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# An Individual's Role in Heritage Preservation: Insights from the Historic Firehouse

Suman Kumar Roy[§ ϑ *] iD

**Affiliations**
§ PhD Candidate, The Heritage Studies Ph.D. Program, Arkansas State University (OA)

**Qualifications**
ϑ MA in Heritage Studies; MA in History; MA in Development Studies

## Abstract

Institutions and policymakers often dominate heritage preservation. Global preservation lists often overlook the critical role of individuals, with no recognized criteria for those who actively initiate, restore, sustain, and preserve heritage. Through a case study and historical analysis of the Historic Firehouse in Springfield, Missouri, this thesis examines its critical heritage to explain how the restoration, adaptation, and reuse of a historic building can play a vital role for society, transforming it into a vibrant social and commercial venue for events such as weddings and receptions, birthday parties, seminars, and business banquets, thereby creating civic event space. Recently, individual initiative worldwide has played a role in heritage conservation in many ways. Historic Firehouse 2 is one such case study that demonstrates the new dimensions of private enterprise in heritage conservation. This thesis argues that individuals play a crucial role in restoring historic buildings and developing sustainable heritage preservation through demolition and reactivation, grounded in the development of heritage practice in society. By framing heritage as conservation, restoration, management as practice, community heritage, sustainable heritage, history, and tourism, this study concludes that sustainable heritage often depends on individual initiative and local engagement. Therefore, heritage restoration goes beyond static conservation and can support economic and social development, save historic buildings from demolition, and earn a place in historic preservation programs.

**Keywords:** *Adaptive Reuse, Community Heritage, Historic Firehouse, Individual Agency, Sustainable Heritage Practice*

*** Corresponding author** Suman Kumar Roy

## 1. Introduction

Urban development in the United States during the colonial period (mainly 1757–1947) drove city growth during the early stages of infrastructure development, particularly in areas that became densely populated. However, infrastructure and technical limitations meant that wooden houses, factories, and utility buildings spread, making those areas dangerous to live in. Because of the lack of proper safety, maintenance, and infrastructure control, those areas often experienced devastating fires in public life. As a result, to protect the safety and vigilance of the common people in the United States, public and private initiatives organized building codes, municipal administration, insurance systems, and professional firefighting organizations to prevent such tragedies. Notably, with modernization, the horror of fire can be considered not as a peripheral hazard for the United States but as a structural force in the formation of modern American urbanization, especially in the establishment of fire departments. Although it began as a voluntary system to protect cities in the 19th century, it later evolved into a structural system that changed and expanded over time, depending on location, time, and context, and can be seen as a heritage.

Heritage scholars have emphasized connections between urbanization and heritage preservation. Modernization, societal changes, politics, and warfare often pose significant threats to heritage and historic sites. According to Rodney Harrison, heritage management practices, including the restoration and adaptive reuse of historic buildings, become essential not only for preserving material heritage but also for maintaining the social, cultural, and identity values associated with these places.[1] Laurajane Smith also argues that heritage practices are not simply preserved objects or architecture, but "management and conservation protocols, strategies and procedures" that reflect and construct meaning and identity as part of social and cultural processes.[2] The management of historic buildings, monuments, archaeological sites, artifacts, oral traditions, performing arts, customs, festivals, traditional crafts, traditional customs, languages and skills, natural landscapes, flora and fauna, etc., that are related to cultural identity and are transmitted and practiced from generation to generation. However, due to globalization, urbanization, wars, nuclear power, and climate change, heritage resources currently are facing serious threats worldwide. Population growth and urbanization are placing significant pressure on historic neighborhoods and civic infrastructure, often resulting in destruction, alteration, or loss of cultural heritage in the wake of new development. According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, more than half of the world's population now lives in urban areas, a figure that is expected to increase to nearly 70% by 2050.[3] This will undoubtedly negatively affect heritage conservation due to the increasing demand for housing.

