



The Network an E-Newsletter for Ohio's Certified Local Governments

Ohio Historic
Preservation Office

The Network
October/November 2006

Olmsted Falls — It All Began With a Library

Imagine if you will, that it is 1829 and your small settlement of some 50 families in northeast Ohio is about to receive 500 books carried overland by oxcart from Hartford, Connecticut. It is very likely that you may still live in a log house or cabin, your Greek Revival style house not yet completed. There is no room to spare in your small living quarters.

But you and your neighbors have undertaken to be librarians for an indeterminate period because of a unique circumstance in the Western Reserve. By public vote, you have changed the name of your settlement from Lenox to Olmsted as a condition for receiving these books---a library in the wilderness representing the New England culture you left behind for land, opportunity, and hardship. In fact, you and your neighbors now have the first publicly owned library in the Western Reserve, a singular event, emblematic of a deep respect for learning.

Those early arrivals, mostly from Connecticut, a few from Vermont and New York, found themselves in an extraordinarily beautiful setting, with towering hardwood forests and two water sources, the West Branch of the Rocky River and Plum Creek with their respective waterfalls providing cheap power and, where they joined together, dramatic views in high water and romantic ones in dry periods. Revealed by the force of the water was a rich resource, sandstone that would provide millstones for the many local mills and, later, employment when the quarries were opened.

Among those first settlers were descendants of famous American families: Bradfords, Alcotts, and Adamses. They brought

with them traditional Yankee values of frugality and practicality. "Waste not; want not" was a living principle for them.

Long before "adaptive use" entered the preservation lexicon, example after example of saving buildings for new uses abounded in Olmsted Falls. The girls' Seminary was sledged across the frozen Rocky River to serve as a railroad hotel. One of the earliest houses was moved across the street to become the Village Library and portions of the two earliest schoolhouses were added to homes being built in the 1840's. In recent years, after being threatened by demolition, the former Middle School, which was the first consolidated school in Cuyahoga County, survived to become a multi-purpose building, housing the City's "new" Administration Building, the Police Station, Community Center, and a Child-Care Center.



The former middle school now houses city offices.

Now mostly forgotten is the origin of Olmsted Falls' local preservation movement in 1964. A small band of enthusiasts, moved by the communities great natural beauty and its wealth of Greek Revival Style private and public buildings, were alarmed by the national fever for growth at any cost. Fearing that Olmsted Falls would suffer the same fate as surrounding communities, i.e., losing their architectural heritage to shopping strips and malls, the group, calling itself The Friends of the Village, set up an ambitious program of preservation and community education. They were emboldened by encouragement from an ALA subcommittee on preservation that they had invited to tour the Village and assess its historic architecture.

Thus began a long and arduous journey of self-education and political activism to

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MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

The Building Doctor is coming to Kent, October 26-27. Visit <http://www.ohiohistory.org/resource/histpres/programs/bdfact.html> for more information.

National Trust Preservation Conference, October 31-November 5, 2006

Ohio Farmland Summit, November 2, 2006

Ohio Main Street Announcement Ceremony, December 14, 2006

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gain preservation adherents. A crisis was averted in the 1970's when the old hotel, a superb example of the Greek Revival Style and the most significant local historic landmark, was threatened with demolition, to be replaced by a brick one-story bank. The author (a member of the Friends) turned to the Regional Preservationist, the late Eric Johannessen, who acted at once and had the hotel entered in the National Register of Historic Places. As a result, the bank officials moved into new quarters across the street.

In 1984, one of the Friends, along with an enlightened President of Council, shepherded into law an Historic District section of the Zoning Code.

These two events, saving the old hotel and establishing the Historic District, were pivotal in the preservation successes that followed. Without exception, the Friends never set themselves up as experts. They called in preservation specialists to guide them. They ultimately convinced the City Council to undertake the cost of a citywide historic inventory in 1992 and the creation of a strong preservation ordinance including design guidelines for historic buildings. The legal adoption of these documents enabled the City to become a Certified Local Government in 1996.



The restored Old City Hall.

This, in turn, set the stage for the establishment of a National Register of Historic Places District.

None of this was easy. When in 2000, Olmsted Falls was notified that it did indeed have a District entered in the National Register, the community could look back over almost 40 years of public meetings, debates, newspaper interviews, letters to the editor, library talks and displays and house tours, gaining adherents and losing some skirmishes.

