



## Oberlin Heritage Center E-Gazette September 2021

PO Box 0455, Oberlin, OH 44074 (440) 774-1700  
[www.oberlinheritagecenter.org](http://www.oberlinheritagecenter.org)

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or send e-mail to [members@oberlinheritage.org](mailto:members@oberlinheritage.org).*

### OHC Goes Back in Time for the First Day of School!



The name “Oberlin” has always been synonymous with learning; in fact, the whole colony was founded as an experiment in higher education. The teaching of younger residents was a priority for the early colonists, and the need for an official schoolhouse became apparent just one year after the town’s founding. Before that, school was held in various locations—including unused corners of private homes, shops, or even collegiate buildings that could be rented. In 1834, Oberlin’s residents voted to establish a school district, choose a school board, and construct a schoolhouse for the town’s young students. The result of this meeting was Oberlin’s first official school structure, which is affectionately known today as the Little Red Schoolhouse.

The Little Red Schoolhouse was the first public school building in town, and is the oldest building that is still standing. Construction began (and was finished) in 1836, for the cost of \$200. Although some residents argued that such a building was “nonessential,” the simple building was described by a supporter as “a step forward and upward in the cause

of education.” First located on the corner of Main and Lorain Streets (near First Church), the simple structure was furnished with rough boards for seats. Later, benches and desks were built along the walls for pupils, and a blackboard and stove were added to upgrade the facility.

Unfortunately, the schoolhouse was already too small for Oberlin’s students when classes began in 1837. Only 17 students of varying ages were enrolled at the school, with the other 180 attending schools scattered throughout private homes and other buildings. So, who **DID** use the Little Red Schoolhouse? Although records are sparse, we do know that in 1842, Eliza H. Hitchcock was the school mistress and that the Little Red Schoolhouse operated as an all-girls’ school that year.

From the beginning of Oberlin’s public school system, all schools—whether the Little Red Schoolhouse or one of the “overflow” schools in a private residence—where both coeducational and interracial (The exception being, of course, the year Eliza Hitchcock ran an all-girls’ school!) Although coeducational primary schools were common at this time, the fact that Oberlin’s schools were interracial was in direct defiance of Ohio’s “Black Laws,” which restricted the rights of black Ohioans. Of course, this comes as no surprise to people today, as Oberlin’s long tradition as an abolitionist stronghold was established early in the colony’s history. But at the time, such a position was considered quite radical and even dangerous.

By the late 1840s, construction on a new, larger school began. This building, known as the First Union Schoolhouse, was built on Professor Street. When Oberlin’s student body outgrew that building, it was sold to Oberlin College and renamed “Cabinet Hall.” (That building no longer exists.) In 1874, the Union High School (now the Oberlin Center for the Arts) was constructed for Oberlin’s growing student population.

What happened to the Little Red School House after its school days were over? Well, it was sold to an Oberlin resident and used as a residence, a tailor shop, and a sign painter’s shop for the next century. It was moved through town a few times, too! In the late 1950s, the city purchased the Main Street property on which the building sat, with plans to demolish the now badly deteriorating schoolhouse. Community residents, led by Clifford Barden, organized the Oberlin Historical Society and saved the structure, raising \$4,000 to have it moved and restored at a new site on Vine Street, overlooking Plum Creek. It was also painted red, with white trim, at this time—earning its official name. Finally, in 1997, the Little Red Schoolhouse was moved to where it now sits, to be enjoyed by all as a testament to schooldays long gone! For more on the history of the schools, visit this online self-guided tour offering: <https://izi.travel/en/4552-history-of-the-schools-of-oberlin/en>.

*Photo: A group of Oberlin’s younger residents visit the Little Red Schoolhouse for a history lesson.*

## Come Visit OHC at the First Annual *End of Summer Classic* Saturday, September 11, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.



The Oberlin Heritage Center is taking part in the first annual “End of Summer Classic,” hosted by the Lorain County Beekeepers Association on Saturday, September 11 from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The day’s activities will take place at the Lorain County Fairgrounds (23000 Fairgrounds Road, Wellington, Ohio) and will feature keynote bee speaker, Ray Olivarez from Olivarez Honey Bees Inc. (Orland, California), and guest speakers, Dr. James Tew (Wooster, Ohio) and Earl Hoffman (Strong Microbials, Inc.). The family-friendly event will also include bee activities, vendors, fair food, games, and raffles. Come visit OHC at our table as we partner with other local groups and vendors to help promote beekeeping through education and cooperation. The event will take place, rain or shine!

