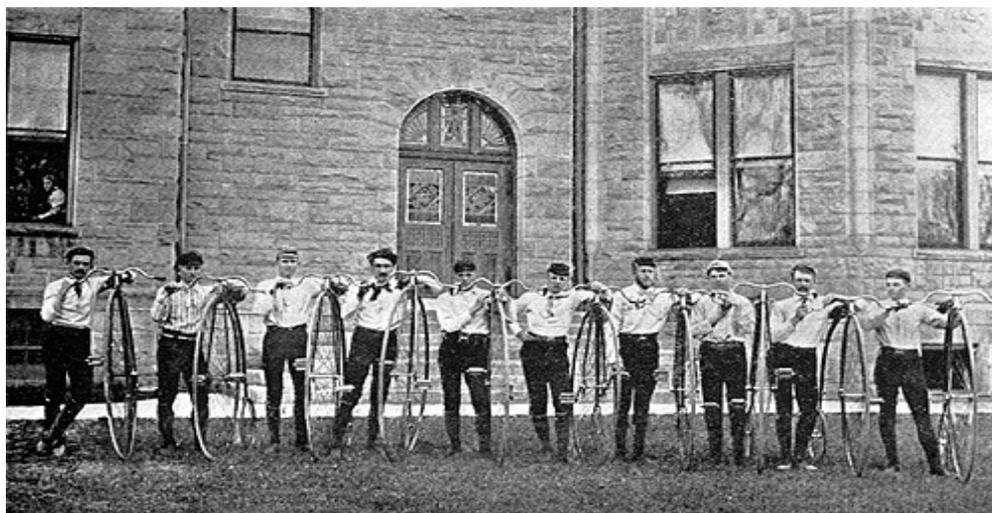




# Biking Tour of Historic Oberlin



This tour is designed for bikers, but can also be traveled on foot or by car. For booklet copies of the tour visit the Oberlin Heritage Center office in the James Monroe House at 73 1/2 South Professor St. The full tour is about 4 and 1/2 miles.



The 1890 Oberlin Bicycle Club  
From Oberlin College "Hi-Oh-Hi", 1890, p. 122

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**THE OBERLIN HERITAGE CENTER**

Winner of the Ohio Association of Historical Societies  
and Museums' History Outreach Excellence Award

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## Acknowledgements

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Morgan Franck, Oberlin Heritage Center Museum Fellow: research, writing, and production; Grassroots Leadership Development Program of Lorain County; City of Oberlin Bed Tax and the Oberlin Main Street-Chamber: financial support; Oberlin College Archives: a wealth of information about bikes in Oberlin and editorial assistance; and Sarah MacLennan Kerr, PhD.: knowledge of Westwood Cemetery and editorial assistance. Updated by Elizabeth Schultz, OHC Museum Education and Tour Coordinator.

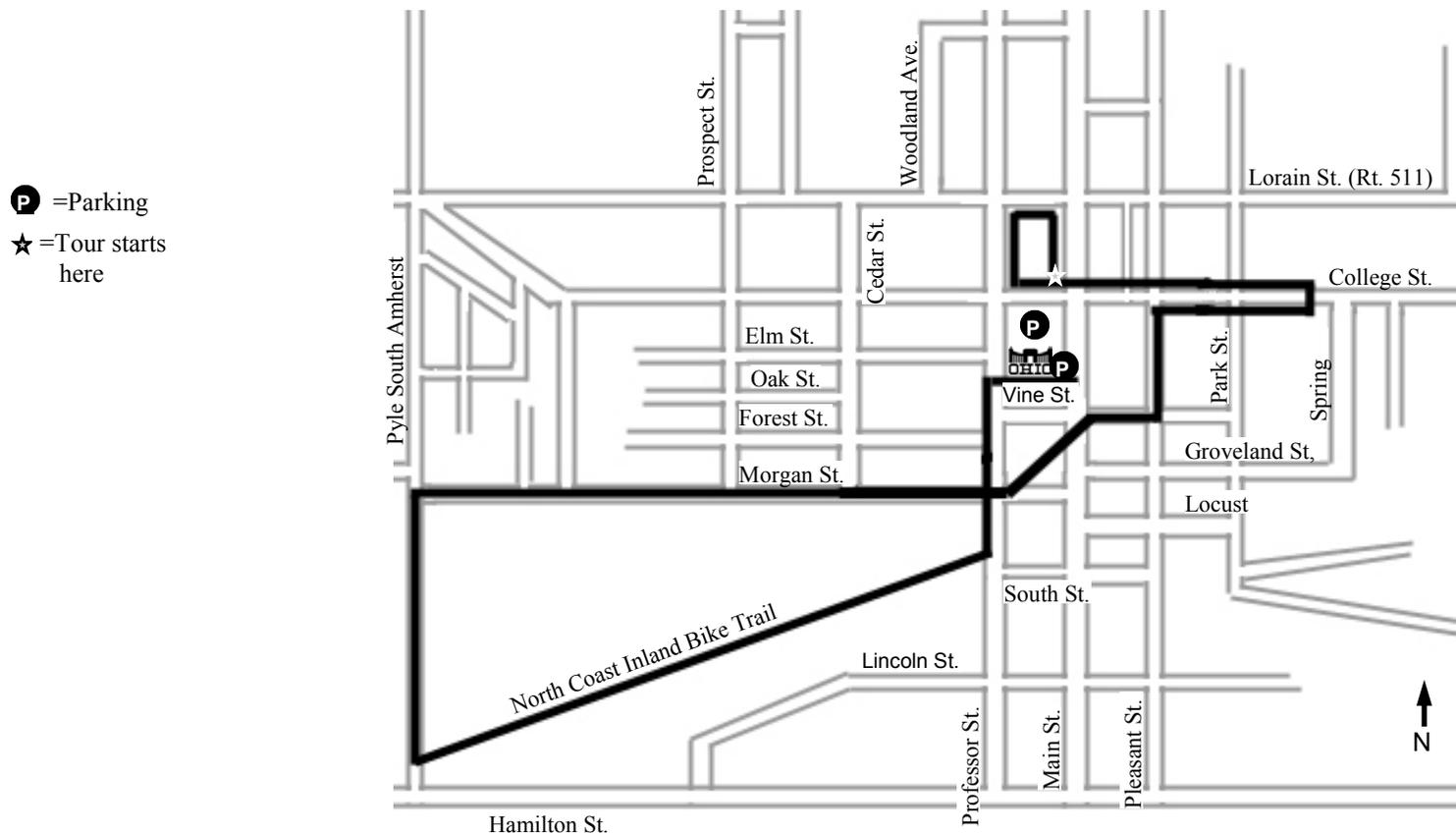


In the 1951 Oberlin College yearbook, this photograph by Sharman Hummel was given an award for being the most "Typically Oberlin."  
From Oberlin College "Hi-O-Hi", 1951, p. 6.

Jan. 28, 1883: “The Oberlin College Bicycle Club begins its headlong career with a nucleus of five members... We desire to have it distinctly understood that the object of the club is to scare the required number of horses, run over the usual number of people, patiently answer all questions and willingly follow out every idea presented.”

