Annotated Bibliography—Oberlin in the Civil War (1861-1865)

This listing pertains to relevant local resources (online or print) that illuminate historical figures, events, or places in Civil War era Oberlin and/or its county, Lorain, in Ohio. Under each source’s citation, a short annotation is given regarding its content and relevance to local history and the Civil War. If applicable, precise locations are given for resources. The bibliography is subdivided into Primary and Secondary Sources.


Primary Sources:


This record was written by James Cannon, a member of the Oberlin Company K of the 150th Ohio Volunteer Infantry, a National Guard regiment. He was a student at Oberlin College and the Seminary during the Civil War. This record gives a history of Oberlin’s involvement in the 150th OVI; it also includes excerpts and stories from other soldiers and a complete roster of Oberlin participants and where and what they were doing directly after the war.


Henry Chester wrote his recollections in the early 1900’s. Using a combination of his memories, letters, documentations of service, and images, he gives a very detailed recollection of his service in the military. He also includes interesting stories, like about Native Americans playing “La Cross” and escaping from Confederates in a skirmish. Henry had just finished at the Preparatory Department at Oberlin College when he enlisted in the 2nd Ohio Cavalry for three years’ service.


Richard L. Chittenden lived in Elyria, OH, and was the rector of Saint Andrews Episcopal Church there. He enlisted in the 43rd Ohio Volunteer Infantry in late 1862. His diary tells of his daily spiritual struggles, his bouts of sickness, daily camp life, as well as military and political affairs. The diary
begins in January 1863 and goes to June 1865. It was transcribed by his daughter Mary Chittenden Parks. Michael Palazzolo's blog is a transcription of Mary Chittenden Parks' work. Mary Chittenden Park's diary belongs to St. Andrews Episcopal Church.


Edgar Condit had just finished up school in the Preparatory Department of the College when he enrolled in Company C of the 7th Ohio Volunteer Infantry. This story pertains to his escape after the Battle of Cross Lanes in West Virginia; he hid with two other Union soldiers at a Union sympathizer’s property in a cave for several weeks.


Jacob Dolson Cox was an Oberlin College graduate and a member of the Ohio State Senate when the war broke out. He rose to the rank of a Major General with the 23rd Corps. His military reminiscences are detailed, and it is a useful resource on his journey in the military.


Judson Cross, enrolled in the College in 1860, enlisted in Company C of the 7th Ohio Volunteer Infantry in the spring of 1861. This account covers the 7th Ohio’s first movements as a regiment through West Virginia.

Elliott F. Grabill Papers (30/43), Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio.

Located at the Oberlin College Archives, this collection contains a series of letters written between Elliot Grabill and his future wife, Anna Sutton Jenney, from December 1863 to 1865, along with images and other writings by Grabill. Elliot Grabill was enrolled at Oberlin College when the war broke out; he first enlisted in Company C of the 7th Ohio Volunteer Infantry, and later was an officer in the 127th Ohio Volunteer Infantry (the 5th US Colored Troops), and brevetted a major at the end of his service.


Professor Ellis of Oberlin College gave this speech to college alumni on August 23, 1865, a few short months after the war ended to college alumni. His speech is beneficial as a post-war examination of the causes, Oberlin’s status and convictions, and gives a glimpse of the local expectations of the newly united country.
Fannie to her sister, 10 September, 1862. Letters Series II, Oberlin Files (RG 21), Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio.

Located in the Oberlin College Archives, this is a really wonderful letter detailing home front opinion on the war, the departure of a Squirrel Hunters contingent from Oberlin, the activities of the Oberlin Soldier’s Aid Society, and day-to-day life for a woman living in town.

Grand Army of the Republic (30/140), Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio.

Oberlin’s Grand Army of the Republic Post #364 was founded in 1883 for veterans of the Civil War. They met until 1935, when the last veteran died. The Oberlin College Archives collection contains the bylaws and regulations, journals of minutes, financial records, and newspaper clippings. In Series 3, there is a listing of all members and their military involvement, in a personal war sketches bound book.

George Keyes to Edward Clark, 28 August, 1863. Letters Series II, Oberlin Files (RG 21), Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio.

George Keyes was enrolled at Oberlin College in 1863, when he began training with a volunteer militia in Oberlin (which later became Company K of the 150th Ohio Volunteer Infantry). This letter was to a friend from Michigan who was already serving in the war. He details daily happenings and events in town, along with opinions on the war, Oberlin, and the college.

Giles Waldo Shurtleff Papers (30/32), Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio.

