

Oberlin Heritage Center E-Gazette – July 2012

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Summer is a Great Time to Explore Oberlin!

Whether you're looking for a getaway weekend, or simply want to know more about your own "backyard," the Oberlin Heritage Center offers many opportunities for learning about the fascinating history of a community whose founders bragged was "peculiar in that which is good." The Heritage Center offers an inspiring **Freedom's Friends History Walk** each **Saturday morning at 11 a.m. in July and August**. This guided 75-minute, four-block walking tour focuses on Oberlin's role as an active station on the Underground Railroad. Tickets are \$6 for adults, free to OHC members and college students. Youngsters are encouraged to explore Oberlin, too! The **I Spy Oberlin: History & Architecture Scavenger Hunt** is designed for children ages 5-11 with an adult companion. Join us the **first Saturday in July, August and September at 3 p.m.**, rain or shine. All ages have fun on this guided walk keeping their eyes peeled for historic markers, decorative details and Oberlin oddities. Reservations are required; \$3 per child and free for adult companions. Register at www.oberlinheritage.org or call (440) 774-1700 for more information. Remember, guided **on-site tours** of the Oberlin Heritage Center are offered year-round on **Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays at 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.** (\$6 adults; free to OHC members, children and college students). Walk-ins welcome. The on-site tour is an excellent introduction to the nationally significant history of Oberlin, with powerful stories of everyday people who have done extraordinary things ever since college and town were founded in 1833. Plan a visit to the Oberlin Heritage Center soon!

History Walk Docent Training: Freedom's Friends

Learn more about Oberlin's famous freedom seekers and those known to have helped them make their way to freedom on the Underground Railroad at this **Sunday, July 8** workshop from **1-4 p.m.**, which is designed to train docents to lead the Freedom's Friends History Walk. No previous experience is needed; all that is required is a commitment from docents to assist with at least four history walks within the next year. The workshop is free, although advance registration is requested by July 4. Training begins at the Monroe House (73½ South Professor Street in Oberlin) and will move on from there. For more information, contact **Liz Schultz**, Museum Education and Tour Coordinator, at (440) 774-1700 or tourinfo@oberlinheritage.org.

More Quilt Connections

"The Quilt as Storyteller" program and tours in June, presented by Collections Assistant, **Prue Richards**, received superb reviews from audience members and those who joined the guided tour (some with magnifying glasses in hand to view the tiny, precise stitching!) If you missed the Heritage Center's "Quilt Connections" last month, you may be interested to know that Prue's illustrated presentation can be booked for clubs and organizations as part of the OHC's Speaker's Bureau program. There still is time to make a reservation to join us for the workshop **Textile Care and Preservation in Your Own Home** offered on **Saturday, July 14 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.** at the Oberlin Depot (240 South Main Street). Prue Richards provides useful insights and practical tips for taking care of your family's most precious textile treasures (such as grandmother's quilt, mother's wedding dress, or Uncle Jim's military uniform). Participants may bring one or two textile pieces of

their own for evaluation during the afternoon session. Fee: \$50 (\$45 for OHC members) includes box lunch. Pre-registration required; limited to 15 participants. Make your reservation online at www.oberlinheritage.org or call (440) 774-1700 to request a workshop flyer.

