

Oberlin Heritage Center E-Gazette – November 2013

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Follow the Oberlin Heritage Center on   

OHC Offers History Walks and More for College Parents' Weekend

As part of Oberlin College's Parents' Weekend activities, the Oberlin Heritage Center has expanded its guided tour schedule for **Friday, November 8** and **Saturday, November 9**. Out-of-town visitors and residents of the area are welcome to take part in the **Freedom's Friends Underground Railroad History Walk**, which will be offered **Friday at 3:00 p.m. and Saturday at 11:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.** \$6 adults; Pre-registration required. The 75-minute guided walk covers approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile through downtown Oberlin and surrounding neighborhoods. Prefer something a little shorter and indoors? Try the **Oberlin Origins/Sneak Peek Tour** which will be offered **Saturday on the half-hour from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.** This guided 30-minute visit through the first floor of the 1866 Monroe House is filled with stories about the events and individuals that shaped Oberlin's first 100 years. \$3 adults; Walk-ins welcome. Both the History Walk and Sneak Peek tour are FREE for Oberlin Heritage Center members, college students and children. For reservation, directions to start locations, or more information visit www.oberlinheritage.org or call (440)774-1700.

Oberlin Heritage Center Salutes Historic Community Bookstore

For almost seven decades, the **A.G. Comings and Son Bookstore** of Oberlin served as a popular crossroads for both college and community members. Local historian and writer, **Sid Comings**, pays homage to four family ancestors who owned and operated the downtown business establishment from 1888 to 1959 in a program hosted by the Oberlin Heritage Center on **Tuesday, November 26 at 7:15 p.m.** Comings, great-grandson of the bookstore's founder, provides his audience with a glimpse of local commerce in years gone by and offers insights into the world of booksellers and how they served the community over time. The event takes place in Heiser Auditorium at Kendal at Oberlin (600 Kendal Drive) and is free and open to the public. For more information, visit www.oberlinheritage.org or call (440) 774-1700.



Thanksgiving Weekend Hours at the Oberlin Heritage Center

Warmest thanks are sent to all of the Heritage Center's members and friends for the tremendous support you provide to keep Oberlin's rich history alive for future generations. The Oberlin Heritage Center will be closed on **Thursday, November 28** so that staff, interns, and volunteers may celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday with families and friends. The Heritage Center will be **open from 10 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Friday, November 29 and Saturday, November 30**. Guided tours of the Oberlin Heritage Center will be offered on **Saturday at 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.** For more information, visit www.oberlinheritage.org or call (440) 774-1700.

Save the Dates

Circle these dates on your calendars now, and find our more in next month's E-Gazette or visit www.oberlinheritage.org:

The Oberlin Heritage Center's **Home School Series** for children ages 8-13 takes place at the Oberlin Depot on four Wednesdays in the new year, February 26 through March 19, 2014 from 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. This year our study of several amazing world cultures includes: **Stone Age Britain; Ancient Indonesia; Age of Exploration: Voyages at Sea; and The Five Nations of Iroquois.**

Two great new **Spring Break Camps** will be offered in late March for boys and girls ages 8-13. Each two-day camp runs from 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The topics will make you wish you were a kid again: **Undercover History: Spies, Detectives and Police** (March 24-25) and **Ancient Egypt** (March 26-27).

Oberlin Heritage Center 2012 Annual Report

Take a look behind-the-scenes at the Heritage Center's day-to-day operations and learn more about the planning, projects and people that come together in this beehive of activity all year round. ***Oberlin Heritage Center in Action and on the Go!*** is the theme of the 2012 Annual Report, arriving soon in members' mailboxes. You also may view this wonderful recap in stories and photos by visiting www.oberlinheritage.org (select "Annual Reports" on the pull-down tab beneath the "Events and News" main menu heading). The Annual Report of the preceding year is printed each fall, so that it may include a financial audit summary of the year just past (which is finalized in the summer). We work diligently to list all donors and volunteers in the Annual Report. Apologies to anyone whose name was inadvertently omitted (and please let us know who you are!).

