OHIO HISTORIC INVENTORY

Little Red School House (O.H.I.O.)

1. No. 4. Present Name(s)
2. County 5. Historic or Other Name(s)
3. Location of Negatives 6. Specific Address or Location
4. Present Name(s)
5. Historic or Other Name(s)
6. Specific Address or Location
7. City or Village
8. Site Plan with North Arrow
9. U.T.M. Reference
10. Object
11. On National Register?
12. N.R. Potential?
13. Part of Estb Hist Dist?
14. Dist. Potential?
15. Name of Established District (N.R. or Local)
16. Thematic Association(s)
17. Date(s) or Period
17a. Alteration Date(s)
18. Style or Design
18a. Style of Addition or Element(s)
19. Architect or Engineer
19a. Design Sources
20. Contractor or Builder
21. Building Type or Plan
22. Original Use, if apparent
23. Present Use
24. Ownership
25. Owner’s Name & Address, if known
26. Property Acreage
27. Other Surveys in Which Included
28. No. of Stories
29. Basement?
30. Foundation Material
31. Wall Construction
32. Roof:
33. No. Bays
34. Exterior Wall Material(s)
35. Plan Shape
36. Changes (Explain in #42)
37. Window Type(s)
39. Endangered?
40. Chimney Placement
41a. Distance from road
41b. Frontage on road
42. Further Description of Important Interior and Exterior Features
43. History and Significance
44. Description of Environment and Outbuildings (see #52)
45. Sources of Information
46. Prepared by
47. Organization
48. Date Recorded
49. Revised by
50a. Date Revised
50b. Reviewed by

OHIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY
SINCE 1885

This vernacular, single story building has a plain, rectangular plan and gable roof. Each gable end has a single bay while each side has two bays. The only entrance faces west in the center of the gable end. Above the entrance doorway, a casement window with six lights is below the gable peak. Evidence of an identical casement window can be seen in a boarded window opening on the opposite gable end. The windows on the sides of the building are sixteen-over-sixteen, double-hung, and are arranged slightly off-center. The exterior walls have rough-cut shiplap siding, painted red to reinforce that this is a red schoolhouse. A sign near the main entrance also titles the building as such. The building originally had a chimney that is no longer apparent from the outside. (cont.)

In January 1835 the Oberlin Society appointed three community leaders to develop plans for construction of a schoolhouse for Oberlin children. At a price of $215.00 Bradstreet Stevens built this building in 1836-37, on a lot just north of First Church, on North Main Street. The schoolhouse provided a learning space for 18 students, male and female, but it was immediately overcrowded, as there were more than 200 school age children by 1836. College professors’ wives and others opened schools in their own homes and college buildings throughout the community for the many students the schoolhouse could not accommodate. (cont.)

This building is located at the Oberlin Heritage Center, a collection of four buildings that are used to interpret the history of Oberlin. The schoolhouse is set back from the road in an open area.

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

The walls and ceiling of the interior space were completely renovated and the high foundation is not original. A sandstone walk has recently been constructed to provide wheelchair access.

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

After fourteen years of service this building was obsolete as a schoolhouse and in 1851 a new graded school was built on Professor Street. It then was purchased by Elizure Leonard, who moved it to 73 South Main Street, next to his home. In 1897 C.E. Mason purchased the building, and he added a front porch, rear shed, and interior partition wall. This building served these men as a residence, a tailor shop and a sign-painter's shop.

In 1957 a fire severely damaged the building, and the City purchased it and planned to demolish it. A group of local residents, led by Clifford Barden, were able to raise the $4,000 needed to save the building. They had it moved to a new site in the park on the eastside of Vine Street, overlooking Plum Creek. It was then moved to the west side of Vine and located in Wright’s Park, across from Midas Muffler and 90 South Main. The schoolhouse was painted and other improvements were made to return it to a more original condition in time for the community's 125th anniversary celebration in 1958. The newly formed Oberlin Historical Society was now the new owner. In 1968 the building was moved to a site on the west side of the Monroe House, and in 1997 it was moved to its present location at the Oberlin Heritage Center. At that time a new foundation was built. The building continues to go through repairs and improvements as its appearance and structure is repaired. Sandstone steps and an inclined walkway are the most recent improvements. It is interpreted as part of the Heritage Center's tour and education programs (O.H.I.O. Docent Manual).

This building is significant for its record of a small pioneer community's provision for the education of its children, for its century of adaptive reuse, and for its history of preservation efforts led by an active community of concerned citizens.