

# Local - Springfield News-Sun

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## Olive Branch School again on most endangered list

One of Ohio's 13 most endangered historic sites.



Bill Lackey

Dave Swann, a maintenance worker for the Tecumseh Local School District, walks through the old Olive Branch School, which is currently being used as a warehouse, on Monday. Olive Branch School is on the list of Ohio's most endangered historic sites. Bill Lackey/Staff

By Tiffany Y. Latta, Staff Writer

NEW CARLISLE —

The Olive Branch School has once again been listed as one of Ohio's most endangered historic sites.

The school is on the 2015 list of 13 Ohio properties that are in jeopardy due to demolition, disinvestment or indifference, according to Preservation Ohio. This non-profit organization was established to enhance the understanding and appreciation for Ohio's historic resources.

The building at 9710 W. National Road was first listed as one of Ohio's most endangered historic sites last year and is also on the National Registrar of Historic Places.

Cyndie Gerken, vice chair of the Olive Branch School Preservation Society and a member of Preservation Ohio, said the building is currently being used as a district warehouse and storage facility by the Tecumseh Local School District and is not in any imminent danger of being torn down.

"It's being in a way neglected because the roof is leaking ... We've been concerned for quite some time," Gerken said. "We're concerned not just for the deterioration of the building itself, but we were thinking they (the district) should be concerned about things like a roof leak because it could damage things that are stored in the warehouse."

Gerken said the school district has started the process of trying to secure the roof and get the building stabilized, but added that more work needs to be done to restore the school.

"We just don't want it to be ignored and deteriorate further," Gerken said.

The school was built in 1908, designed by local architect Charles Insko Williams, and rebuilt in the same style after a 1913 fire. It functioned as a school until the early 1970s, when the district started using it as storage instead.

Gerken said she nominated the building to appear on the Preservation Ohio most endangered historic sites list to draw attention to the needs of the school.

“This is a very valuable community asset,” Gerken said. “

It’s an excellent example of a rural high school in the year’s past decade or so when we’ve torn down so many of the historic schools across the state. This still stands as a treasure from over 100 years ago.”

The Olive Branch School Preservation Society, which formed in 2007, is trying to raise money to renovate the school. The preservation society has raised about \$6,000, but the building needs an estimated \$2 million to be restored, Gerken said.

Phase one of the project would involve removing asbestos, she added.

Gerken, who attended the Olive Branch School, said the building could be used as a community center and a museum to the school district.

She said many of the schools she attended in the district have been torn down, such as the Olive Branch Middle School and Oscar T. Hawke.

“This is the only one that remains on that campus,” Gerken said. “It’s a very distinctive style. It’s a craftsman style. The architect was famous from Dayton. He designed a lot of buildings down in Dayton that are on the National Registrar. It’s got value regardless of my personal attachments to it. It’s worthy of being taken care of and being maintained.”

Clark County Commissioner John Detrick said he supports the preservation society’s mission to save the school.

“It’s unique architecture and there’s not a lot of unique architecture in western Clark County,” Detrick said. “I would like to hope that someone will see the value of it and support it.”

For more information about the Olive Branch School or to donate to the Olive Branch School Preservation Society, visit: <http://www.olivebranchschool.org>.

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