

# Historic Oberlin Today



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## About the Project

The December 21, 2004 issue of the *Oberlin News-Tribune* launched a series of historic home profiles selected from the 300 buildings included in the City of Oberlin Historic Preservation Commission's city-wide historic site inventory conducted by the Oberlin Heritage Center in 2003 and 2004; the series continues with buildings from the 2005-2006 inventories. The buildings were chosen based on their historical and architectural interest, geographical distribution, and the varied themes, architectural styles and building types that they represent within the context of Oberlin's history. In order to respect property owners and occupants' privacy, the series does not include information about current owners or occupants of the properties.

Property owners or others with questions or with additional information they would like to share about the history of the buildings in the series are encouraged to contact Pat Murphy at the Oberlin Heritage Center at 774-1700 or to send an email to [pmurphy@oberlinheritage.org](mailto:pmurphy@oberlinheritage.org). Historic Oberlin Today was made possible in part by a grant from the U.S. Department of the Interior's National Park Service administered by the Ohio Historic Preservation Office of the Ohio Historic Preservation, in cooperation with the City of Oberlin Historic Preservation Commission and the Oberlin Heritage Center.



**199 W. College Thompson-Pond House**

The religious fervor of Oberlin's residents has long spurred them to social action, often for noble causes such as abolitionism, but also for moral crusades that may now strike us as quite conservative. Three past residents of this house represent this spectrum. It was built in 1866 for Deacon Uriah Thompson. A passionate abolitionist and important early patron of the college, he also fervently denounced liquor, secret societies, and anything else he saw as unwholesome. In 1883, after Thompson left to run a student boarding house in the former 'First Ladies Hall' across the street, Rev. Chauncey N. Pond moved into this house and stayed until 1916. A pastor in several Congregational churches in Ohio, he was also involved in various national organizations including the American Sunday School Union (now the American Missionary Fellowship) and the Industrial Missionary Association of Alabama, which assisted African Americans in acquiring land. Pond also founded Oberlin's Union Telegraph Institute during the Civil War. The third prominent resident of this house, Susan Fidélité Hinman, was president of the Oberlin chapter of the Women's Christian Temperance Union from 1914-36 and lived here in the 1920's.



**271 W. College Henderson House**

This attractive, well-preserved house was designed by Columbus architects Marriott and Allen for John and Ada Henderson who moved in circa 1908. In John's long career, he was president of the Oberlin Business College and the Peoples Banking Company as well as a founding member of the Anti-Saloon League. The Business College grew and prospered under John's leadership, leading the Oberlin News to declare it "one of the biggest and best [business] colleges in the country." After John founded the People's Bank in 1906 he ran it so well that it was the only bank in Oberlin to survive the nation-wide rash of failures after the Great Crash in 1929, and it did so without losing a dollar of its invested funds. After John helped found the Oberlin Anti-Saloon league in 1893, it became a nation-wide organization that played an important role in enacting Prohibition in 1919. The Henderson's stayed here until John's death in 1939. It was subsequently the long-time home of John and Libby Cochrane, proprietors of Oberlin's Ben Franklin Store.



### 158 Elm

The first person known to live at this house is Edith Dickson who was here from 1890-1896. Edith was a librarian at the conservatory and later president of the Ohio Women's Suffrage Association. Charles Beebe Martin and his wife Helen also lived here with Edith. A lecture series in honor of Charles' forty-five years as a professor of classics at Oberlin continues today at the college. Helen was a chair of the Oberlin Village Improvement Society, a precursor of the Oberlin Historical and Improvement Organization. At the turn of the century, Rev. Benjamin Shuart and his wife Anna were living here. Benjamin owned the Shuart Grader Company, which produced road machinery, and also patented an improvement for an earth scraping machine as well as an 'elevating and transferring apparatus' (Oberlin News 4/7/96:3). The Nord family purchased this house in 1966 and donated it to Christ Episcopal Church. It has been the church's rectory ever since.