[1] Rodney Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches* (London: Routledge, 2013), 45–47; Gill Chitty, *Heritage, Conservation and Communities* (London: Routledge, 2016), 3.

[2] Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (London: Routledge, 2006). 13

[3] United Nations, "68% of the World Population Projected to Live in Urban Areas by 2050, Says UN | United Nations," United Nations, 2025, https://www.un.org/tr/desa/68-world-population-projected-live-urban-areas-2050-says-un?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

Historic preservation is foundational to preserving places, time, and emotions. Similarly, Firehouse 2 is not just a place in Springfield; it is a tangible heritage structure of the region. It continues to be a center of social and cultural development as a community heritage. As Gill Chitty has called heritage in the context of heritage preservation, heritage is a "community heritage." Heritage conservation is not just a state-dependent process; rather, it is the result of community-based participation and capacity-building, which is fundamentally a matter of people's participation, pride, and involvement.[4] Therefore, we can call the restoration and reuse of Firehouse 2 a community heritage. The adaptive reuse of this historic building transformed it from a state of risk to a state of utility, highlighting the dual dimensions of "risk of loss" and "value of utility" in heritage conservation.[5]

The World Heritage Convention, which was originally adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1972, and its international manifestation in cultural diplomacy and heritage conservation, has spent the last fifty years working to protect the world's heritage resources. Besides UNESCO, different institutions such as ICOMOS, the International Council on Monuments and Sites, and national governments have established various structures for heritage conservation. They play an important role in conserving important historical resources, both tangible and intangible, worldwide. However, this discussion largely excludes heritage conservation through individual private initiatives. As a result, UNESCO and others rarely evaluate individual heritage conservation efforts. Therefore, alongside conserving large heritage resources, we should properly evaluate the numerous small heritage resources that exist around us at the marginal level. At the same time, people who play an essential role in conserving these resources at the individual level should also be recognized. This interpretation of heritage essentialism can build familiarity and a felt history, and it can play a unique role in sustainable heritage development.

Firehouse 2 of Springfield is no longer an active firehouse today. The restoration of the building exhibits its past and demands enlistment in the historic preservation program today. Laurajane Smith uses David Harvey's ideas to make an important theoretical point on heritage as history. She is suggesting that 'heritage' is not a modern or recent concept. Rather, appreciating the past and its material heritage is part of a long history of human civilization. In contemporary debates about heritage, we often associate it with the modern state, conservation policies, or institutional arrangements, but according to Harvey, human practice of the past is much deeper and more ancient.[6] History of Historic Firehouse 2 thus seeks to reveal aspects of U.S. heritage that warrant preservation, particularly where heritage and historic preservation hold special significance for marginalized groups, and to enlist them in heritage preservation.

## 2. Methodology

This case study examines the importance of a former firehouse adapted into an event venue and considers its role as a representative of a region's heritage. Rather than focusing on heritage as monuments and nationally symbolic landmarks, this case study examines the emergence of historic firehouses to see how marginal and social initiatives have been used to protect heritage. Therefore, Firehouse 2 in Springfield, Missouri sets a precedent for considering historical significance. It highlights the importance of institutions and individual initiatives in using resources effectively in modern society, which is essential for restoring and preserving a society's heritage. Restoring historic structures integrates a society's historic civic structures with the framework of sustainable heritage tourism. By providing both analytical depth and broader theoretical significance for citizens to protect heritage socially, grassroots conservation practices can expand contemporary understandings of heritage and sustainability.

This paper uses qualitative historical analysis methods alongside fieldwork. Archival documents, oral histories, and contemporary and historical newspapers were reviewed to verify and interpret data. In addition to interviews with the conservator and principal investigator of the historic Firehouse No. 2 on Commercial Street in Springfield and site visits, I reviewed historical and modern maps of the area to explore the site's historical significance, architectural transformations, and cultural influences, and to identify its heritage significance.

