Mission: “To preserve and share Oberlin’s unique heritage and to make our community a better place to live, learn, work and visit.”

History: The roots of the Oberlin Heritage Center date back to the Oberlin Village Improvement Society, founded in 1903 by a group of concerned citizens to beautify and improve the town, and the Oberlin Historical Society, organized in 1960 to preserve the Little Red Schoolhouse and the Monroe House. The two volunteer groups merged in 1964 as the Oberlin Historical and Improvement Organization (O.H.I.O.). The organization has grown tremendously since hiring its first professional staff member in 1993. In 2005 the organization was renamed “The Oberlin Heritage Center.” (It retains Oberlin Historical and Improvement Organization as its legal name). Today, the Oberlin Heritage Center is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), and has earned the Ohio Association of Nonprofit Organizations’ (OANO) Standards for Excellence certification. The Heritage Center offers educational programs and special events both at its complex of historic sites and throughout the community, often in collaboration with other organizations. OHC is widely recognized as a model small museum, historical society and historic preservation organization.

Governance: The non-profit 501(c) (3) organization is governed by an 18-member Board of Trustees. Officers include President Gail Wood, 1st Vice-President Ken Grossi, 2nd Vice-President Eboni Johnson, Secretary Barb Enos and Treasurer Erik Bruenig. The organization’s strategic plan is available online.

Facilities: The Oberlin Heritage Center includes the historic Monroe House (1866), Jewett House (1884) and Little Red Schoolhouse (1836).

Tours: Guided tours of the three sites of the Oberlin Heritage Center are offered on a walk-in basis on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday at 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Guided “Sneak Peek” mini-tours are available throughout the week. History walks, focused on varied historical themes, are offered regularly during warm weather months. All tours and history walks may be arranged at other times by appointment. Check the website, send an e-mail, or call for additional information.

Office and Museum Store: The organization’s business office and the museum store are located in the Monroe House; open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and at other times by appointment. The museum store includes a unique assortment of Oberlin history-themed books and mementos.

Oberlin Heritage Center Resource Center: The library is open by appointment only and features an array of reference materials relating to Oberlin's history including genealogical information on early Oberlin families, historic house inventories, and building preservation resources. Some research services also are available for a fee.

Publications: Members receive the Oberlin Heritage Center’s annual report, advance notices of special events and upcoming programs, and they also may opt to receive the E-Gazette newsletter on a monthly basis. Publications include Bonnets to Boardrooms: Women’s Stories from a Historic College Town, compiled and edited by Eugenia Poporad Vanek (2014); Oberlin Origins and Onward! by Bentley Boyd (2011); Investing in Community: The History and Legacy of the Nord Family of Ohio by Martha M. Pickrell (2004); Sarah Margru Kinson: The Two Worlds of an Amistad Captive by Marlene D. Merrill (2003); the Biking Tour of Historic Oberlin (2003); the children’s activity book My Oberlin History and Adventure Book (1998); and Westwood: A Historical and Interpretive View of Oberlin’s Cemetery (1997). A variety of history features also may be found on the Heritage Center’s website and blog.
Awards & Accomplishments: Recognized with a special commendation by the Ohio Secretary of State as one of 14 nonprofits (out of 67,000 across the state) to appear in the spotlight on the Secretary’s website during August/NonProfit Month (2018); Ohio Local History Alliance (OLHA) History Outreach Excellence Award in Public Programming for the Heritage Center’s Oberlin and World War II series (2017); OLHA Individual Achievement Award to Liz Schultz, OHC Executive Director (2016); OLHA History Outreach Excellence Award for the oral history based publication Bonnets to Boardrooms: Women’s Stories from a Historic College Town (2014); OLHA Individual Achievement Award to Walt Edling, Past President of the Oberlin Heritage Center Board (2014); OLHA and Ohio Museums Association’s Visual Communication Award for the Oberlin History comic book “Oberlin: Origins and Onward! (2012); OLHA History Outreach Excellence Award for the Oberlin Heritage Center’s Summer Camps for Kids programs (2011); Ohio Association of Nonprofit Organizations (OANO) Standards for Excellence Certification (2011; 2014 re-certification); OLHA Individual Achievement Award to James W. White, Past President of the Oberlin Heritage Center Board (2010); Ohio Association of Historical Societies and Museums (OAHSM) History Outreach Excellence Award for Morgan Street Bridge Project Restoration (2009); Chemical Breakthrough Award from the American Chemical Society’s Division of the History of Chemistry (2009); Preserve America Steward designation from the United States Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (2009); OAHSM History Outreach Excellence Award (2008) for “Black Indians: A Hidden Heritage” a series of community programs presented for Black History Month (February 2008); OAHSM Individual Achievement Awards (2007) to Mary Anne Cunningham (Assistant to the Director) and Prue Richards (Collections Assistant); OAHSM Individual Achievement Awards (2006) to Pat and Dick Holsworth, Honorary Trustees; Oberlin Heritage Center selected to be part of the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Partner Places program (2006); OHC Executive Director Pat Murphy named “Oberlinian of the Year” by the Oberlin News-Tribune (2006); Accredited by the American Association of Museums (2005); OAHSM Individual Achievement Award (2005) to Cathe Radabaugh, Past President of the Board; OAHSM History Outreach Excellence Award (2005) for Investing in Community: The History of the Nord Family of Ohio, by Martha Pickrell; OAHSM History Outreach Excellence Award (2004) for Sarah Margru Kinson: The Two Worlds of an Amistad Captive, by Marlene D. Merrill; Designated a facility on the National Park Services’ National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom (2004); Preservation Hero annual award from Downtown Ohio/Heritage Ohio (2004); Prepared nomination for the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s selection of Oberlin as one of its Dozen Distinctive Destinations (2004).

Funding: The organization is funded by memberships, contributions, endowment income, investments, grants, special projects and planned gifts. Foundation supporters include the Community Foundation of Lorain County, The Nord Family Foundation and Nordson Corporation.

Members: At the heart of the organization are some 700 individual, family, business and organizational members from Oberlin, across Lorain County, and throughout the country. Endowed life members have made a special lasting gift to endowment funds that provides on-going operating support. Members receive free admission to OHC’s historic sites tour and neighborhood history walks, a reduced rate on any program for which there is a fee as well as discounts at the museum store, and additional benefits at history museums around the country through the Time Travelers Network. New members are always welcome.

Staff: The organization’s staff includes Executive Director Liz Schultz, Assistant to the Director Mary Anne Cunningham, Business Manager Bethany Hobbs, Collections Manager Maren McKee, Education and Tour Coordinator Amanda Manahan, Museum Housekeeper Mary Worthington, AmeriCorps member Riley Thomas, and student interns.

Volunteers: Over two hundred volunteers of all ages and backgrounds assist in many ways including staffing the front reception desk, giving tours, doing research, helping with events, working in collections care and cataloging, serving on committees, taking photos, gardening, and more. New volunteers are always needed.

For More Information

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