(Oberlin Review, Feb, 1883)

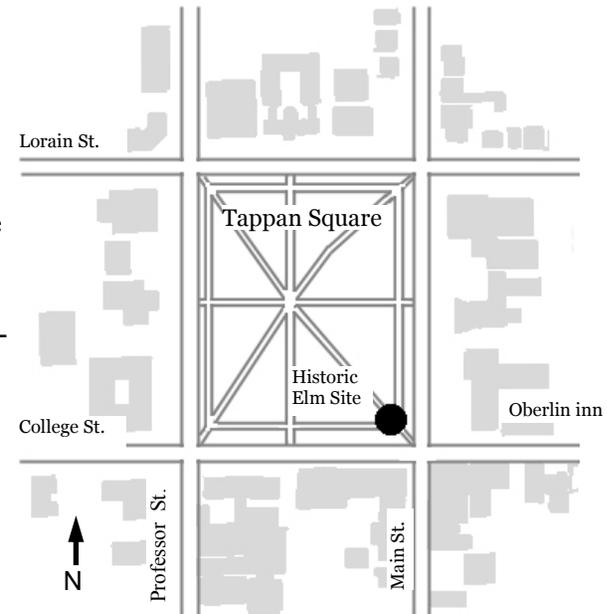
Thus began Oberlin’s long love affair with the bicycle. Ever since these first five students began riding their precarious iron and wood contraptions, many Oberlinians have preferred the bike over any other form of transportation. This is a town perfectly suited to the bicycle, with its easy flat terrain and small-town size. Therefore, let your bicycle lead you through Oberlin and show you its many landmarks and rich history.



**Directions:**

The tour begins at the southeast corner of Tappan Square, at the intersection of Main Street and College Street.

Tappan Square has been the center of Oberlin's college and town life since the town's beginnings in 1833. On the southeast corner of the Square is a round monument marking the place where the Historic Elm Tree once stood. Founders John Shipherd and Philo Stewart, Congregationalist ministers inspired by religious zeal to establish a community that would be a shining example of purity for the Western frontier, traveled the wilderness of Lorain County in search of a place to found their town. Legend has it that they stopped to pray at this very spot, asking God to show them where they should place Oberlin. As they were leaving the tree, a hunter came to them and told them that a few minutes before, he had seen a bear and her cub climb out of the tree they had just prayed under—surely the grace of God had protected them from the bear. Shipherd and Stewart took this as



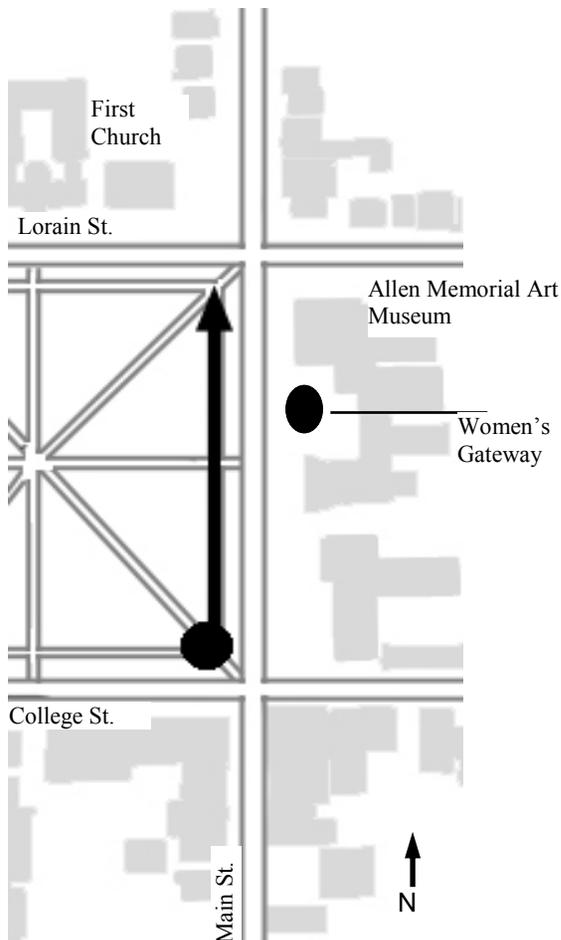
Strangers in Oberlin have one distinct memory of their visit. "Never have I seen so many bicycles on a college campus."

From Oberlin College "Hi-O-Hi", 1951, p. 12.

a sign that this was where they should found the town and the college of Oberlin. They named their religious colony after John Frederick Oberlin (1740-1826), a minister in the Alsace region of France whose work they admired.

Across the street from the Historic Elm site stands the Oberlin Inn (built in 1955). There has always been a shelter for visitors near this spot. Peter Pindar Pease, the first colonist in Oberlin, built his log cabin near here, and he was always willing to lend a room to travelers. The Inn that is presently on the site continues the tradition of simple living and generous hospitality that has always marked Oberlin.

Directions: Travel north along the brick path that follows Main Street, stopping at the northeast corner of Tappan Square.



As you begin to travel around Tappan Square, imagine what it must have looked like in the 1830s. The settlers had cleared the forest (it was said that a boy could cross Tappan Square hopping from tree-stump to tree-stump and never have to touch the ground), the land was a bit marshier than it is now, a small stream ran through the square, and a fence around the square kept cattle from wandering into it. Several of the original college buildings stood in Tappan Square, including a large tent that served as a church until First Church was built, and Tappan Hall, a five-story building named for a philanthropist who supported the Oberlin Colony in its early years. By the 1920s, the buildings on Tappan Square had either already been demolished or were in bad condition, so the inventor Charles Martin Hall started an endowment at his death to maintain Tappan Square as an open public park for the college and the town.

If you look across Main Street to the east, you will see the Coeducational Centennial Memorial Gateway, erected in 1937 to commemorate the fact that Oberlin was a coeducational school from its very beginning and the first college to grant undergraduate degrees to women (in 1841). This was controversial at the time—many people thought it immoral—but Shipperd and Stewart believed that women were intellectually capable of attaining a college education, and that they needed a good education to teach others about the Gospel and support their husbands in their ministry. Next to the Women's Gate is the Allen Memorial Art Museum, which is among the finest college art museums in the nation.

Detour: The Allen Memorial Art Museum is free and open to the public Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

As you pause at the northeast corner of Tappan Square, you will also see the First Congregational Church in Oberlin (now UCC). This building, which for a time was the largest building west of the Appalachian Mountains, was built in 1842; for many years, it was the only church and meeting house in Oberlin. From 1837 to 1872, the pastor was Charles Grandison Finney (1792-1875), who was a major figure of the Second Great Awakening, a time of renewed religious fervor in the United States. Finney was well known throughout the country for his preaching skills, and he used to travel with a huge tent to conduct religious revivals. The walls of First Church have been witness to many important events in Oberlin's history—commencements, political rallies, abolition meetings, and lectures by famous speakers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Angela Davis, Mark Twain, and Martin Luther King Jr.

