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First Financial Corporation donates downtown Terre Haute landmark

TERRE HAUTE, June 14, 2018—First Financial Corporation, the parent company of First Financial Bank, announced today that it has given a 1903 building that formerly served as the bank's main office to Indiana Landmarks. Once restored, the building is intended to become the new home of CANDLES Holocaust Museum and Education Center.

First Financial's CEO and President Norman L. Lowery revealed the donation at a press conference in front of the historic building at 643 Wabash Avenue in downtown Terre Haute. In addition to gifting the property, First Financial added a cash contribution of \$110,000 to help Indiana Landmarks stabilize the structure and jump-start the renovation.

"On behalf of our board of directors and shareholders, First Financial is pleased to help preserve a building known to generations of people in this area," Lowery said. "As our main office headquarters for 60 years, it represents a significant part of the bank's history of service to the community."

Indiana Landmarks and CANDLES Holocaust Museum and Education Center approached First Financial to request the donation of the building in 2016. "We knew that CANDLES needed more space and wanted to move downtown," said Indiana Landmarks President Marsh Davis. "And having been a tenant in the old First National building many years ago, we thought it could be an ideal location for CANDLES.

"We're grateful to the bank for helping us pursue our vision," Davis added.

After First Financial completed construction on its current headquarters at 6th and Wabash in June 1988, 643 Wabash was occupied by the Terre Haute Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber shared the structure with other tenants—Wabash Valley Community Foundation, Terre Haute Economic Development Corp., Terre Haute Convention & Visitors Bureau and Indiana Landmarks' Western Regional Office.

Indiana Landmarks will stabilize the structure, including roof replacement, over the next six months. Indiana Landmarks intends to pass ownership to CANDLES while retaining a protective covenant on the building in perpetuity.

"Increasingly, CANDLES has been limited by space for offices, exhibits and public programs," said CANDLES Executive Director Dorothy Chambers. "We look forward to working with Indiana Landmarks in transforming 643 Wabash Avenue into a vibrant place for the community to gather and learn. In addition to being closer to our partner, Indiana State University, CANDLES will increase the synergy among museums and other arts and culture organizations that already call downtown Terre Haute their home," she said

The building is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. "Knowing this building so well as the last tenant, it will be rewarding to play a role in its transformation," noted Tommy Kleckner, director of Indiana Landmarks' western office. Kleckner will manage the stabilization project over the next six months.

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See next page: backgrounder on 643 Wabash

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First Financial Corporation is a financial services holding company headquartered in Terre Haute, Indiana. Our subsidiary, First Financial Bank N.A., founded in 1834, is the oldest national bank in Indiana and the fifth oldest in the United States. First Financial Bank operates 65 banking centers in Indiana and Illinois offering complete banking services, including depository accounts, loans, brokerage services, and trust and asset management to retail and business customers. At December 31, 2017, First Financial Corporation had assets in excess of \$3 billion. The Corporation's common stock is traded on the NASDAQ Global Select Market under the symbol THFF. For more information, visit www.first-online.com.

Indiana Landmarks revitalizes communities, reconnects us to heritage and saves meaningful places. With nine offices located throughout the state, Indiana Landmarks helps people rescue endangered landmarks and restore historic neighborhoods and downtowns. People who join Indiana Landmarks receive its bimonthly magazine, *Indiana Preservation*. For information on membership in the not-for-profit organization, call 317-639-4534, 800-450-4534, or visit www.indianalandmarks.org.

CANDLES Holocaust Museum and Education Center shines a light on the story of the Holocaust and Eva Kor to create an empowered community of critical thinkers who will illuminate the world with hope, healing, respect and responsibility. The only organization in the world dedicated to the memory of the twin victims and survivors of medical experimentation at Auschwitz, CANDLES honors and celebrates the lives of the Mengele Twins to educate the world and prevent similar atrocities. The institution also works to prevent genocide on a global level and transform prejudice on a local level. For more information, visit www.candleholocaustmuseum.org.

Background on 643 Wabash Avenue, Terre Haute

Built as the United States Trust Company in 1903, the structure at 643 Wabash Avenue got a Neoclassical makeover in 1928, a year after United States Trust merged with the Terre Haute National Bank, creating Terre Haute National Bank and Trust Company.

Chicago architect Solon Beman designed the original structure. Terre Haute architectural firm Johnson, Miller, Miller & Yeager was awarded the '20s renovation project, with Taylor-Palmer Company of Milwaukee responsible for the redesign of the main banking hall.

The building's limestone façade was reconstructed to include a grand arched window. Customers were greeted by an elegant hall that rivaled county courthouses in materials and decoration— marble floors, rich wood wainscoting and an intricate coffered and barrel-vaulted ceiling punctuated by a large skylight. A stairway leading to the basement in the center of the lobby was floored over to create more space.

The 1928 redesign also saw the addition seven murals by Italian-American artist Vincent Aderente (1880-1941) of New York City. He painted murals across the United States in churches, hospitals, banks, theaters, courthouses and many other public buildings, including the Denver Mint, Utah State Capitol, Detroit Public Library and Boston Opera House.

His murals in Terre Haute—the only Aderente murals in Indiana—use female allegorical figures to represent various aspects of banking: thrift, success, wealth, power, trust, mining, transportation, factories, industry and agriculture. Placed high on each wall of banking hall just below the vaulted ceiling, the arch-shaped oil-on-canvas murals have been damaged by roof leaks and will require restoration.

The renovated building had its formal opening on June 18, 1928. Following another merger in 1932, Terre Haute National Bank and Trust Company became Terre Haute First National Bank. The bank's main office remained at 643 Wabash until 1988, when it moved into newly constructed offices at 6th and Wabash.

After the move, the bank leased its former headquarters to the Terre Haute Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber shared the building with other tenants—Wabash Valley Community Foundation, Terre Haute Economic Development Corp., Terre Haute Convention & Visitors Bureau and Indiana Landmarks' Western Regional Office. The tenants departed one by one, beginning with the Chamber in 2004. The building has been vacant since 2008.

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