Located in a college town of some eight thousand residents and college students in the center of Lorain County, the Downtown Oberlin Historic District is the central core of the community’s business district. It contains a mixed-use area of commercial buildings, row houses, apartment buildings, and single-family homes, and was a center of civic and educational life in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The district is located west of the Oberlin Union College campus, to the east and south of the South Main Street Historic District, and north of the South Main Street Historic District. The district is bounded on the south from College Street to Vine Street. The district is roughly T-shaped, with College Street as the top bar of the T.

Among the streets there are these, converted former storefronts, streetlights, hitching posts, and other streetscape design elements, and the area is a physical embodiment of early 20th-century small-town Ohio business district. The area is a historical landmark and the result of several periods and styles, and includes the Victorian Gothic, Queen Anne, and Classical Revival styles. The buildings are a mixture of large commercial buildings and smaller row houses with second and third floors, with retail on the first floor.

The downtown area is directly south and southeast of Tappan Square, a large open green space owned by Oberlin College and enjoyed by both the college students and the community. The square was opened in 1844 when the college and town were founded. Most have five- to six-story buildings with second and third floors, and are a part of the college campus. The college campus is located north of the downtown area.

Main and College Streets have served as the town and college’s primary business district since 1833, when the college and town were founded. Most have five- to six-story buildings with second and third floors, and are a part of the college campus. The college campus is located north of the downtown area.

Downtown Oberlin was designated a National Register Historic District in 2003. This tour brochure does not include all the buildings contributing to the historic district.

Downtown Oberlin:
A Historic District
on the
National Register of Historic Places
An Historic District
Tour of
Oberlin's Downtown
A Walking
Walking Tour of Downtown Oberlin's National Register District

The Carpenter Block, 1880
Alfred W. Edinburgh (architect), John D. Carpenter (building owner)
Carpenter and Company (contractor)

26 South Main

The Carpenter Block is a Queen Anne-style Victorian building with four first-floor storefronts. It was originally built as a commercial and residential complex in 1880.

22 South Main

This one-story variegated pressed-brick building has a symmetrical facade with a round-arched recessed entrance. The building adjoins the Carpenter Block on the north.

1874

Contractor: Charles Ewing
Builder: Emelie Royce (later Mrs. A.G. Comings)

16 South Main (Campus Video)
Contractor: Bonsor Brothers, Lorain

5 - 13 West College (Ben Franklin)
Architect: Weary & Kramer, Akron
Contractor: H.G. Carpenter

19 - 21 West College (Green Iguana)
Builder: J.D. Carpenter

23 West College (Gibson's)
Contractor: Gibson Bros.

27 West College (Tooo Chinoise)
Contractor: W.A. Westervelt and Son

This three-story brown pressed-brick building houses Oberlin's oldest family business, a bakery and market that is still owned and operated by descendants of the original owners.

The bay window clad in aluminum siding appears to be from the 1970s.

12 West College (Green Iguana)
Builder: J.D. Carpenter

19 West College (Arboretum Antiques)
Contractor: E.C. Fitzpatrick

This three-story brick structure with a first-floor storefront and upper-floor shops and apartments was rebuilt following a fire in January 1898. The present storefront was added in 1900.

The second floor has three bays with segmental arched windows.

5 - 13 West College (Ben Franklin)
Architect: Weary & Kramer
Contractor: H.G. Carpenter

19 - 21 West College (Green Iguana)
Builder: J.D. Carpenter

23 West College (Gibson's)
Contractor: Gibson Bros.

27 West College (Tooo Chinoise)
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The bay window clad in aluminum siding appears to be from the 1970s.

This three-story brown pressed-brick building houses Oberlin's oldest family business, a bakery and market that is still owned and operated by descendants of the original owners.

This two-story brick Queen Anne-style building was constructed by Charles Ewing in 1874.

A full description of each building is available in the Walking Tour pamphlet.
This two-story Victorian brick building has three first-floor storefronts divided by brick piers. The Queen Anne double-hung windows include colored glass panes, and... about 1877, the two southern sections in 1895. The Oberlin Grange met on the second floor from 1919 until circa 1970.

38 - 42 South Main
(Oberlin News Tribune)
Contractor: J. D. Carpenter, c.1877 (north); 1895 (south)

This finely detailed, one-story, neoclassical building has a central block flanked by smaller side wings. The interior retains nearly all its original woodwork and marble... Attending the post office's dedication in 1937 was James Farley, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's postmaster general.