In this study, a timeline of important events has been created by combining primary and secondary data to analyze the specific historical data of the city of Springfield in order to understand the regional history and the historical evolution of the fire department there from the beginning of its existence to the contemporary period, which has played a special role in the evaluation of the heritage of Fire House 2 in the research. Although this city has more historical sites like Fire House 2, the reconstruction of this historical infrastructure and its adaptive reuse are undoubtedly exemplary.

## 3. The Case Study of Historic Firehouse 2, Springfield, Missouri

### 3.1. Historical background

Known as the "Queen City of the Ozarks," Springfield is in the southwestern corner of Missouri and is considered the region's economic and cultural center. In 1821, the city became part of the United States of America. According to the City Council of Springfield, in the mid to late 1820s, two Tennessee brothers - John Polk and Madison Campbell - along with several other homesteaders set out on an exploratory trip to southwest Missouri. The area was then populated by the Kickapoo, Delaware, and Osage Indigenous tribes. According to John Rutherford, a local history associate at the Springfield-Greene County library, John Polk Campbell was born on March 29, 1804, in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. He began traveling at age 13 and received his education along the way. In 1829, Campbell and his brother Madison traveled west in search of new opportunities, eventually choosing the site of modern Springfield due to its abundant natural resources, including a natural well on current Water Street. John H. Miller, a nephew, noted how John Polk Campbell first located his future home in Springfield: "In the fall of 1829, John Polk Campbell and his brother Madison left Maury County, Tennessee, on horseback, traveling toward the setting sun in search of homes for themselves and their families. They crossed the Mississippi River, thence headed west through the then Territory of Arkansas."[7] In February 1830, Campbell, his brother-in-law Joseph Miller, and their family settled in the area, which began

[4]Gill Chitty, "Introduction: Engaging Conservation – Practising Heritage Conservation in Communities," in *Heritage, Conservation and Communities: Engagement, Participation and Capacity Building*, ed. Gill Chitty (London: Routledge, 2016), 3.

[5]Chitty, "Introduction: Engaging Conservation," 3.

[6]David Harvey, Spaces of Hope (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 320, 333, cited in Laurajane Smith, Uses of Heritage (London: Routledge, 2006), 16.

[7]"Who Was Campbell Behind Campbell Avenue?" *Springfield News-Leader*, March 11, 2017. https://www.news-leader.com/story/news/local/ozarks/2017/03/11/who-campbell-behind-campbell-avenue/98895980/

EARTH VIEW

the development of Springfield. Campbell played a key role in the settlement, giving of his time and land to encourage others to join him there. His original land claim extended across the center of modern Springfield, and he generously donated land for the Springfield Public Square. Campbell later helped organize Greene County by selling land to new settlers. By 1835, Springfield had a population of about 500, and the city was incorporated in 1838.[8] The city's heritage has fueled its continued growth as a center of commerce and transportation, and it has been the site of significant events and routes, including the Trail of Tears, Civil War battles, the arrival of "Wild Bill" Hickok, a railroad, and Route 66. The resulting growth and urbanization of Springfield throughout the 19th century laid the foundation for essential municipal services, including a fire department.

Urbanization and modernization reflect the growth of a financial and social area. They also bring risks to society. Springfield, Missouri's socio-economic development and urbanization also brought several problems. As urbanization expanded, the main problem became protecting the city through its fire control system and planning, given its large population in a small area. The history of Springfield in the early nineteenth century shows that the main causes of safety issues as a result of the rapid development of the city in a small area were ignorance and indifference, carelessness about fire safety, lack of awareness and concern, personal hostility, and indifference to the threat of fire within the institutions of government.[9] Historian John Sellars discusses this in an interview with Springfield Fire Chief David Pennington. He describes these reasons that led to the establishment of a fire department at that time.[10] In addition, when looking at the causes and severity of fires in various 19th-century newspapers, the following reasons were highlighted.

