This two-story, Romanesque, red and brown sandstone church has a red tile, gable roof with a square bell tower with pyramidal roof and ball finial. The east-facing, front façade has five sets of double doors with cast-iron hinges, centered below a prominent circular window. The center set has the widest opening and a trumeau supports its large, arch tympanum. The bands of stonework surrounding the tympanum are progressively less ornate from the center outward. The other sets of doors have slightly smaller arch tympanums. Two, red, sandstone, Corinthian colonnettes flank each entrance. Four more columns support stone piers that protrude from the wall space between the tympanums of the main entrance. Two wall-length, stone piers separate (cont.)

In 1903 Oberlin College president Henry Churchill King approached Frederick Norton Finney, former President Finney's son, about construction of a new chapel to honor the former president. F.N. Finney responded favorably to the idea of the chapel and suggested two architects, Charles Follen McKim and Cass Gilbert. King selected Gilbert, however, disagreements quickly developed between Finney and Gilbert, and King became the mediator (Blodgett). The architect struggled with the effort to find the correct blend of college's restrained austerity and the environment created by Peters Hall, Carnegie Library and Warner Gymnasium. He finally settled on (cont.)
the main entrance from the tower on the south side, and the one-story wing on the north side. The bell tower has an entrance at its east-facing base. The tower has a pair of arches on each wall, centered below a row of stone brackets. A red sandstone colonnette bisects each of these arches, and above each colonnette sits a round incised carving. The sidewalls of the building have six bays separated by stone piers and one-story, shed-roof wings. Each bay has a window with multiple panes of leaded glass. Every window along the sides and rear is arched except the windows on the single-story side wing. The rear of the building has a two-story, seven-bay projection with a bracketed stone cornice and narrow arched windows. Two other projections, on each side of the rear projection, have conical roofs and exit doors. This building has been recently renovated.

"the language of the Romanesque of southern France...as the eclectic foundation for a uniquely Oberlin style" (Klukas and Wueellner).

The building was built on the site of President Finney’s former home at Lorain and Professor Street. Construction began in June 1907, and the chapel was dedicated June 21, 1908, as part of the seventy-fifth anniversary. The total cost was $135,000 and the seating capacity was 1,960 (OC General Catalogue). Gilbert’s vision for the building’s interior was not realized, however, as the college was unwilling to expend funds to achieve his aesthetic goals. In 1982, architect William Blunden, using a Gilbert drawing, guided a renovation of the chapel and the interior colors that brought the space closer to Cass Gilbert’s original intention (Blodgett).

This building is significant for its architect, its architecture and for its long association as an important center for college religious and secular life. It 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 Historic Landmark in November 1997.