### 190 Elm Leslie-Johnson-Thomas House

This house was at the cutting edge of both style and technology when it was built for Florence Leslie in 1894. It was one of the first houses in Oberlin to have central heating, which allowed much larger and airier rooms. Rebecca Johnson moved here from her previous house on S. Professor St. in 1911, which disproves a local legend that she killed herself out of grief following the death of her husband, Albert, in a train wreck in 1899. When she died in 1915, her will stipulated that her long-time houseman, coachman, and gardener, Henry Thomas, be allowed to stay until his death. Henry, born a slave, had been freed by the Johnson family. After Henry moved into a rest home in the early 30's, local contractor John Annable bought the house and divided it into apartments. The house is still used as a duplex today.



**221 Elm**

This house was constructed in about 1874 for Francis Thompson and his family. Francis owned Watson & Thompson Hardware (now Watson's Hardware) with M.J. Watson. Helen Cox, a first lady of Ohio, lived here circa 1910. Her late husband was Civil War general and Ohio governor Jacob Cox. She was also the daughter of famed preacher and Oberlin College president Charles Finney. Paul and Helen MacEachron, who had both taught in China, moved in about 1925 when Paul came to Oberlin as a phys-ed professor. Tragedy struck in 1930 when Paul died after falling from a cliff at Chance Creek. The Tumblesons moved in after Carl Tumbleson bought the more than century-old Oberlin School of Commerce in 1952. Carl served as president, his son Robert as vice-president, and Robert's wife, Ruth, also worked at the school. This property was restored by Mary Durling, who lived here from 1978-2000.



**228 Elm, DeFrance House**

The first known residents of this house were Allen and H. B. Hayward, both carpenters. From 1883-1891, Mary DeFrance and her children moved in. Mary, an African American woman, moved here from Albuquerque, NM with her six children, one of whom, Marie, went on to become a successful business woman, and one of the first African American business women in Oberlin. Marie bought Belle Knowlton's Millinery Store at 24 South Main in 1886. She operated her own millinery store until her health failed in 1926.



**240 Elm, Woods House**

The house at 240 Elm was built circa 1890, and the first residents were John and Sarah Woods and their daughter Maud. Among the many residents of the house, John and Isabelle Wrightman lived here from 1916 until 1942. John was a Professor of Romance Languages, and he and his wife were often away during the summer months. During the summer of 1932, neighbors noticed water in the street in front of this house and, upon investigation, discovered the water was coming from the front door. When neighbors went into the house they discovered a mess; an upstairs water pipe had broken and had been leaking for several weeks. Portions of the ceiling had fallen, walls were badly damaged, and the fireplace front had fallen over. Luckily, the damage was able to be repaired.



**249 Elm, Comings House**

This house was built sometime in the 1890's and Andrew & Emelie Comings and their two children were the first residents. Andrew owned a bookstore on W. College and was also the mayor (1892-1896) under whom Oberlin saw its first electric streetlights. He went on to the Ohio General Assembly, but remained an important figure in Oberlin affairs. Among the other many residents of the house have been many college professors and administrators. In 1993, John Jude and Leonetta Palencar lived here. John Jude is a nationally recognized artist whose works have appeared in numerous publications including those produced by Bantam, Time/Life, Avon, and Warner (Felix).



### **195 Forest, Andrews House**

195 Forest was built in the summer of 1893 for Professor George and his wife, Harriet, Andrews, and their two children. While construction was still underway, George felt the excavated area was too small and so ordered the dimensions of the house to be enlarged resulting in, at the time, a larger-than-life home. George was a professor of Organ and Composition at the Conservatory from 1882-1931, an eminent performer, conductor, and composer. George and Harriet moved to Honolulu in 1931, where George passed away. This house then experienced several other owners, including Oberlin College. In 1977 James and Catharine Caldwell bought and restored the house.