In the 19th century, houses made mainly of wood had inefficient electrical design, and dry goods caught fire easily. *The Springfield Leader* reported this in its August 29, 1921, issue: "Fire, supposedly originated from defective electrical wiring in the basement of the Masonic Temple building did damage to the stock of the O. W. Robertson Grocery company, 301 East Walnut Street." [11]

In addition, according to information published in various newspapers at the time, the main causes of fires were structural weakness, inadequate fire-extinguishing systems, and the impact of industrial activities. Initially, many buildings in Springfield, especially homes and commercial buildings, were made of wood, which allowed fire to spread quickly. Because wood is highly flammable, this construction posed significant environmental and design risks. In addition, urban factors such as densely packed wooden buildings increased the risk of fire spreading from one building to another.[12]

Limited firefighting capabilities and knowledge at the time meant Springfield did not install fire hydrants until 1901. Before that, firefighters had to use buckets. Even then, the city had not yet established a full-fledged fire department. Before the city converted to a paid fire department in 1897, it relied on untrained volunteers. In addition, the Gamewell alarm box (a device used to notify a fire department of a fire or a fire alarm activation) was not installed until the late 19th century, so people gave the alarm by ringing a bell or firing a gun, which delayed response time.[13]

This resulted in disaster for many factories and warehouses, which were heated by wood- and coal-fired stoves and contained highly flammable products but lacked modern fire protection. It also increased the risk of accidental fires due to open flames and poor electrical wiring, such as using open flames for lighting and faulty electrical connections. In addition, the region's climate and monsoon winds made wooden buildings prone to fire, making the area's dry season conditions even more dangerous. The results of the fire were devastating, as evidenced by the complete destruction of Firehouse No. 2 in 1900 and The Great Fire of 1913, also known as "The Big One", which destroyed 11 businesses and caused over $1 million in damage.[14]

Ozark newspaper reporter Gregory J. Holman, in an interview with Springfield Fire Chief David Pennington, talked about the history of the Springfield Fire Department.

"Springfield's fire department dates back to 1847, and accordingly, 'mission-critical' technology and building needs change over time," Springfield Fire Chief David Pennington said. According to him, buildings wear out. Usually, they are demolished, but sometimes they find new life. The department formally transitioned into a volunteer organization in 1879. "Eight male volunteers lived at the firehouse," Pennington said. Their responsibilities extended beyond fighting fires to maintaining the coal and wood supply and caring for the horses. The 1887 installation of 41 Gamewell fire alarm boxes revolutionized emergency response. As a result, when a fire broke out, people in the affected area could break the safety glass, pull the handle, and send a code directly to the fire station. This was a significant advance in communication technology.[15]

This led to the advent of modern fire extinguishers, with the first steam engine being connected to the fire department in 1901. As a result, the fire department could pump 35 gallons of water per minute to put out fires. In addition, modern motorized vehicles were added to the fire department in 1910, marking the emergence of modern firefighting as a historically important development. This new era was tested dramatically in 1913 with a fire that became infamous in the city's history.[16]

"On June 9, 1913, the northeast corner of the square caught fire, destroying 11 businesses. The fire, known as "The Big One," caused over $1 million in damages, but it could have been far worse if the newly acquired fire engines hadn't been available. He also mentioned, "You took this wonderful panel of all the new equipment arrayed on the square, and that's the quarter that burned down." Pennington shared a modern parallel: "In 2012, when we brought in four new engines, I made sure we photographed them in an empty parking lot far from any buildings because of the history of the square".[17] There are currently 13 fire department stations throughout the city of Springfield, which not only serve public safety but also symbolize the history, heritage, and architectural style of the local community.

The history of Springfield's fire stations tells the story of local communities' transformation and architectural adaptation. Many of the older fire stations are no longer used for fighting fires; instead, they have found new life as private homes, businesses,

[8]"History of the Area," *City of Springfield, MO - Official Website*, accessed February 8, 2025, https://www.springfieldmo.gov/709/History/.

