

OLIVE BRANCH SCHOOL PRESERVATION SOCIETY
ANNUAL REPORT
TO
TRUSTEES/GENERAL MEMBERSHIP
OCTOBER 10, 2011

As required by Article VI-Section 5 of the Olive Branch School Preservation Society By-Laws, the chairperson shall furnish a written report annually to all trustee and general membership of the Society. In compliance with said by-laws the following report will serve as a review/timeline of activities occurring from September, 2009 to the present.

During the latter part of 2009, the Olive Branch School Preservation Society (OBSPS) was involved in making final preparations for the dedication of the 1908 Olive Branch School building. January 17, 2010 was selected as the date for the formal dedication ceremony and the unveiling of the plaque which recognizes the building's placement on the National Register of Historic Places and took our first step toward meeting our goal of restoring the little OB to its former glory

State of Ohio, Clark County, Bethel Township, and City of New Carlisle officials were invited to attend this historic event to be held in the Tecumseh High School auditorium. Dr. James Gay, Superintendent of Tecumseh School District, welcomed all those in attendance, an audience estimated to be 150 to 200. Among those in attendance were State Senator Christopher Widener who presented a Proclamation, Ross McGregor, Ohio House of Representatives, Barbara Powers, Ohio Historical Society, Denna Johnson, past President of the Ohio National Road Association (ONRA), Cyndie Gerken, current ONRA President, Marian Vance, President of Preservation Ohio, David Phares, Bethel Township Trustee, Kim Jones, New Carlisle City Manager and Richard Zsambok, New Carlisle Mayor along with many others.

Special guest include 100 year-old Martha Blakely Hawn, a 1927 graduate of Olive Branch, 98 year-old Charlene Flora, a teacher and Principal in the "Little Round School," and Mr. Harry Sheets, graduate, long time bus driver, custodian and Director of Maintenance for the school district. They each expressed their thanks to all those who led the effort to secure listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Each shared their hope that our efforts in securing the necessary funding for the completion of renovations to the building would be realized, which would enable us to establish a Museum/Archival Center for Bethel Township, as well as new office facilities for the Board of Education. Sad to say, but both Martha and Charlene have passed on to their reward since that historic day.

With the retirement of Matt Curtis, newly appointed Tecumseh School District Assistant Superintendent, Brad Martin, was welcomed at our July meeting. It was reported that a request for Brownfield funds for the removal of asbestos were to be requested from the American Recovery Act. The cost for such a project was estimated at \$30,000. Due to the severity of the economic downturn, many funding sources whose investments have suffered huge losses, such as the Turner Foundation and others are currently not

funding new projects. The OBSPS trustees discussed a variety of other possible ways to raise funds including an Alumni membership drive, soliciting teachers who have had outstanding careers at Tecumseh, continued contact with other Foundations such as the Dayton Foundation and Davidson Trust, and making application for possible State and Federal grants that may come open now and in the future. It was agreed that key components to the success in fund-raising are to remain positive and enthusiastic, maintain momentum, and institute an aggressive publicity campaign among our many constituents and those interested parties previously mentioned.

The OBSPS failed to meet and conduct business for their Annual quarterly meeting in October, 2010 but scheduled the Annual meeting to take place in January, 2011.

The January quarterly OBSPS meeting reviewed events and activities of the past year, reported a balance in treasury of \$1000.00, and recommended that an audit should be completed in accordance with the OBSPS by-laws requirement. Treasurer Pam Mustovich has been contacted and asked to provide bank statements for auditing.

A review was conducted of the various terms of office of the Society's Board of Trustees. The first election was held May 19, 2009 and the following were elected:

Two year term: Jane Manemann and John Sipe

Four year term: Bill Berry, Cyndie Gerken and Susan Morgan

Six year term: Jim Leathley, Ken Strickland, and Virgil Studebaker

All successive terms will be for three years.

Jane Manemann and John Sipe were both reappointed to three-year terms as trustees.

Mr. Berry reported that little had been accomplished by the trustees over the past year due to the recession and severe economy crisis we are experiencing in the country. For this reason and in deference to the May, 2011 school levy, the Finance Committee who has been tasked with the responsibility of establishing a vision, setting goals and potential strategy for fundraising ideas, has yet to meet for such purposes.

It was reported that the Society did not receive funds from ARA or Historic Preservation Grants, and in regard to pending funding request, Dr. Gay reported that our application for Brownfield funds was not approved for asbestos removal but could be utilized to remedy lead paint problems.

An extensive discussion by the trustees as to possible strategies the society should ensue for seeking funding sources for the renovation and restoration of the Olive Branch Building followed. Many good ideas and suggestions were offered, but no conclusive answers were forthcoming from these discussions, other than to suggest that we remain positive and enthusiastic until such time as the economy improves.

The trustees met on April 11, 2011. Mr. Berry reported that an audit of our financial records was being audited by Mr. Ray Lowe. In response to an e-mail from Mr. Berry to Mr. Frank Ruffini, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, requesting an update as to

a second Proposed Stimulus Package Grant, he was informed that public officials are not convinced that stimulus money should be used for historical preservation.

The OBSPS By-laws Article III, Section 5-“Meetings,” was amended to change the date of our quarterly meetings from the first to the second Monday of January, April, July and October.

Trustee Manemann suggested that the community wanted the Olive Branch Building preserved and saw no conflict with the current levy proposal, but nevertheless should be continued as a separate issue. She further stated that the Society must go with a grassroots approach, and realize that a windfall is unlikely. Fundraisers would get our name before the public and we should utilize all means available to us as likely sources of funds.

Mr. Leathley stated that he believes the levy issue and the restoration project should be totally separate. Other suggestions to be offered by trustees included tours of the district buildings to be given in conjunction with class reunions, especially Tecumseh High School and the Olive Branch Building, request for long term financial commitments, recruitment of alumni, interested community residents and others through a membership drive.

No Meeting was held in July but in the interim period leading up to the October 10 Annual meeting Mr. Ray Lowe concluded an audit of our financial statements, review of account records at Security National Bank, and determined that the above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Olive Branch Preservation Society. A letter of resignation was received from Mr. James Leathley, dated April 11, 2011, stating that “due to personal and professional commitments, he could no longer have the ability to commit the time necessary for the position” (of trustee).

An Executive Committee meeting was held in the office of the Superintendent of Schools on September 14, 2011 with Superintendent Dr. James Gay, Assistant Superintendent Brad Martin, Vice Chairperson Cyndie Gerken and Chairperson Bill Berry in attendance. The purpose of said meeting was to plan for the October 10 Annual meeting and the agenda for the meeting. Mrs. Pam Mustovich, Treasurer, was unable to attend this meeting but was subsequently asked to establish an appropriate record system for collecting membership fees, etc., if a membership drive for active members is to be initiated after presentation at the October meeting. A letter of invitation to attend the October meeting to join in a discussion of organizing a membership drive was sent to all general membership participants and to begin an energetic publicity blitz of the larger Clark County community to reignite once again an interest and enthusiasm for the restoration project of the “Little Round School” known as Olive Branch.

Respectfully Submitted,

William M. Berry, Chairperson
Olive Branch School Preservation Society

