

THE  
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# REVIEW

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## Perryville's Deep Roots:

*America's Heartland  
Honors Faith,  
Farming & Freedom*



# Perryville's Deep Roots:

## *America's Heartland Honors Faith, Farming And Freedom*



Missouri's National Veterans Memorial provides a respite from traffic and distractions, allowing visitors to completely immerse themselves in a calming and peaceful environment to remember, honor and reflect.

The city of Perryville is a fourth-class city and the county seat of Perry County, Missouri. The City traces its origins to Missouri statehood. Three days prior to the official admission of Missouri to the Union, the County was given 51 acres that became the original town.

Located adjacent to the I-55 corridor, it is now home to a diverse economy, including: TG Missouri, an automobile component supplier; Gilster Mary-Lee, a private-label food manufacturer; Robinson Construction Company, the fourth-largest construction company in Missouri; and The Bank of Missouri headquarters and data center. The City population increases approximately 43% each day as employees come to work from surrounding communities.

Perry County Economic Development Authority Executive Director Scott Sattler says the City consistently has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the state of Missouri, largely because of a dedicated workforce. While it faced a spike in unemployment due to COVID-19, the rates have since gone back down.

"We are blessed with a solid workforce that helps our industry stay here," said Sattler.

The City has targeted tourism as a growth potential and has worked to boost the telling of its story.

Perryville's effort to promote themselves as a tourism destination began in 2015 with the creation of

the Perry County Heritage Tourism organization. At first, the Office of Heritage Tourism was funded entirely by the city of Perryville. The County joined as an equal partner just one year later after seeing the benefits. Two years later, the community passed its first hotel tax (6%) with a resounding 76% of voters in support. In five years, the list of accomplishments includes the opening of the Perryville Welcome Center and gift shop with local artisans, a bicycle hostel to promote cycling in the region, national recognition for 2017's Great American Eclipse and multiple Missouri Division of Tourism awards (including 2018's Innovator and Rising Star awards). The group has recently begun to focus on bringing more public

art to Perryville by having two new murals painted downtown celebrating the City and County; has created a barn quilt trail highlighting agricultural roots (featuring more than 50 barns); and is currently developing mountain biking trails within the city limits.

“All of these things help support and build a better foundation for visitors coming to our area,” said Trish Erzfeld, director of Perry County Heritage Tourism. “We have just begun to realize the potential and economic impact tourism is having on Perryville. Tourism brings people into our community and then it is our hope they find a reason to stay.”

Mayor Ken Baer added, “This is not doing tourism for the sake of doing tourism. We have built our entire approach on simply celebrating the things that make Perryville and Perry County special. We are blessed that these things just happen to be very authentic experiences that are relatable to people from all walks of life.”

One of the top Perryville attractions includes the Missouri National Veterans Memorial, along with the National Shrine of the Miraculous Medal, and the American Tractor Museum. The Saxon Lutheran Memorial is also located in Perry County, as well as Tower Rock, the Ball Mill Resurgence, and more than 700 caves.

## Missouri National Veterans Memorial

The Missouri’s National Veterans Memorial (MNVM) features a full-scale black granite Vietnam Veterans Memorial identical to that in Washington, D.C. on the National Mall. This awe-inspiring, full-scale Wall offers veterans, civilians and those currently serving a place to reflect on the sacrifices of all service men and women in the quiet, peaceful setting that Perryville offers. After the May 2019 grand opening, the memorial now welcomes several thousand visitors each month.

Missouri’s National Veterans Memorial’s mission is to pay tribute to all service men and women and their families, while providing an environment for peaceful reflection.

*“Missouri’s National Veterans Memorial here in the Midwest is a unique memorial that helps us all to remember, honor and thank our veterans and those who paid the ultimate sacrifice for this great nation. God bless America.”*

*-Randy Alewel, BG (Retired)*

### Missouri’s National Veterans Memorial’s History

The beginnings of this project date back to Vietnam in 1968, when U.S. Serviceman Jim Eddleman made a promise to himself that he would one day find a way to honor his comrades if he made it out alive.

In 2016, Eddleman began to connect with those interested in coordinating a memorial. By 2017, a growing board of directors began convening weekly.

After meeting with officials in Washington, D.C., and gaining the support of Robinson Construction, the planning began for the campus layout. Volunteers checked approximately 60,000 names three times to ensure the spellings were correct.

The MNVM Board was adamant that this would be an exact replication of the U.S. Vietnam Veterans Memorial, character by character. Over time, the project has gained significant support from more community members and national organizations across America.