[9]Tony Nguyen, "A Historical Look at the Springfield Fire Department," *Ozarks First*, June 14, 2023, https://www.ozarksfirst.com/news/a-historical-look-at-the-springfield-fire-department/.

[10]Ibid.

[11]*The Springfield Leader*, "Fire Does Damage to Grocery Store on Walnut Street," August 29, 1921.

[12]*Springfield Leader*, "Fire Does Damage to Grocery Store," 7.

[13]Tony Nguyen, "A Historical Look at the Springfield Fire Department," *Ozarks First*, June 14, 2023, https://www.ozarksfirst.com/news/a-historical-look-at-the-springfield-fire-department/.

[14]Ibid.

[15]*Nguyen, "A Historical Look.*

[16]Ibid

[17]"Springfield Fire Department History," *City of Springfield, MO*, last modified February 8, 2025, https://www.springfieldmo.gov/2401/SFD-History

EARLY VIEW

and event spaces. Fire Chief Pennington added that Station No. 5's hose tower still stands, maintaining the building's unique identity. Station No. 3 has also been transformed into a modern home while maintaining its historic roots. At 2000 N. National Ave., a former station is home to Crazy Hats, a bar. But the best-known ex-fire station in Springfield is probably Historic No. 2 Firehouse at 101 Commercial St.[18] "These buildings are not just for housing fire engines. They still hold the story of our past and reflect a new future," Pennington said.[19]

This research focuses on historic Firehouse No. 2 on Commercial Street in Springfield, which has a rich history. Since its establishment, Firehouse No. 2 has played a significant role in the lives of many firefighters. It has evolved from being the home of Springfield's first professional firefighters to a well-known local event venue. Fire Chief David Pennington and local historians have said Firehouse No. 2 represents a unique aspect of Springfield's heritage.



**Figure 1.** The original Firehouse No. 2, as reported by Ozarks First. Source: Ozarks First (2025).

"Firehouse No. 2's birth and rebirth span a long history. It was built in the early 1900s as a new structure to replace the original wooden firehouse, which was tragically destroyed by fire. The new building was constructed at Booneville Avenue, creating a seamless connection to the existing buildings." [20] "This is the location where Springfield's first professional firefighters were stationed, marking an important transition from a volunteer to a professional fire department," said Fire Chief Pennington.[21]

It should be noted that the historic Firehouse No. 2, built in the early 20th century, had a wood frame and was destroyed in a terrible fire on the mountain. *The Springfield Leader and Press*, Thursday, March 15, 1900, Page 2 noted, "Fire Department No. 2 now presents an excellent appearance on the interior, due to a new coat of paint. The ceiling and upper part of the walls are painted a glistening gray, and below this the walls are painted red." [22]

The new structure was strategically built off Boonville Avenue, creating a seamless connection between the existing buildings. Fire Chief Pennington explains, "The original firehouse was where Springfield's first paid firefighters were stationed, marking a significant transition from a volunteer effort to a professional fire department." In 1987, a fire destroyed the adjacent building, leaving only the dividing wall - now the east wall of the firehouse - standing. This event necessitated the construction of a third iteration of Fire Station No. 2 further west on Grant Avenue, leaving the historic structure derelict until it was finally restored.[23]

