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Revised 3/13/08

*Oberlin-Wellington Rescue Coalition
c/o City Of Oberlin
85 South Main Street
Oberlin, Ohio 44074*

Oberlin-Wellington Rescue Celebration 2008 Events



*150th Anniversary
1858 - 2008*

*“Celebrating Our Antislavery
Heritage, Renewing Our
Commitment to Social Justice”*

Oberlin-Wellington Rescue History

On the morning of September 13, 1858, two Kentuckians, supported by a federal marshal and his assistant, captured John Price, an escaped slave who had resided in Oberlin for about two



years. The slave catchers took him to Wellington with plans to send him back south on the afternoon train. News of Price's capture spread quickly, however, and the Oberlin community promptly mobilized. Blacks and whites, college students, faculty, and townspeople raced to Wellington to block the slave catchers' plans. Wellingtonians joined the effort, and using force—but without shedding blood—the Rescuers succeeded in recovering Price, who later made his way to freedom in Canada. Thirty-seven Rescuers were subsequently indicted and jailed for allegedly violating the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. Two were convicted in federal court before a deal was struck for the release of all the Rescuers in return for Lorain County's agreement to drop kidnapping charges against the slave catchers. The Rescuers' bold defiance of federal law in the name of human rights attracted nationwide attention and generated political controversy in both the North and the South.

Oberlin's reputation as "the town that started the Civil War" stems from the Oberlin-Wellington Rescue and its role in exacerbating sectional tensions over slavery.

Wellington-Oberlin Rescue Celebration Events

April 12: Presentation by Nat Brandt on "Oberlin's Finest Hour and How It Resonates Today: Reflections on the Oberlin-Wellington Rescue of 1858" at 2 p.m. at First Church, United Church of Christ, 106 North Main Street, in Oberlin, followed by a book signing and reception. Sponsored by the Oberlin College Archives and the Oberlin Heritage Center. **For More Info:** Contact the Oberlin College Archives at 440-775-8014 or www.oberlin.edu/archive or contact the Oberlin Heritage Center at 440-774-1700 or www.oberlinheritage.org.

June 13-14: Oberlin Juneteenth Celebration on Tappan Square in Oberlin. **For More Info:** Contact Linda Isabell at 440-669-9273(cell)/440-775-4790 (work) or www.JuneteenthOberlin.com.

September 13: Public celebration on Tappan Square in Oberlin. Sponsored by Oberlin-Wellington Rescue Coalition. **For More Info:** Contact Sharon Pearson at 440-775-7217 or e-mail at spearson@cityofoberlin.com.

November 7-8: Oberlin College Symposium on "Race and Resistance, 1858 & 2008," with keynote address by Robin D.G. Kelley. Organized by Departments of African American Studies and History and the Comparative American Studies Program. **For More Info:** Contact Gary Kornblith at gary.kornblith@oberlin.edu.

*All events are
free & open to
the public*

September 13th Celebration Mission Statement

The rescue of freedom seeker John Price from slave catchers on September 13, 1858, was arguably the most important town-gown collaboration on behalf of social justice in Oberlin's 175-year history. We wish to commemorate this event by holding a public celebration on Tappan Square on September 13, 2008. This celebration will testify to our great pride in our interracial antislavery heritage while recognizing that our community—like the nation at large—suffers from troubling racial divisions and racism in the present day. A festive town-gown gathering will provide both a joyful opportunity to renew our commitment to social justice and an opening for fresh dialogue among ourselves about how better to put progressive ideals into practice on a daily basis. We welcome residents of Wellington and other communities to join Oberlinians on this occasion.

The September 13th Celebration is scheduled to run from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. and will include a free community lunch.



Wadsworth Hotel,
Wellington, Ohio. Scene of the
rescue of John Price.
-Courtesy of Oberlin College Archives