Preservationists will always have their opponents... some because of vested interests and some because of honorable (if misguided, we think) principles. But the victories are sweet. One in particular, the author remembers. City Council approved some funds for writing the National Register nomination, but not nearly enough. In this tight-fisted town of economic conservatives, a request was sent to about fifteen businesses, asking for \$500.00 each and stating that there was no assurance that the nomination would be successful. In four or five days, the checks rolled in, no questions asked.

The last direct descendant of Governor Bradford in Olmsted Falls died a few years ago. An Alcott descendant survives. At this moment, the magnificent 1940 WPA replacement of an earlier City Hall and Fire Station that had been destroyed by fire, is undergoing restoration. A beautiful golden sandstone structure, it is sensitively designed to fit into its mostly Greek Revival Style context. An out-building to the rear looks down on the river just above the falls. Natural and man-made beauty coalesce here and remnants of the Oxcart Library are stored in the public library just across the street where Plum Creek turns to join Rocky River.

The author is Marilyn Quay Sparks, Chair of the Olmsted Falls Architecture Board of Review, which is the administrative body in charge of local preservation. Mrs. Sparks and her husband, Andrew, were charter members of the Friends of the Village.

Portsmouth — Ohio's 42nd Certified Local Government

Portsmouth, the county seat of Scioto County, is Ohio's 42nd Certified Local Government. Known for its famous flood wall murals, a wonderful pictorial history of Portsmouth and its citizens, this Ohio River town is also home to the Bonneyfiddle Historic District, a prime motivating factor in the city becoming a CLG. Founded in 1803, Portsmouth was once a thriving river port and steel town, but today technology, education and tourism are contributing to the communities revitalized economy. To learn more about Portsmouth, visit the city and county web sites at www.ci.portsmouth.oh.us/ or www.sciotocountyohio.com/



Market Street, Flood Wall Mural

Planning for Preservation — The Importance of an Historic Preservation Plan

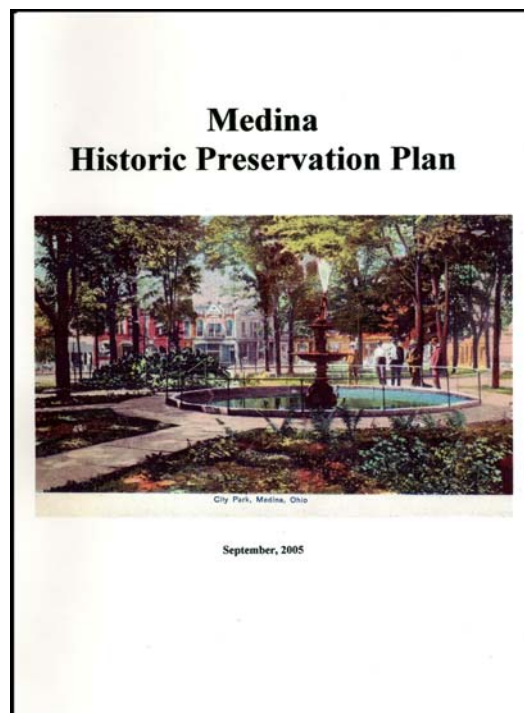
Historic Preservation Plans can serve as a blueprint for future historic preservation activities in your community. They allow you to take a pro-active stance with preservation issues instead of simply reacting to the latest crisis.

A good preservation plan should:

- Include recommendations that correspond with current preservation needs, issues and priorities and should build upon the heritage of the community and past preservation successes.
- Be developed with extensive public input, through public meetings, workshops, interviews and local media coverage
- Focus on strategies for the community to pursue that will encourage preservation and revitalization of historic resources
- Identify opportunities for public-private partnerships and tools and financial incentives that individual property owners can use to rehabilitate and restore historic buildings
- Serve as a resource manual for additional sources of information, including links to publications, web sites and organizations that can support local historic preservation efforts
- Embrace and relate to *A Future for Ohio's Past: The Ohio Historic Preservation Plan*. The state plan is available on line at the Ohio Historical Society web site: www.ohiohistory.org

The Content of a Preservation Plan

- Introduction (a brief summary of past and current preservation activities)
- Purpose (why was the plan written and what will it be used for)
- Historic Contexts (information about historic properties representing aspects of your communities history, architecture, archaeology, engineering and culture that are



organized according to a cultural theme and its geographical and chronological limits). Contexts describe the significant broad patterns of development in an area that may be represented by historic properties.

