**1. No.**

**2. County**

**3. Location of Negatives**

- O.H.I.O. Resource
- Roll #
- Exp. #
- Facing
- Front 2 21A NW
- Rear 2 20A NE

**5. Historic or Other Name(s)**

- First Church

**7. City or Village**

- Oberlin

**9. U.T.M. Reference**

- Zone
- Easting
- Northing

**13. Dist. Potential?**

- Yes

**15. Name of Established District (N.R. or Local)**

- NR: Oberlin College thematic nomination

**17. Date(s) or Period**

- 1842-44
- 1845

**18. Style or Design**

- Greek Revival
- High Style

**19a. Design Sources**

- Richard Bond, Boston

**20. Contractor or Builder**

- Basilican Plan Church
- Church/Religious Structure

**22. Original Use, if apparent**

- Church/Religious Structure

**23. Present Use**

- Church/Religious Structure

**24. Ownership**

- X Public
- Private

**25. Owner’s Name & Address, if known**

- First Church of Oberlin
- 106 North Main Street
- Oberlin OH 44074

**30. Foundation Material**

- Stone

**31. Wall Construction**

- Brick Bearing

**32. Roof:**

- Type: Gable
- Pitch: Moderate
- Material: Composite Shingle

**34. Exterior Wall Material(s)**

- Brick, Stretcher or Running Bond

**35. Plan Shape**

- Rectangular

**36. Changes (Explain in #42)**

- Altered, Minimal. Additions

**37. Window Type(s)**

- 6 over 6, Double and Triple-hung

**38. Bldg. Dims.**

- approx. 135 ft. X 100 ft.

**44. Description of Environment and Outbuildings (see #52)**

- First church is at the northwest side of the intersection of two State Route, 511 and 58. These are busy thoroughfares for both in town and through town traffic.

**43. History and Significance**

- In 1835 Arthur and Lewis Tappan persuaded Charles Grandison Finney to move to Oberlin to direct the theological department and train missionaries at Oberlin College. When Finney left New York for Oberlin, his friends gave him a big tent for his meetings. This tent served for seven years as Oberlin's community church and as the site of commencement services. Finney organized community commitment to build a new church in 1841, and a citizen committee worked for a year to develop plans and raise funds (Oberlin News-Tribune). Rev. Finney then turned to the college's newest benefactor, Willard Sears, who asked (cont.)

**46. Prepared by**

- M. Fedelchak-Harley; L. Previll

**47. Organization**

- O.H.I.O. and H.P.C.

**48. Date Recorded**

- 9-30-2000

**49 Revised by**

- 50a. Date Revised
- 50b. Reviewed by

**45. Sources of Information**

- Lorain County Courthouse: Lorain County tax records.
51. Condition of Property
- Excellent
- Good/Fair
- Deteriorated

52. Historic Outbuildings and Dependencies
- Barn Type(s)
  - Corn Crib or Shed
  - Smoke House
  - Designed Landscape Features
- Archaeological Feature:
  - Well
  - Privy
  - Cistern
  - Foundation
  - Structural Rubble
  - Formal Trash Dump
  - Other

53. Affiliated OAI Site Number(s)

54. Farmstead Plan

42. Further Description of Important Interior and Exterior Features (Continued from page 1)
The interior has stadium-like seating and much of its original woodwork. To the north, the main building is connected to a two-story, gable roof, activity building (circa 1860), by a 20th century enclosed brick walkway with green metal panels, it provides handicapped access. A building similar in appearance to the walkway extends perpendicular from the activity building. It is also a 20th century addition and it has a kitchen and large meeting room. The rear of the church has a small playground with a recently added iron fence.

43. History and Significance (Continued from page 1.)
Prominent Boston architect, Richard Bond, to design the church. In December 1841 Finney traveled to Boston, approved the plans for a Greek Revival hall with seating-in-the-round (Finney’s preferred congregation arrangement) and mailed the plans to Oberlin. The community decided that the details required a democratic vote; the structure was reduced in size; Greek Revival details were constrained; mortise-and-tenon joinery replaced iron bolting; and the circular seating on the ground floor was replaced with less costly rectangular pews. Ground was broken in March 1842 with Deacon Thomas P. Turner, a carpenter from Vermont, in charge. The foundation sandstone was hauled from nearby quarries. Walls were constructed of locally fired bricks, and crossbeams came from hardwood trees on a nearby farm. The congregation voted to add a cupola with clock and bell tower, but these were too costly and the clock and bell were never added. As completion approached in 1844, the community was financially drained and the project was $500 short of completion. A proposal to auction pews was debated in a series of meetings and the final compromise reserved seats in the front for the elderly, the infirm, and the deaf, and for the theological faculty. Other pews went up for auction. The money was raised and the seating arrangement now reflected the community’s social hierarchy. Despite extensive absences, Finney remained minister in First Church until 1872 when membership in the church made it the second largest congregation in the nation, surpassed only by Henry Ward Beecher’s Plymouth Church in New York. Additions to the north have continued, as have renovations to the church itself. In 1882 stained-glass windows were installed, to be replaced with clear bubble-glass in 1927. And in 1892 the Doric columns that supported the balcony were removed and replaced with the current iron posts (Blodgett). In 1908 extensive alterations were made and a new $7,500 organ was installed. It was the gift of Mr. Charles M. Hall of Niagara Falls, N.Y. “The alterations and renovations were made under the direction of Messrs. Patton and Miller, architects, of Chicago, at a cost of $13,000” (OC General Catalogue, 1908).

This church is significant for its design and its history. It was, when built, the largest structure west of the Alleghenies. Over the years many people of national prominence have spoken in this building, including Frederick Douglass, Mark Twin, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Woodrow Wilson. The church also served as the center of college and community religious life for many years. It was listed as an Oberlin City Landmark in 1975. It was listed on the National Register as part of the Oberlin College thematic nomination in 1978.