In addition to their significant financial contribution and donation of 46 acres of their third-generation family farm, Eddleman and his wife, Charlene, hope this story will be an inspiration for others to honor all of those who have served and support this privately funded (501c3 nonprofit) memorial.

### Memorial Features

In addition to the Vietnam Wall, the memorial has a Welcome Center where visitors can watch a welcome video and browse the gift shop.

On the grounds, an Honor Flag Memorial, a large, concave structure, stretches 49 feet along the Welcome Center’s western edge. Each granite section of the memorial pays homage to America’s conflicts and branches of the military, with laser-etched illustrations and typography, along with a patio of tribute bricks and benches. It prominently represents the historical battles of each of the five United States Armed Forces. The Honor Flag Memorial embraces the memory of our nation’s military members in an intimate, contemplative space.



**After the May 2019 grand opening, the memorial now welcomes several thousand visitors each month.**



**Guardians of Freedom Monument.**

Under the walkway pavilion is the Guardians of Freedom Monument that depicts the special forces of each military branch. The monument's design features the military seals of the United States Marine Corps, Army, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard.

The first phase of the Military Museum

recently opened, providing information on the United States' involvement in the Vietnam War and experiences as told by soldiers during the conflict. An extensive gun collection allows visitors a glimpse at the changes in the weaponry throughout U.S. military history. The museum's next phase will include exhibits on the Battle of Hue, military basic training, and the United Service Organizations (USO).

The memorial has hosted well-known figures like Jackie Smith, Ozzie Smith, Missouri Governor Mike Parson, Missouri Lieutenant Governor Mike Kehoe, Congressman Jason Smith, Jim Knotts, president and CEO of the U.S. Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., and Sculptor Harry Weber.

*The Vision*

Future plans for the memorial include an amphitheater overlooking a reflecting pool at the apex of the wall. Additional memorials and statues representing all branches of military and other military conflicts will be placed throughout.

Other planned additions include:

- A Veterans' Hall, with an event space where organizations, individuals and businesses can host receptions, celebrations and other events.
- Scattering Oak Grove, a shaded area where loved ones can spread the remains of their veteran.
- A reflecting fountain, providing a gorgeous backdrop to provide soothing sounds for a meditation at America's Wall.
- Interfaith Chapel Hall, a quiet space where visitors of all faiths can reflect and pray.
- A cemetery, offering a serene field to serve as the final resting place for heroes.

The memorial depends on the generosity of individuals, civic organizations and veterans service organizations to sustain current facilities, add to the campus, and to have the ability to host programs and events.

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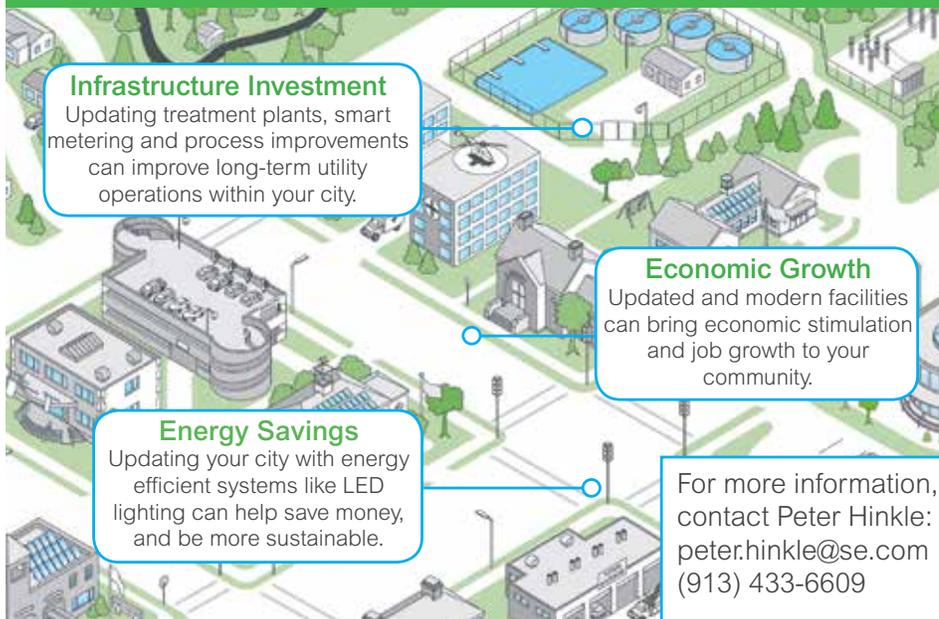
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“It has become a very special place for the community,” said Buerck. “Mr. Eddleman hoped the wall would become a place where veterans and their families could find both hope and healing ... it is safe to say that is occurring every single day.”

