the cemetery, which is on a knoll in the woods. All stones will be cleaned, and those that have toppled or are buried will be reset. When the restoration is complete, access to the cemetery will be through the Stratford Ecological Center's visitors center.



Photo: John Tetz



Photo: FindAGrave



Photo: John Tetz



SCENIC OHIO

Scenic Ohio is an affiliate of Scenic America.

Created in 1933 as the Ohio Roadside Council, Scenic Ohio is the only nonprofit in Ohio dedicated to protecting and enhancing the visual quality and scenic character of Ohio's towns and countryside.

Scenic Ohio seeks to educate the public and elected officials about their ability to enact stricter laws to enhance and protect the visual quality of the landscape.

Scenic Ohio is an entirely volunteer nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization.

JOIN US and help protect your scenery.

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OUR MISSION AND GOALS:

Serve as a leading advocate for the development and preservation of Ohio's scenic corridors and landscapes.

Preserve and expand Scenic Byways. Conserve Ohio's scenic, historic, cultural and ecological resources.

Educate the public on the importance of scenic values in relationship to cultural / historic tourism and the economic growth and well-being of small villages and cities.

Elevate the importance of scenic values in relationship to Ohio's gateways, portals and "views from the road" for millions of travelers in Ohio.

Advance context-sensitive design. Work with local jurisdictions, villages, cities, counties and townships to knit transportation improvements with land use, gateways and other local needs.

Reduce proliferation of off-site signage and billboards that degrade property values and create unsafe distractions and public welfare issues along state and federal highway systems.

Advance "Green" solutions like vegetative sound walls and storm water bio-retention to modernize and make highway corridors more sustainable.

Educate ODOT Districts on how to better manage the "greensward" of our highway corridors.

Give back to local jurisdictions in our Home Rule State the ability to control their visual resources by providing amortization legislation.

Work with local jurisdictions and state agencies, including ODOT, Ohio History Connection, TourismOhio, Ohio Humanities, Ohio Department of Commerce, ODNR, garden clubs and historical societies to preserve and conserve scenic resources.

CURRENT PROGRAMS:

Working with ODOT to improve roadways, including promotion of living sound walls and improving vegetative management practices. Continue the Scenic Ohio "Green Highways" educational workshops with each of the 12 ODOT District offices.

Working with Ohio Humanities, Ohio History Connection, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, ODOT and TourismOhio to advance a unified online Scenic Resource map and improved Ohio tourism website.

Meeting with Ohio Garden Clubs of America to coordinate advocacy of issues of mutual interest.

Recognizing agencies, organizations and individuals who have significantly contributed to preserving, conserving and enhancing the visual resources of Ohio with the annual Scenic Ohio Awards program. Conducting the awards program to maximize public education on the importance of scenic resources.

Continuing to advocate for safe and beautiful highway corridors that minimize distractions that reduce safety to the driving public. This includes distracting lighting, on-premise signs, off-premise signs, billboards and digital billboards.

www.ScenicOH.org

