



Oberlin Heritage Center E-Gazette – May 2013

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Conversation and Reading with Tracy Chevalier

Best-selling historical novelist (and Oberlin College alumna)

Tracy Chevalier will speak about and do a reading from her new book “*The Last Runaway*” at First Church in Oberlin, U.C.C. (106 North Main Street) on **Tuesday, May 14 at 7 p.m.** The event, which includes a reception with the author following her presentation, is free and open to the public.

The Last Runaway is the story of a young English Quaker woman, Honor Bright, who emigrates to a fictional community just outside of Oberlin in 1850, and ends up taking part in the Underground Railroad. Check out Tracy Chevalier’s website (www.tchevalier.com) for more background on the book and the author’s inspiration for writing it.

Chevalier, known for the detailed research that goes into creating her novels, spent time in the Oberlin Heritage Center’s Resource Center a couple summers ago doing groundwork for the book by thumbing through Oberlin history books, historic photographs, newspapers and other materials. The May event is co-sponsored by the Oberlin Heritage Center, First Church, U.C.C., Friends of the Oberlin College Library, and the Oberlin Public Library.



Commencement/Memorial Day Weekend at the Heritage Center

Looking for something memorable and out of the ordinary for your family or out-of-town guests to do this Memorial Day and Oberlin College Commencement/Reunion Weekend? Explore historic Oberlin and the Oberlin Heritage Center by enjoying guided mini-tours or neighborhood history walks during extended hours **Friday through Monday, May 24-27**. The “Oberlin Origins” mini-tour (first floor of the Monroe House) is a 30-minute introduction to Oberlin history; admission is \$3 for adults and reservations are not needed.

Themed history walks (75-minutes) are scheduled throughout the weekend; fee is \$6 for adults and advance reservations are required. OHC members and their children, as well as all college students, can enjoy tours and history walks free (reservations still needed for history walks; all activities most likely to be enjoyed by ages 9 and up). Here’s what’s happening each day:

Friday, May 24 Freedom's Friends (Underground Railroad) History Walk at 3 p.m.
Scholars & Settlers (Tappan Square) History Walk at 5 p.m.
OHC Museum Store open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Saturday, May 25 Sneak Peak – Oberlin Origins Tour (Monroe House) every half hour, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Soldiers & Civilians (Civil War) History Walk at 11 a.m.
Freedom's Friends (Underground Railroad) History Walk at 3 p.m.
Scholars & Settlers (Tappan Square) History Walk at 5 p.m.
OHC Museum Store open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Sunday, May 26 Sneak Peak – Oberlin Origins Tour (Monroe House) every half hour, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Soldiers & Civilians (Civil War) History Walk at 11 a.m.

Freedom's Friends (Underground Railroad) History Walk at 3 p.m.
OHC Museum Store open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Monday, May 27 Freedom's Friends (Underground Railroad) History Walk at 1 p.m.

If you are unable to take part in a history walk this weekend, remember that the Freedom's Friends and Scholars & Settlers walks will be offered at 11 a.m. on alternating Saturdays beginning June 1 and running through the end of August. More information, including dates for each walk, may be found on the Events Calendar at www.oberlinheritage.org (click on the "Events and News" tab on the main menu bar).

Docent Training: 101

Been thinking about becoming a docent at the Oberlin Heritage Center? Here's a great way to get your feet wet! Come to the two-hour training on **Saturday, May 4** (12 noon to 2 p.m.) to learn how to present a thirty-minute introductory tour of the first floor of the Heritage Center's Monroe House. The **Sneak Peek – Oberlin Origins Tour** will show you how to share a few of the founding stories about people and decisions that set Oberlin on a unique path in our nation's history. Training is free, and volunteers are asked to commit to leading at least four mini-tours per year for the Heritage Center. Register in advance at www.oberlinheritage.org or call (440) 774-1700 for more information.

OHC Spring Grounds Clean-up

Help the Heritage Center get spruced up for its busy summer visitor season by volunteering an hour or two on **Saturday, May 11 from 9 a.m. to noon** during our Spring Outdoor Clean-up Day. (Note this date is one week earlier than the community-wide clean-up on Oberlin Pride Day.) Meet at the Heritage Center's brick crossroads and wear your work gloves. If you have a favorite gardening tool – bring it along! Every year we get a LOT of work done together (and have fun, as well!), and what a difference these efforts make in getting the grounds "visitor-ready" for the coming months. For more information, or to let us know you plan to lend a hand, call (440) 774-1700 or e-mail members@oberlinheritage.org.