## Join OHC for the Final History Walks of the Summer Season

OHC will host the final four history walks of the summer season this month on Saturday mornings at 11:00 a.m. The walks will take place outdoors, with no indoor stops, and may be canceled if there is inclement weather at the start time. This month’s tour will start at Westwood Cemetery, on Morgan Street. If interested, please pre-register online at <https://bit.ly/3cLsGcg> or by calling (440) 774-1700. The cost for each tour is: adults: \$6; children/students/members: free.



September’s tour is *Radicals and Reformers*, which promises a pleasing balance of Westwood’s scenic landmarks and stories of some of the many spirited men and women of Oberlin who simply refused the status quo. Find out which resident was remembered as “gentle, soft-spoken, tolerant and yet nobody’s fool.” Visit the headstone of the man who escaped from slavery (twice!) and later served on the Oberlin village council.

Please visit our website at <https://bit.ly/3k4310a> for updated COVID-19 information and procedures.

# **Wilson Bruce Evans Home Historical Society to Hold their First Annual Meeting**

*Saturday, September 18, 2021 at 11:00 a.m.*

The Trustees of the Wilson Bruce Evans Home Historical Society invite community members to attend their first annual meeting, scheduled for **11:00 a.m. on Saturday, September 18 at Oberlin's Martin Luther King, Jr. Park (17 East Vine Street)**. (*Rain location: House of the Lord Fellowship Church, 125 South Pleasant Street.*) Trustees of the society, including Evans family descendants, will gather



to celebrate progress on the house's restoration. While we cannot yet tour the house, the conceptual plans for the renovation will be presented at the annual meeting.

At 2:00 p.m., staff members of the Oberlin Heritage Center will conduct a special walking tour for guests and visitors attending the First Annual Meeting. The tour will begin in Martin Luther King, Jr., Park. Later in the afternoon, at 4:00 p.m., we will honor the Evans ancestors who rest in Westwood Cemetery.

Formed in January 2021, the Wilson Bruce Evans Home Historical Society brings together Oberlin residents with interests in African American history and descendants of Wilson Bruce Evans and Sarah Jane Leary Evans, free people of color born in North Carolina. They moved to Oberlin in 1854, where he built the home that still stands today at 33 East Vine Street. In 1858 Wilson Bruce Evans joined in the Oberlin-Wellington Rescue to secure freedom for self-emancipated John Price. His nephew John Anthony Copeland and his brother-in-law Lewis Sheridan Leary participated in John Brown's Harpers Ferry uprising.

Membership in the society is open to all. Founding memberships, priced at \$10, are available up to and including the day of the annual meeting. The Evans Home Historical Society is a nonprofit charitable organization and can receive tax-deductible contributions. To join, support, or receive more information, write the Evans Home Historical Society at P.O. Box 284, Oberlin, OH 44074 or email [\*\*manager@evanshhs.org\*\*](mailto:manager@evanshhs.org).

## Save the Date

### **(Diet) Root Beer & Yesteryear**

*Sunday, October 3, 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.*



Okay, we won't actually be serving "diet" root beer, but we will be hosting a lighter, outdoor version of Root Beer and Yesterday to ensure that everyone can safely enjoy the activities. Play historic games at the Little Red Schoolhouse, listen to antique phonographs on the porch, check out a Model T car (weather permitting), and meet a Civil War soldier. Enjoy a free root beer float and popcorn thanks to Oberlin IGA and the Oberlin Athletic Boosters. Social distancing is required and masks are requested when not enjoying refreshments.

**Volunteers needed!** Please contact Liz Schultz at [director@oberlinheritage.org](mailto:director@oberlinheritage.org) or (440) 774-1700 if you can help make this event possible! We need volunteers in 2-hour shifts between 12:30 and 4:15 p.m. to serve root beer floats and popcorn, greet guests at the information table, and supervise games at the Little Red Schoolhouse. We could also use set-up helpers at 11:30 a.m. that morning.



### **Join us for OHC's Annual Trivia Night!**

*Friday, November 12, Time and Place TBD*



What colorful children's product, still sold today, was first manufactured in the 1930s by a Cincinnati company? What are Justin Bieber fans called? If you like the challenge of rapid recall, teamwork, and team persuasion, this evening of family-friendly fun is perfect for you. Pro-tip for serious teams: there may be a few questions where kids will have the upper hand, so consider adding a younger member to your team!

Watch future newsletters for details about the game structure and team registration, but be assured this will be an enjoyable evening of maddening minutia, playful pondering, and plenty of moments for you to feel proud of—and embarrassed by—your mental storehouse.

**Answers:** Play-Doh and Beliebers

*Thank you to Kurt G. Sarringhaus for being the premier sponsor of Trivia Night!*

**Kurt G. Sarringhaus  
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## News from the Second Floor:

### Welcome to OHC's Newest ELMS

OHC would like to welcome its newest Endowed Life Members: Bill and Patti Pitts, and Pat and Joe Price. A big thank you to our new ELMS for choosing to support OHC in such a meaningful way. Bill, Patti, Pat, and Joe join 100 other members whose gifts support the OHC Endowment for Heritage Preservation and make the work of OHC possible.