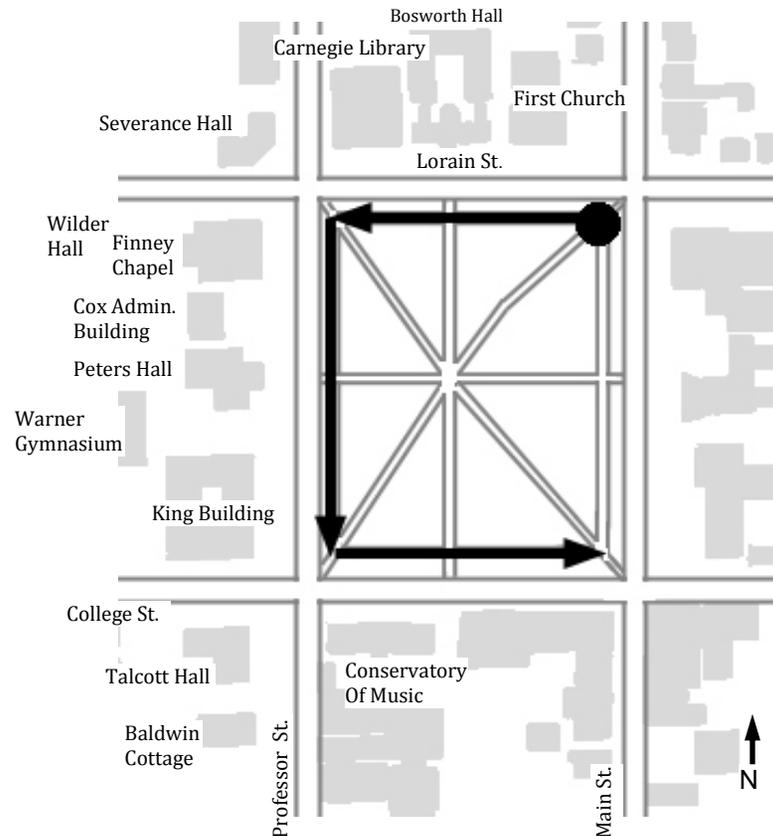


Detour:  
If you would like to see the inside of First Church, it is usually open on weekdays. You may enter through the back door of the new wing, which is accessible from the parking lot behind the church, and the church secretary will be happy to let you into the meeting house.

**Directions:**

Continue following the brick paths around Tappan Square, returning to the Historic Elm site.

As you continue around Tappan Square, you will notice two dominant types of architecture. The first is the Richardsonian Romanesque style, embodied by Peters Hall (across from the Memorial Arch), Talcott Hall, Baldwin Hall, Warner Gymnasium (behind Peters) and Wilder Hall (behind Finney Chapel). Most of these buildings were built between the 1880s and the 1910s from sandstone quarried in the nearby town of Amherst. From the 1910s to the 1930s, the well-known architect Cass Gilbert (1859-1934) designed several buildings for Oberlin. He envisioned a series of unified buildings surrounding Tappan Square, all made of smooth sandstone with red tile roofs. He designed the Allen Memorial Art Museum, Bosworth Hall / Fairchild Chapel, Finney Chapel, and the Cox Administration building. He had plans to destroy Peters Hall so that the architecture around Tappan Square would be consistent, but those plans were never completed. Peters was threatened with destruction again before it was renovated in the 1990s.



Across the street from the south side of Tappan Square, you will see the large white buildings that house the world-famous Oberlin Conservatory of Music, founded in 1865. It is the nation's oldest continuously operating conservatory, and the only major music school in the country linked with a liberal arts college, allowing students of all backgrounds to take advantage of the skilled faculty and abundant musical resources. Both the Conservatory and the nearby King building were designed and built between 1961 and 1964 by internationally known Japanese architect Minoru Yamasaki. Yamasaki also designed the ill-fated World Trade Center Twin Towers in New York City.

**Directions:**

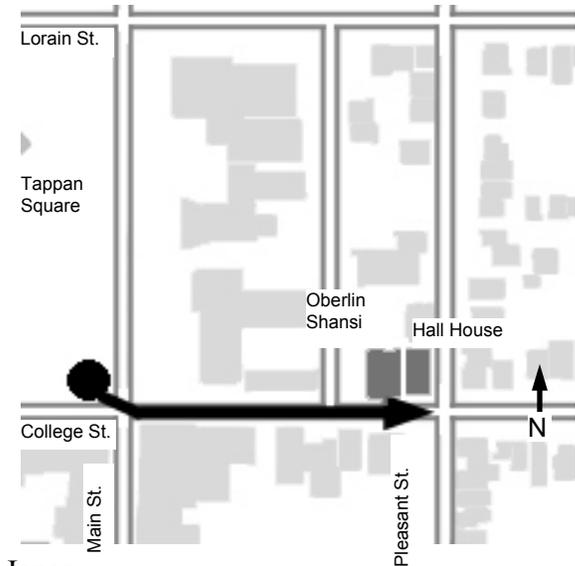
From the southeast corner of Tappan Square, head east on College Street. Bicycles are not allowed on downtown sidewalks, so you will have to ride in the street for one block to the corner of College and Pleasant Streets. Stop at this corner; the Shansi Association and the Hall House will be to the left (north).



**BICYCLE CLUB.**

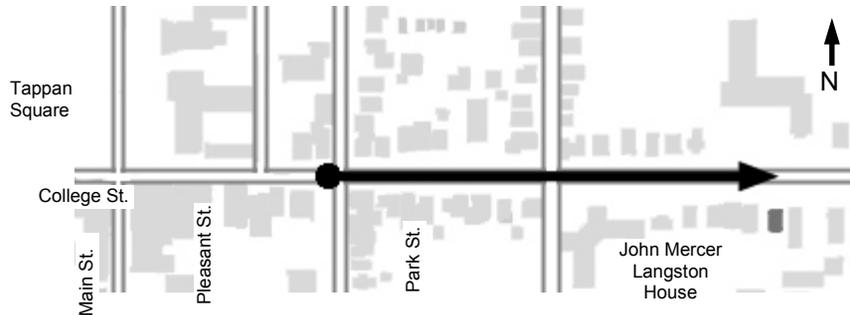
The 1895 Oberlin College  
Bicycle Club  
From Oberlin College "Hi-O-Hi",  
1895, p. 136.

From the intersection of College and Pleasant Streets, you can see Oberlin Shansi's headquarters, located in one of the oldest houses in downtown Oberlin. Originally founded as the Shansi Memorial Association in 1908, the organization supported the missionary activities of Oberlin students in China. It, like the Memorial Arch in Tappan Square, is dedicated to the memory of Oberlin citizens who died in the Boxer Rebellion in 1900. Oberlin's missionary activities were well known throughout the United States and the rest of the world. Now Oberlin Shansi works for cultural understanding between Asia and America and sends fellows to China, Indonesia, India, and Japan.



On the corner of College and Pleasant Streets is the Charles Martin Hall House, built in 1853. This is the family home of Charles Martin Hall (1863-1914), a precocious student who loved doing chemistry experiments in his house. As a child, he once set the cupola on top of the house on fire, so his father built him a woodshed out back, where he could conduct his experiments without endangering the house. In 1886, eight months after graduating from Oberlin College, young Hall discovered a commercially efficient method of creating aluminum, known as the electrochemical process. It was this experiment that made aluminum readily available to the public at affordable prices for the first time. Hall went on to found the Pittsburgh Reduction Company, which later became Alcoa, and amassed a huge fortune, much of which he invested in his home town and his alma mater. A large part of his fortune went to the Shansi Association—his family had been very active in the organization. He also started an endowment for the college which mandated that the few remaining buildings on Tappan Square be razed and that it be maintained as an open public park forever. He gave the money that was used to build Hall Auditorium, in honor of his mother, Sophronia Brooks Hall.

Directions:  
Continue east on College Street until you see  
207 East College, which will be on your right.