This collection contains correspondences between Giles Shurtleff and his future wife Mary Burton Shurtleff, images, letters, service records, and recollections by Shurtleff. Shurtleff served first as the Captain of Company C, 7th Ohio Volunteer Infantry, and later, as the Colonel of the 127th Ohio Volunteer Infantry (5th US Colored Troops). This is a very valuable resource collection on one of the most notable Oberlin participants in the war.


Russell Hall was a sophomore college student at Oberlin College in 1863. For a year (1861-1862), he was in the 43rd OVI, but due to illness, was discharged; later, in 1864, he volunteered in the 150th OVI. His in-depth journal entries for the months of April to December 1863 provide an invaluable male student perspective of Oberlin, student life, and the home front.

Phillip Hayes was an Oberlin College student who started out as the Captain of a Lorain County company in the 103rd OVI; at the end of the war he was promoted to the Colonel of the regiment, and was brevetted a brigadier general. His journal gives a straight-forward and detailed account of the regiment’s actions; however, it is an impersonal account.

**Jacob Dolson Cox (30/3), Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio.**

Jacob Dolson Cox was an Oberlin College graduate, a major general in the Civil War, and a governor of Ohio. This thirteen series collection contains materials pertinent to Cox’s whole career, as a student, a soldier, and a statesman. Of particular interest for the Civil War researcher is Series 4 on Cox’s military records and papers, which includes papers, diaries, newspaper clippings, letters and papers that Cox accrued over his time in the military.

**Judson, Daniel S. *The Private Civil War Journal of Daniel S. Judson, Co. C, 7th Regiment, Ohio.* Transcribed by Clare Ann Hatten.**

Daniel Judson enlisted in Company C of the 7th Ohio Volunteer Infantry in the spring of 1861, at the age of 21 and a student at Oberlin College. He kept this journal from August 16th, 1861 to March 10, 1862. Judson writes fairly detailed pages in his journal detailing his day-to-day struggles as a soldier and his longing for home. He died shortly after his final entry after sustaining severe leg injuries in the Battle of Port Republic. The compilation by Hatten includes letters, news clippings, and discharge papers, along with the diary.


John Mercer Langston was an African American lawyer, reformer, abolitionist, and recruiter for African American regiments in the Civil War. This is Langston’s autobiography. It contains particularly useful chapters on his recruitment efforts in the Civil War for African American troops (the 54th and 55th Mass. Infantry and the 127th Ohio Volunteer Infantry or the 5th US Colored Troops).

**The Lorain County News. Microfilm Collection, Oberlin Public Library, Oberlin, Ohio.**

*The Lorain County News* started in 1860 as Oberlin and Wellington’s weekly newspaper on local and national events. This newspaper is one of the best resources on local opinions, events, and projects on both the home front and war front. During the war, usually a column or even the whole second page of the paper was designated to local and nation-wide war news. [The Oberlin Heritage Center also has
scans of relevant Civil War pages up through 1863 on the shared drive; the Oberlin College Library has these microfilms and a scanner.


E.W. Morey was a student at the college when he enrolled in Company C of the 7th Ohio Volunteer Infantry. Elias writes of daily life in prison in New Orleans, describing harsh conditions, boredom, and Yankee treatment by the Southerners, and gives a glimpse of the war-time South.

*The Oberlin Evangelist. Microfilm Collection, Oberlin College Library, Oberlin, Ohio.*

*The Oberlin Evangelist* was a weekly, religious publishing in Oberlin. Its last edition was in 1862. While mainly on religious subjects and sermons, it does provide the Oberlin perspective on the war and slavery; sometimes it contains transcripts of speeches and meetings in town about emancipation and war efforts.


*The Ohio Seventh* was published in Weston, Virginia (now West Virginia) by two Oberlinians in Company C of the 7th Ohio Volunteer Infantry—Elliot Grabill had been a student at the college, and J.F. Harmon was an editor of *The Lorain County News* before the war. The newspaper is very entertaining, with the motto, “We come to protect, not to invade.” In the single edition of the paper, there is an image of a “Secesh,” news articles from Southern papers, and reports and stories of the regiment.

*Sarah Merion to her sisters. Letters Series II, “Oberlin Files” (RG 21), Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio.*

The Oberlin College Archives has a series of letters by Sarah Merion, a teacher and graduate of the Preparatory Department who was taking classes at the college during the war. She describes life as a female student on the home front, current fashions, and describes the departure of the Squirrel Hunters in 1862.


This was a newspaper published by Union prisoners in 1861 and 1862 in the Southern prisons of Richmond, Tuscaloosa, New Orleans, and Salisbury. Oberlin soldiers in Company C of the 7th Ohio
Volunteer Infantry participated in this publishing by contributing essays or poems, and one Oberlinian, Leroy Warren, was editor of two editions.