68 South Main (Post Office)
Architect: Alfred Hahn, Toledo
Contractor: A. J. DeKoning, Kalamazoo, 1934

Oberlin's first modern gas station, this one-story Tudor Revival building has simulated half-timbering in the gable ends of the roof. According to Barry Jones, the present owner, the property was bought in 1963. The building continued as a filling station until 1981, and then was adapted for use by Midas Muffler.

17 - 21 East College
(Ada's Ice Cream)
Architect: Mr. Walters, Cleveland (probably George Charles Walters)

This Prairie Style-inspired brown brick building cost approximately $40,000 to build. The Oberlin News reported (May 28, 1919) that the town council wished to use stone for the building to deter vandalism and provide an architectural context for the surrounding buildings. The building continues to house City, Township, and other offices. It served as city hall until the present city hall building to the south opened in 1977.

69 South Main Street
(Oberlin Town Hall)
Architect: Mr. Walters, Cleveland

5 - 13 South Main (FirstMerit Bank)
Architect: Walter Blythe, Cleveland, 1882

39 South Main
(New Union Center for the Arts)
Architect: Walter Blythe, Cleveland
Contractor: John Berg, 1874

51 - 53 South Main
(Yesterday's Ice Cream)
Contractor: S. S. Hobbs, 1914

17 - 21 East College
(Ada's Ice Cream)
Architect: Mr. Walters, Cleveland

90 South Main (Midas Muffler)
Architect: William Durand, Oberlin
Contractors: George Jackson, George Broadwell, 1930

Built following a disastrous fire in 1882, this was the first commercial building in Oberlin with an iron frame. A portion of the original cast-iron storefront remains, with piers and canopy. The building later housed the National Guard Armory. This structure is now the site of the Oberlin School of Commerce.

5 - 13 South Main (FirstMerit Bank)
Architect: Walter Blythe, Cleveland

17 - 21 East College
(Ada's Ice Cream)
Architect: Mr. Walters, Cleveland

90 South Main (Midas Muffler)
Architect: William Durand, Oberlin
Contractors: George Jackson, George Broadwell, 1930

This two-story, flat-roof brick commercial building has two plate-glass first-floor storefronts divided by a central brick pier. The building was used for about 40 years, followed by Schultz Furniture. The building is now studios and a residence for two Oberlin artists.
The Oberlin Colony was founded by Elyria Pastor John Jay Shipherd (1802-1844) and his friend the Reverend Philo Stewart (1798-1868), who had served as a missionary to the Choctaw and Chickasaw tribe. The Oberlin Colony was founded on the grounds of the Oberlin College and Theological Seminary, which was then located on the banks of the Maumee River. The college was incorporated, and in 1850 the name of the college was changed from Oberlin College to Oberlin College.

In the 19th and early 20th century, both college and town participated in various reform movements, including antislavery, African-American rights, women's rights and suffrage, temperance, and progressive-era community improvement.

Visit the Oberlin Heritage Center/O.H.I.O.

Start your visit to Oberlin with a 1-hour and 15-minute guided tour that showcases the nationally significant history of the community and college. Enjoy learning about abolition and the Underground Railroad, aluminum history, women's rights and suffrage, and more.

The Oberlin Heritage Center is located at 73 ½ South Professor Street, one-half block from the Downtown Oberlin Historic District. The Oberlin Heritage Center is part of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's National Historic District Program. A complete copy of the nomination form can be found at www.oberlinheritage.org.

Take A Tour Around The Square (and More)...

- Visit the Oberlin Heritage Center/O.H.I.O.
- Enjoy learning about abolition and the Underground Railroad, aluminum history, women's rights and suffrage, and more.

Buildings and Their Architects

- **Little Red Schoolhouse**, 1836
- **Jewett House**, 1840
- **Oberlin College Center**:
  - **Wilson Hall**, 1866
  - **Abbott College**, 1868-1877
  - **Con Manse**, 1894
  - **Hall Auditorium**, 1953

- **Allen Art Building Addition**, 1976

- **Allen Memorial Art Museum**, 1886-1887
- **Oberlin Heritage Center**:
  - **Monroe House**, 1866
  - **Little Red Schoolhouse**, 1836
  - **Jewett House**, 1884

- **Open to the Public**:
  - **Parking**

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**Acknowledgements**

This text is adapted from the Oberlin Historical and Improvement Organization's application for downtown Oberlin's National Register designation. A complete copy of the nomination form can be found at O.H.I.O.

Edited by Jane Blodgett and Carol Ganzel

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Cover Image: The Oberlin Heritage Center/O.H.I.O.

For more information, please contact the Oberlin Historical and Improvement Organization at 73 ½ South Professor Street, Oberlin, OH 44074, or call 440-774-1700.