

Out of the Box



A Selection of
Historical Objects in the
Oberlin College Archives

Goodrich Room Exhibit
4th Floor, Terrell Main Library

Out of the Box is a semi-permanent exhibit of objects from the Oberlin College Archives. The objects may be seen in the Archives and Special Collections reading room (Goodrich Room) on the fourth floor of the Terrell Main Library. Visit us Monday through Friday, 10-12 and 1-4:30. Monday evening hours from 5:30-9 are offered when classes are in session.

All of the objects held by the Oberlin College Archives can be accessed online from the *Archives Museum Collection* on the Archives website. Go to our home page at www2.oberlin.edu/archive/, click on “Digital Collections.”

Cover illustration

The cover features a four-piece silver-plated hollowware tea and coffee service set, mid-1800s. It belonged to George Nelson Allen, Oberlin College Class of 1838 and faculty member who taught sacred music from 1841 to 1867.

Cabinet 1. Trophies and Cups

Clockwise from top left to lower left



Women's Literary Society Cup, 1924

As the first college women's debate society in the U.S. in 1835, female students at Oberlin established and organized a forum to discuss issues of interest and to learn the skills of oratory and debate denied them as part of their formal education. Among the early members were such prominent women as Lucy Stone (1818-1893), Antoinette Brown Blackwell (1825-1921), Betsey Mix Cowles (1810-1876), and Lucy Stanton (1831-1910). By 1852 the Association split into two groups: the Ladies Literary Society and the Young Ladies Lyceum (later the Aelioian Literary Society).

William E. Stevenson Cup, 1913

William Edward Stevenson was the eighth president of Oberlin College, from 1946 to 1960. This silver-plated cup is engraved with Stevenson's name and birthdate, August 30, 1913. It is from the personal papers of W. E. and Eleanor Bumstead Stevenson.

Cabinet 1. Trophies and Cups (cont.)

Spear Library Cup, c. 1880s

Spear Library served as the College's library from 1885 to 1908, when it was converted for use by the Zoology Department. It was located in Tappan Square until it was demolished in 1927.

Cup given to William E. Lincoln by Charles Grandison Finney, c. 1860

William E. Lincoln heard Charles Grandison Finney preach in England and came to America to attend Oberlin College's program for entering the Theological Department. He attended sporadically from 1853 to 1865 while teaching and serving as clergyman to local churches. Lincoln was one of the two students who bodily rescued the runaway slave John Price from slave catchers in the famous Oberlin-Wellington Rescue in 1858. He spent 83 days in the Cuyahoga County Jail with other Oberlinians involved in the Rescue. This silver with gold inlay cup, with the initials C. F. on the front for Charles G. Finney, may have been given on the occasion of the birth of Lincoln's son, James Finney Lincoln.

Oberlin Society Night Song Contest Trophy, 1920

The Oberlin Society was until 1841 the governing body of the Oberlin Colony. Although disbanded in 1903, a night song contest was held with the Society's moniker. Lord Cottage won the 1920 contest.

Intersociety Debate Trophy, c. 1909

The debate trophy is inscribed with the initials and dates of debate winners from 1909-1916 and 1919.

Inter-Class Indoor Meet Trophy, March 23, 1912

This Athletics trophy was awarded to the Class of 1915, the winners of the (men's) Inter-Class Indoor Track Meet of 1912.

Reunion Cup, 1928, awarded to the Class of 1858

Inscription: "This Class Reunion Cup is Awarded by Oberlin College to the Class Reunion for any Reunion after its fiftieth anniversary and having all of its living members present. ..."

Cabinet 2. Buildings and Dedications

Clockwise from top left to lower left



Commemorative Plate for Oberlin's Sesquicentennial Celebration, 1983

Peters Hall is featured on the front of this Wedgewood commemorative china plate for the 150th anniversary of the College's founding in 1833.

Kettering Hall of Science Dedication Key, 1961

The Kettering Hall of Science, completed in 1961 to house the departments of Biology and Chemistry, was named for the late Charles F. "Boss" Kettering, renowned automotive engineer and inventor. Part of the building was incorporated into the new Science Center in 2003.

Model of the Head of Clyde Holbrook

Professor Clyde Holbrook instituted and managed the Department of Religion from 1951 to 1977. A version of this model was installed in a column capital in the Bosworth Hall cloister in his honor.

Cabinet 2. Buildings and Dedications (cont.)

Illuminated Parchment Scroll and Box, 1893

The Conservatory faculty presented this gift to Dr. and Mrs. Lucien C. Warner in honor of their 25th wedding anniversary. The Warners were the donors for Warner Hall, the Conservatory's first building. The box is decorated with an etching in silver of Warner Concert Hall.

Souvenir with Photographic Image of the Old Chapel, c. 1905

The first College Chapel was completed in 1855 and located on Tappan Square. The chapel was remodeled several times during the 19th century to accommodate an organ, a large clock and a two thousand-pound bell. The Chapel was destroyed by fire in 1903. This aluminum souvenir, made in 1905, is stamped with a photographic image of the Old Chapel.

Warner Hall Dedication Trowel, 1884

This elaborate trowel of sterling silver and ebony by Tiffany & Company was used in the dedication ceremony for Warner Hall, the College's first Conservatory building, by Mrs. Lucien Warner. She and her husband financed the construction of Warner Hall, which served the Conservatory until the new building by Minoru Yamasaki was completed in 1964.

Cabinet 3. Great Wooden Spoon and Case with Carved Top



Greek inscription on handle: *ho aischros labeto*, "Let the ugly person receive me."