Shurtleff, Giles Waldo. “Reminiscences of Army Life.” Giles Waldo Shurtleff Papers (30/32), Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio.

This is a recollection by Giles Shurtleff written in 1881 on his time in the Union military in the 7th Ohio Volunteer Infantry and the 127th Ohio Volunteer Infantry. He writes in retrospect on initial enlistment, briefly on the 7th OVI, and more extensively on the 127th in regard to battles and the regiment’s movements.

Shurtleff, Giles Waldo. Speech on the 5th USCT, 1895. Oberlin Heritage Center, Oberlin, Ohio.

This was speech given by Shurtleff in 1895 on the 5th US Colored Troops (127th Ohio Volunteer Infantry)—in it he addresses his fight for African American recruits to receive proper pay and equal benefits (he even spoke with Abraham Lincoln on this matter personally); also, his troop’s bravery and the bloody battles they participated in.


This is an account by Giles Shurtleff on his year spent in the Southern Prisons of Richmond, Castle Pinckney, Libby, and Salisbury, after capture at the Battle of Cross Lanes in Virginia (now West Virginia) in August 1861. He speaks of the Union treatment by Southerners, of playing baseball, reading, writing letters home, and even an elaborate escape plan.


Luman Tenney had just finished at the Preparatory Department of Oberlin College when he enlisted in the Second Ohio Cavalry. During his service of four years in the military, he kept a war diary, typically writing daily. By the end of the war, he was awarded the rank of a major. His diary displays well the life a soldier in the Second Ohio and their travels across the country. Luman is personable and engaging in his entries. His war diary was published by his wife after his death. A.B. Nettleton, an Oberlinian in the Second Ohio, who was eventually made Colonel of the regiment, contributes an introductory note on the unit and its history, and notes throughout the text. Images of Luman and his family, letters, and biographical notes are included in the book.

Lucien Warner was a student at Oberlin College in the war, and a participant in the Squirrel Hunters (1862) and the National Guard unit, Company K of the 150th Ohio Volunteer Infantry (1864). This work is an autobiography, which includes chapters on his time as a college student and a soldier—providing a glimpse of life on the war and home front.

**Warren, Leroy.** *Diary, 1861-1862. Diaries Series X, Oberlin Files (RG 21), Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio.*

Leroy Warren was an Oberlin College student who enlisted in Company C of the 7th Ohio Volunteer Infantry. This diary starts from the Battle of Cross Lanes in August 1861 and goes through his time in prison in 1862. It provides a personable account of prison life and day-to-day proceedings of a Union prisoner.

**Wheeler, Willard.** *Civil War Diary: August 1861-February 1862, including time spent in a parish prison, New Orleans, LA. Peoria, IL: Charity G. Monroe, 1995.*

Willard Wheeler was a sophomore at Oberlin College when he enlisted as a member of Co. C, 7th OVI. His diary spans the 7th OVI’s history through the battle at Cross Lanes to just past their release from Parish Prison in New Orleans in 1862. He has daily diary entries—the main portion of which are from his time imprisoned at Parish Prison. Of particular interest is his account of Cross Lanes, the 7th OVI’s entrance into New Orleans, the conditions and daily life of an imprisoned Union soldier.

**White, Fannie (Bailey).** *Journal, 1858-1865. Diaries Series X, Oberlin Files (RG 21), Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio.*

Fannie Bailey was a woman living in Oberlin during the war. She lived with her husband, James, a shoemaker. She wrote daily in her diary on proceedings in town: usually on the weather, visits, religion and church, and tending to sick relatives. She also writes on occasion of participating in Oberlin’s Soldier’s Aid Society and on major events in the war. This diary is one of the very few female perspectives from Oberlin in the war.


George Wright briefly participated in Company C of the 7th OVI; however, due to illness, early in the summer of 1861, he could not continue as a soldier. This is a short essay on Oberlin’s first company of men to depart and their history as part of the 7th OVI. He also talks about why Oberlin was invested in the war—mostly to end slavery.

George Wright was briefly a member of Company C, 7th OVI, an Oberlin College student and later a professor. This is his autobiography; he includes a chapter on life as a student at the College and his enrollment in Company C.

**Secondary Sources:**


*They Stopped in Oberlin* is an excellent source on Oberlin African American men who participated in the war. It has two helpful appendices which list African American soldiers from or enlisted in Oberlin, their companies and regiments, their status at the end of the war (i.e., dead or alive), and also a brief description of the major regiments, such as the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry. Furthermore, many of the men listed in the appendices also have brief biographies in the main section of the book, which greatly aids in the research of the lives and roles of African Americans from Oberlin in the war.