Learn more:

[www.facebook.com/americaswall](https://www.facebook.com/americaswall)

<https://mnvmfund.org>

[www.twitter.com/followmnvm](https://www.twitter.com/followmnvm)

### National Shrine Of Our Lady Of The Miraculous Medal

“Really think about what I’m about to tell you ... the National Shrine here in Perryville has been around more than 30 years before the Civil War,” said Shrine President and CEO Don Fulford. “The history of this beautiful Catholic Shrine is something all faiths should see, and combining it with a visit to one of the other great places of this community is something you just won’t forget.”

The National Shrine of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal is a Roman Catholic church and former seminary in Perryville. Established in 1818, it is the historic seat of the American Vincentians order of Priests and Brothers and was the first institution of higher learning west of the Mississippi River.

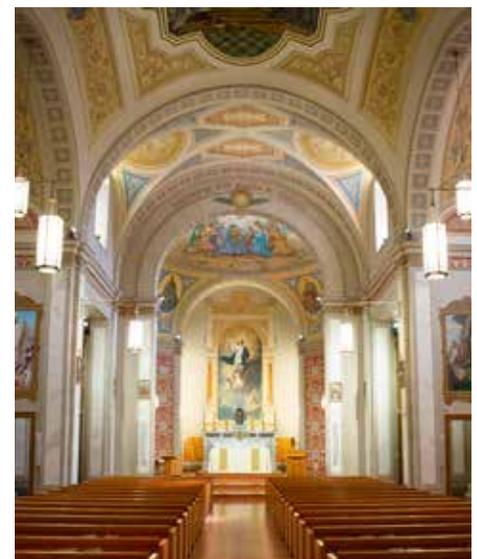
Its architecture and decorations reflect its long and interesting history. As you enter you will immediately notice the detailed murals on the ceiling. Over the main altar of the church is a large painting of the Assumption of our Lady, indicating the original dedication of the edifice. There are many other paintings in the church depicting the history of the Vincentian community and various devotions. The Venerable Felix de Andreis, first superior of the Vincentians in the New World, is buried beneath its floor.

As a former seminary, the many intricate altars offered places for new priests to learn, practice and reflect. Near the tomb of Felix de Andreis is the chapel housing the Shrine of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal. Here a novena of Masses is offered each month for members of the Association. Petitions from all over the country are placed near the altar.

“We have visitors from all of the world, and we all do our best to connect each visitor not only to our tours, but also to the entire community,” said Fulford. “Our church is spectacular, the



The National Shrine of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal.



Detailed ceiling murals decorate the Shrine.



**The National Shrine of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal is a Roman Catholic church and former seminary in Perryville.**

grounds are beautiful and the grotto is very prayerful, but more importantly this entire place is part of an incredible community. What I love seeing the most is people coming here from all walks of faith to enjoy a little of our history, but leaving more relaxed and deeper in their own faiths.”

**Learn more:** [www.amm.org](http://www.amm.org)

## American Tractor Museum

Celebrating the iconic machine and backbone of America, The American Tractor Museum walks visitors through the evolution of the machine that plowed, planted and harvested the American dream. Visitors will find one of the most unique and largest collections of its kind featuring rare manufacturers such as Rumely, Waterloo Boy, Illinois, Indiana, Huber, Plymouth, Avery, Rock Island, Grayhound, Centar and more.



**The museum is still expanding and offers guests an interactive experience. Each tractor has a QR code to scan with a mobile device, where guests can learn more about each display, including photos, memories and stories submitted by previous visitors.**

more about each display, including photos, memories and stories submitted by previous visitors.

“We just love to share the memories, information and the journey from visitors,” said Alissa Ernst, board member and designer of the Museum. In addition to the full-size tractors, more than 90, fully-restored pedal tractors line the museums walls.

**Learn more:**

[www.americantractormuseum.com](http://www.americantractormuseum.com)

## Conclusion

Perryville’s future looks bright, in large part due to a strong work ethic, the dedication of the community and solid partnerships.

“Our community is full of faith, farming and freedom,” said Fulford. “Whether you run a restaurant in town or the Shrine or anything in between, there is a synergy, with everyone working together to increase the positive impact on our community.”

**Learn more about Perryville and Perry County:**

[www.cityofperryville.com](http://www.cityofperryville.com)

[www.visitperrycounty.com](http://www.visitperrycounty.com)