

cereal mill in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and the German Mills American Oatmeal Company of Ohio. In the early twenty-first century the United States was one of the leading oat-producing countries.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Beeman, Randal S., and James A. Pritchard. *A Green and Permanent Land: Ecology and Agriculture in the Twentieth Century*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001.
- Heiser, Charles B., Jr. *Seed to Civilization: The Story of Man's Food*. San Francisco: W. H. Freeman, 1973.
- Hoffbeck, Steven R. *The Haymakers: A Chronicle of Five Farm Families*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2000.

Deirdre Sheets

See also **Agriculture; Cereal Grains.**

OBERLIN COLLEGE. In 1833 the evangelical Protestants John J. Shipherd and Philo P. Stewart founded a utopian community in Northeast Ohio focused on promoting the Oberlin Collegiate Institute to educate ministers to preach salvation to the unchurched West. Named for an Alsatian pastor, John Frederick Oberlin, the school opened in December 1834 as a manual labor institution. While both men and women attended from the beginning, not until 1837 could women pursue the A.B. degree. In 1835 a decision to admit students irrespective of color transformed the fledgling college. With this embrace of interracial education, Oberlin welcomed young men exiled from Lane Theological Seminary for their insistence on conducting ANTISLAVERY revivals. The "Lane rebels" carried with them support from the New York merchant, abolitionist, and evangelical Lewis Tappan, thus ensuring the survival of the college and the recruitment as professor of theology Charles Grandison Finney, the leading evangelical preacher of the time.

Perfectionist radicalism and attendant causes, including the Graham vegetarian diet, female moral reform, temperance, missionary activity, and particularly antislavery activism, permeated early Oberlin. The school officially became Oberlin College in 1850. Although not Garrisonians, Oberlin's abolitionists embraced a "higher law" when, in the Oberlin-Wellington rescue of 1858, students, faculty, and townspeople joined together to free a fugitive captured by bounty hunters. Oberlin students and faculty distinguished themselves in military service during the Civil War, and African American alumni led in the recruitment of Ohio's first troops of color. Men and women graduates played particularly important roles in establishing schools and colleges for freed slaves during Reconstruction.

Oberlin rose to academic prominence in the late nineteenth century. Educational advances included the addition of the Conservatory of Music in 1869, the rise of men's sports, a pioneering women's physical education program, the establishment of laboratory science, the ad-

vent of electives, the creation of academic departments, and accreditation as a founding member of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools in 1895. By 1916 the preparatory department, once the largest part of the institution, closed its doors.

Despite a post-Reconstruction retreat from racial egalitarian principle, at Oberlin in the late nineteenth century, one-third of all African American graduates of predominantly white colleges before 1900 were Oberlin alumni. The college retained many of its other progressive ideals, especially in connecting the developing social sciences and the needs of social reform. In 1890 it appointed its first female professor, although not until 1948 was the first African American appointed to the faculty.

The school's religious orientation, which in 1882 supported the largest college chapter YMCA in the world, spurred Oberlin-trained missionaries to establish schools and churches in Africa and Asia. Although mandatory chapel was eliminated in 1934, later graduates of the theological department and college undergraduates played important roles in the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. In 1966 the college closed the theological school.

Entering the twenty-first century Oberlin boasted a highly ranked College of Arts and Sciences enrolling 2,200 students and a world-renowned conservatory with 650 students. A pioneering environmental studies program, high academic standards, and social commitment maintain Oberlin's traditions.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barnard, John. *From Evangelicalism to Progressivism at Oberlin College, 1866–1917*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1969.
- Baumann, Roland M., compiler. *Oberlin History Bibliography: A Partial Listing of Published Titles Bearing on the History of the College and Community Covering the Period 1833 to 1992*. Oberlin, Ohio: Oberlin College, 1992.
- Fletcher, Robert Samuel. *A History of Oberlin College from Its Foundation through the Civil War*. 2 vols. Oberlin, Ohio: Oberlin College, 1943.

