



73½ South Professor Street
P.O. Box 455
Oberlin, OH 44074-0455
Phone: 440-774-1700
Fax: 440-774-8061
Website: www.oberlinheritage.org
E-mail: members@oberlinheritage.org

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Contact: Patricia Murphy, Executive Director at (440) 774-1700 or patm@oberlinheritage.org

Oberlin Heritage Center Presents Civil War Program on Soldiers of Color

As a prelude to Civil War sesquicentennial (2011-2015) activities around the state, the Oberlin Heritage Center welcomes Dr. Kelly D. Selby, a Walsh University assistant professor of history, to discuss Oberlin-area African-Americans' participation in the war and the effect that their service had on their lives when they returned home. **“Oberlin’s Sable Arm: Black Ohioans and the Civil War”** is an illustrated presentation taking place on Tuesday, December 8, at 7:15 p.m. at Kendal at Oberlin’s Heiser Auditorium. The event is free and open to the public.

The War Between the States began in 1861, and it was two years later, in May 1863, that the U.S. War Department created the Bureau of Colored Troops to coordinate the enlistment and the service of African Americans in the Union Army. Free black men from Ohio enthusiastically volunteered, and by the end of the war, the state had sent over 5,000 soldiers to the United States Colored Troops (USCT). A number of Oberlin-area African-Americans served in the 5th and 27th USCT. These men served for a variety of reasons and experienced many different consequences as a result of their contributions. They participated in a number of significant battles, suffered from the inequalities faced by black soldiers, and ultimately earned the right to citizenship and veterans' benefits. Not all men, or their families, benefited equally from these achievements. Dr. Selby's research demonstrates how despite the nation's amnesia concerning the role of African-Americans in the Civil War, the local community recognized and honored their "Sable Arm" as part of commemorating Oberlin's contribution to ending slavery and preserving the nation.

Dr. Selby has local roots, being born and raised in Grafton, Ohio, while her father and his family were from Oberlin. In the mid-1990s, she worked at the Oberlin Heritage Center (then the Oberlin Historical and Improvement Organization) as a graduate student intern while pursuing a master's degree in public history at Kent State University. Dr. Selby obtained her Ph.D. from Kent State in 2008, focusing on nineteenth-century United States history. Her dissertation was on "The 27th United States Colored Troops: Ohio Soldiers and Veterans." She has been on the faculty of Walsh University in North Canton, Ohio since 2000.

For more information about this program, or other events and activities sponsored by the Oberlin Heritage Center, please visit www.oberlinheritage.org or call (440) 774-1700.

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