### **248 Grafton, Quinn House**

The first known residents of this house were Solomon and Frances Quinn in 1883. Solomon served in the 27<sup>th</sup> US Colored Troops in 1865, but because of illness, was discharged after only three months service. He later joined the Grand Army of the Republic, and applied for a pension because of continued illness. Solomon was a farmer and laborer and belonged to the First Methodist Church. Frances belonged to Mt. Zion Baptist Church. Solomon and Frances had 7 children, and lived here until their deaths (Solomon d. 1894, Frances d. 1909). This house continued to be occupied by Quinn family members, including fireman Marion Quinn, until at least 1916. Since then, this house has seen many other residents.



### **36 E. Lorain Hobbs House**

William Dayton Hobbs, his wife Gertrude, and their daughter Nellie moved into this house in 1895, about a decade after its construction, and stayed for more than fifty years. A long-time rival of the Gibson brothers, Dayton ran a bakery and restaurant called 'The Oberlin' on E. College. The Hobbs rented out part of this large house to various people, including Anna and Louise Beck, sisters who ran a millinery shop next to the bakery. Dayton was also responsible for both of Oberlin's movie theaters. He built the Apollo's building, 'Hobbs Block,' in 1913 to house both the theater and his restaurant and also built the former 'Rex' theater at 51 S. Main (now Yesterday's Ice Cream Shoppe and Quiznos). Dayton sold his restaurant in 1917 to retire from the food business at age 49, but it was not long before he began working as manager at the Oberlin Inn. By the time he retired for good in 1932, Dayton had also served on the Village Council and the Board of Public Affairs. The house is now a home to off-campus students.



### **369 West Lorain, Stone-Gunn House**

This house was built sometime close to 1868 for Montraville and Mary Ann Stone. Former residents of Strongsville, the Stone family moved to Oberlin in 1868 where Montraville became the president of Citizens' National Bank, and Mayor of Oberlin in 1874 and 1875. Among the many other residents of this house, Lucius and Lila Upton lived here in the late 1890's. Lucius was a Conservatory Graduate, and a photographer, who opened the Photography Gallery in 1880. Ross Gunn, another prominent citizen, lived in this house in 1908 with his wife Lora. Ross was a surgeon and supported civil improvement ideas and spoke against alcohol and narcotics.



### **216 S. Main Stone House**

This house was probably built between 1873 and 1877 when the first known residents, Herbert Penfield, a carriage maker, his wife Harriet, and their daughter Sarah were living here. During the Civil War, Herbert was one of the ‘Squirrel Hunters,’ a group of Ohio civilians who volunteered in 1862 to protect Ohio’s southern border near Cincinnati from Confederate attack. In 1895, Judson & Ida Stone moved in. Judson had a long career in politics, serving as a village treasurer and a member of the village council, president of the Oberlin Board of Commerce, state senator for three terms, and secretary of Oberlin Business Men's Club. Judson also attained the rank of ‘grand sentinel’ in the Royal Arcanum men’s group. Judson and Ida had five children before her death in 1912. Judson and his second wife, Gertrude, had two children. One of them, Paul, who worked with the Oberlin Elevator Co., lived here with his parents and his wife Ina and the house has remained in the Stone family for almost 110 years.



### **272 Oak, Monroe-Wolfe-Lord House**

This house was built sometime between 1894 and 1897. The first residents were Allen and Dora Monroe. Allen served in the civil war at a young age in the 129<sup>th</sup> Ohio Volunteer Infantry and the 19<sup>th</sup> Ohio Ind. Battalion (1863-1865), and later became one of the first mail carriers in Oberlin. Allen and Dora adopted a daughter, Maude A., who graduated from Oberlin College, and went on to become an Associate Professor of Physical Education. In 1908, Albert and Clara Wolfe moved in. Both were active in the women’s suffrage movement, and Albert was a professor at Oberlin College. This house continued to have college ties, as professors lived in it until 1993. Katharine Wright, O.C. graduate and sister to Orville and Wilbur, was married here in 1926, while Professor Louis and Frances Lord lived here.