Books to Add to Your Holiday Reading List

Three new books with local history connections provide a great way to relax over the holidays (or make unique gift-giving ideas for family and friends!):

Best-selling historical novelist (and Oberlin College alumna) **Tracy Chevalier's** latest novel ***The Last Runaway*** is now in paperback and available at the Oberlin Heritage Center's Museum Store. The community and its nationally significant history in the abolition movement play a role in the story of Honor Bright, a young English Quaker woman who emigrates to a fictional village just outside Oberlin in 1850, and ends up taking part in the Underground Railroad. Chevalier, who spoke before a large audience of OHC members and others at First Church in Oberlin, U.C.C., this past May, launches an east coast speaking tour in November. Find out more at www.tchevalier.com.

Oberlin Heritage Center member and Kendal resident, **Judy Cook**, is an author, singer and entertainer with a new book, titled ***A Quiet Corner of the War: The Civil War Letters of Gilbert and Esther Claflin, Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, 1862-1863***, published this month by University of Wisconsin Press. The book includes transcriptions of letters between Cook's great-great grandparents, interwoven with her own research and background narrative about things, people and events that the couple reference in their writing. For more, visit www.judycook.net.

Africa is My Home by **Monica Edinger** is inspired by the true story of **Margru**, a child of the slave ship *Amistad* (1839). This beautifully illustrated book (artwork by **Robert Byrd**) is thorough in its detail and research, and will appeal to children ages 10 and up. Find out more at <http://medinger.wordpress.com/africa-is-my-home/>. Oberlin Heritage Center member **Marly Merrill**, author of ***Sarah Margru Kinson: The Two Worlds of an Amistad Captive***, is thanked in the book's acknowledgments. Both Margru books are available for purchase at OHC's Museum Store.

Honor Someone Special with a Gift to the Annual Fund!

We're in full-swing with the Oberlin Heritage Center's once-a-year, end-of-the-year campaign for annual operating support. This year's goal is \$35,000, and we've passed the halfway mark with \$18,500 from 145 donors to date. Consider honoring a family member or friend with a tax-deductible gift to the Annual Fund. Gifts "in honor of" or "in memory of" are treasured by their recipients and greatly appreciated by the Heritage Center. Donate online at <https://secure.oberlinheritage.org/donation.shtml> or mail your gift to the OHC Annual Fund, P.O. Box 0455, Oberlin, OH 44074. The Annual Fund campaign continues through December 31, 2013. Your donation is especially needed at this time to help end a very lean year in the black. OHC truly is grateful for every contribution!

OHC Staff and Volunteer News

In the small world department, **Pat Murphy** recently traveled west to see her daughter, **Anne**, who presently lives and works in Lander, Wyoming. During the visit, Pat took time to explore the local history museum in Lander and was surprised to find a stove made by **Philo P. Stewart** on display. Many Oberlin history buffs recognize Stewart's name as one of the two founders of Oberlin – college and town – yet many may not be aware that Stewart also was a well-known inventor and stove designer. The towering Lander stove is a top loading coal-burning stove (over 7 feet tall) that stood in the Lander Railroad Depot for years, and kept locals and travelers warm as they waited for the next train.

Volunteer **Ron Gorman** gives readers a glimpse of the cautious and hidden world of those who helped freedom seekers on the Underground Railroad. His fascinating new blog entry, [The Secret Room of the Fitches](#), may be found at www.oberlinheritage.org.

Ohio History Service Corps member, **Jen Graham**, will launch a bi-monthly electronic history newsletter in early December that features news and events happening among the region's history organizations, preservation groups and others interested in local history. To add your name to the newsletter's mailing list, e-mail jen.graham@oberlinheritage.org. Keep an eye out for Jen when she steps out at the end of the workday on October 31 in one of the Heritage Center's reproduction 19th century dresses and hoop skirts to take part in Oberlin's "Downtown Trick-or-Treat" event. Jen will hand out sweets and share fun history "treats" with kids and their parents about some of Oberlin's Halloween traditions from days gone by.

Hats off to OHC intern, **Annalee Sekulic**, who wowed her Western Reserve High School chemistry teacher and classmates when she unflappably answered the bonus question on a recent chemistry exam. Anna not only knew **Charles Martin Hall** was the answer to "Who was responsible for devising an efficient process for the development of aluminum?" but she quickly sketched a detailed outline of Hall's life on the reverse of the test paper, and earned herself extra credit plus a king-size Reese's candy bar! ☺ Although Hall was not mentioned in the class textbook, Anna recalled the teacher referring to him once in a classroom lecture and her ears perked right up! She's learned all about the inventor, businessman, and philanthropist from her training as an Oberlin Heritage Center docent and regularly shares stories about Hall's life and accomplishments when she leads tours for OHC visitors.