This contains brief sections on Harpers Ferry and the Oberlin-Wellington Rescue of 1859, where Oberlin and Wellington residents assisted in rescue of a freedom-seeker, John Price, from fugitive slave catchers.


This work pertains to the Oberlin-Wellington Rescue, where Oberlin and Wellington residents assisted in rescue of a freedom-seeker, John Price, from fugitive slave catchers. It gives an in-depth chronology of the events of the rescue and the subsequent trial, in addition to bios and images of relevant figures. The authoritative source on the event.

**Burroughs, Wilbur Greeley.** “Oberlin’s Part in the Slavery Conflict.” In *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Quarterly*. April-July, Columbus, 1911, XX, 332-334.

This essay is in regard to Oberlin’s abolitionist past and its involvement before and during the war.

William and Aimee Cheek’s collection of chronological essays on John Mercer Langston, an African American Oberlin resident, lawyer, reformer, abolitionist, and recruiter for African American regiments, provide a detailed history of Langston’s life and achievements. Of particular interest, are the final four essays on Langston from 1856-1865, which highlight his involvement with recruitment efforts in the Civil War and his fight for equality for African Americans before, during, and after the war. Also of use are the detailed endnotes of each chapter which cite rich primary sources.


This is a resource binder created at the Oberlin Heritage Center, which includes a bibliography of resources, primary sources (letters, newspaper articles, first-hand accounts), regimental histories, rosters, notable Oberlin figures, and images and maps, pertaining to Oberlin’s involvement and status in the war on the home and war front.


This essay is a good source on Oberlin’s anti-slavery and abolitionist efforts before the war; a useful starting point for talking about why Oberlin became invested in the war.


Emilio’s work is a history of the 54th Massachusetts Infantry, which includes rosters and a detailed history of the formulation of the regiment and its movements and battles. Around twenty from Oberlin enlisted in the first African-American regiment in the country, and two Oberlinians were involved with recruitment efforts in the mid-west: John Mercer Langston and O.S.B. Wall.


During the war, James Fairchild was a professor at Oberlin College—shortly after it, in 1865, he became President of the College. This is history of the town and the college, from the perspective of one who lived through much of its early history. Of interest is Chapter 7, which pertains to Oberlin in the Civil War; Fairchild invaluably includes his own perspectives of the home front and war efforts in Oberlin.

Fletcher’s Book V, “War and Transition,” provides an excellent, detailed history of Oberlin’s involvement in the Civil War, particularly of Company C of the 7th OVI, which was the first company of Oberlin men to fight in the war. While other sources, such as Phillips and Fairchild’s works give a basic history of Oberlin in the war, Fletcher in his book gives a meatier version—with excerpts from primary source materials, like diaries and letters. This text also has footnotes of sources, mostly primary.


Fox’s compilation is a key reference for details on regimental and state losses; he includes rosters, battles, and histories of corps and major figures in the war.


This catalogue, which is available online and in print, is useful for researching students and volunteers in the war at Oberlin College; it is a listing of students who attended the college.


Hansen’s book is comprehensive, unbiased, and a well-established classic in regard to the context, background, events, and personages of the Civil War in the United States. Generally chronological in presentation, the work provides concise, factual information pertaining to a wide array of Civil War topics. An excellent introduction to the Civil War and its historical context; however, the text ends after Lincoln’s death and does not include information about the Reconstruction period in America.


Harper’s work is an excellent reference source on Ohio during the Civil War.


The *History of Lorain County* is a work detailing the early history of Lorain County’s towns, important figures, and culture. It gives a record, history, and partial rosters of major Lorain County regiments, many of which Oberlin residents participated in. Of particular use, it gives an overview of Oberlin in the 19th century with summaries on schools, settlements and growth, and churches and bios of important figures.

Jeffrey’s book contains a roster of all of those who passed through the Southern prison, including twenty-nine from Oberlin. It also includes sections on the *Stars and Stripes in Rebeldom*, a newspaper that Oberlin residents participated in, and on the Union Lyceum, a debate club that Oberlin volunteers started.


This work provides an exact, not too lengthy, history of the 41st OVI. Of excellent use are the sections at the end of book on individual companies. In this, each company’s history, statistics, and men, are all listed. Basic details about each person are included. Of particular interest for Oberlin is the section on Company H, which Alonzo Pease organized, recruited for, and was a captain of. It is the best source for information on Oberlin’s involvement with the 41st OVI.


Asa Mahan, first president of Oberlin College, wrote a history of the Civil War. Of interest, he writes of his visit to Washington to talk with President Lincoln on the status of the war.