#### **41 North Prospect, MacCoughlan House**

The first known resident of this house, Charles Caywood, moved in sometime between 1917 and 1927, though the house looks much older. It is possible that it could have been moved from another location here in Oberlin. In 1935, Arthur and Mabel Lucas lived here with their children Amelita and Arthur, Jr.. Arthur owned a restaurant on South main (circa 1917) and was also once fined for letting his chickens “run at large.” Harold Dearth lived here in 1939, and in 1942 John C. and Ida MacCoughlan lived here for at least 30 years.



#### **45 N. Prospect Johnson-Ratner House**

When this house was completed in 1948, it was on the cutting edge of architecture for Oberlin. It was designed and built by Douglas Johnson and Max Ratner, who went on to build a number of other houses throughout town. It was divided into a duplex with Max and his wife on one side and Doug and his wife on the other. Both men as well as Doug's wife, Shirley, were graduates of Antioch College and came to Oberlin after World War II to work on a project to help Lorain Steel workers build their own homes in response to a housing shortage. Both the Johnsons and Ratners were involved in founding the Oberlin chapter of the ACLU and Max and Shirley went on to be very active in the state organization. Max had actually been imprisoned for almost four years for refusing to fight in WWII. He left Oberlin in the mid-fifties to design buildings throughout the country ranging from Brook Tower in Denver, then the tallest building west of the Mississippi, to half-way houses and homeless shelters. Doug continued to build and design houses until 1965 when he became facilities manager for Gilford Scientific Co., which designed spectrophotometers for use in medical diagnostics. Doug also served a number of terms on the city council. Both he and Shirley continue to live in Oberlin.



#### **23 S. Prospect Truffant House**

This house was built about 1897 when Mr. F. A. Breck and his family lived here. The Oberlin City Directory from that year lists Breck as a manufacturer of unfermented wine. Perhaps the product was intended for use by some of the more ardently anti-alcohol churches in Oberlin, birthplace of the Anti-Saloon League in 1893. Regardless of his intentions, Breck had left town by 1899. Another fascinating resident was Eulalie Grover, who lived here with her parents from 1907-1916. Eulalie was the author of two popular series of books for young children, the *Sunbonnet Girls* and the *Overall Boys* and also edited a Mother Goose nursery rhymes collection that remains popular to this day. Mabel and Lester Truffant set the longevity record for this house, living here from 1922 to 1966. Lester, a local physician, had his office at 15 S. Main Street.



### **337 Reamer, Geiser House**

This house was built in 1919 for Professor Karl and Florence Geiser. Karl was a Professor of political science and the first chairman of the Political Science Department. He was known by his students as a good teacher, but was very controversial in Oberlin. The son of German immigrants, Karl supported Germany during WWI and even supported Hitler in WWII. In fact, he was awarded the Order of the German Eagle (given to statesmen or other prominent persons in friendly countries), which caused so much uproar that he was forced to retire. He died in 1950, but his wife continued to live here until the late 60's.



### **346 Reamer , Mosher House**

Two Conservatory professors of singing, Margaret and Charles Adams, were the first to live in this house, built in 1916. Charles and Harriet Mosher and their two children, lived here in the 50's and 60's. Charles, a philosophy major at Oberlin College, entered the town's public arena in 1940 when he bought the Oberlin News Tribune. He was the paper's editor until 1961 when he won a seat in the US House of Representatives as a Republican. During his eight terms, he sat on the Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee and was, notably, the first Republican representative to vote against funding the Vietnam War. Before his retirement in 1982, Charles also served as a trustee of Oberlin College and First Church and as a fellow at the Smithsonian's Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars. At age seventy-six, Charles re-enrolled at the college and earned an M.A. in government in 1983.



