**Memorial Arch**

- **No.** 09-00-085-110-001
- **Location of Negatives**
  - Front: 34A
  - S. Side: 33A
- **County**
- **Historic or Other Name(s)**
  - Memorial Arch
- **Present Name(s)**
  - Memorial Arch
- **Present Use**
  - Monument
- **Owner's Name & Address, if known**
  - Memorial Arch
- **Property Acreage**
- **U.T.M. Reference**
  - Zone
  - Easting
  - Northing
- **Site Plan with North Arrow**
- **City or Village**
  - Oberlin
- **Site Data**
  - **Lot, Section or VMD Number**
  - **Specific Address or Location**
  - **Township & Vicinity**
- **On National Register?** Yes
- **Part of Esth Hist Dist?** No
- **Name of Established District (N.R. or Local)**
  - Oberlin College thematic nomination
- **Thematic Association(s)**
  - Education: Higher & Religion: Christianity
- **Object**
  - Monument
  - No. Bays: 1
- **Property Data**
  - **No of Stories**
  - **Basement?** Yes
- **Building Construction**
  - **Foundation Material**
    - Stone, Concrete
  - **Wall Construction**
    - Sandstone
  - **Roof:**
    - **Type**
    - **Pitch**
    - **Material**
    - **Sandstone**
    - **U-Shaped**
  - **Style or Design**
    - Neo-Classical Revival
    - High Style Elements
  - **Architect or Engineer**
    - Joseph Lyman Silsbee, Chicago
  - **Design Sources**
    - McQuillin (76)
  - **Completed?**
    - No
  - **Alteration Date(s)**
  - 1903
  - **Alteration?**
    - Yes
  - **Rehabilitation?**
    - No
  - **Endangered?**
    - No
  - **Alteration Date(s)**
    - 1903
  - **Ownership**
    - Private
  - **Address**
    - 135 West Lorain Street
    - Oberlin, OH 44074
  - **Built By**
    - Joseph Lyman Silsbee, Chicago
  - **Purpose**
    - Monument
  - **Construction Sources**
    - Oberlin College, 1908
    - General Catalogue of Oberlin College, 1908
    - Oberlin Shansi Memorial Association brochure.

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**Description**

The Indiana sandstone Memorial Arch was privately commissioned and it was designed by architect J.L. Silsbee of Chicago. Final cost for the arch was $20,720, of which D. Willis James donated $20,000. The remainder was raised in small amounts from students and friends of the college. It was built to honor those former Oberlin College students who, as missionaries in China, were killed in the Boxer Rebellion. The cornerstone was laid October 16, 1902; dedication was on May 14, 1903 (OC General Catalogue, 1908). Missionary work became possible in China after the nation lost the Opium War in 1839. Oberlin missionaries had gone to China’s Shansi Province (cont.)

**Further Description of Important Interior and Exterior Features**

Composed of sandstone with red marble inlays, this monument is one of two structures in Tappan Square. The footprint of the Arch conforms to a half circle, which is bisected by the path running from east to west across the middle of the Square. The central component of the arch is a rectilinear corridor with a bracketed crown of terraced sandstone and rectangular red marble inlays. The ceiling of the corridor is 20 ft from ground level and both supporting walls have a large bronze plaque. The flanking colonnades, attached on the north and south sides, are single rows of Doric columns set on a curved base. Each curved row of columns has a border at ground level of three steps that provide access (cont.)

**Historical Significance**

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**Sources of Information**

52. Historic Outbuildings and Dependencies

Barn Type(s)

- Corn Crib or Shed
- Summer Kitchen
- Silo
- Smoke House
- Spring House
- Ice House
- Designed Landscape Features
- Privy
- Garage

53. Affiliated OAI Site Number(s)

OAI Completed?  

42. Further Description of Important Interior and Exterior Features (Continued from page 1)

to the base, and upon which rest the columns and an end pier. The columns support a carved entablature with text and acanthus leaves that is level with the ceiling of the central corridor. Above each column a circle of red marble interrupts the entablature. A row of stone brackets sits above the entablature. The piers on each end of the monument are topped with decorative, functional, street lamps mounted on oxidized copper posts. In May 2000 the monument was sandblasted.

43. History and Significance (Continued from page 1.)

between 1882 and 1900. As Christian missionaries they learned and spoke Chinese, started schools, cared for orphans, and opened refuges to cure opium addicts. The Boxer Rebellion was a reaction to the missionaries as foreigners and to the special privileges given to Chinese Christians. In the revolt more than 200 foreigners lost their lives, including thirteen Oberlin missionaries and five of their children, all of whom were beheaded (Oberlin Shansi Memorial Association brochure).

Today, the Oberlin Shansi Memorial Association continues programs of educational exchange with universities in a number of Asian countries. Students walked through the Arch as a part of graduation ceremonies for many years, but when the arch came under criticism as the monument to Imperialism, that practice was halted, though graduation continues to be held in front of the Arch.

This structure is significant as a monument to an important part of Oberlin College’s missionary history, for its record of an unintended outcome, and for its evidence of the college’s response to the tragedy. The Memorial Arch was listed on the National Register as part of the Oberlin College thematic nomination in 1978. It was listed by the City of Oberlin as an Oberlin City Landmark in November of 1997.