Oral History Project Speaks Volumes

Did you know that the Oberlin Heritage Center has collected over 100 oral history interviews, and more are added each year as they are recorded and transcribed by OHC's **Oral History Committee** volunteers? Researchers, genealogists, and interested others can hear stories of Oberlin from the townspeople themselves -- including graduates, shopkeepers, residents, and community leaders, representing town and gown, black and white, city and country, male and female. They include memories of downtown, college life, local industries, world events, politics, entertainment and daily life from the early 1900s to the present. You can make an appointment to listen to or read transcripts of the interviews in our [Resource Center](#) (copies are available for a fee). One family historian from Texas inquired recently about purchasing a copy of his grandmother's oral history which was recorded more than 25 years ago in Oberlin when she was 94 years old. Our staff was able to check the original tape and determine it still in good condition and able to be copied. OHC master genealogist **Pat Holsworth** sent an e-mail response to the fellow making the request saying "Your grandmother's voice is strong and clear," and that she would go forward in copying and mailing the tape and transcript to his family. The researcher wrote back thanking Pat for her good news and continuing with these words of appreciation (which we just loved!): *"Interesting that you characterize Grandma's...voice as strong and clear; that's how I hear her in my mind. I am interested in what she has to say, but I am also looking forward to hearing her voice again. We owe a debt to the entire project re: recording Oberlin history. What a great resource – thank you!"*

Oberlin and the Civil War Digital Collection

In commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, the **Oberlin College Archives** partnered with the Oberlin Heritage Center this past year to build "Oberlin and the Civil War," a digital collection of Civil War era materials in the Oberlin College Archives. **Richard Donegan**, an AmeriCorps Ohio History Service Program member based at the Oberlin Heritage Center (and before him, **Karyn Norwood**, in this same position) assisted with the selection, description and digital capture of period materials. This is a wealth of primary resources including photographs, letters, diaries, battle maps and more – all viewable online at www.oberlin.edu/archive. Visit soon and take special note of the Civil War Digital Collection's banner/logo which is a detail from the Certificate brevetting **Giles Waldo Shurtleff** as a Brigadier General for "gallant and meritorious services during the war," signed by President Andrew Johnson and Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton on May 22, 1866. Shurtleff was the first owner of the Oberlin Heritage Center's 1866 Monroe House.

Underground Railroad: The William Still Story

Earlier this year, PBS broadcast WNET Buffalo-Toronto's national documentary **Underground Railroad – The William Still Story**. If you missed it, the DVD and an accompanying **Community Educator Guide** (with lesson plans that can be adapted for Grades 4-12) are available for viewing at the Oberlin Heritage Center's Resource Center (open by appointment). This production tells a lesser known, yet important, story from the abolitionist era. William Still, noted by the *New York Times* as the Father of the Underground Railroad, risked his life many times by harboring and supporting perhaps as many as 800 slaves during the 1850s and '60s. Credited with supporting the freedom ride of Henry "Box" Brown as well as working with many abolitionists, Still kept secret records of all his

freedom seekers and was successful in documenting the heritage of many families. Today's, Still's book, a compilation of the notes he'd kept, is recognized as the most authentic account of some of America's most heroic stories. The **Oberlin Heritage Center** is proud to be included in the program's Community Educator Guide as a resource for those interested in learning more about the Underground Railroad. For more information, visit www.pbs.org/wned/underground-railroad.

Blue Star: Bigger and Brighter!

In mid-June, the **Blue Star Museum** program officially registered its **1,800th** museum! This collaborative program of the National Endowment for the Arts, the Department of Defense, and Blue Star Families extends a special invitation to military families to visit participating museums across America and receive free admission from Memorial Day through Labor Day 2012. The offer is available to active-duty military and their family members including Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, and active duty National Guard and Reserve members. To find out which museums are participating (including the Oberlin Heritage Center!), visit www.arts.gov/bluestarmuseums.

Members' Update

New members at the Oberlin Heritage Center include the **Amerson Family** (Elyria), **Jessa New**, **Melissa Rogers** (Wellington), **Jacques Rutzky & Dyane Sherwood**, **Preston Sundin** (Taipei City, Taiwan, ROC), and **Gerry & Aleta Wallace** (Penn Valley, CA). (Members are from Oberlin unless indicated otherwise.) Thank you for joining OHC! New members are essential to the good health of the Oberlin Heritage Center, keeping the organization vibrant and strong! In 2011, **71** new members joined the Heritage Center. To date in 2012, we've welcomed **28** more. If you are not yet a member, we encourage you to become a new member today! Your support is needed to continue the good work of the Oberlin Heritage Center. Visit www.oberlinheritage.org or call (440) 774-1700 (members@oberlinheritage.org) for more information.