### 3.2. Restoration Plan

The current owner of Historic Firehouse 2, Mary Collette, is a graphic designer and photographer who started her business in 1980 as Collette Studio, a photo studio and gift shop. She purchased Firehouse 2 in 1995. Since much of the building had been destroyed by fire, Mary Collette and Paul Parker began their restoration with the dedicated efforts of her team. She said, "When we first saw it, the firehouse was in terrible shape. The roof was rotting, the interior was exposed to the elements, and it had been used as a storage space for years." [24] In this regard, Springfield Fire Chief David Pennington said, "The couple began by removing the stucco façade to return the structure to its original brickwork, a crucial step to earn its designation as a contributing structure within the federally recognized Historic Commercial Street district. They then turned their attention to the roof and interior, undertaking extensive repairs to restore the building's 6,000 square feet." [25] Mary Collette said they initially had no idea about this dilapidated building, but since their main residence was next to it, they took a long time to start the restoration work themselves. They said the restoration is still ongoing from the ground floor to the top. While this restoration work was going on, they succeeded in building an event venue in Fire House 2. In her words, "We had to remove years of debris, rocks, and rubble," Parker explains. "It took years to transform it into the lush garden you see today." The garden now serves as a stunning backdrop for weddings and events, preserving the area's history while adding a touch of elegance.[26] When asked about the history of Firehouse 2, Pennington says, "This firehouse has seen flames, restorations, and celebrations. Its walls hold the stories of a community that values its past while looking to the future. It's a place full of history."[27]

### 3.3. Adaptation of Heritage Identity

To understand the Historic Firehouse No. 2's heritage value, this study conducted extensive research into primary sources. This study has revealed that Firehouse No. 2 played an important role in extinguishing fires in the city at that time. Its important role appears in various documents from 1885 to 1925, not only as the city's fire department headquarters but also in important meetings, events, and parades. According to *The Springfield Democrat*, in the issue published on Saturday, December 26, 1891, "The fire boys are all good whole-souled fellows. While other people sleep, they are always on duty. They spent their Christmas sitting around the fire,

[18]What Should Happen to Two Old Springfield Fire Stations? The City's Taking Ideas," *News-Leader*, January 21, 2018, https://www.news-leader.com/story/news/local/ozarks/2018/01/21/what-should-happen-two-old-springfield-fire-stations-citys-taking-ideas/1044400001/.

[19]Tony Nguyen, "A Historical Look at the Springfield Fire Department," *Ozarks First*, June 14, 2023, https://www.ozarksfirst.com/news/a-historical-look-at-the-springfield-fire-department/

[20]"'Frightly News' Investigates the Haunted History of the Poltergeist in Commercial Street's Historic Firehouse," *OzarksFirst*, accessed February 8, 2025, https://www.ozarksfirst.com/news/springfield-news/frightly-news-investigates-the-haunted-history-of-the-poltergeist-in-commercial-streets-historic-firehouse/

[21]What Should Happen to Two Old Springfield Fire Stations? The City's Taking Ideas," *News-Leader*, January 21, 2018, https://www.news-leader.com/story/news/local/ozarks/2018/01/21/what-should-happen-two-old-springfield-fire-stations-citys-taking-ideas/1044400001/.

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[23]"'Frightly News' Investigates the Haunted History of the Poltergeist in Commercial Street's Historic Firehouse," *OzarksFirst*, accessed February 8, 2025, https://www.ozarksfirst.com/news/springfield-news/frightly-news-investigates-the-haunted-history-of-the-poltergeist-in-commercial-streets-historic-firehouse/

[24]" Historic Firehouse No. 2 - Chapter 1980," *YouTube*, uploaded by Lost Panorama, Sep 1, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cFV6Lf3ho6E

[25]"What Should Happen to Two Old Springfield Fire Stations? The City's Taking Ideas," *News-Leader*, January 21, 2018, https://www.news-leader.com/story/news/local/ozarks/2018/01/21/what-should-happen-two-old-springfield-fire-stations-citys-taking-ideas/1044400001/.

[26]"History," *Historic Firehouse*, accessed February 8, 2025, https://historicfirehouse.com/about-us/history/

[17] "3," https://newscomwc.newspapers.com (The Springfield Democrat, December 26, 1891), https://newscomwc.newspapers.com/image/40864511/?match=1&terms=whole-souled%20fellows&pqsid=eUbSBS8IHj7xv6VaoS4Gwg%3A130947%3A25784102.