Carol Lasser

See also **Education, Higher; Denominational Colleges.**

OBERLIN MOVEMENT. This antislavery movement throughout the West began in 1834, when Theodore Dwight Weld, an evangelical abolitionist and protégé of the New York philanthropists Arthur and Lewis Tappan, arrived at the Oberlin Collegiate Institute (now Oberlin College) to lecture and train students as antislavery agents. Weld and his followers had come from Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati, which they vacated en masse in 1833 when the school's trustees ordered Weld's antislavery society disbanded. The Oberlin Movement's antislavery agents preached, lectured, and distrib-

uted tracts against slavery. The Oberlin Movement helped convert much of Ohio and the Northwest to the anti-slavery vanguard.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abzug, Robert H. *Passionate Liberator: Theodore Dwight Weld and the Dilemma of Reform*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980.

Timothy M. Roberts

OBERLIN-WELLINGTON RESCUE CASE.

The Oberlin-Wellington rescue case grew out of a rescue party's release of a fugitive slave in 1858 in Oberlin, Ohio; the slave had been in the custody of a federal officer at the village of Wellington, nine miles south of Oberlin. The rescuers, mostly citizens of Oberlin and students of the college, were indicted under the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. From their jail in Cleveland, they published a newspaper, *The Rescuer*; through the barred windows they addressed mass meetings of sympathizers; and in their cells



Slave Rescue. Thomas Weld, shown here, was one of the founders of Oberlin College and a participant in the Oberlin-Wellington Rescue Case, in which a large group of antislavery advocates rescued a runaway slave from a federal officer in Wellington, Ohio. Group members later faced charges (later dismissed) under the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

they entertained correspondents of eastern newspapers and deputations from churches and philanthropic societies. The indictments were shortly dismissed, and the rescuers were freed.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Shipherd, Jacob R. *History of the Oberlin-Wellington Rescue*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1972.

Gilbert Hobbs Barnes / A. R.

See also **Antislavery**; **Fugitive Slave Acts**.

OBESITY is defined as having a body mass index (BMI), which is the relationship of mass to height, of 30 or more, or a weight of about 30 pounds over the maximum desirable for the individual's height. Those at least 100 pounds over their ideal weight are regarded as morbidly obese.

Obesity as a health problem was first discussed by Thomas Short (1690?–1772) in *A Discourse Concerning the Causes and Effects of Corpulency. Together with A Method for Its Prevention and Cure* (London, 1727). In 1829, the English physician William Wadd (1776–1829) published his *Comments on Corpulency, Lineaments of Leanness, Mems on Diet and Dietetics*. In 1863, Dr. William Banting (1779–1878) proposed his special “Banting diet” as a treatment for obesity. So-called Bantingism, a diet low in sugar and oily foods, swept across England, making it the first fad diet craze of national proportions. Largely compilations of unscientific speculations and opinions, these early works were supplanted by more systematic studies coming primarily from Germany and France throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century.

The United States did not come into the forefront of obesity research until Hugo Rony's *Obesity and Leanness* (1940). By the 1950s, the National Institutes of Health served as a catalyst for new investigations into the causes and nature of obesity, launching a new era in evaluating this potentially life-threatening condition. Researchers in the early twenty-first century understand obesity as a complex condition that can be approached from one of four different perspectives: behavioral/psychological aspects; physiological factors; cellular bases in the functions of fat cells; and genetic and molecular factors.

This last aspect came to scientists attention in the late twentieth century. In 1992, a specific gene responsible for obesity in mice was discovered and two others were identified shortly thereafter. Since this pathbreaking work, a number of genes thought to be responsible for predisposing humans to obesity have been uncovered. With the advent of new genetically targeted pharmaceuticals, the prospect of developing a “magic bullet” for people in this category might be on the horizon.

Still, the principal cause of obesity for most Americans is a combination of overeating and sedentary lifestyle. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention