

Oberlin Heritage Center E-Gazette – December 2011

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Elisabeth Severance Prentiss: Oberlin's "Forgotten" Angel

Neither the Allen Memorial Art Museum nor Allen Memorial Hospital could have been built had it not been for the generosity of Elisabeth Severance Prentiss, but, even in Oberlin, her legacy has been overshadowed by the good works of her father, Louis, endower of Oberlin College's Severance Hall, and her brother, Cleveland Orchestra benefactor (and Oberlin College graduate) John L. Severance. The Severances' longstanding involvement with and allegiance to this community will be traced by journalist **Diana Tittle**, author of a 2010 biography of this remarkable Western Reserve family, in an illustrated lecture examining the life, times and motivations of the now-unheralded philanthropist Elisabeth Severance Prentiss. The program takes place **Wednesday, December 14 at 7:15 p.m.** and is co-sponsored by the Oberlin Heritage Center and the Allen Memorial Art Museum. Location: Kendal at Oberlin's Heiser Auditorium (600 Kendal Drive). Free and open to the public. For more, visit www.oberlinheritage.org or www.theseverances.com

Who Will Be OHC's Next Community Award Recipients?

In the next few weeks, consider taking some time to nominate an outstanding individual, organization, or business whose accomplishments in serving the community are in keeping with the Oberlin Heritage Center's mission *to preserve and share Oberlin's unique heritage and to make the community a better place to live, learn, work and visit.*

Award Categories include:

- *Community Historian* - for an individual who adds to the knowledge of the history of Oberlin through research, writing, and/or educating others
- *Heritage Guardian* – for an individual or group dedicated to the ideals of conservation and preservation and who serves our community as a leader in preserving history, historical records, or historic buildings
- *Oberlin Heritage Center Volunteer of the Year* – for a volunteer who makes extraordinary contributions of time and talent to the Oberlin Heritage Center
- *Community Teacher of the Year* – for an area educator who inspires his or her students to get involved in community service
- *History Teacher of the Year* – for an area educator who inspires his or her students to learn more about history
- *Keep Oberlin Beautiful Award* – for an individual, business or organization that helps to enhance the aesthetics and appearance of the community.

Anyone may submit a nomination by **February 1, 2012**. You may download an [entry form](#) by visiting the "What's New" sidebar at www.oberlinheritage.org. Award winners will be announced and saluted at the Oberlin Heritage Center's Annual Meeting on April 4, 2012.

First-Grade Fun with Oberlin History

Last month, 70 first-graders from Mapleton Elementary School in Ashland County spent the day with Oberlin Heritage Center docents learning a lot about the past and having great fun in the process. The interactive schedule was something new, designed by Museum Education and Tour Coordinator, **Liz Schultz**, to accommodate a very large group of youngsters for a full day. The visit passed quickly as the children and their chaperones rotated among three history "stations," including "Lessons in the Past" at the Little Red Schoolhouse, a guided tour of the Monroe House and Jewett House, and history activities and lunch at the Oberlin Depot. Special thanks for a super team effort by volunteers **Michele Andrews, Sue Barsay, Deloris Bohn, Charlotte Bosch, Anne Elder, Betty Mahjoub, Cesar Palacio** and **Gail Wood** who helped OHC stretch space and staffing limits to make the day a big success.

Oh Dear, Oh Deer!

There are so many positive happenings at the Heritage Center, but every once in a while we have some distressing news to report. We're sad to say that this fall there has been an increased amount of after-hours vandalism occurring on the Heritage Center grounds. Oberlin Police have stepped up their watch, and we continue to keep the grounds well-lit overnight. Most disheartening was the harm done to our dear **Straus**, the magnificent cast-iron deer that

graces the Monroe House front lawn, whose cement base was uprooted as he was tipped over and damaged by vandals last month. Thank you to **Bob Lodge** (and his great crew at **McKay Lodge Fine Arts Conservation Laboratory**) for promptly taking Straus under their care and working to return him to fine form once again. We welcome your help in any way with curbing the vandalism which takes away valuable time, energy and funding from all the good work going on at the Heritage Center.

Holiday Gift Ideas from the Heritage Center

Apollo Theatre tee shirts are popular items at the Museum Store this season! A deck of Oberlin history playing cards makes a great stocking stuffer! For the collector of beautiful and unique pieces – how about a lovely reproduction of an original tile from Julia Finney Monroe’s signature blue parlor fireplace? For the person who has everything, an inscribed [brick](#) in his or her honor placed along the Oberlin Heritage Trail is guaranteed to please. The one-size-fits-all gift that keeps on giving throughout the year is an Oberlin Heritage Center gift membership! Visit www.oberlinheritage.org or stop by the Monroe House Tuesday through Saturday (10 a.m. to 3 p.m.) to do some holiday shopping for everyone on your list. They’ll be delighted with something out-of-the-ordinary and you’ll feel good knowing you’ve made a difference in helping to preserve Oberlin’s nationally significant history!

Welcome New Members

The Oberlin Heritage Center extends a warm welcome to new members **Barbara Bruer, Lesslie Crowell** (Charlottesville, VA), **Robert McClusky** and **Patricia Yarber-Lamb**. (All are from Oberlin unless indicated otherwise.) The Heritage Center has welcomed nearly 60 new members in 2011 – your support really means a lot to the organization! If you are not yet a member, **please join!** Visit www.oberlinheritage.org to join online or call (440) 774-1700 (members@oberlinheritage.org) to request a membership brochure be sent to you.