### **347 Reamer, Fitch House**

This house was built circa 1938, and its first resident was Florence M. Fitch. Florence, originally from Connecticut, graduated from Oberlin College in 1897. Florence went on to become the first American woman to earn a MA & PhD at the University of Berlin. She came back to Oberlin about 1908, and was an instructor in the Dept. of Philosophy and secretary to the Oberlin College President Henry C. King. She taught religion and philosophy and had a broad knowledge of other cultures based on many travels. She was also involved in many community organizations including: the First Church in Oberlin, Oberlin Community Chest, Community Center, Women's Club, and the League of Women Voters. This house has many other residents tied to the college (professors and administration).



### **Pagoda Houses**

In 1960, seven children died when their family's sub-standard home on Lincoln Street caught fire. The fire was a wake-up call for the town, finally making people think about the woefully inadequate conditions that Oberlin's poor residents were living under, particularly in its southeast quarter. The city strengthened its enforcement of housing codes and enacted a fair housing law, but it was soon apparent that Oberlin residents needed new homes. With funding from the federal Public Housing Authority, 54 pagoda-style houses were built in 1965-66. Two unique features set Oberlin's public housing apart. First, public housing in the rest of the country usually took the form of huge apartment buildings that concentrated residents in the poorest part of town and separated them from the neighborhoods they lived in. Oberlin decided to build single-family homes scattered throughout the town so that their residents would not be stigmatized or ghettoized. Although they were not ultimately spread throughout the city, the units were interspersed with pre-existing homes throughout the southeast section of Oberlin. The second unique feature of the houses is their Asian-inspired design, which led residents to call them 'pagoda' houses. Their architecture is, however, a mixed blessing since it makes them stick out from the surrounding houses. While few would agree that low-income housing in Oberlin is perfect, the pagoda houses went a long way towards making Oberlin a better community for all of its residents.

### **235 N. Main Street, Mitchell House**

Built in the 1870s, this house's first known residents were an African American family: William M Mitchell, a North Carolinian, his wife Zurah Ann, a Virginian, and their five children: Walter, Arthur, Minerva, James, and Nellie. William, a house painter and paperhanger, had come to Oberlin about 1866. Later, running as an Independent, he won a seat on the village council in 1884. This was unusual in staunchly Republican Oberlin, where Lincoln's old party was firmly entrenched. William's success in 1884 as an independent was thanks largely to the tradition of having at least one African American on the council. Since the Republicans hadn't nominated any black candidates, William got the job. He ran for various positions several more times as an independent and as a member of the Prohibition Party, but he never again overcame the Republican machine. The Mitchell home was not known just for politics; it was also one of the most popular places for black college students to live in Oberlin. Some families sent multiple generations of their children here before the Mitchells left in 1923.



### **Orchard Kindergarten**

This building is one of Oberlin's finest examples of Craftsman style architecture. It was originally part of the property of Maynard M. Metcalf. Metcalf was a professor of zoology at the college and notably served as the lead expert witness for the defense at the Scopes 'Monkey Trial' in 1925. It is unclear what he used the building for before the Oberlin Kindergarten-Primary Training School bought it and made it into a kindergarten in 1926. Founded in 1894, the school trained Kindergarten teachers and provided free education to Oberlin's five-year-olds. It was one of the premier schools of its kind before new state requirements forced it to close and transfer its buildings and students to the college in 1932. The college leased the building to the city school system, which continued to use it for kindergarteners. Lying between Forest and Elm streets and surrounded by trees, the school was so secluded that it was called 'Fairyland' before South and Lord/Saunders dormitories were built around it in the 1960s. Concerns from the fire marshal and falling enrollment led the school system to shut it down in 1980. The only one of the Training School's former dormitories, lecture, halls, and classrooms still standing, the building now appears rather forlorn and neglected.



### **266 N. Professor, Horn House**

John H Horn, a carpenter and contractor, built this house for his family between 1902 and 1904. They lived here until about 1910. Mrs. Anna B Hughes, an artist, lived here from about 1910 to 1920. The house's most illustrious residents, the Mays, moved in between 1927 and 1929. The patriarch, Alfred E May, fought in the Civil War for Company G of the 7<sup>th</sup> Ohio Volunteer Infantry after joining at age 17. In 1915, Ohio's governor appointed him to a commission to select a design for a monument to commemorate a battle at Lookout Mountain. Also an inventor, he claimed to have been the first to find a practical use for fuel oil when he built his own oil-burning boiler in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Alfred was the last member of his Civil War company to die when he passed away in 1929. His daughters Mary and Nora ran a county children's boarding home here from the 1930's through the 1950's.