This is a transcript of a speech given by Ulysses Marvin at the dedication of the Shurtleff monument in 1911 in Oberlin. He gives a biography of Shurtleff and highlights his achievements.


This is a short paper on Giles Shurtleff as an Oberlin leader in the Civil War, as Captain of Company C, 7th Ohio Volunteer Infantry, and later, as Colonel of the 127th Ohio Volunteer Infantry. The work includes primary quotes by Shurtleff.


This massive, searchable index allows researchers to identify men and their particular companies and regiments, whether navy, infantry, artillery, sharpshooters, or cavalry. They also have records of two prisons, medal of honor recipients, cemeteries, battle and regiment histories.

There are twelve volumes in this collection, which contains regimental histories and rosters for all Ohio units, divided by company, in the Civil War. It usually includes individuals’ ages at enlistment, mustering in and out dates, and locations of enlistment.


Phillips’s work provides a solid, accessible account of Oberlin’s history from 1833-1933. Regarding its usefulness for Oberlin in the Civil War, his chapter “The Inevitable Conflict,” sheds some light on the Oberlin’s involvement. As his main source of information for that period is the Lorain County News, this chapter gives approximate years, numbers, and some names. From his work, many of the companies and regiments that Oberlinians participated in, along with approximate numbers and dates, are listed. This is a good initial source for the background and aftermath of the Civil War in Oberlin, as well as for approximate details in regard to companies, regiments, some individuals, and dates.


Whitelaw’s massive two volume work on the involvement of Ohio in the Civil War is a great reference resource. The first volume is mostly an over-arching history of Ohio in the War; however, at the end of this volume he provides brief biographies of notable Ohio men, including some Oberlinians: Giles Shurtleff, Jacob Cox, and A.B. Nettleton. In the second volume, there are brief histories of all infantry, cavalry, and artillery regiments from Ohio.


Rokicky’s dissertation on James Monroe is a biography of his life. Of particular interest for Civil War researchers is Chapter 3: “Monroe and the Civil War.” Monroe, an ardent abolitionist, while in the Ohio State Senate was an early proponent of Oberlin recruits in the Civil War—this chapter details his political involvement and early efforts in Oberlin in the war.


Roseboom’s book provides a great overview of Ohio in the Civil War period; he discusses major themes, events, Ohio perspectives on national events, and antebellum and post-war Ohio.

This is a roster of remaining members of Company C in the year of 1913.


Garfield was one of the most important Northeast Ohio veterans of the Civil War, and later, a United States President. At the end of this work, there is a great description of Camp Taylor in Cleveland, where many Oberlin volunteers trained, particularly the Monroe Rifles, Company C, of the 7th Ohio Volunteer Infantry.


Stevens’s database on Ohio in the Civil War is an easy, searchable database on Ohioan participation in the war. He includes histories and bibliographies for all the Ohio artillery, infantry, cavalry, and sharpshooter regiments in the war. In addition, there is information on G.A.R. posts, Ohio resource books, and more.


This is a history of the 105th Ohio Volunteer Infantry; however, at the end of this work, there is a great description of Camp Taylor in Cleveland, where many Oberlin volunteers trained, particularly the Monroe Rifles, Company C, of the 7th Ohio Volunteer Infantry.


This massive series contains rosters and regiment histories for all Union and Confederate armies.


Washington’s work is a history of the 127th Ohio Volunteer Infantry or the 5th US Colored Troops. Oberlin had officers and recruiters participating in this important regiment—the first African-American regiment in Ohio. It includes a history of the formation of the regiment, typical recruits, major battles, and appendices on the roster of the officers, examine scores, and prisoners in the war. There is also a useful bibliography at the end of the work.

This is a history of Oberlin’s first company of men: Company C of the 7th Ohio Volunteer Infantry. This work includes a history of the company from early recruitment efforts, to time spent in prison, to their mustering out. At the end of the history, there is a complete roster, with short bios of the men and their time in the war.


Wilson’s great history of the 7th Ohio Volunteer Infantry is a rich text, full of images, primary source excerpts (stories, letters, and telegrams). There are several stories from Oberlin participants at the end of the work, and excerpts from letters sent, throughout. A thorough history, it also includes rosters, reunion details, and memorials for the soldiers of the 7th.


This source provides a good broad account of Northern Ohio’s participation in the Civil War. Oberlin is mentioned in regard to the Oberlin-Wellington Rescue and its main regimental contributions. However, this work is heavily centered on Cleveland’s role in the War. Thus, it is a fine source for Northern Ohio’s, and especially Cleveland’s, time in the Civil War.