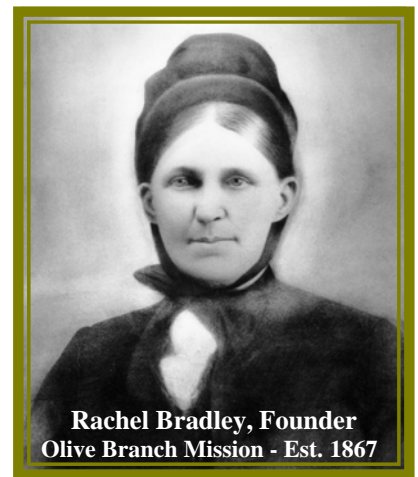




139 YEARS OF FRONTLINE SERVICE TO CHICAGO

Olive Branch Mission is not only the oldest rescue mission in the City of Chicago, it is also the oldest in the United States. While the earliest beginnings of the mission date back to **1867**, Olive Branch Mission was formally registered in 1876. Olive Branch Mission predates Hull House and the modern social service system by as many as 20 years. The Olive Branch newspaper "**The Olive Branch**" is in its 111th year of publication making it the second oldest continuously published news publication in Chicago after the Chicago Tribune.

Founder Rachel Bradley began Olive Branch Mission through offering sewing classes to prostitutes, providing them with an alternative source of income. Early on she fought hard against a growing proliferation of prostitute houses which were known to purchase and enslave very young girls (8 to 12 years of age) into lives of prostitution. She touched their lives with a genuine love and a message of hope. She expressed her belief that, given an opportunity, such 'special women' could overcome guilt, shame, pain and the most incredible challenges and struggles. She started her sewing classes and the mission in her Church on Morgan Street and then moved to a room on West Lake Street. As the ministry increased, she went on to establish the 'Wells Street Mission' in a space that formerly housed a saloon. Records indicate that the 'Ladies of Olive Branch Mission' successfully closed taverns, saloons and prostitute houses through their street meetings and community activism. It wasn't long before the ministry grew to include homeless men, women and children, further expanding to include the dire needs of alcoholic and addicted men and women who existed on the fringes of society.



Olive Branch Mission was founded and led by courageous Free Methodist Women who dared to minister where most would not go. Historical records recount their travels through Chicago's streets and alleyways at all hours of the day or night, during the worst of weather, to care for the hungry, homeless, sick and dying. These dedicated women regularly ministered in Cook County Jail and Cook County Hospital. They fought their battles upon Christian principles and challenged every social ill that raised its ugly head.

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Olive Branch Mission summer activity
with some of the mission kids – 1937.

Olive Branch Mission was founded historically at the crossroads of Chicago's most critical time of need. This was the time not long after the American Civil War, when large numbers of emancipated southern African American individuals and families moved to Chicago seeking employment in hopes of building a new life; a time when waves of European immigrants came to Chicago in search of fulfilling 'their own American Dreams'; a time when nearly one third of Chicago's

residents were rebuilding their lives after the 'Great Chicago Fire.' For so many, it didn't work out as they had planned. They found themselves in desperate circumstances - on Chicago's 'skid row.' At this very moment in history and for the ensuing generations across Chicago who might just find themselves on the frontlines of pain, failure, rejection and broken dreams, indeed it was for each hurting person and family that the Olive Branch Mission was founded. Just as it was then, the same policy of Christian hospitality continues today – "no one is turned away."

In a rapidly re-emerging city, Olive Branch Mission was addressing the spiritual and physical needs of a very poor and homeless population. The mission applied an aggressive outreach emphasis toward developing intentional relationships with those who were broken, cast aside and rejected by society. Olive Branch Mission has consistently resisted an approach of condescending compassion as it has cared for individuals and families in need. Rather, it has always tried to affirm the dignity and value of each and every person, no matter their condition or immediate circumstances.



The Old Mission "Get-Around"

Wars, economic depression and civil unrest came and went, as did social, political and theological theories about poverty's causes and cures. Through it all, Olive Branch Mission has endured and to this day remains steadfast, carrying on an unwavering commitment to those who have lost their way. In the streets, in the alleys, under isolated bridges and in abandoned buildings is a wealth of lost human potential and resources. Olive Branch Mission declares that it can be reclaimed and restored. In fact, for the very sake of humanity – it must. In caring for and helping someone who has lost their way, we indeed are caring for a part of ourselves.

Olive Branch Mission is not in the business of simply giving handouts, glorifying, managing or maintaining human tragedy and poverty. Rather, this great mission stands firm against enhancing dependency. However, Olive Branch Mission is in the business of human development, providing opportunity for recovery, restoration, reinstatement and re-entry unto productive life. Olive Branch Mission remains a place where lost, injured, broken and desperate lives can freely, safely and unconditionally receive help, love and care.

March 1, 1996, David E. Bates became the 11th Executive Director of Olive Branch Mission and he continues as President and CEO to this day. President & CEO David Bates is the son of former missionary parents who gave most of their lives of service to Central/East Africa (Burundi, Rwanda, Congo and Kenya). He was born in Burundi and spent his entire childhood years on through high school graduation in this part of Africa.



During his tenure, Olive Branch Mission has expanded its programs many times over, vastly increasing its impact and the number of individuals and families it serves. The caliber and quality of its programs, the outcomes and sustainable results achieved by the Mission are truly bringing hope on the very frontlines of community need across Chicago. Olive Branch Mission continues to represent in all that it does, to everyone it touches, a promise of HOPE.

Today, Olive Branch Mission provides: year-round shelter and meals for homeless men, women and children; 7 to 9 month long-term residential recovery for men struggling with addiction to heroin, cocaine, alcohol, marijuana and tobacco; job readiness and employment training for individuals transitioning from homelessness to full-time employment and self-sufficiency; after-school tutorial support for homeless children who must keep up academically in their respective schools, fully accredited academic and internship training for graduate and undergraduate university students; life-skills seminars and case-management support for homeless individuals and families transitioning to stable homes and long-term employment; to walk-in clients comprehensive community-based support and referrals/access through its Community Resource Center; and much more...

It should be included, that Olive Branch Mission has also broadened its vision and programs to include offices and staff in Jamaica, Kenya and Burundi. Bates was also instrumental in helping to develop and establish Hope Africa University – “An African University seeking African Solutions to Africa’s Problems”. Hope Africa University opened its doors on February 7, 2000 – serving East and Central Africa in particular and the entire African Diaspora in general. Part of his vision is that African American students from the United States would have the opportunity to attend this university in the African context (Hope Africa University is fully accredited with the same accreditation granted to any U.S. institution of higher education). On September 4, 2004 Hope Africa University graduated its first 37 Bachelor Degrees. The current freshman class numbers over 300 students.

138 years from its beginning, Olive Branch Mission still passionately believes that with God’s help, something can always be made from nothing, more can come of less and that every person really matters. To this end, Olive Branch Mission must continue to create authentic opportunities that change individual lives, families, community, and impact an entire city. Bates is convinced that the best and most crucial work of Olive Branch Mission is yet to come – be watching for it.