[27]Gregory J. Holman, "What Should Happen to Two Old Springfield Fire Stations? The City's Taking Ideas," *Springfield News-Leader*, January 21, 2018, https://www.news-leader.com/story/news/local/ozarks/2018/01/21/what-should-happen-two-old-springfield-fire-stations-citys-taking-ideas/1044400001/.

PEER REVIEW

having a social good time with one another."[28] The Springfield Leader and Press, in the issue published on Wednesday, July 28, 1894, "Fire Department No. 2 entertains its visiting friends at a Banquet." The news mentioned the entertainment party with different types of foods like potage, different kinds of salad, roast leg of mutton with French peas, mixed pickle, cold roast beef, hams, California fruits, assorted nuts, wine, lemonade, iced lager, and assorted cakes were served. It also mentioned, "When this collection of dainties was dispatched there followed singing, dancing and recitation and at a late hour the gallant company went forth in the light of the moon and subsequently had the nightmare."[29]

Springfield Leader and Press, in the issue published on Tuesday, November 12, 1895, wrote "Fire Department No 2 fought a small blaze like an old-time village fire brigade like an old flame village fire brigade last night."[30] Another newspaper, *The Farm Club News*, in the issue published on August 25, 1938, published a joyful moment of Firehouse 2. The article said, "Mr. and Mrs. Ed Robberson of Route 6 are celebrating their golden wedding anniversary September 4 at Phelps Grove Park. Mr. and Mrs. Robberson moved to Springfield in 1900, went to work for the fire department No, 2."[31]

After Mary Collette and Paul Parker purchased the historic Firehouse 2 and the vacant lot next door in 1995[32], they successfully transformed it into a comprehensive event venue that hosts a diverse range of events and parties organized by the local community. In modern society, demand for such event venues is growing. After restoration, Firehouse 2 is uniquely positioned to meet this demand by offering exceptional service. Its main hall has a vintage feel, with a highly polished, stained, and buffed concrete floor that resembles black marble. Adjacent to the antique-style decoration that leads to the lush green open field, the entire downstairs and courtyard area includes a baby grand piano from 1902, the same year Historic Firehouse No. 2 was built. The downstairs has a gallery area, a beautifully decorated gift closet, a sweet little DIY photo booth area, a buffet serving area featuring a 10′ long antique counter, a beverage station, a saloon area with a keg cooler and refrigerated storage, two very large restrooms, one with a baby-changing station and a spacious, efficient catering kitchen and recycling area in the back of the house. The studio and Bridal Area are situated on the second floor and have an outstanding view of Historic Commercial Street. Its broad window, vintage piano, furniture, and decoration had historical appeal. A lounge next to the studio and a vintage veranda offer a place to experience the historic firehouse 2.[33]



**Figure 2.** Photos of the restoration by Collette and Parker, as reported by Ozarks First. Source: Ozarks First (2025).

### 3.4. Heritage Tourism and Achievement

This remarkable restoration not only provides the community with a perfect event venue to celebrate, but also advances heritage tourism, as Historic Firehouse 2 is now known in society and was awarded the prestigious McReynolds Award. This award, one of the State of Missouri's most prestigious Historic Preservation Awards, was given to Mary Collette on May 7, 2013, in the Rotunda of the State Capitol in Jefferson City by the Missouri State Historic Preservation Society. She was also recognized by resolution on the floors of both the Senate and House of Representatives for her leadership in the revitalization and historic restoration of the Commercial Street Historic District, including the successful adaptive reuse and restoration of Firehouse No. 2. Commitment to sustainability is a hallmark in the ongoing restoration of this 115-year-old structure.[34]

