

MAPLEWOOD MANSION LEARNING LAB:
A PARTNERSHIP ADVANCING IMMERSIVE LEARNING, COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Smith, Ronda Marie, Martin, David A., Earhart, Carla M., Maplewood Mansion Learning Lab:
A Partnership Advancing Immersive Learning, Community Engagement and Economic
Development.

This paper was presented at the Central CHRIE Conference, Central CHRIE, Indianapolis, IN.
(March 22, 2019) and is classified as Teaching and Learning Scholarship (TLS).

Abstract

Through a unique partnership, Ball State University has repurposed a historic university home into the Maplewood Mansion Learning Lab and is using to support the housing needs of Indiana University's physician residency program in Muncie, IN. Operating on the values of building and enhancing community partnerships, positive impressions, a sense of community and immersive learning, Maplewood Mansion Learning Lab is home to IU's resident doctors in training, and numerous Ball State University's Management Department student immersive learning experiences.

Credit is extended to a variety of supporters for their assistance with projects at Maplewood Mansion Learning Lab: Ball State University, Ball Brothers Foundation, Indiana University School of Medicine, Miller College of Business Immersive Learning Grants, Rodewald Immersive Learning Fund, and the RPM Advisory Board.

History of the Home

Maplewood Mansion is an important part of Ball State and our community. It is a historic, three-story, Georgian-style home located in the Minnetrista Boulevard Historic District of Muncie, Indiana, less than two miles from the Ball State University campus. Surrounded by other beautiful homes for the Ball family, Maplewood was built in 1898 for William C. Ball and his wife Emma for their family. Their son, William H. Ball occupied the home into his late life.

The Ball family, for whom Ball State is named, is notable for the iconic Ball canning jars and their extraordinary beneficence to this community. The family-owned business, Ball Brothers Glass Manufacturing Company, relocated their business and entire family to Muncie, Indiana in 1887 in response to the natural gas resources which were needed in the glass making process. The large family secured the rights to extensive property along the beautiful White River that flows through the center of town to build several neighboring homes for the family. Drawing on the area's native heritage, "the Ball sisters named the site Minnetrista, combining a Sioux word, "mna" with the English "tryst" (an agreed upon meeting place). Thus, the family "gathering place by the water" was established." (<https://www.bsu.edu/web/maplewood-mansion/about>)

While the natural gas industry changed after a few years, by that time the entire Ball family had made the community their home, investing extensively into real estate and the community. Several of those original homes still stand today, lining the beautiful White River and have been repurposed for many different businesses, non-profits and other gathering places. The area

around them has been built up and includes the Minnestrista Gathering Place, which is home to many community events and activities.

Over the years, the home has been used for many purposes including offices, events and even guest quarters for out of town visitors in the 1970's (Cox, 2018). Inspired by the traveling activities of the late resident, W.C. Ball, who spent many years on the road traveling for the company as a salesman and its company secretary, the home was renovated in 1984 to provide more comfortable accommodations for visitors of the Ball Corporation.

<https://www.bsu.edu/web/maplewood-mansion/about>

A University – Community Partnership

Inspired by disparities in statistics from an economic development report and the realities of providing access to better health care in smaller local areas, a new partnership was born. An initiative, called “Optimus Primary” (a tip to the altruist robots in the Transformers franchise perhaps) involves the Ball Brothers Foundation (BBF), the Indiana University School of Medicine-Muncie, and IU Health Ball Memorial Hospital, and is funded by several grants. The program includes goals of increasing the health outcomes in local areas and keeping trained doctors in their communities. The IU School of Medicine operates three hospital residency programs in Muncie, “the second-largest physician training program in the state,” and as part of that program they provide rotational housing for their residents (Cox, 2018).

As part of the implementation of those initiatives, The Ball Brothers Foundation owns the Maplewood Mansion, and in 2017 leased the home to Ball State University so that it could manage and operate the home as short-term housing for medical students, while also creating immersive learning opportunities for students (Human, 2018). The contract for full occupancy is

with the Indiana University School of Medicine to provide housing for their residents who are completing educational requirements at I.U. Health Ball Memorial Hospital in Muncie. The Ball State University and IU Medical School partnership is important for more than just the parties involved. A goal of the partnership is that residents who train in Muncie will have a better residential experience within the community and thereby appreciate how smaller communities can be desirable places to learn and work (Cox, 2018). Immersive learning is a hallmark of the Ball State student experience. It brings together businesses, non-profits, faculty and student groups to advance issues and opportunities of the community partner.

The Maplewood Mansion Learning Lab is operated through the Department of Management in the Miller College of Business at Ball State University. The Department is home to several programs that have been able to engage with the property for a variety of different projects, goals and immersive experiences. These include Residential Property Management, Hospitality and Food Management, and General Management.

Current Operations, Activities and Progress

The project was implemented and operates on the values of building and enhancing community partnerships, positive impressions, a sense of community and immersive learning (<https://www.bsu.edu/web/maplewood-mansion/about>). Operating as a startup business, the Maplewood Mansion has many student-led engagement experiences to share. To date, students have been engaged with the property as part of an immersive experience or internships on projects that included: administrative and operational activities running the property, destination marketing, service enhancements, strategic growth opportunities and environmental scanning, event management, and sustainable tourism.

Although a great deal has been accomplished in a very short time through Maplewood Mansion Learning Lab, a variety of challenges exist operating a learning lab within a residential environment and an operating business, the applied mode of teaching, activities at an off-campus site and maintain the operating and integrity of a historic building. It is our desire to inspire faculty at other universities to create similar learning opportunities in their hospitality-related classes.

References

Cox, E. (2018). Optimus Primary and a New Mission at Maplewood Guesthouse. ALLIANCE
The Magazine of the Muncie-Delaware County, Indiana Economic Development
Alliance.

Human, D. (2018). Students Help Run Mansion at Minnetrista With Hopes of Recruiting Doctors
to Muncie Long-Term. Ball State University Magazine. Retrieved from:
[https://magazine.bsu.edu/2018/08/27/students-help-run-mansion-at-minnetrista-with-
hopes-of-recruiting-doctors-to-muncie-long-term/](https://magazine.bsu.edu/2018/08/27/students-help-run-mansion-at-minnetrista-with-hopes-of-recruiting-doctors-to-muncie-long-term/) January, 4, 2019.

(n.d.) <https://www.bsu.edu/web/maplewood-mansion/about>