In 1895, Class Day exercises during commencement broke with tradition in one odd respect. Male members of the senior class selected the homeliest man among them and presented Charles Alvan Brand with this unusual carved wooden spoon and case. During the inaugural "Ceremony of the Wooden Spoon," Brand passed the spoon to the homeliest junior. The details of this peculiar rite were recounted in the *Oberlin Review* of June 19, 1895:

"Mr. Brand stated that it was an undoubted axiom that the harder and the longer a man works, the homelier he becomes. He claimed Socrates and Lincoln as patron saints of the order. After a very humorous introduction, he deeded the 'spoon' to the care of Mr. Barnes of the Junior class, who aptly responded, saying that history was being made this day. Numerous roasts and personal hits were abundant in the speeches of both gentleman."

Cabinet 4. Hats and Clubs



Alumni Reunion Hats

Oberlin Alumni frequently come together at commencements. The Archives holds hats and other items worn at these occasions. These hats will be rotated periodically.

Dr. F. E. Leonard's Indian Clubs, c. 1890s

In India, juggling clubs like these were used to develop strength and agility, a practice taken up by the British in the Victorian era and popularized in the U.S. These clubs were owned by Fred E. Leonard, a professor of physical education at Oberlin from 1888-1922. Werner Bromund, a professor of chemistry, was a Big Ten champion in the Indian clubs routine as a student at the University of Chicago. Bromund demonstrated his skills during Illumination Night at Oberlin.

Cabinet 5. Apollo Space Rocket Model and Microscope



Apollo Manned Space Rocket Model, c. 1960s

This official NASA model of the Apollo spacecraft, in 1/40th scale, was presented to Congressman Charles A. Mosher, graduate of the Class of 1928. He was the ranking Republican member of the Science and Technology Committee in the House of Representatives. The Archives holds both Mosher's congressional and personal papers.

Carl Zeiss Jena Binocular Microscope, c. 1930s

This microscope was used by Professor of Psychology Raymond H. Stetson, Class of 1893, and by his graduate assistant, James Pickett.

Cabinet 6. Chinese Connections



Chinese Temple Shingle, 1932

This copper shingle was taken from a structure inspired by the Temple of Jehol in Manchuria, exhibited at the Century of Progress International Exposition in Chicago in 1932. The exposition building was donated to house the Oberlin Shansi Memorial Association offices at Oberlin College, a project spearheaded by H. H. Kung (OC 1906). The exposition building was deemed unfit for permanency, and was never rebuilt at Oberlin. See the *Shansi: Oberlin and Asia* digital collection on the Archives website for more information on Kung and the Shansi program.

Chinese Decorative Artwork and Box, c. 1996

This traditional art work of sandalwood, silk and glass of Chinese craftsmanship was given to the college in memory of Hsueh-Jen Wang (Master of Theology, Oberlin College, 1934) by his son Cunjun Wang in 1996. Hsueh-Jen Wang was a graduate of the Oberlin Shansi Academy in Taigu, China.

Cabinet 7. Gift from J. F. Oberlin University, Tokyo, Japan



Freestanding Japanese Plaque, 2011

In 2011 the J. F. Oberlin University in Tokyo celebrated its shared history with Oberlin College and John Frederick Oberlin's former pastorate in Alsace, France. The university presented this freestanding plaque, with Oberlin's historical motto "Learning and Labor" in Japanese calligraphy, to Oberlin College. The founder of the university, Yasuzo Shimizu, attended Oberlin in the late 1920s. He was influenced by the educational philosophy of John Frederick Oberlin, the namesake for both institutions. Ken Grossi, College Archivist, attended the festivities in Tokyo and received the gift on behalf of the college.

Cabinet 8. African Artifacts



African Artifacts from the Erwin H. Richards Papers

Between 1880 and 1908, Oberlin graduate (BA and MA) Erwin H. Richards worked as a missionary with the Zulu and Tsonga peoples in Natal, South Africa, and Inhambane, Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique). These artifacts are from the Erwin H. Richards Papers.

Clockwise from top left:

Cup with figure base; Zulu brown cowhide shield with woven strips of black cowhide; Zulu knobkerrie (throwing club) carved from one piece of wood; two Zulu wooden head rests; Tsonga incised gourd dipper with wooden handle; and Zulu glass bead bracelet.

Out of the Box was the first exhibit in the display cabinets installed during the 2012 renovation of the Goodrich Room, Terrell Main Library.

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Explore our Digital Resources

Accessible from our website at www2.oberlin.edu/archive/

New! Oberlin Sanctuary Project

A consortial project that provides a forum for research, reflection, and discussion of what it means to be a sanctuary campus and community (in progress).

New! Oberlin College Student Publications

Explores 197 student newspapers, magazines, newsletters and booklets from 1858 to the present.

Architecture of Oberlin College

A comprehensive guide to the college's architecture, monuments and public spaces, past and present.

Archives Museum Collection

Artworks and objects relating to the College's history.

Campus Views

Historical views of campus from the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Historic Portraits

A guide to paintings on campus of notable figures in the college's history.

Oberlin's Namesake: John Frederick Oberlin

Interactive website and digital collection on Oberlin's namesake.

King-Crane Commission Digital Collection

Co-directed by Oberlin president H.C. King, the Commission investigated the former Ottoman territories following World War I.

Military Service in World War I

Oberlin students who served in the military in the First World War.

Near East Relief Collection

Two graduates of the Class of 1912 volunteered in the relief efforts after World War I.

Oberlin and Activism

Examines activism throughout Oberlin's history.

Oberlin and the Civil War

Explores Oberlin's involvement in the culmination of the antislavery cause.

Popular Images

The most published images from the Archives' collections.

Sela G. Wright Digital Collection

Ojibwa language dictionary compiled by missionary and former student Sela G. Wright.

Shansi: Oberlin and Asia

Oberlin's long involvement in China and other countries.

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