OHC Staff, Intern and Volunteer News

Bentornata and Welcome Back to Museum Education and Tour Coordinator, **Liz Schultz**, who returned to the office after participating in a one-month Rotary Club International exchange program in Italy. Her trip was absolutely amazing (and most likely tremendously exhausting to anyone with less stamina than our Liz!) She had the opportunity to visit many, many Italian museums and even had the chance to spend some time sharing information and ideas with others who hold similar positions in Italian museums as Liz does at the Heritage Center. OHC members and friends will be able to hear about Liz's marvelous experience first-hand when she presents an illustrated program to the community this fall.

Ohio History Service AmeriCorps Program Civil War 150 Leadership Corps Member **Richard Donegan** was invited last month to present a program for the Black River Historical Society on "The Civil War – Emancipation Proclamation."

Kudos Corner

The **Ohio History Service AmeriCorps Program** has earned an "Award of Merit" from the **American Association for State and Local History (AASLH)**. The award will be presented at the AASLH annual meeting in Salt Lake City in October. The Ohio Historical Society and all its first and second year partners (including the Oberlin Heritage Center) were listed in the nomination. Congratulations to all the partner host sites for their good work, and to the Ohio History Service

AmeriCorps members (including the Heritage Center's **Richard Donegan** and **Karyn Norwood**), who are the heart of this successful program!

Also of Interest

"*In Their Own Right*" is a fiber art exhibit by **The Artist as Quiltmaker** exhibition curators, past and present, displayed at the Beth K. Stocker Art Gallery at **Lorain County Community College** (1005 N. Abbe Road, Elyria). The exhibit is open from 1-4 p.m. on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays through July 28 (closed July 4) and features the works of **Ricky Clark, Sue Copeland Jones**, Gayle Pritchard and Ruta Butkus Marino. Clark and Jones are Oberlin Heritage Center Endowed Life Members. In addition, Ricky Clark served on the Oberlin Heritage Center's Collections Committee for several years and curated an exhibit of "Underground Railroad Quilts" in 2001, co-sponsored by FAVA and the Oberlin Heritage Center. "*In Their Own Right*" is part of **QuiltConnection 2012**, a summer-long series of quilt-related events in and around Oberlin. Full information is available at www.artistasquiltmaker.com.

Help Support the **Oberlin Backpack Program**! In the **Oberlin City School** District 55% of students take part in the Federal Free Lunch Program, but there are no programs to help these children on the weekends. Oberlin started a Backpack Program that helps 90 elementary students by providing a backpack filled with food such as cereal, milk, ramen, fruit cups, chicken noodle soup, and canned vegetables. The meals are healthy, filling and easy for children to prepare. Your votes can help the program win a cash prize to continue funding the program for the next school year. It's simple and quick: visit www.biglots.com/lots2give/vote#spotlight-iframe and indicate you want to view the videos from Ohio, then scroll down to the Oberlin High School/Oberlin Backpack Program video. Vote up to 3 times daily through July 8.

Battle Scars: Stories of the Civil War is a free public program at the Avon Branch Library (37485 Harvest Drive, Avon, OH) presented **Monday, July 9 at 7 p.m.** by Bette Lou Higgins and **Eden Valley Enterprises** (www.edenvalleyenterprises.org). For additional information, contact the Avon Library at 440-934-4743.

The **Back Roads & Beaches Lorain County 5K and 10K** run, hosted by **Visit Lorain County**, takes place in Oberlin on **Saturday August 18 at 5 p.m.** This is a fun run through Oberlin with live entertainment, local food and wine available outdoors at the **Oberlin Inn** following the race. \$20 if registered by August 13; \$25 on the day of race. More information is available at www.visitloraincounty.com.

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