### **128 Shiphperd Circle, Ellis House**

Oberlin College developed the Shiphperd Circle neighborhood after WWII to entice and retain faculty with quality modern housing. Built on the land called Caskey farm after William Caskey, a professor of oratory at Oberlin College at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the first houses were constructed in 1950. Wade and Agatha Ellis and their sons Wade Jr. and William moved into this house after its construction in 1956. Wade was only the tenth African American to earn a PhD in Mathematics in the United States and the first African American professor to teach at OC, where he taught math from 1948 to 1967. Wade also served on the Oberlin City Council. Both of his sons graduated from OC and went on to have distinguished academic careers: Wade Jr. became a college math instructor in California and William taught political science at Howard University, at one time heading research in the department. .

### **73 N. Pleasant, Hovey House**

The first known residents, Frank Hovey and his wife Mary Etta, moved into this house about 1875 with their children Lena and Harry. Frank was a farmer, ice dealer, painter and paperhanger, and later ran a plumbing business with his son. He also had a career in public service, serving as chief engineer of the fire department, city councilman, and warden. Lena married Frank Foster in 1898 and the couple stayed in this house with Lena's parents. After Frank and Etta died, Harry moved back in with his sister in 1941 and worked as a plumber at the college. Two more Hoveys, Paul and Harold, also lived here in the forties. Paul was a fighter pilot in WWII, serving in China, Burma, and India. After more than seventy-five years, The Hovey family's long residence here ended about 1960.



### **396 Morgan, Paul and Sally Arnold House**

Designed and partially built by its first owners, Paul and Sally Arnold, this house exemplifies the post-WWII do-it-yourself movement in home construction. Oberlin College's art department hired Paul, a 1940 Oberlin College graduate, in 1941. After returning from service in WWII, Paul and his wife Sally, also an Oberlin grad., began designing their new home. Paul cleared his blueprints with Berea architect Franklin Scott, pulled together his own materials, and began building with the help of local contractor Lee Ross the summer of 1948. The Arnold's moved in to their nearly completed home that Christmas. The modern split-level house featured a high-ceiling living room with an overlooking bedroom balcony. As the Arnold's family grew so did the house and they eventually converted the garage into a dining room and the rear porch into a music room among other improvements and additions. Paul also designed two monuments in Oberlin, one to Martin Luther King Jr. and the other to Oberlin's namesake, John Frederick Oberlin..

### **319 Reamer, Carruthers House**

This large neo-Georgian house was constructed in 1909 for Claudio Strauss Carruthers and her husband Will. Claudio was the daughter of August Strauss, who, along with his cousin Marx, made himself one of the richest men in 19<sup>th</sup> century Oberlin. Although they arrived in Oberlin from Germany almost penniless in the 1850's, the cousins used their connections with New York relatives to build a thriving clothing business. Claudio's husband Will Carruthers ran a jewelry store on W. College Street before selling it to work for his father-in-law in 1913. Another illustrious resident was George Simpson, who lived here with his wife Eleanor from 1948 until the 1980's. George was a leader in the field of cultural anthropology and long-time chair of Oberlin's Sociology-Anthropology Department. He studied cultural minorities in the U.S. and abroad as well as Caribbean and West African religions.