## 4. Analysis: Architectural Preservation, Sustainable Heritage, and Tourism

The restoration of Firehouse 2 re-examines this historic significance in the community by re-imagining it as a modern event venue. Mary Collette has linked the historical interpretation of the former firehouse in Springfield's commercial district to her upcoming event venue as a form of heritage management. Socially, by establishing its foundation, connecting with the community and its heritage, and modernizing an abandoned building, the site re-examines its history as sustainable heritage, history, and tourism. In this regard, heritage scholar Laurajane Smith argues that using the past and collective and individual memories is a new way to express and negotiate heritage.[35] The Firehouse 2 is important for social development and historical preservation. Although the historic Firehouse 2 is not registered as a historic preservation site, the community and society still recognize it. Just as national landmarks, such as national monuments, historic streets, or neighborhood landmarks, carry national symbolism and historical significance, so does Firehouse 2 carry the heritage of Firehouse 2. This case study from Springfield teaches us that countless such small structures are scattered around us and, if discovered, could reveal an ocean of historical significance. The role of private enterprise in heritage preservation, and the transformation of the historic Firehouse 2 into an event venue, is a

[28]"3," https://newscomwc.newspapers.com (The Springfield Democrat, December 26, 1891), https://newscomwc.newspapers.com/image/40864511/?match=1&terms=whole-souled%20fellows&pqsid=eUbSBS8IHj7xv6VaoS4Gwg%3A130947%3A25784102.

[29]Springfield Leader and Press, "ATE, DRANK, WERE MERRY," https://newscomwc.newspapers.com/image/40881554/?match=1&terms=ATE%2C%20DRANK%2C%20WERE%20MERRY&pqsid=IYWV49XWuR9-7LMCFerAtg%3A2213749%3A1979839486, July 25, 1984.

[30]"Like Old Timers," https://newspapers.com (The Springfield Democrat, September 5, 1893), https://newscomwc.newspapers.com/image/39994290/?match=1&terms=Like%20Old%20Timers&pqsid=IYWV49XWuR9-7LMCFerAtg%3A2648890%3A1871112770.

[31]"Golden Wedding," https://newspapers.com (Springfield Leader and Press, October 7, 1893), https://newscomwc.newspapers.com/image/40905651/?match=1&terms=Golden%20Wedding&pqsid=IYWV49XWuR9-7LMCFerAtg%3A2827710%3A799473641.

[32]"'Frightly News' Investigates the Haunted History of the Poltergeist in Commercial Street's Historic Firehouse," *OzarksFirst*, accessed February 8, 2025, https://www.ozarksfirst.com/news/springfield-news/frightly-news-investigates-the-haunted-history-of-the-poltergeist-in-commercial-streets-historic-firehouse/

[33]"Historic Firehouse," *Historic Firehouse*, accessed February 8, 2025, https://historicfirehouse.com/

[34]"Green Team," *Historic Firehouse*, accessed February 8, 2025, https://historicfirehouse.com/about-us/green-team/

[35]Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (London: Routledge, 2006). 4

EARLY REVIEW

successful modern example that can serve as an early catalyst for heritage recognition and sustainability. Heritage conservation has a cost and requires support, i.e., investment, vision, and leadership. It is essential to identify its historical significance, determine the structure's future, and reimagine it. Historic Firehouse 2 is a case that shows sustainable conservation depends on citizen entrepreneurship as well as state or institutional intervention.

Kalliopi Fouseki, May Cassar, Guillaume Dreyfuss, and Kelvin Ang Kah Eng interpreted sustainable heritage as an integrated framework focused on environmental responsibility, social inclusion, economic viability, and long-term governance, rather than conservation as simply protecting the material structure.[36] The Firehouse 2 study shows that restoring a historic building highlights history, preserves heritage, and enables economic opportunity. Historic Firehouse 2 may not be a museum, but historically it is as significant as a heritage museum in today's modern society. This supports long-term sustainability, social participation, and economic resilience. Therefore, this case shows that heritage tourism goes beyond commodification and can be a blessing in disguise through architectural conservation. These initiatives in preserving locally and connected socially bring sustainability, a small undertaking in today's era of widespread global pressures for destruction.

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## Author contacts

Contact

### 1. Suman Kumar Roy*

ORCID 0009-0003-8926-7923

* Correspondence

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