May is National Preservation Month: "See! Save! Celebrate!"

Throughout our nation's communities there are significant places that have contributed to our American experience – whether it is a house museum, place of worship, monument, battlefield, or ship. There is a lot you can do to help support the places that preserve our nation's stories, such as: Become a volunteer and assist with a community preservation project; Include historic sites or hotels on your next vacation to learn about our country's past; Join as a [member](#) of your local preservation organization (www.oberlinheritage.org) or if you already are a Heritage Center member, consider membership in the [National Trust for Historic Preservation](http://www.preservationnation.org) (www.preservationnation.org). By taking action, you're acknowledging that saving our heritage isn't someone else's job. Ensure that our nation's heritage will be protected for future generations and spread the word this May encouraging friends and family to *see, save and celebrate* our local history. Read on to learn more about one of OHC's current preservation efforts.

Vineway Building Rehab Update

Amazingly enough, and thanks to a dream team of volunteer helpers, all the white vinyl and fake brick plastic siding was removed from the Vineway building (82 South Main Street) in just a few short hours early last month. Led by professionals, including local building contractor **Pat Ives** and painting contractor (and OHC Board Member) **Scott Broadwell**, the group worked quickly and efficiently with no interference to the building tenants – **The Mandarin**, **Lupita's** and **The Bridge** – and their customers. There were no major surprises, and we are intrigued by what we see and look forward to preservation architect **Lorri Sipes'** assessment of what has now been uncovered incorporated into a staged exterior renovation plan.

Meanwhile, you can help by providing the Heritage Center with any photos you may have that depict the front or south side of the building in its early days. (We can scan your photo and return it to you.) Thus far, the public response has been very positive. We'll keep readers posted on the next steps.

Staff, Volunteer and Intern News

Richard Donegan represented the Oberlin Heritage Center at the Ohio Local History Alliance's Region 3 meeting held last month at the Cuyahoga County Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument, Cleveland. **Mary Anne Cunningham** attended the 20th anniversary celebration of Oberlin College's Bonner Center and enjoyed hearing panel discussions that featured current Bonner Scholars and Bonner alumni. The Bonner program weaves a strong component of community service into students' college experiences. It was fun to reconnect with former Oberlin Heritage Center intern, **Andria Ryberg '06**, and meet her beautiful toddler, Ellie!

Among the best rewards of **Liz Schultz's** position as Museum Education and Tour Coordinator are the thank you notes from tour guests. Last month, Liz gave a tour to a group from the Shore Cultural Center (Euclid, OH) whose members were learning English as a second language. The class assignment was to practice their developing language skills out in the community while also learning something new about a topic. A guided tour at the Oberlin Heritage Center fit the bill! A few days after their visit, Liz received a package of lovely, hand-written notes from the group, which included young people from Pakistan, Morocco and Japan. "*Dear Liz, wrote one young man, we are very thankful to you for your wonderful guidance yesterday. We learned a lot more interesting information about Oberlin. You are [a] very soft spoken lady. We all understood your speech because you spoke clearly and slowly. You really inspired us.*" The gracious thank-yous were a real day-brightener for us all!

"*The Monroe House front parlor is done!*" pronounced Collections Assistant **Prue Richards** with a big smile, as she and Board Member and volunteer extraordinaire **Scott Broadwell** hung the last gold cord from the picture rail traveling around the top of the room's four walls. The Parlor Project, underway since 2010, included a complete refurbishment of the space reflecting the Victorian décor that early homeowner, **Julia Finney Monroe**, might well have designed herself. Stop by and see the final results of the room's complete transformation!

We're looking forward to welcoming four college student interns to the Heritage Center's team for the summer. **Michelle Myers** (Swarthmore College) is first to arrive at the end of May. Michelle is a Leadership Lorain County intern, returning for her second summer at the Heritage Center. **Trey Levy** (Oberlin College), **Courtney Martin** (Grinnell College) and **Lauren Schiavoni** (Grove City College) round out this bright, enthusiastic team of young historians who will be helping OHC staff and volunteers with a full summer of tours, history walks, and summer camps, plus behind-the-scenes work with collections conservation, preservation, publicity, and more!