### **184 Woodland, Cowdery House**

This house was built in the late 1880s. About 1900, the Cowdery family moved in and stayed for sixty years. Kirke Cowdery and his wife Mary had two sons, Lawrence and Karl. Kirke, originally from Wisconsin, was a professor of French, and later professor emeritus, at Oberlin College, and Mary, from Mt. Vernon, Ohio, was a tutor, and later assistant professor emeritus, also in French. Kirke taught at the college for thirty-one years, helped to establish Oberlin's chapter of Phi Beta Kappa, served as a foyer (translator) for French troops in WWI, and worked for the Red Cross in Oberlin during WWII. Mary taught at both the college and the preparatory school for forty-five years. In 1946, Kirke died but Mary stayed on until about 1960. The house is now owned by the college and rented to students.



### **131 Groveland, Hallauer House**

In the early days of Oberlin, many skilled artisans, both black and white, lived in the southeast section of town. Only a few of their home, such as this one, still stand. Jacob Hallauer, a Swiss stonecutter who had immigrated to the U.S. about ten years earlier, built this red brick cottage in 1862. He and his large family lived here through about 1880 and many generations of Hallauers went on to live in other parts of Oberlin. Though it is not the fanciest old house in town, its longevity speaks to Jacob's construction skills and it has been preserved without major alterations. It also provides an excellent example of the life of enterprising working family in early Oberlin.



### **271 Elm**

This house has seen many residents since it was built circa 1895. Lyman and Henrietta Williams were the first known residents. Lyman was a local architect, carpenter, and contractor. During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (1907-1908 at least) he had an office on the second floor of 15 S. Main Street. One of Lyman and Henrietta's children, Arthur, went on to become a professor of music education at the Conservatory, and was instrumental in establishing and strengthening many music educator organizations and resources. About 1948, Herman and Nina Worcester moved into this house. It appears that the Worcesters rented out part of it. Two such renters were Arthur and Nancy Dann. Arthur was a professor of piano at the Conservatory, who today has an award named in his honor. The Arthur Dann Award provides one pianist per year at the Conservatory the funding to perform concerts outside of Oberlin.

### **67 N. Park**

This house was built sometime around 1891. Among its many residents were Raleigh and Fannie Godfrey. Raleigh was a local chauffeur and inventor. In 1909, he received a patent on a non-crank automobile starter. The Oberlin News at the time wrote that the starter was "a perfectly practical device" that not only started the car easily, but also served as an automatic tire inflator. Raleigh started a business, the Gas Engine Starter Co., to produce the device. He also received a patent on a continuous music record player in 1919. Some time later, Frank Parsons lived here. Frank owned and operated Parson's Jersey Dairy, which was located at 355 E. Lorain Street.



**55 Union, Broadwell House**

This turn of the century house was home to George Broadwell, a man whose business is on the minds of many Americans today-- gas. The modern gas station first came to Oberlin in the 1930's when George Broadwell and George Jackson had the building at 90 S. Main (currently Midas) built. Before this George and George owned a taxi stand and filling station on N. Main. The original name of the business was J & B, but, because the letters ran together, the name was changed to the Janby Oil Co. George Broadwell also owned the Apollo and the Rex theater for a short time. George was married to Lucinda Broadwell and had one son, George Peake Broadwell.



**373 Edgemoor, Cerf House**

This house was built in 1937 by Oberlin College professor and architect William H. Brown for Raymond Cerf, a violin professor. During (and after) construction, this house turned more than a few heads. One person asked, upon seeing the stark concrete box that was still shaping into the house, "When do they mount the canon?" Very much a concrete rectangle covered with wooden clapboarding, the house features what appears to be unusual window placement when viewed from the outside. However, it is important to understand that this house was designed to put function before aesthetics, and as such, the outside appearance is starkly more modern than much of Oberlin's architecture. This house was an important first step for Oberlin ushering in the modern architectural age.



### 19 E. College

The building complex that the Apollo Theater is a part of was built by William Hobbs in 1914. George Broadwell, the man who built the first modern gas station in Oberlin, was the first owner of the theater. 'Thor, Lord of the Jungle,' was the first motion picture shown here. After Broadwell sold the building to Ira West in 1917, there were several owners before the Steel family took over the theater in 1928. Jerry Steel, a Cleveland native, fought with the American Army in France during WWII, managed Alhambra Theater in Cleveland for a time, and worked as a distributor for Warner Bros. before coming to Oberlin. Under his direction, the theater flourished through the depression years, and was enlarged and modernized. In 1950, the theater gained its now famous neon, triangular sign. The Steel family continues to own the theater.