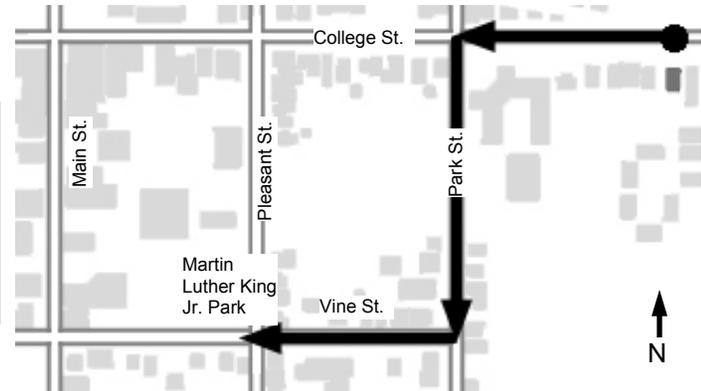


The walkway to Bosworth Hall, filled with bicycles.  
From Oberlin College "Hi-Oh-Hi", 1958, p. 4

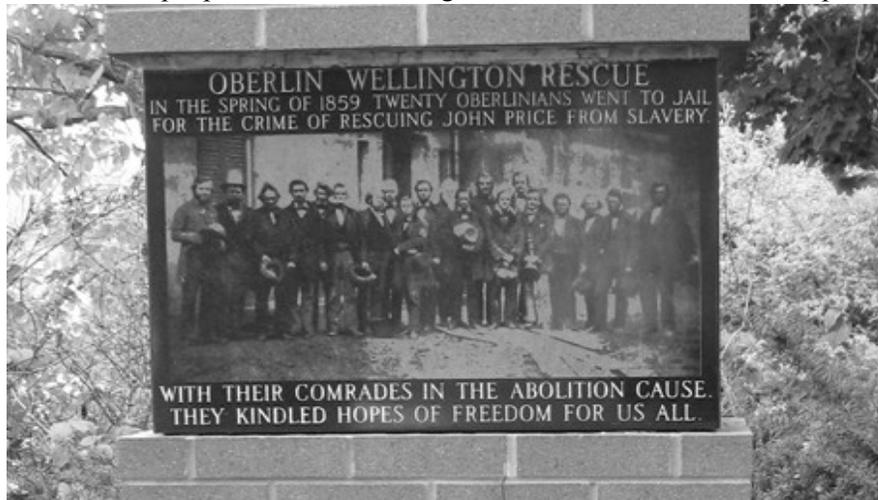
At 207 East College Street, you will see the John Mercer Langston House, built in 1856. This house, which is a National Historic Landmark, was the home of John Mercer Langston (1829-1897), who was proud to be the first African American to live in this affluent white neighborhood. This was just one of the many “firsts” that Langston achieved as an African American. Langston and his brother Charles were the sons of a Virginia slave owner and one of his former slaves. Because they were the man’s only family, upon his death they inherited the family fortune. The brothers came to Oberlin, where they were among the college’s first African American graduates. John Mercer Langston wanted to be a lawyer, but could not attend law school because of his race. However, he studied privately and passed the bar on his own, making him Ohio’s first African American lawyer. In 1855 Langston was elected Clerk of Brownhelm Township, becoming one of the first African Americans ever elected to a public office (when he didn’t even have the right to vote!). Throughout his notable political career, John Mercer Langston was strongly committed to the fight for black freedom—he organized anti-slavery societies, helped fugitives on the Underground Railroad, and recruited troops for African American infantries in the Civil War. Langston is credited with helping to steer the Ohio Republican Party toward its strong anti-slavery stance. He also campaigned vigorously for voting rights for African American men, a right they were given in 1867. In 1868, Langston created the Law Department at Howard University, a school that became known for its race and gender diversity. He went on to become the first African American elected to the United States Congress from Virginia.

**Directions:**

Turn around and go west on College St. Take the first left onto Park Street, and then the first right onto Vine Street. At the corner of Vine and Pleasant Streets, you will see the Martin Luther King Jr. Park. The monuments you will see border the small paved path through the park.



Martin Luther King Jr. Park commemorates several important events in Oberlin’s African American history. The first monument you will see honors Dr. Luther King, Jr., who spoke in Oberlin on several occasions and who received an honorary degree from Oberlin College in 1965. Continuing west, a brick monument honors twenty men from Oberlin who were arrested in 1858 for their role in the Oberlin-Wellington Slave Rescue. John Price, a young man who had escaped from slavery in Kentucky, had been living in Oberlin for about two years when slave hunters from Kentucky found and captured him. They took him to Wellington to wait for the train that would take them back home. When news reached Oberlin that one of the fugitives in their care had been kidnapped, the whole town rallied and several hundred people rushed to Wellington to free him. John Price escaped and then travelled to safety in Canada. For their part in John



**Oberlin-Wellington Rescue Monument**

Price’s rescue, thirty-seven men from Oberlin and Wellington were arrested and put on trial for breaking the Fugitive Slave Law. The event sent waves of anger throughout the nation, prompting historian Nat Brandt to call Oberlin “The Town that Started the Civil War.”

As you stand at the monument to the Oberlin-Wellington Rescuers, you can look across the street to two houses that played a role in the rescue. The brick house at 33 E. Vine belonged to Wilson Bruce Evans (1824-1898), an African American cabinet-maker and undertaker. His brother Henry was an upholsterer. The house, which is a National Historic Landmark, was a center of the African American community and abolitionist spirit in the 1850s. Right next door, at 43 E. Vine, is the home of Chauncey Wack (d. 1900). Wack seemed to disagree with the general Oberlin population over just about everything. He ran

a saloon in a town that was opposed to alcohol and he was pro-slavery—this Democrat helped the slave-hunters plan their capture of John Price.



Harper's Ferry Monument

The next monument you will see in the Martin Luther King Jr. Park is a worn obelisk, which is a monument to three African American men who fought with John Brown at Harper's Ferry in 1859. John Brown's father, Owen Brown, served on Oberlin's Board of Trustees in its first decade, so when Brown was recruiting men for his raid, he knew that he would be likely to find help in Oberlin. There were twenty-one men with John Brown at Harper's Ferry—four of them were African American, and of those, two were from Oberlin: John Copeland and Lewis Leary. Leary was killed in action, but Copeland was hanged for treason. When Oberlin College professor and politician James Monroe went to Virginia to attempt, unsuccessfully, to retrieve Copeland's body for burial, he saw there the body of Shields Greene and thought he recognized him as an Oberlin citizen.

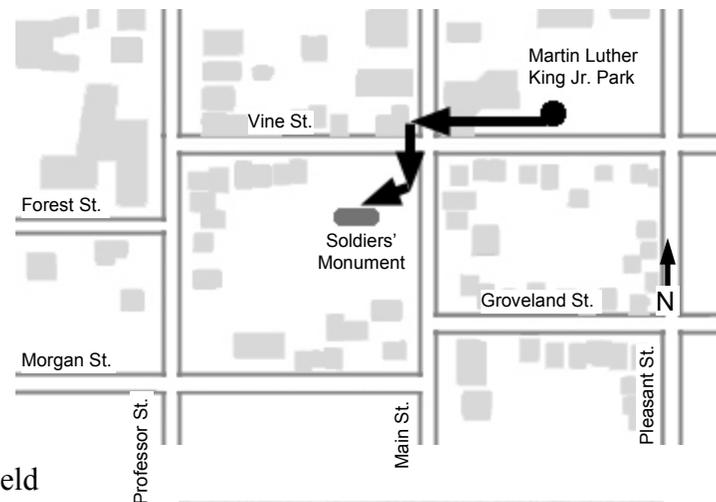
To the best of our knowledge, Greene never actually came to Oberlin, but the town claimed him anyway and memorialized him along with Copeland and Leary in celebration of African Americans' fight for freedom. The obelisk was originally erected in Westwood Cemetery in 1865, but when the Martin Luther King Jr. Park was created in 1971, it was moved to its present location. Where the monument now stands used to be a harness shop, owned by African American businessman John Scott, where Lewis Leary worked.