- Challenges and opportunities for historic preservation (What are the challenges that will influence the success of historic preservation and the opportunities for insuring success).
- Strategies for supporting Historic Preservation (architectural design review, economic development, education/public awareness, financial incentives)
- Appendix (sources of information and technical assistance, bibliography, historic district maps, tax credit information etc.)

A number of Certified Local Government communities, including Aurora, Barberton, Canal Winchester, Glendale, Medina, New Richmond, Shaker Heights and Waynesville have completed preservation plans. Preservation plans are a fundable CLG grant activity.

Did You Know?

The following information about Ohio's CLG program is available at our web site www.ohiohistory.org

- ◆ General information about the program
- ◆ A Complete list of CLG's in Ohio including CLG contacts

- ◆ CLG grant information
- ◆ CLG grant application package

Current and past issues of The Network, Ohio's CLG e-newsletter

National Alliance of Preservation Commissions Announces Listserve

The National Alliance of Preservation Commissions announces a Listserv for its members. Known as NAPC-L, initially members will be able to post to the list, receive replies and reply to other member's postings. In the coming months the Alliance will add a searchable archive. If you are a member of NAPC simply send an email message to NAPC@uge.edu You will receive information about how

to post to the list within twenty-four hours of subscribing.

If your commission or board wishes to become a member of NAPC, please see membership information below.



Join the

National Alliance of Preservation Commissions

Who We Are

Become part of the national network of local preservation, historic district, and landmark commissions and boards of architectural review. Organized to help local preservation programs succeed through education, advocacy, and training. The National Alliance of Preservation Commissions is the only national non-profit organization dedicated to local preservation commissions and their issues. NAPC is a source of information and support for local commissions and serves as a unifying body giving them a national voice. As a member of NAPC, you will benefit from the experience and ideas of communities throughout the United States working to protect historic districts and landmarks through local legislation, education, and advocacy.

Membership Benefits

- ❖ *The Alliance Review*, a newsletter filled with practical information for staff and members of preservation commissions.
- ❖ A resource center of information, including educational materials, forms, guidelines and ordinances developed and used by commissions across the country.
- ❖ Technical seminars and conferences, special regional events, and an annual meeting and workshops for commissions held in conjunction with the National Trust's Annual Conference.
- ❖ A voice for your commission in Washington with the National Park Service, the National Trust, the Advisory Council, Preservation Action, and the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers.

Membership Categories

- \$35 Individuals/ Commissions with a budget under \$500
Communities with a population under 5,000 or local non-profit organizations
- \$80 Commissions with a budget of \$500 - \$5,000
Communities with a population of 5,000-50,000 or regional or statewide nonprofit organizations
- \$130 Commissions with a budget over \$5,000
Communities with a population over 50,000, national non-profit organizations, businesses, state governments, or sponsoring associates
- \$250 Chair's Circle - Honoring past Chairs of the NAPC Board of Directors,
- \$500 Founder's Circle - Honoring NAPC's Founders

Name of Organization _____

Contact Person _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____

Zip Code _____

Phone _____

Fax _____

E-mail/Website _____

Please return this form with payment to NAPC, PO Box 1605, Athens, GA 30603

CLG Grant Applications Due October 27th

CLG grant applications are due at the Ohio Historic Preservation Office by 5:00 p.m. October 27. If approved, the project start date is March 1, with the project period usually running 18 months through August 31 of the following year. If you have questions about CLG grants please contact Judy Krasniewski at 614/298-2000 or jkrasniewski@ohiohistory.org.



Oberlin Heritage Center Designated a National Trust Partner

The City of Oberlin continues to garner national honors with the recent designation of the Oberlin Heritage Center as a Partner Place of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Previously, the city was honored as a Preserve America Community and as one of the Trust's Dozen Distinctive Destinations.

A Certified Local Government since 2001, Oberlin has long recognized the importance of its historic built environment as a major contributing factor to the community's quality of life and has capitalized on its heritage to win national recognition.

According to the Trust, Partner Places symbolize the diversity of American history, architecture and traditions that are our legacy from the past and are also important reminders

of the role of preservation in keeping the legacy alive. The Partner Places program now features more than 130 historic sites and museums across the country.

The Oberlin Heritage Center offers guided tours of two historic houses and a pioneer era, one-room schoolhouse. The tour highlights the powerful stories of Oberlin history including its role as an important station on the Underground Railroad.

For more information about the Oberlin Heritage Center visit the Center's web site at www.oberlinheritage.org.



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Monday-Friday 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
(Individual staff hours may vary)
To better serve you we recommend that you
call ahead for an appointment

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