Members' Update

Welcome new members: **Will Blake & Family** as well as **Albert W. Jascoe & Lori Barker** (all of Oberlin). If you are not yet a member, we encourage you to become one today by visiting www.oberlinheritage.org.

One Size Fits All: Gift Membership!

Consider the gift of an OHC membership for family and friends who enjoy being part of a good thing! Members receive free admission to tours and history walks, reduced prices on Oberlin Heritage Center children's summer camps, community events and educational workshops for which there is a fee; discounts at the Museum Store; and complimentary benefits in a network of historical sites and museums throughout

the United States participating in the [Time Travelers Network](#) (currently there are over 250 participant institutions located in more than 40 states). Most of all, members will know they are making a difference and helping to preserve Oberlin's unique, nationally significant history. Visit www.oberlinheritage.org to purchase a gift membership online or call (440) 774-1700 (members@oberlinheritage.org) to request a membership brochure be sent to you. If you wish the recipient of your gift to receive a gift card before December 25th, please purchase your gift membership by December 14th.

Ave Atque Vale / Hail & Farewell

With sorrow, OHC staff and volunteers mourned the passing of long-time members and friends, **Jarvis A. Strong, Jr.** and **Louise Richards**. Strong died at the age of 95 at his home in McLean, Virginia. A local memorial service will be held on **Saturday, November 9 at 11 a.m. at First Church in Oberlin, United Church of Christ**, with a reception immediately following. The Strong family encourages your attendance if you knew Jarvis or his family when they resided for many years at 252 West College Street in Oberlin. Louise Richards passed away in Oberlin on October 7 at the age of 93. Louise was an Oberlin Heritage Center honorary trustee, Endowed Life Member, and active volunteer on OHC's Collections Committee. Louise's friends are invited to attend a memorial service at Kendal at Oberlin on **Saturday, November 23 at 2:00 p.m.**

Also of Interest

American Glamour: Modern Architecture, Marketing and Popular Culture in the 1950s, presented by **Alice Friedman**, Professor of American Art at Wellesley College, takes a look at ways in which buildings and interiors came to reflect American culture as seen through the prisms of advertising, fashion photography, film and television. The event is sponsored by the Baker-Nord Center for the Humanities at Case Western Reserve University and takes place **Thursday, November 7 at 6:00 p.m.** in Ford Auditorium (11100 Euclid Avenue). Free and open to the public; [registration recommended](#). For more information visit www.case.edu/humanities or call (216) 368-2242.

The public is invited to the dedication of "**The Count**" **Frank S. Williams Practice Room** at the Oberlin College Conservatory (Kohl Building, Room 220; 77 West College Street) on **Saturday, November 9 at 2:00 p.m.** Later that same evening, the Oberlin Jazz Ensemble Concert takes place at 8:00 p.m. in Finney Chapel (corner of Professor and Lorain Streets). Both events are free and open to the public. Oberlin Heritage Center member, **Anna Ernst** (OC '10), received OHC's Community Historian Award in 2011 for her research on Williams and the introduction of African-American music and jazz into the curriculum of the Conservatory. Frank Williams is considered to be the first jazz pianist to bring jazz to Finney Chapel in October 1944, and also is the oldest graduate to receive a bachelor's degree from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music in 1982 at the age of 64. For more about the events surrounding the celebration of the music of Frank Williams and the early roots of Jazz at Oberlin College, visit www.oberlin.edu.

Congratulations to the **City of Cincinnati** for its recent designation as a **Preserve America Community**, joining 20 other communities in Ohio that have been recognized by the U.S. Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the Office of the First Lady for the good work being done to celebrate and protect their local heritage. The **City of Oberlin** was designated a Preserve America Community in 2004. In addition to the 890 Preserve America Communities around the country, there also are now 40 **Preserve America Stewards** nationwide, including the **Oberlin Heritage Center**, which recognizes programs that have demonstrated a successful use of volunteer time and commitment in order to help care for its historic heritage.

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