Outside Carnegie Building  
From Oberlin College "Hi-O-Hi", 1955, p. 12.

**Directions:**

Cross Main and Vine Streets so that you are on the southwest corner of the intersection. Ride onto Plum Creek Walkway—the paved path that follows the south side of the creek.



The Plum Creek Pathway was built thanks to the efforts of Adelia A. Field Johnston (1837-1910), one of the founders of the Oberlin Village Improvement Society, a predecessor organization to today's Oberlin Heritage Center (formerly known as O.H.I.O). The first woman to be given faculty status at Oberlin College, she had an active career as a professor of medieval and art history and dean of women.

Next to Plum Creek, in Wright Park, stands the Soldiers' Monument. 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. 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 earth bank behind the monument threatened to push it into Plum Creek, but in 1983, the monument was restored and stabilized in time for Oberlin's sesquicentennial celebration.

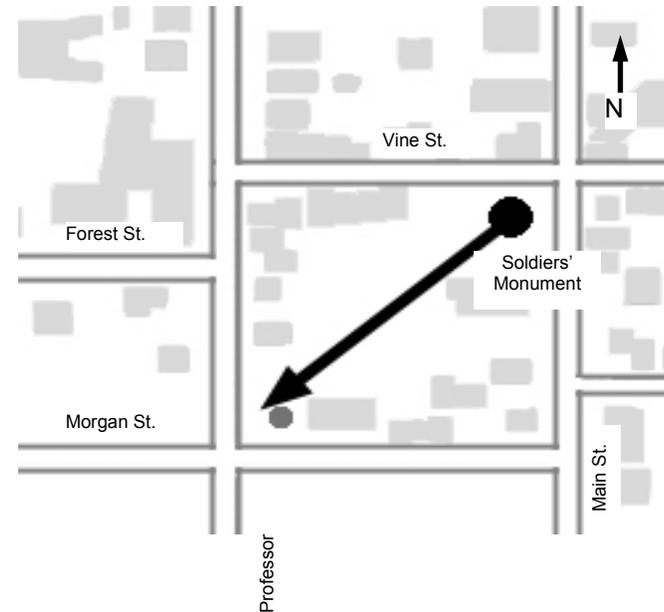


The Soldier's Monument that was built in 1870 and dismantled in 1930.

Directions:  
Follow the Plum Creek Walkway (if conditions allow) until you come to Morgan Street.



Bikes clustered outside Peters Hall.  
From Oberlin College "Hi-O-Hi", 1950, p. 15.

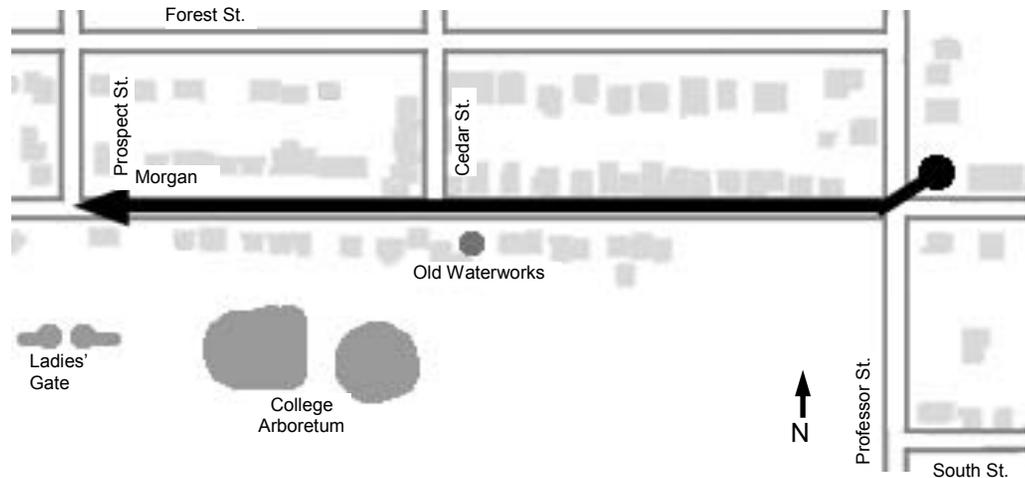


At the corner of Morgan and Professor Streets stands a statue of General Giles Shurtleff (1831-1904). This statue was completed in 1911 by Emily Ewing Peck. Shurtleff was a general in the Civil War, who led the 5<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Troops—the first African American infantry from Ohio. Despite heavy casualties in battle, not one of them ever deserted. Over the course of the war, approximately 1,000 residents and students enlisted in nearly 40 different regiments. About 1 in 10 of those men died during the war. On the home front, many men and women organized support networks for the soldiers and continued the call for emancipation.

After the war, Shurtleff continued to teach at Oberlin College. In 1898, he served as the Mayor of Oberlin. He was also active in the Oberlin Village Improvement Society, the Oberlin Chamber of Commerce and the Anti-Saloon League. Behind the statue is Shurtleff Cottage (46 Morgan Street), one of the homes in Oberlin where Shurtleff resided. It is now a bed and breakfast inn.

**Directions:**

Go west on Morgan Street. The Old Water Works will be on your left at the intersection of Morgan and Cedar Streets. To get to The Ladies' Gate, continue up Morgan Street. The Ladies' Gate sits far off the road on the left side where Prospect Street meets Morgan Street.



Next you will travel west on Morgan Street, which is lined by many beautiful historic homes. When you reach the intersection of Morgan and Cedar streets, you will see a public park on the site of Oberlin's Old Water Works, which consists of a large round stone tower, a reservoir, and other structures. This tower was built in 1886, after downtown Oberlin suffered a series of fires. As the buildings that make up today's downtown were being constructed, this water tower was built to hold enough water to put out a fire, should another one occur. In 1903, a water-softening plant was added to the municipal water system, the first of its kind in the United States.

Behind the Water Works is the College Arboretum (affectionately called "The Arb"), a park donated to Oberlin College by Charles Martin Hall. At the edge of The Arb, where Prospect Street meets Morgan Street, is the Ladies' Gate, a pair of stone pillars marking an entrance to the woods. According to the 1859 College rule book, "Young ladies who do not reside with their parents are not allowed to walk in the fields or woods excepting the grove assigned for this purpose." Some women used to meet in the forest near here to hold debates, because women were not allowed to debate in public. Among them were Antoinette Brown Blackwell (1825-1921), an 1847 Oberlin graduate who became the first woman to be ordained as a Protestant minister, and college classmate Lucy Stone (1818-1893), who also graduated in 1847 and became a well-known feminist who fought for women's suffrage.

**Detour:**

The College Arboretum is a lovely forest with some well-maintained paths. Some of the paths are navigable for bikers with mountain bikes. To enter the Arb, follow the gravel path that leads around the water reservoir.

