The middle three bays of the facade are covered by a colossal porch held up by large Ionic columns. The porch has a dentilled cornice. The first floor windows project slightly from the facade, and have round arches of brick, with large sandstone keystones. The second floor windows are topped by brick segmental arches, also with keystones. Most windows have plain stone lug sills. The front door has sidelights and a fanlight with elaborate tracery and a large sandstone keystones. The second floor windows are topped by brick segmental arches, also with keystones. The middle three bays of the facade are covered by a colossal porch held up by large Ionic columns. The porch has a dentilled cornice. The first floor windows project slightly from the facade, and have round arches of brick, with large sandstone keystones. The second floor windows are topped by brick segmental arches, also with keystones. Most windows have plain stone lug sills. The front door has sidelights and a fanlight with elaborate tracery and a carved-wood tympanum above it, topped by a round arch with a large keystone. The roof has three subtly-pedimented gabled dormers in front, and modillion blocks under its slightly flared eaves. There are one-story additions on the NE and SE corners, and a decagonal bay window on the first floor of the back of the house.

History and Significance

This house was built for Oberlin College President John Henry Barrows in 1901, but he died in 1902, only seven months after its completion. His father, John M. Barrows, had graduated from Oberlin’s theological department in 1838. John Henry Barrows came to Oberlin in 1898, after having organized the World’s Parliament of Religions at the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair. He had also taught comparative religions at the University of Chicago, and published several books about Christianity as a world religion. As Oberlin College’s president, he was an able fund-raiser and pulled the College out of dire financial straits. (cont.)

Description of Environment and Outbuildings (see #52)

The house sits atop a hill covered by a giant lawn. There is a small parking lot on the north side of the house. There is a brick wall extending from the north side of the building, with a large carved-stone ornament on it.

Sources of Information

51. Condition of Property

- [X] Excellent
- [ ] Good/Fair
- [ ] Deteriorated

54. Farmstead Plan

52. Historic Outbuildings and Dependencies

Barn Type(s)
- [ ] Corn Crib or Shed
- [ ] Smoke House
- [ ] Designed Landscape Features

- [ ] Summer Kitchen
- [ ] Spring House
- [ ] Privy

- [ ] Silo
- [ ] Ice House
- [ ] Garage

53. Affiliated OAI Site Number(s)

OAI Completed? 

Archaeological Feature: Observed Expected on Basis of Archival Research

- Well
- Privy
- Cistern
- Foundation
- Structural Rubble
- Formal Trash Dump
- Other

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

He and his wife, Sarah, had four children, Mary, Katherine, Arthur, and Eleanor. Arthur attended Oberlin College and Eleanor attended the Conservatory. After Barrows died, Charles Whiting Williams and his wife, Caroline, lived here in 1908 with their daughter, also named Caroline, while Charles worked as an assistant to Oberlin College President Henry Churchill King. In 1910, William E. Byrnes and Arthur Quinn lived here before the College bought the house and used it as a dormitory starting in 1916. In 1963, the house was slated for demolition to make way for the Firelands Retirement Center, but Professor Warren Taylor led a community campaign to save the house. This was the first Oberlin preservation effort to invoke the 1954 Supreme Court ruling that citizens could act to ensure the health and beauty of their communities (Blodgett). Currently, the Oberlin Student Cooperative Association uses the house as a dormitory and kitchen for student members who work together to share cooking and cleaning responsibilities.

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

John Henry Barrows brought a very cosmopolitan influence from the University of Chicago and the World’s Fair, and it is evident not only in his effect on the college, but also in the architecture of his house, which is one of Oberlin’s most striking examples of the Neo-Classical and Georgian revival that followed the Chicago World’s Fair.