

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Olive Branch High School  
Clark County, Ohio**

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**Narrative Description**

The Olive Branch High School is a one-story Craftsman school building, constructed in 1908. The school was largely reconstructed in 1914, following a devastating fire in November 1913. The building maintains its 1914 appearance. The Olive Branch School is located in a rural area on U.S. Route 40, the National Road, just west of the small village of Donnelsville.

*Setting*

The Olive Branch High School is in Bethel Township, near the western edge of Clark County. It is approximately eleven miles west of Springfield, the county seat. The school is situated just west of a row of c.1900 two-story houses. (Photo 1) The overall area is a mix of farmsteads and, mostly, frame houses, constructed throughout the first half of the 1900s.

The Olive Branch High School is surrounded by asphalt and gravel paving, except for the east elevation where grass separates it from the neighboring house. The nominated school is on a five acre site that includes several buildings owned by the Tecumseh Local School District, including two service buildings and an altered I-house, used for offices. A tennis court is also on the parcel and adjacent to the nominated school. To the west, on neighboring parcels, are modern school buildings, constructed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, along with associated athletic fields.

Historically, the school had a fieldstone fence demarking the property's entrance at the National Road. Extending from the stone fence and lining the driveway was a simple fence constructed of concrete ballards and a metal rail. A section of the historic fencing is still extant along the eastern edge of the property. (Photo 4) (In addition to the keyed photos, see also the floor plan and historic photos)

*Exterior*

The Olive Branch High School is an irregularly shaped building, with a central octagonal room that rises several feet above the rest of the one-story building. (Photo 2) Six of the eight octagon walls have paired square clerestory windows, with a sunburst pattern. A concrete stringcourse is below the windows. The octagon has a steep pitched pyramidal roof and is topped by a skylight with finial. The skylight was recently restored in 2007. Historically, stone chimneys were on the east and west elevations of the octagonal section and extended to nearly the same height as the roof finial. The chimneys were removed in the 1960s. The roof has asphalt shingles, which replaced the original clay tile roof.

The school has random-coursed fieldstone, on the lower half of each elevation. The remaining wall treatment is stucco, with a concrete stringcourse separating the materials. Four rooms, or wings, project outward from the octagon. Each wing has a hipped roof that curves slightly near the eave. Windows on the first floor have a decorative light pattern, with smaller panes framing a larger glass pane. In between each of the four wings is a smaller connecting projection with the same wall and fenestration treatment. The larger wings have larger windows than those of the smaller projections. Due to the organization around the central octagon, none of the building's corners are at a 90 degree angle.

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The southern façade features the main entrance to the building. (Photos 2-4) The entrance is covered by a porch, with four Doric columns constructed of concrete. Windows flank the centered doorway. The paired wood doors with nine-light windows are original. A seven-light transom is above the entry.

Each of the four wings has a secondary entrance on one of the short beveled walls. The doors are solid wood without windows. A small dock is at the entrance in the northwest wing. (Photo 6) This entry has a shed-roof hood, and the original door has been replaced. The connecting projections also have secondary exits. (Photo 5) These doors have multi-light windows and a four-light transom above. The entry on the rear elevation has an enclosed gabled extension. (Photo 7)

The school is three steps above grade, accommodating a raised basement. Basement windows are located on the side and rear elevations. Most have been covered over, or in-filled, with the exception of one six-light window on the rear elevation.

*Interior*

The Olive Branch High School is constructed of brick and poured concrete. The floors are of poured concrete, all of which have been covered with linoleum, except the central room. Wall treatment on the interior historically, and currently, was plaster over lath boards. The ceilings are also made of plaster, which remain intact in the octagon and in the room behind the stage; elsewhere drop ceilings have been installed. Throughout the interior, original wood door and window surrounds are intact. Many of the original doors remain, which are generally solid wood divided into three panels. With a few exceptions, doors and trim have been painted. Original chalkboards are present in the classrooms and near the stage.

Inside the main entrance is a vestibule, with doors into the classrooms on both ends and a doorway that once held double doors leading into the central octagonal room. (Photo 8) An original metal floor grate can be seen in the vestibule. (Photo 20)

The interior of the Olive Branch High School is organized around the central octagonal room, originally containing the cafeteria and gymnasium. (Photos 9-10) This room is enhanced by a large skylight, centered above. A coved cornice forms a transition, from the ceiling to the skylight. The skylight is also octagonal in shape, and each window section is comprised of three vertical lights. On the east and west walls are the former chimneys, which appear as stepped projections into the room. On the north wall of the octagon is a small raised stage, with wood floor and simple round arch proscenium. The proscenium has been in-filled with a wall partition.

The four wings, extending from the central cafeteria, each contained a classroom. (Photos 11-13) The classrooms had a large doorway, with pocket doors leading into the cafeteria. Only the doors of the southeast classroom remain in place. (Photo 14) The other three door openings have been altered, with partial partitioning of the opening and a smaller door inserted.

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The small connecting projections, on the east and west side of the building, contain short, oddly-shaped hallways, with access to the restrooms and secondary exterior doors. The restroom, on the east side of the building, has unpainted door and window trim and intact stall partitions. (Photo 15) Restroom features on the west side have been removed. Access to the basement is in this hallway. (Photo 16) The basement is utilitarian in function and is largely an open space. The poured concrete structural columns and floors are visible, as well as the brick-walled original coal-fired furnaces. (Photo 17-18) The connecting projection on the north side is directly behind the stage, and therefore above the floor level of the remainder of the building. This room originally served as the principal's office.

*Integrity*

Despite its current use as a warehouse facility, the Olive Branch High School maintains a high degree of historic integrity. Other than the shortening of the chimneys and change of roof materials, the building remains largely unchanged on the exterior. Key elements of the Craftsman style are intact including the original decorative windows, deep eaves, and juxtaposition of exterior materials. The interior also retains its historic features such as chalkboards, floor plan, window and door surrounds, doors and the stage. One original desk remains in the school. (Photo 19)