**Directions:**

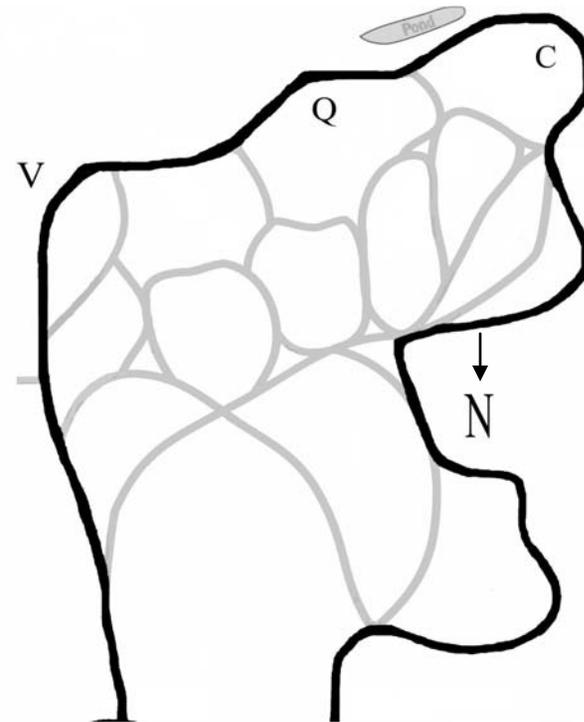
Continue west on Morgan Street. Westwood Cemetery will be on your left. Turn left and follow the paved drive into the cemetery. In front of the former receiving vault, the road splits. Turn left at the Y and go clockwise around the perimeter of the cemetery, staying on the paved road.

Oberlin's first cemetery was near the present site of Shurtleff Cottage. In the early 1860s, realizing that the two acres of land on that site were not enough for the growing town, residents created a new cemetery here, and most of the graves were moved. As you follow the outer loop of the paved road through the cemetery, you will recognize many people who have already been mentioned on this tour.

One of the first graves you will see on the left is that of Mary Kellogg (1818-1863), an enslaved woman inherited by Mary Kellogg Fairchild, the wife of Oberlin College's third President James Harris Fairchild. Mrs. Fairchild emancipated Mary Kellogg, and Ms. Kellogg continued to work for the Fairchilds' as a hired servant for the rest of her life.

A little farther along on the left side (Section V) you will see a bench engraved with the name Frank Zavodsky (1917-1997). Zavodsky lived in Oberlin nearly all his life, and served the city government in a variety of positions for over 40 years. During all of that time, he lived in the house at the entrance to Westwood and took care of the cemetery, transforming it from the overgrown "Westweed" cemetery into the beautiful public park and tree sanctuary that it is today and preserving its history.

On your right in Section Q you will find the grave of Sabram Cox (1823-1897). He was an escaped slave who came to Oberlin and attended the college in 1839. He worked on the Underground Railroad, disguising himself so that slave hunters would pursue him, allowing the actual slaves to escape.



Map of Westwood  
From "Westwood", 1997, p. 33.

You will pass a gravel road, and just beyond that on your right you will see the grave of William Brown Bedortha (1854-1904), a lifelong Oberlin resident, active Republican, and well-respected lawyer. The last year of his life was spent trying to rectify a sordid event in Oberlin's history. Bedortha was the attorney for the Citizen's National Bank in Oberlin, and he learned that the bank president had illegally lent nearly a quarter of a million dollars to a lady named Cassie Chadwick, who claimed to be the illegitimate daughter of Andrew Carnegie. Bedortha doubted the truth of this claim and tried to save the bank from demise at her hands. Just a month after Bedortha died, Chadwick's crimes were discovered—she had illegally borrowed over 1.5 million dollars from various banks throughout 1904—and she was arrested. Citizen's National Bank was forced to close, at great financial loss to many Oberlin students. However, when Andrew Carnegie learned what had happened, he agreed to repay students' losses. Oberlin College President Henry Churchill King saw this as a great opportunity, and convinced Carnegie to endow a new library for the school—thus Carnegie Building now stands on the north side of Tappan Square. It served as the college's library until 1974, and the town's public library until 1990.

Look for the unusual stone marking the grave of George Fredrick Wright (1850-1921). He was a geology professor who used this rock, a glacial deposit from the north shores of Lake Huron known as pudding stone, to prove that this area was once traversed by a glacier. The rock is 2.6 billion years old, and the red flecks in it are jasper.

Across the road from the duck pond, you will notice a large worn obelisk. This marks the plot of the Safford family, one of the families that sold the land that became Westwood. In return, they were given one of the best plots in the cemetery.

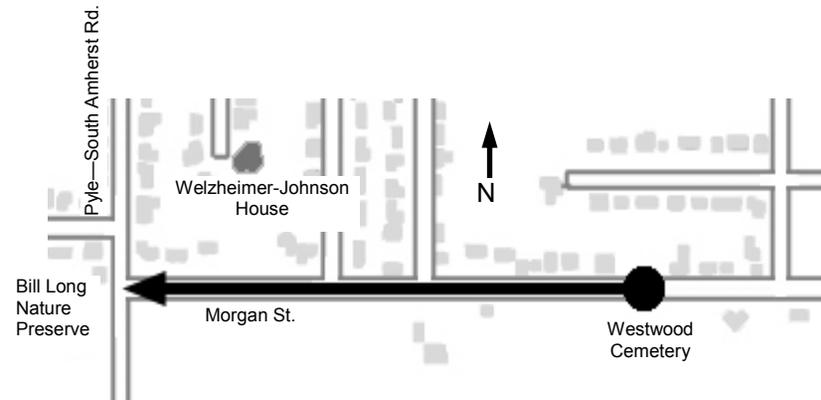
On the right side in Section C are two poignant stones marking the graves of Civil War soldiers. The stones are broken columns, a symbol of young life cut short. These markers are surrounded by a stone and iron fence—many of the graves used to have fences.

Before you return to the road that brought you into the cemetery, look for an engraved stone underneath a Japanese Maple tree. This stone marks the spot where earth from the grave of John Frederick Oberlin rests.

**Directions:**

Leave Westwood Cemetery and turn left (west) onto Morgan Street. Toward the end of Morgan Street, you will see the Weltzheimer-Johnson House on your right; it sits far off the road, but a sign on the road will alert you when you can spot it.

After seeing the Weltzheimer-Johnson House, keep going west on Morgan Street. Turn left onto Pyle South Amherst Road. After a few yards, turn right into the driveway of the Bill Long Nature Preserve. Beware that, although most motorists are aware that a bike trail is nearby and many people bike along this road, cars travel quickly here.



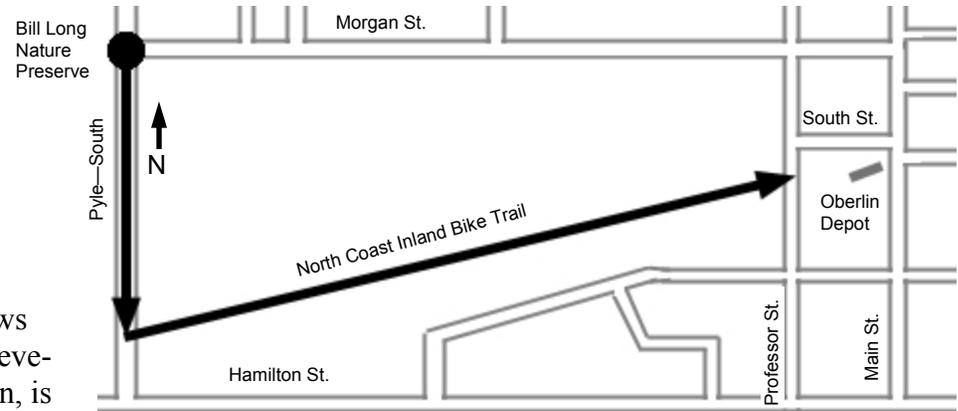
Toward the west end of Morgan Street, on the right hand side, is the Weltzheimer-Johnson House, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, which sits far back off the road. The house was finished in 1950 on Usonian principles—the house is simple, with informal multi-purpose space inside, oriented to take maximum advantage of the sun through its generous windows.