### OHC is Hiring!

OHC is seeking a part-time museum housekeeper. Do you want to work behind-the-scenes in a museum and contribute to the preservation of one-of-a-kind objects, documents, photographs, and furnishings from Oberlin's past? The museum housekeeper works six hours per week with other staff members and OHC volunteers to clean and care for the artifacts and interiors of the Heritage Center's historic buildings in accordance with accepted museum practices and standards for historic house museums. Primary duties include rotating weekly cleaning, periodic special cleanings, recordkeeping, and supply and equipment care. Applications are due Thursday, September 30. Review the job notice and application details at <https://bit.ly/3j0FnDx> or stop by for an application packet.



The Oberlin Heritage Center is seeking a  
Museum Housekeeper!



Application & instructions available at:  
[www.oberlinheritage.org/about/work](http://www.oberlinheritage.org/about/work)  
Applications Due: Thursday, September 30<sup>th</sup>

### Also of Interest:

### The AMAM's Frank Lloyd Wright House to Reopen this Fall



The AMAM has announced that public tours of the Weltzheimer/Johnson House will resume this fall on the first Sundays of the month: September 5, October 3, and November 7. Presentations on the architecture and history of the property will be offered at noon, 1, 2, 3, and 4 p.m. on open house days. Admission is \$10 for adults. Visit the museum's website at <https://amam.oberlin.edu/flw-house> for tickets and information on parking, COVID safety measures, and more.

## Join LCHS for Craft Beer at Hickories on Tap

Stop by the Lorain County Historical Society on **Saturday, September 11 from 3:00 – 7:00 p.m.** to sample a variety of local craft beers while enjoying music and food truck fare on the spacious grounds of The Hickories Museum in Elyria's beautiful Washington Avenue Historic District. Tickets are \$35 per person (\$30 for LCHS members, \$10 for non-alcoholic drinks only).

Ticket holders will receive 10 beer sample tickets to redeem for 10 4 oz. beer samples. (There will also be several options for those who are not fans of beer.) A variety of food trucks will be on site during the event, too. Seating is limited, so attendees are asked to bring lawn chairs in case the tables are full. There will also be raffles and a 50/50 raffle.



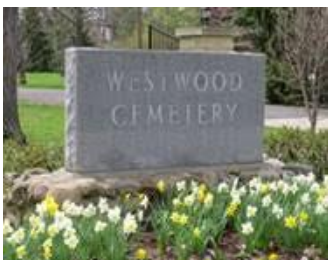
For more information, and to purchase tickets, please visit: <http://www.lchs.org/events>.

## Save the Date for the Southern Lorain County Historical Society's Annual Meeting

The Southern Lorain County Historical Society will hold its **Annual Dinner Meeting on October 14, 2021**. Doors open at 6:00 p.m., with dinner served at 6:30 p.m. The evening will include a presentation by John Perry, who will speak on "Life as a Civil War Soldier." The meeting will take place at the Wellington Eagles, 631 S. Main St., Wellington. Tickets are \$18.00 per person, and payment is due by October 1. You can mail the fee to The Spirit of '76 Museum, PO box 76, Wellington, OH 44090.

Membership dues for the 2021-2022 season are also due by October 14. A single membership fee is \$10.00; the fee for a couple or family is \$20.00; and a lifetime membership costs \$100.00. The SLCHS leadership thanks everyone in advance and hopes to see you there!

## Calling All Volunteers! The Friends of Westwood Cemetery Need You!



The Friends of Westwood Cemetery have scheduled the final stone-cleaning session of this summer, and need volunteers. **The session will take place Saturday, September 25 from 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.** Volunteers will be asked to spray a cleaning solution on headstones and to clean debris from their area as they work. (Bring any small garden tools you think will make your job

easier.) If interested, please meet at the Tranquility Garden at 9:00 a.m. on the assigned day to get your cleaning supplies and assignment. Thank you!

## **OHC is Keeping History Alive**

The Oberlin Heritage Center is working harder than ever to fulfill its mission: to preserve and share Oberlin's unique heritage and to make our community a better place to live, learn, work, and visit. Thanks to YOU—our members and supporters—we have been able to continue sharing Oberlin's history with you, through both virtual programming and in-person community events. We look forward to creating even more engaging content, and exploring even more avenues of local history with the members of our community. Please schedule a visit soon—we'd love to see you!

*Photo: Museum Education and Tour Coordinator Amanda Manahan and a tour visitor.*



**OBERLIN  
Heritage  
CENTER**

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