



**2021**



## **REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY**

OHI shall restore and preserve the historic Oviatt House located in Richfield Heritage Preserve to honor its significant ties to the Underground Railroad, preserve the pioneer spirit of the Western Reserve, and inspire the community and future generations to celebrate the freedom it represents.

**HONOR • PRESERVE • INSPIRE**

## Letter to the Community



Dear Supporters and Friends,

Oviatt House Inc. (OHI) is pleased to present our first annual report. OHI was created out of the successful effort of the Richfield Town Trust, the Richfield Historical Society (RHS), and local citizens to save this historic home.

Our first major step was accomplished in August 2021, as we signed a ten year renewable contract with the Richfield Joint Recreation District allowing us to restore and use the historic Oviatt House. Within a few short months we engaged volunteers, held fundraising events, developed a website, and collected pledges.

Due to the outpouring of support from the Richfield community and beyond, we are on our way to achieving our goal of restoring the historic Oviatt House. In 2022 we will continue our fundraising efforts and begin restoration of the exterior of the house, including replacing the roof, restoring the siding and much more!

We thank all those who have joined us on this amazing journey.

With sincere gratitude,  
Judy Bowman  
President, Oviatt House Inc





## Major Accomplishments

- April:
  - Oviatt House Incorporated formed
  - Oviatt House listed on the National Park Service's Underground Railroad Network to Freedom through an application made by the Richfield Historical Society
- July:
  - 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization approval obtained
  - Richfield Joint Recreation District (RJRD) rescinded their decision to raze the Oviatt House
- August:
  - Contract with RJRD allowing us to restore and use Oviatt House executed
- October:
  - Volunteer work days to work on the interior of the house
  - Progress Through Preservation of Greater Akron tour
  - FUNdraising Fridays at The Lodge
- November:
  - Informational Display for the Richfield Library
- December:
  - Volunteer work day
  - Participated in Winter Wonders





## Preservation & Restoration

OHI's goal is to restore the house in accordance with NPS standards. The house will be restored to as close to its original 1836 layout as possible. Ultimately, OHI will develop a visitor center and educational museum.

Work started in October by first removing the carpeting from the second floor. All tack strips and hundreds of nails were pried up. The bathroom and non-original walls were torn out.



Volunteers put up generator powered lights allowing us to finally see the basement!



The first floor bathroom was gutted, but some walls still need to be removed.



With the removal of non-original walls, we can begin to discover the original floor plan. In 2022 we will have historic preservationists draw up plans for restoration of the interior while we complete exterior renovations including installation of a new roof and restoration of the original siding.



## Our 2021 Sponsors

### **\$10,000+**

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Robert and Karen Hooper  
Richfield Historical Society

### **\$5,000-\$9,999**

Ken and Judy Bowman

### **\$1000-4,999**

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### **In Kind**

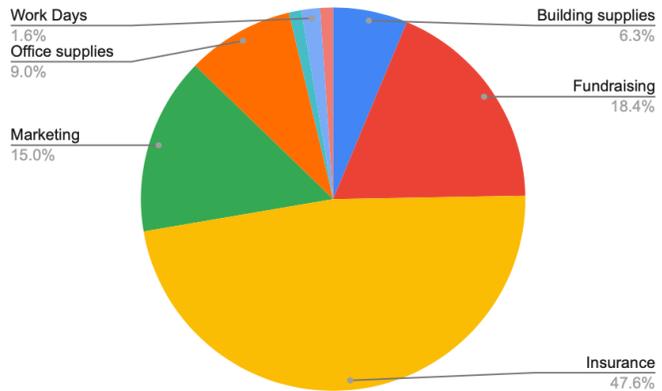
Maureen Locke  
Judy Makowski

If we inadvertently failed to acknowledge your donation please contact us at [oviatthouse1836@gmail.com](mailto:oviatthouse1836@gmail.com).

## Income and Expenses

### 2021 Expenses: \$3,047

Expenses were kept to a minimum thanks to all the work being done by volunteers!



### 2021 Income: \$52,425

Income was generated from direct donations; events at Richfield Heritage Preserve including Kirby Day, FUNdraising Fridays and Winter Wonders; and PayPal Giving Fund.

Our story was read far and wide thanks to an Akron Beacon Journal article which was their 2nd most read in 2021! Donations were received from as far away as California!

OHI received \$35,175 in donations from individuals and organizations who pledged support of Oviatt House as far back as January 2020. These pledges enabled us to demonstrate to RJRD that support for saving the house was strong.



## Letters of Support

“When the levy (bond) was proposed to the Richfield residents to save the park, the historic structures were an important part of the ‘save’. This cannot be forgotten as a promise to those supporting the campaign.”

- Betty Vandermeer



“At NO COST to the RJRD, the Save Oviatt House Committee that is leading this restoration effort is comprised of volunteers with the skills and expertise needed to restore Oviatt House. This group has also raised significant funds to begin this project and will continue its efforts to raise additional funds and pursue tax credits...This is our community. This is our park. Let’s work together to continue to preserve Richfield Heritage Preserve and save this hidden treasure for generations to come.”

- Judy Makowski

“If it is destroyed without cause, we lose not only the examples of their craftsmanship, we lose history of the times in which they lived.”

- Cynthia McWilliams



“Despite not living near Richfield (I live in New Jersey), I stumbled across a news article on-line regarding the Oviatt House, its history, and its endangerment. I want the historic house to be preserved, and restored if possible.”

- Aditya Santhanam



“The farmhouse was built by an important family in early Richfield history, was used by the underground railroad, has connections to John Brown, is over 180 years old and, amazingly, still stands! Although the Oviatt house may not have the visual appeal as Kirby’s Mill, it is a historic treasure worthy of restoring, maintaining and honoring...As part owner of Richfield Heritage Preserve, I support saving the Oviatt house!”

- Ken Brown

# THANK YOU!

Oviatt House Inc.

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Michelle Merolla (pages 5,7,8)

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