**Detour:**

The Weltzheimer-Johnson House is open for tours on select days. For information, contact the Allen Memorial Art Museum at (440) 775-8665 or [www.oberlin.edu/allenart](http://www.oberlin.edu/allenart)

The James F. “Bill” Long Nature Preserve is another enjoyable detour, and you can ride a bike on the gravel paths. The park includes a reservoir that served as a back up water source for Oberlin from 1950 to 1961. The site was designated a nature preserve in 1991 and named in honor of Bill Long. Long was born in Baltimore, but his interest in farm bureaus and co-operative organizations eventually led him to Oberlin. A natural leader and an effective administrator, he soon had a huge influence on politics in Oberlin. He was primarily responsible for the very successful food and book co-op stores that used to operate in Oberlin—the Co-Op Book Store was the college bookstore until 1999. Long also served many terms on Oberlin’s City Council, where he was one of the people who worked hard to pass Oberlin’s Fair Housing Ordinance. Among the first legislation of its kind in the nation, it dictates that any person of any race or creed has the right to live anywhere in Oberlin.

**Directions:**  
 Go south on Pyle South Amherst Road.  
 Before the end of the road you will see the  
 North Coast Inland Bike Trail on your left.  
 Ride onto the bike trail and follow it for ap-  
 proximately 1 mile until you reach Profes-  
 sor St.



The North Coast Inland Bike Trail, which follows the right-of-way of the Toledo, Norwalk and Cleveland railroad line that used to go through Oberlin, is part of the twenty-mile trail that connects Oberlin and Elyria and links to other trails throughout the state. The brief section of the trail that you will follow passes the Oberlin Golf Course, Westwood Cemetery, and the Arb and takes you to Professor Street. Almost immediately after bikes first came to Oberlin in the 1880s, students and townspeople began working to make bike trails throughout Oberlin and the county. One of the most famous bike trail advocates was Charles P. Doolittle, who was not only a professor of cello but also the superintendent of buildings and grounds for the college. In 1899, Doolittle—who was affectionately nicknamed “Cinder Path” Doolittle—completed a cinder bike path to Elyria. This was the first of many cinder paths throughout Oberlin and Lorain County that Doolittle helped to build so that bikers could travel safely on their own weatherproof trails.

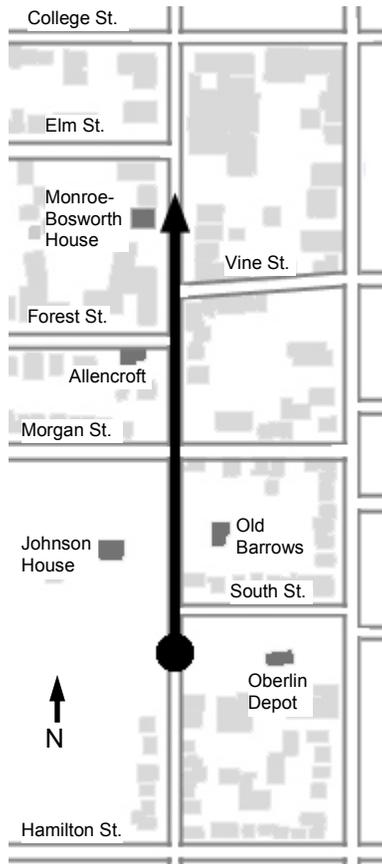
Doolittle would certainly be pleased if he could see the Bike Trail that goes through Oberlin today.



Oberlin Depot

From the intersection of the bike trail and South Professor Street, you can see the Oberlin Depot, on the far side of the Oberlin Community Services Building. This was once Oberlin’s train station. Trains stopped in Oberlin from 1866 to 1949. The train service gradually decreased over the years, and by the 1930s, there was only one train a day—a commuter train on its way from Toledo to Cleveland stopped in Oberlin around 7:00 each morning and returned around 6:00 each evening. It was known as “the Plug” and served as an alarm clock for many people in town. There was also a trolley line that operated in Oberlin from 1897 to 1931. Known as the Interurban, the trolley took people to Elyria, Cleveland, and other nearby destinations.

**Directions:**  
Turn left onto Professor Street and go north. Johnson House, Old Barrows, and Allencroft have identifying signs in front of them.



Going north on Professor Street, you will pass the Johnson House, a beautiful Victorian structure on your left. This house was built in 1885 by Albert Johnson (1838-1899), who started the gas and electric companies in Oberlin. The Johnson family was very wealthy, and Albert wanted to showcase his fiscal accomplishments by building a suitably lavish house. The house, along with the Arb behind it, was acquired by Charles Martin Hall and donated to the college—it now serves as student housing.

Across the street from Johnson House is Old Barrows, built for John Henry Barrows in 1902. Sadly, Barrows died of pneumonia seven months after the house was completed. Since 1916, it has been used as a dormitory.

Further north, on the left you will pass 134 South Professor, known as Allencroft. This house was built in 1861 for Ralph Plumb. He was one of the Oberlin-Wellington rescuers and a Republican congressman. Later, Dr. Dudley Allen resided here. Allen was a notable surgeon who gave the money to start Oberlin’s hospital, now known as Allen Community Hospital. Allen was also an avid art collector, and his widow endowed the Allen Memorial Art Museum in his name.

The next landmark on the left is the 1857 Monroe-Bosworth House at 78 South Professor. This house belonged to James Monroe (1821-1898), an abolitionist and politician. Monroe may have harbored freedom seekers traveling the Underground Railroad in this house.

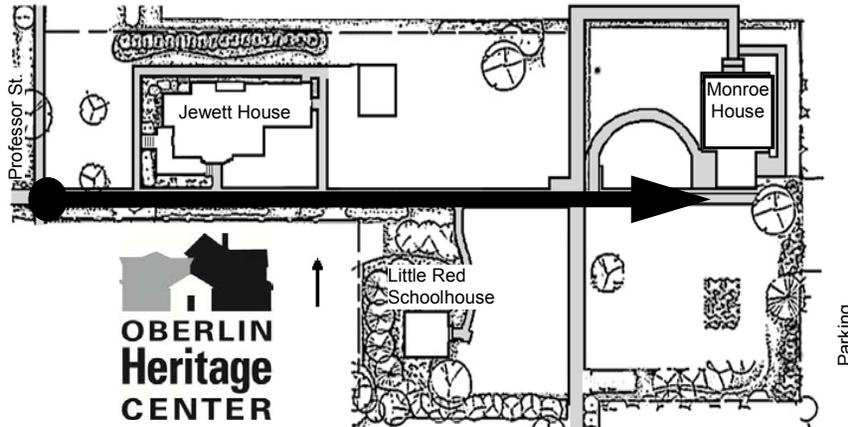


Wilder Hall  
From Oberlin College “Hi-O-Hi”,  
1958, p. 5.

