

# OHIO HISTORIC INVENTORY

Ohio Historic Preservation Office  
567 E. Hudson St. Columbus, Ohio 43211  
614/297-2470



1. No.	2. County <b>LOR</b>	4. Present Name(s) New Union Center for the Arts		<input type="checkbox"/> Coded
3. Location of Negatives O.H.I.O. Resource		5. Historic or Other Name(s) Union School; Westervelt Hall		
	Roll # Exp. # Facing			
Front	2 13A NE			
Rear	4 15A W			
6. Specific Address or Location 39 South Main		17. Date(s) or Period 1874	17b. Alteration Date(s) 1940, 1993-7	30. Foundation Material Stone
6a. Lot, Section or VMD Number 09-00-086-102-083		18. Style or Design High Victorian Gothic	High Style <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	31. Wall Construction Brick-lined Frame
7. City or Village Oberlin		18a. Style of Addition or Element(s)	Elements <input type="checkbox"/>	32. Roof: Type Truncated Hip w/ Gables Pitch Steep Material Composite Shingle
8. Site Plan with North Arrow		19. Architect or Engineer Walter Blythe	33. No. Bays Front 5 Side 6	
		19a. Design Sources	34. Exterior Wall Material(s) Brick, Stretcher or Running Bond	
		20. Contractor or Builder John Berg	35. Plan Shape Square	
9. U.T.M. Reference		21. Building Type or Plan Other Building	36. Changes (Explain in #42) Reconstruction, renovation	
Zone	Easting	22. Original Use, if apparent School	37. Window Type(s) 4 over 4, 6 over 6 Double-hung	
		23. Present Use Art Studio/Art Center	38. Bldg. Dims. 75 ft. X 75 ft.	
10. <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure		24. Ownership <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private	39. Endangered? No Explain:	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Object		25. Owner's Name & Address, if known The Nord Family Foundation	40. Chimney Placement No Chimney Observed	
11. On National Register ? Yes	12. N.R. Potential ?	26. Property Acreage 0.591	41a. Distance from road	
13. Part of Estb Hist Dist? No	14. Dist. Potential ? Yes	27. Other Surveys in Which Included McQuillen (75)	41b. Frontage on road 75 ft.	
15. Name of Established District (N.R. or Local)		28. No. of Stories 3 and 1/2		
16. Thematic Association(s) Education: Public & Arts: Visual Arts		29. Basement? Yes		
42. Further Description of Important Interior and Exterior Features This three-and one-half-story building was built in the Victorian Gothic Style. It has a bracketed cornice, brick corbelling, and a truncated hip roof with two intersecting steep gables, three stories above the central, main entrance. The rear and front façades have identical window and door placement and proportions. Each original window is double-hung with either four-over-four or six-over-six lights. Five belt courses encircle the building at the levels of the stone lintels and sills above and below almost every window. The corners have tapered buttresses with stone quoins along the slopes. This building had an extensive rehabilitation in the early 1990s, (cont.)				
43. History and Significance After the passage of a local bond issue of \$30,000 for construction of a school for all grades, Union School was built in 1873-1874. It provided 11 classrooms, a library, and a superintendent's office. Total cost was \$37,000 with an additional \$3,500 spent on furniture. Union School replaced a school on North Professor Street that was sold to the college for \$5,000, and later known as Cabinet Hall, the college science lab (Oberlin News-Tribune). Built of Plum Creek brick and Amherst sandstone, the building was dedicated on November 9, 1874. There were 1052 school age children in Oberlin at that time. This building was the school for all children (cont.)				
44. Description of Environment and Outbuildings (see #52) This building anchors the southern end of the downtown commercial district. Main Street is State Route 58 and it is busy with both through and in town traffic.				
45. Sources of Information Lorain County Courthouse: Lorain County tax records. O.H.I.O. Resource Center: Oberlin Historic Preservation Commission Files; National Register nomination; Martha Lermond, Westervelt Hall: Its First Century. Press of the Times, 12/12/82; Oberlin News-Tribune, 3/29/35; Al McQueen, "A Brief History of the Oberlin Consumers Cooperative and its Business."				
46. Prepared by M. Fedelchak-Harley; L. Preville			47. Organization O.H.I.O. and H.P.C.	
48. Date Recorded 9-30-2000			49. Revised by	
50a. Date Revised			50b. Reviewed by	

51. Condition of Property

<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruin
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good/Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Destroyed/Burned
<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	Date _____

54. Farmstead Plan



52. Historic Outbuildings and Dependencies

Barn Type(s)

<input type="checkbox"/> Corn Crib or Shed	<input type="checkbox"/> Summer Kitchen	<input type="checkbox"/> Silo
<input type="checkbox"/> Smoke House	<input type="checkbox"/> Spring House	<input type="checkbox"/> Ice House
<input type="checkbox"/> Designed Landscape Features	<input type="checkbox"/> Privy	<input type="checkbox"/> Garage

53. Affiliated OAI Site Number(s) \_\_\_\_\_

OAI Completed? \_\_\_\_\_

Archaeological Feature:	Observed	Expected on Basis of Archival Research
Well	No _____	No _____
Privy	No _____	No _____
Cistern	No _____	No _____
Foundation	No _____	No _____
Structural Rubble	No _____	No _____
Formal Trash Dump	No _____	No _____
Other _____	No _____	No _____

42. Further Description of Important Interior and Exterior Features (Continued from page 1)

which included the reconstruction of the bell tower above the front-facing gable end; the original bell tower had been removed in 1940.

43. History and Significance (Continued from page 1.)

until Prospect and Pleasant Street schools were built in 1887. Later Union School was a high school only, it was granted a high school state charter in 1903. Agitation for a new school began in 1909; by 1916 the Superintendent was arguing for a new building, stating that Union School was "antiquated, inconvenient, unsanitary... and wholly unsuited for modern high school work." In 1918 the building was condemned by the state fire marshal, and the last class graduated in 1923.

In 1925 local businessmen purchased the building and grounds for \$12,500, for "commercial purposes." In 1926 Edmund C. Westervelt purchased it for \$9,000 and gave it to the college. For several years the college used the building as a classroom space. Then after extensive discussion of alternatives for use, the college gave the building to the City of Oberlin in 1973, with requirements that the gift be repaid if the city sold it. In 1979 it was sold to A.H. Clark for \$32,000 with a requirement that exterior restoration be completed within three years. Two local women, Patricia Bailey Stetson and Marion Bradley Kelly, convinced Mr. Clark to make the space available as headquarters for the Sesquicentennial Committee in 1982. The heat was turned on and the building was insured. The committee occupied two classrooms, one as a business and industry museum, the other as committee headquarters (Lermond). In 1991 and 1992 it served as the temporary home of the Oberlin Consumers Cooperative (McQueen).

In 1995 The Nord Family Foundation purchased the building for conversion into an arts center and now as the New Union Center for the Arts, the building has been adapted for use by visual and performing arts organizations.

This building is significant for its architecture, and for its history of education in a small 19th century community. It is also significant for its adaptive reuse for a modern need. Union School was listed on the National Register in 1973. It was listed by the City of Oberlin as an Oberlin City Landmark in September of 1975.