Docent volunteer **Ron Gorman** added a new update, [Lewis Clarke: Hero in his Own Right](#), to the Heritage Center's website [blog](#). Learn about this former slave, buried in Westwood Cemetery, whose tombstone inscription reads "*The original George Harris of Harriet Beecher Stowe's book Uncle Tom's Cabin.*"

Post-Boston Marathon Thank You from Pat Murphy

As many of you know, I ran the **Boston Marathon on April 15th**, and was about a block beyond the finish line when the explosions went off. Needless to say, I am among the lucky ones, and ever since I have been amazed and encouraged by the outpouring of love, compassion and concern from Heritage Center members and friends and others from all over Oberlin and beyond. Special thanks to those who sponsored me in the race by making a per mile contribution to the Heritage Center's Endowment for History Education. You inspired me every step of the way. The joy of running among people of all ages and countries and with the support and encouragement of amazing spectators lining the entire 26.2 mile route will always be with me. Wearing a shirt from the Cleveland marathon, quite a few spectators would call out "Go Cleveland" as I went by, and a few times other runners shouted -- "Hey, I'm from Cleveland, too" as we ran along. I was very fortunate to finish almost an hour faster than last year when I ran in sweltering heat. Even more importantly it turns out, I finished a few minutes ahead of my goal pace of 4 hours and ten minutes. A 4:10

finish would have put me in the middle of the bombing. The horrendous ending is so very sad for runners, for Boston, and for us all. Putting this all into perspective may take me (and others) some time. Next time, I'll have to find an "Oberlin" shirt to wear! Meanwhile, know how comforting it is to be surrounded by such a wonderful community of supporters and well-wishers. Peace and thank you.

Members Update

A warm welcome goes out to **Charlene Connors** (Lorain), **Carol L. Correthers** (Oberlin) and **Mark & Margaret Reynolds** (Oberlin) as new members at the Oberlin Heritage Center! We are grateful to **Jeff & Merrilee Witmer** (Oberlin) who stepped up to become Endowed Life Members at the Copper level. We appreciate your warm support one and all! With sadness, we note the passing of Endowed Life Member **Helen Davidson Johnson** on April 18, 2013. Helen was honored with the OHC's Heritage Guardian Award in 2008 for publishing her autobiography, "*Times Remembered or What Happened to a Farmer's Daughter.*"

Last Call for Inscribed Bricks at OHC This Year

We'll be sending an engraving order soon to our local stonemason, so order now if you've been thinking about an inscribed brick at the Heritage Center to honor a special person or occasion in your life. The Oberlin Heritage Trail, which criss-crosses the grounds at the Oberlin Heritage Center, is lined with nearly 400 bricks that feature one-of-a-kind messages celebrating, remembering, and creating lasting legacies. Bricks ordered by May 15 will be installed later this spring; bricks ordered after that time will be installed in Spring 2014. For more information, visit the Heritage Center's [website](#) and click on "Make a Gift" to purchase a brick online or download a mail-in brick order form.

Also of Interest

The **Pittsfield Township Historical Society** hosts "*A History of the Pittsfield Township Country Schools*" on **Thursday, May 9 at 6:30 p.m.** in the Pittsfield Township Hall (intersection of SR 58 and Route 303). The program, presented by local historian **Ralph Hayes**, is free and open to the public. For more information, contact ralph.a.hayes@gmail.com or call (440) 647-2203.

Document Shredding, Electronics Recycling and Scrap Metal Round-up will be offered as a free service to all Oberlin residents and businesses on **Saturday, May 18 from 9 a.m. – 12 noon** in the City Hall parking lot (85 South Main Street). Shred those identity-sensitive papers (tax returns, cancelled checks, pay stubs, etc.); recycle old electronics and accessories (computers, printers, cell phones, etc.); dispose of household items composed of aluminum (ladders, awnings, siding), brass (radiator and plumbing fixtures), copper (pipes, wire and small motors) and steel (doors, sinks, small appliances, hand tools, and auto parts). For a list of acceptable materials, contact the City of Oberlin at (440) 775-1531.

Did you know that the **Oberlin Business Partnership** offers gift certificates to Oberlin businesses and nonprofits in amounts ranging from \$5 to \$50? The Oberlin Heritage Center is one of many local organizations participating in this program. What a great way to do your gift shopping for upcoming graduations, Mother's Day, Father's Day, etc. It's one-stop shopping for you, and recipients enjoy shopping at their choice of locales in downtown Oberlin. (A list of participating venues is provided when purchasing the certificates.) Oberlin Gift Certificates can be purchased at the Oberlin Business Partnership located at 23 East College Street from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. or call (440) 774-6262 to arrange a time to stop by.

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