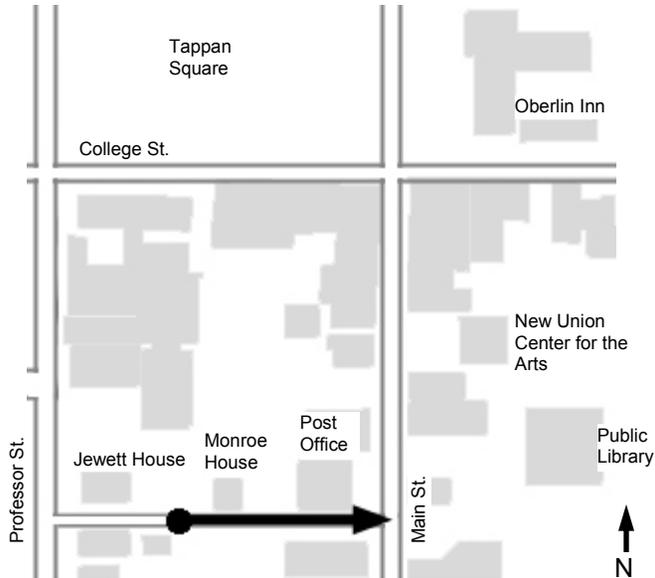
Across the street from the Monroe-Bosworth House is the Oberlin Heritage Center, owned and administered by the Oberlin Historical and Improvement Organization (O.H.I.O.). The three historic buildings of the Oberlin Heritage Center are open for tours. The first house you see is the Jewett House, built in 1884, which belonged to Professor Frank Jewett (1844-1926). Jewett was the chemistry professor at Oberlin College for many years and the mentor of Charles Martin Hall. When Hall's patent came under dispute because another young man, from France, had discovered the same process at about the same time, Jewett's testimony helped prove that Hall had in fact discovered the process first. Jewett lived in the house with his wife Frances Gulick Jewett (1854-1937), who wrote books about health and hygiene. Like many people in Oberlin, Mrs. Jewett believed very strongly in temperance. The Anti-Saloon League was founded in Oberlin, and this was a dry town until the mid 1900s. She was also very active in the Oberlin Village Improvement Society, which was a predecessor of the Oberlin Heritage Center.

As you follow the brick walk eastward through the Oberlin Heritage Center, you will see the Little Red Schoolhouse on your right. This one-room schoolhouse was built in 1836, and it is the oldest building still standing in Oberlin. It was only used as a school for a short time, because it was too small to accommodate Oberlin's growing school-age population. The Oberlin public schools were integrated from the very beginning, so even in the 1830s African American children studied in this schoolhouse with Caucasian children.

Follow the walk to the brick crossroads; you will be standing next to the Shurtleff-Monroe House. General Giles Shurtleff built the house in 1866, but in 1870 he sold it to James Monroe, who was just finishing a seven-year term as U.S. consul to Rio de Janeiro and beginning the first of his five terms in the U.S. House of Representatives. Monroe was an important abolitionist, an advocate of voting rights for African Americans, and a friend of Frederick Douglass. His second wife was Julia Finney (1837-1930), daughter of Charles Grandison Finney. She lived in the house until her death in 1930.



**Detour:**  
Tours of the Oberlin Heritage Center begin at the Monroe House every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday at 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. For more information, call (440) 774-1700 or visit [www.oberlinheritage.org](http://www.oberlinheritage.org)



Downtown Oberlin was designated a National Register Historic District in 2003 and we hope you will enjoy wandering through on your own. Many of the buildings retain their historic facades. Most of the structures along College Street and the north part of Main Street were built in the 1880s, after a series of fires demolished earlier wooden buildings. As you enjoy the shops and restaurants downtown, be sure to take note of the historic character of many of the buildings inside as well as outside.

Continuing east, the walkway will now bring you to Oberlin’s downtown. Bike riding is not allowed on downtown sidewalks, so please park your bike and explore downtown on foot. The walkway ends next to Oberlin’s Post Office, which was built in 1934. Across Main Street and to the north, you will see the bell tower of New Union Center for the Arts. Constructed in 1874, and originally known as Union Hall, the building served as Oberlin’s first high school. For a while, it belonged to the college and housed some of the language departments. The building was almost torn down in the 1980s because it was in such poor repair, but it has been renovated and now houses several art organizations, including the Firelands Association for the Visual Arts, which includes an art gallery, an art store, and studio space for local artists and children’s programs.



South Main Street in the 1920s, from O.H.C.’s Locke Collection

## Further Exploration

If you'd like to learn more about the subjects covered in this tour, the following will be of interest. Some resources are available in the Museum Store of the Oberlin Heritage Center and at [www.oberlinheritage.org](http://www.oberlinheritage.org).

[www.oberlinheritage.org](http://www.oberlinheritage.org): The website of the Oberlin Heritage Center. Contains information about Oberlin's history and the public programs that Oberlin Heritage Center offers on topics pertaining to local history, historic preservation and community affairs.

[Oberlin: Origins and Onward](#), by Bentley Boyd and the Oberlin Heritage Center, 2011. A colorful comic filled with Oberlin's historic events and individuals. Perfect for adults and children!

[Oberlin Architecture, College and Town: A Guide to its Social History](#), by Geoffrey Blodgett (Oberlin: Oberlin College, 1985). Contains brief entries about many of the buildings in Oberlin: when they were built, architectural style, who lived in them, and their significance in Oberlin.

[The Town That Started the Civil War](#), by Nat Brandt (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990). The first few chapters of this book give a good overview of the early history of the College and the atmosphere of the town; the remaining chapters tell the story of the Oberlin-Wellington Rescue in detail, focusing on the event's national significance.

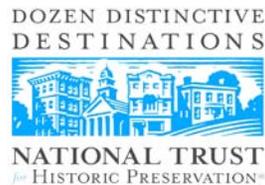
[They Stopped in Oberlin: Black Residents and Visitors in the Nineteenth Century](#), by William E. Bigglestone (Second edition, Oberlin, OH: Oberlin College, 2002). Contains brief biographical sketches about African Americans who traveled through or settled in Oberlin.

[Westwood: A Historical and Interpretive View of Oberlin's Cemetery](#) (Oberlin: Oberlin Historical and Improvement Organization, 1997).

Oberlin Archives website: [www.oberlin.edu/archive/](http://www.oberlin.edu/archive/)

Oberlin Main Street-Chamber website: [www.oberlinchamber.org/](http://www.oberlinchamber.org/)

You may also wish to visit the Resource Center at the Oberlin Heritage Center, located in the Monroe House (email [history@oberlinheritage.org](mailto:history@oberlinheritage.org) or call (440) 774-1700 to make an appointment) or the Oberlin College Archives in Mudd Learning Center ([archivesoffice@oberlin.edu](mailto:archivesoffice@oberlin.edu)).



The Oberlin Heritage Center and Westwood Cemetery are now part of the National Park Service's Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program, which is designed to help sites, facilities and programs nationwide work together to share, preserve and document the history of the Underground Railroad. The National Trust named Oberlin one of their Dozen Distinctive Destinations!





We invite you to visit the Oberlin Heritage Center! Take our one hour and fifteen minute guided tour of three beautifully preserved buildings that tell the unique, nationally significant story of the community and college in Oberlin from their beginning in 1833 until the 1930s. On the tour you will learn about abolition and the Underground Railroad, aluminum history, temperance, women's history, decorative arts, student life, and more in two beautifully preserved Victorian-era houses and a pioneer-era one-room school.

## The Oberlin Heritage Center



Guided tours are every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday at 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Thematic history walks are offered seasonally and group tours are by appointment. Tour admission is \$6 adult; free to college students and children under 18 accompanied by a parent or guardian. Member admission is free and \$5 for AAA members.



The Oberlin Heritage Center's mission is to preserve and share Oberlin's unique heritage, and to make our community a better place to live, learn, work, and visit. You can help achieve this mission by becoming a member of the Oberlin Heritage Center! To find out about the benefits of membership and other ways to get involved, come visit us at the Monroe House Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., call us at (440) 774-1700, or visit our website at [www.oberlinheritage.org](http://www.oberlinheritage.org).



Jewett House



Monroe House



Little Red Schoolhouse



The Oberlin Heritage Center is accredited by the American Association of Museums and is part of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Statewide and Local Partners Network.



[www.oberlinheritage.org](http://www.oberlinheritage.org)

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