### Soldier's Monument

The modern Soldiers' Monument on the corner of S. Main and Vine Streets is neither the first, nor the original war memorial in Oberlin. The marble slabs bearing the names of Oberlin soldiers who died in the Civil War were originally incorporated into a different monument, a Gothic Revival structure built in 1870 that used to stand where the Conservatory is now on the corner of College and Professor Streets. However, in the 1930s, when patriotism was running low and the general Oberlin populace was anti-war, the aging monument was dismantled and the marble tablets were put in storage. When World War II began, Oberlin viewed its veterans more favorably, and the tablets were reincorporated into the present monument in 1943, along with new tablets memorializing Oberlin soldiers from the Spanish Civil War, both World Wars, the Korean War, and the Vietnam Conflict. The monument has since been restored twice: in 1983 for Oberlin's sesquicentennial celebration, and also in 2004.



### **Arboretum**

The Oberlin Arboretum got its start when OC purchased the 17-acre 'Ladies' Grove' in 1892 in order to develop it as a nature preserve. The grove was considered one of the only places appropriate for women to walk and enjoy nature. Wealthy OC alum Charles Hall bought 77 acres of the property surrounding the grove in order to realize a full-fledged arboretum. He presented it to OC, and in his will, left a fund to maintain the property outlining his hopes that the Arboretum remain free of buildings and athletic fields, to be developed as a nature preserve for both the town and OC. The will has been a source of contention ever since. For example, the College leases a large chunk of Hall's purchase to the private Oberlin Golf Club. Consequently, the Arboretum encompasses only about 60 acres of the roughly 100 originally planned. Still, the Arboretum has become a fixture in the lives of both the college and the town.

### **291 Forest, Moulton House**

This house was built in 1932 for professor of physical education Gertrude Moulton. The significance of the house lies under its exterior; this is the first steel framed house in Oberlin. Designed by Cleveland architect Myron Hill, this house's unique frame gives it important technical advantages. The steel framing results in a tight, fireproof, and soundproof structure that insulates well. The framing is also very strong, as the town found out during construction. One night before anything had been built around the frame, a group of men drove up and tried to pull it down by attaching a cable to the steel frame. The tug of war ended with the cable snapping and the men fleeing the scene.



**277 N. Professor, Wade House**

This house first appeared in the city directories in 1894 (probably built soon before that), and the first residents were Gilbert Wade (known as Bert) and his wife Laura. Bert Wade, born in 1862, was a blacksmith who worked at and later bought, in 1889, the Penfield Blacksmith and Carriage Shop. Bert ran his business until his death from pneumonia in 1916. His death was felt by the community where he was remembered as “one of the most highly respected citizens of the village.” After his death, Bert’s son, Benjamin, took over the hardware, harness, and blacksmith shop, and continued to live in the house with his mother (Laura, d. 1942), wife Milfred (m. 1917), and sisters Helen and Mabel. Starting in 1961, this house is listed as Tressie’s Nursing Home, with Tressie Schmauch as the owner. Little is known about the nursing home other than that it experienced a change of ownership in 1982.



**580 W. Lorain, Prestis**

John and Bess Presti opened ‘Presti’s,’ an Italian restaurant and tavern, here on November 21, 1937. There was an existing house at the location, which they renovated when they added the dining area. Their son, Gene Presti, estimated that this original house might have been close to one hundred years old at the time, based on the woodwork. The family lived in the house while they used the other part of the building for the restaurant and bar. Presti’s does not lie within the Oberlin city limits, which explains how it has been able to avoid Oberlin’s alcohol prohibitions. By 1956, John had died, but Bess was still living here with her sons, Eugene and John who managed the restaurant. This building went through further renovations in 1955 and 1967.