Annual Fund Progress

You’ve heard a lot this year about the great variety of programs, tours and services that the Oberlin Heritage Center offers, all the while stretching its slim operating budget with the use of great volunteers, energetic student interns, and donated materials and in-kind services. Memberships, tour fees, and fee-for-service projects help pay the monthly bills, but they do not fully cover the basic costs of operations. The Annual Fund provides essential income needed to operate the Oberlin Heritage Center and balance the budget. To date, the 2011 Annual Fund has raised \$27,975 from 210 donors. If you have not yet contributed to this once-a-year, end-of-the-year appeal, the Heritage Center needs your support to reach its goal of \$35,000. In addition to a tax receipt, you’ll get OHC’s assurance that your donation will be used effectively to preserve and share Oberlin’s important history. Make a gift [online](#) or mail your donation to the OHC Annual Fund, P.O. Box 0455, Oberlin, OH 44074. The Annual Fund campaign continues through December 31, 2011.

OHC Board, Staff, and Volunteer News

Ken Grossi, Oberlin College Archivist and OHC Trustee, participated in a symposium at J.F. Oberlin University in Tokyo, Japan on November 2. Ken gave a presentation about Oberlin College in conjunction with the symposium’s theme “John Frederick Oberlin and His Legacy.” The symposium was held during the 90th anniversary celebration of the establishment of the Sutei Joshi (Girls’) Kodoku Gakko School in China in 1921 by Yasuzo Shimizu, Oberlin College Class of 1926 and founder of Obirin Gakuen (J.F. Oberlin University’s affiliated institute) in 1946.

Executive Director, **Pat Murphy** attended the Ohio Historic Preservation Office Awards luncheon in Piqua last month to accept a **Preservation Award of Merit** for the Oberlin Heritage Center’s partnership with architect **Mark Lesner** and **LorMet Community Federal Credit Union**’s restoration of the [People’s Banking Company building](#) in Oberlin. For [more](#), visit the Ohio Historical Society’s website at www.ohiohistory.org, go to “About” on the main menu, and then follow and click on the tabs for Resources/Historic Preservation/Media Page.

Congratulations to **Liz Schultz**, Museum Education and Tour Coordinator, who has been selected by Rotary International’s District 6600 to be part of a group study exchange in Italy for four weeks next spring. Liz will travel to four regions on Italy’s east coast: Marche, Abruzzo, Molise and Umbria with a group of five young professionals from across northern and central Ohio. The Oberlin Rotary Club is Liz’s sponsor. She plans to learn more about international museum education and tourism practices as part of the experience of meeting many local Italian Rotarians.

The OHC staff appreciated the assistance of **Lorain County Community College** student, **Tammy Hrinda**, during the month of November. Tammy, an Oberlin High School graduate (class of 2009) earned credit for her college public administration planning class by assisting OHC staff with administrative, programming, and collections tasks.

Endowment Campaign Update

The Endowment Fund for History Education is now at \$74,571 toward our goal of \$400,000 in Phase Two of the Oberlin Heritage Center's campaign to fully endow the Museum Education and Tour Coordinator staff position. Special thanks to **David and Susan Egloff, Carol H. Ganzel** and an **anonymous member** all of whom became new Endowed Life members this past month. In 2011, we welcomed 13 new Endowed Life members, while 6 other current Endowed Life members increased their previous commitments to a new level of support. We'd love **you** to be part of this growing group of 88 Endowed Life members who have made gifts or pledges (payable over 5 years) of \$2,000 or more to the Endowment Fund for History Education. Contact Executive Director Patricia Murphy at (440) 774-1700 (patm@oberlinheritage.org) or Board Member Nick Jones at (440) 774-3671 (nrjones360@gmail.com).

In Memoriam

We were saddened by the news that Endowed Life member, **Robert H. Staples**, of Lakewood, NJ, passed away on October 23, 2011. Many caring thoughts are sent across the miles to his family and friends.

Also of Interest

K-12 history, social studies, language arts, and English teachers are invited to apply to the **2012 Gilder Lehrman Teacher Seminars**. Taught by renowned historians on college campuses in the U.S. and the U.K., these one-week interdisciplinary seminars give educators the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of topics in American history and literature – while gaining practical resources and strategies to take back to their classrooms. Deadline for summer seminar applications is February 15, 2012. For more [information](#), visit www.gilderlehrman.org and click on the Education/For Teachers tab.

The **National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom** (NTF) website is new and improved. Visit www.nps.gov/ugrr for information, features and events relating to the Underground Railroad from all across the country. The Oberlin Heritage Center was designated a facility on the National Park Services' National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom in 2004.

Looking for something the whole family will enjoy during the holidays? Visit the **Ohio Historical Society** and view the new permanent State Historic Preservation Office exhibit that features Oberlin's own **LorMet Community Federal Credit Union's** restoration. See "**Buildings, Places & Spaces**," an impressive showcase of preservation efforts throughout Ohio, and "**Following in Ancient Steps**," an amazing archaeology exhibit. While you are there, visit five other exhibits that went up this past spring and summer, plus see the new Visitor Welcome Lobby and Ohio History Store. The museum is open Wednesdays through Sundays. For more information, check out www.ohiohistory.org.

Congratulations to Oberlin College History Professor **Steve Volk**, who teaches Latin American studies and museum studies, upon being selected as the 2011 Outstanding Baccalaureate Colleges U.S. Professor of the Year, a national program that honors the most outstanding undergraduate instructors. Steve and his family are long-time Oberlin Heritage Center members.

See great photos from the community reception that honored retiring OHC staff member, Pat Holsworth, on our [Flickr page](#) at www.oberlinheritage.org.

*The Board and Staff of the Oberlin Heritage Center wish all members and friends a **festive holiday season!** The office will be closed Saturday, December 24.*

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