Severance Hall

17. Date(s) or Period: 1901
18. Style or Design: Romanesque
19a. Style of Addition or Element(s): Elements
19. Architect or Engineer: Howard Van Doren Shaw, Chicago
20. Contractor or Builder: George Feick, Sandusky
21. Building Type or Plan: College Chemistry Dept. Offices & Classrooms
22. Original Use, if apparent: College Psychology Department
23. Present Use: College Chemistry Dept. Offices & Classrooms
24. Ownership: Public
25. Owner’s Name & Address, if known: Oberlin College
26. Property Acreage: 1.127
27. Other Surveys in Which Included: McQuillin (75)
28. No. of Stories: 3
29. Basement?: Yes

42. Further Description of Important Interior and Exterior Features
This two-and-one-half-story rock-faced ashlar building has a clay tile hipped roof, Romanesque details, and a V-shaped footprint oriented within a street corner. The central portion of the building faces southeast, while the outer walls of the side wings face east and south respectively. An inverted trapezoid façade is created where the side wings join the central portion; a large patio rests in front of this façade. The main entrance has a three-quarter-circle transom window above wood double doors flanked by medium-sized stone piers. Three windows are directly above the main entrance and carved just below their sill is “Severance Chemical Laboratory.” Almost all of the windows on the first and second stories are twelve-over-one, double-hung (cont.)

43. History and Significance
Severance Chemical Laboratory was the gift of Mr. Louis Severance, of New York City. The construction began in 1899, and the corner stone was laid May 31, 1900; it was dedicated on September 26, 1901. The total cost, including the site, was $75,000. Mr. Severance also provided an endowment of $40,000 for the Chair of Chemistry, and a laboratory fund of $10,000 for the Department of Chemistry. The architect was Howard Van Doren Shaw, of Chicago (OC General Catalogue). When it was built, Severance Hall provided for a great advance in science pedagogy. Prior to its completion, (cont.)

44. Description of Environment and Outbuildings (see #52)
This building sits at the intersection of Lorain St. (Rt. 511) and South Professor diagonally opposite Tappan Square. Route 511 is a busy traffic thoroughfare and Professor Street is a central pedestrian route for college students.

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

and appear to be original to the building. The windows of the top half-story are six-over-six, double-hung. Plain stone lintels rest above all first-story windows while shaped lintels crown the second-story windows. Each corner of the building has smooth stone quoins. The building's high foundation has allowed the basement to be renovated into classroom space. The back of the building has a cast-iron fire escape added after construction.

43. History and Significance (Continued from page 1)

chemistry had been taught in decaying Cabinet Hall. When Severance was completed, Chemistry Professor Jewett and his students carried their equipment in triumph from Cabinet Hall to Severance (Blodgett).

This building is significant for the history of philanthropy and science pedagogy that it embodies. It is also significant for its history of the college's late 19th century expansion. Severance Laboratory 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 September of 1975.