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Centennial Reflections

Essays from the Oakwood Historical Society

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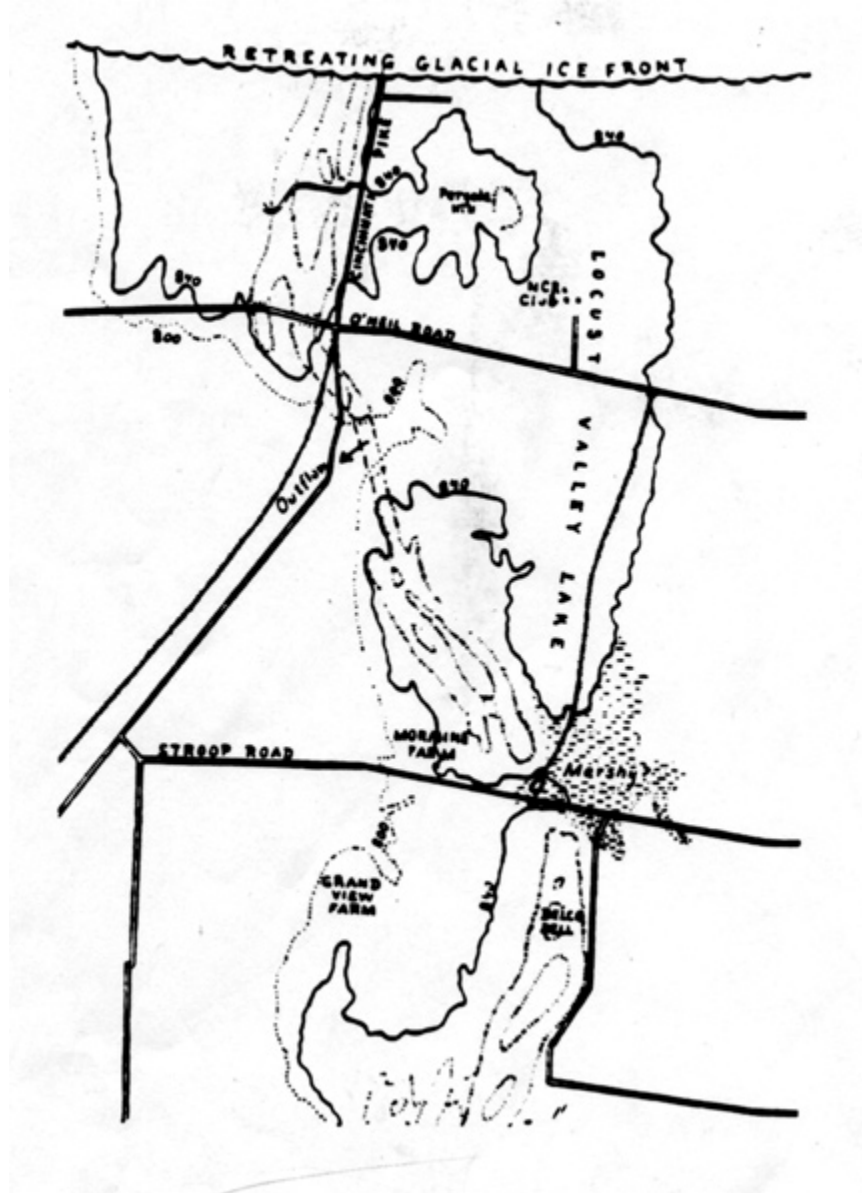
One of the first things that should impress even a casual observer about Oakwood, is the topography. Why is there a ridge slicing through the city which runs on the west of Far Hills Ave. to Patterson and then curls to the right, creating a plateau in the south and east, and valleys in the west and north? Col. E. A. Deeds commissioned a geologist, August F. Foerste, to publish a study in 1915. It was the combined work of the author and Prof. Wm. B. Werthner, who had been studying the south Dayton area since 1893. It zooms in on the gravel ridge extending from Carrmonte and Calvary Cemetery south through Hills and Dales to Holes Creek.

The short version reports that glaciers overwhelmed large parts of the earth's surface several times. The North American Laurentide sheet of ice, spread from Hudson Bay and covered more than five million square miles from the Arctic Ocean, and south to bury eastern Canada, New England, and more than the northern half of the midwestern United States. The last of these glacial invasions – know as the Wisconsin Stage – began about 70,000 years ago, reaching its maximum 20,000 years ago and ending between 14,000 and 8,000 years ago.

As a glacier forms, melts, recedes, and reforms, it moves along the surface carrying particles which have been ground up by the rocks being carried in this “drift” like a conveyor belt, changing the underlying surface and depositing debris when it melts. The material deposited is known as “till”. One landform created of till is the “End Moraine”, a ridge or hill up to several hundred feet high created the melting of the end of the glacier. A type of end moraine, called a Terminal Moraine marks the farthest point of advance of the glacier. Every time a glacier paused in its retreat, a new ridge or hill of rocky debris was deposited.

Applying all this to Oakwood, we see the narrow ridges of Terminal Moraines straddling the Dayton Country Club, extending from Carrmonte (West Schantz/ Patteron Blvd.) southeast along Adirondak Ridge and following Patterson Blvd. to Inspiration Point (cor. Ridgeway and Oak Knoll). Another ridge follows Panorama Rd. (Ridgeway Rd.) from Carrmonte to Fairforest Circle, south to Inspiration Point.

One of the most interesting concepts is the notion put forth by the author that the ridges formed by Gov. Cox's hill, Moraine Farm, Ridgeleigh Terrace and Delco Dell on the west, and Carrmonte, Adirondak, Panorama, and Frederick Farm on the east, formed a lake known as Locust Valley Lake (Kettering Hospital area). Created by melting of the glacier, water was trapped in the depression formed by the gravel ridges. There would have been an outflow at the lowest point, which would have been north of Dorothy Lane in Moraine, and at the Stroop Rd. entrance to Delco Dell. Try that on your mental GPS !



If you keep in mind some well known local land marks, you can reason the how and why of development of Oakwood described in the first paragraph from a geological view. Remember that the Henry Long Homestead of the Oakwood Historical Society had a substantial gravel quarrying operation in the 1800's. Same for the Elizabeth Gardens section (Raleigh, Devereux, Woodstock). Extend your imagination to John H. Patterson's "Far Hills" and Ohmer's Lookout Ridge, then to the new Service Bldg. and Hollinger Tennis Courts (which had a gravel operation early on), and to Woodland Cemetery. Then backtrack to Sugar Camp, Carrmonte, and Calvary Cemetery along West Schantz – same thing!

Thus we are the beneficiaries of tens of thousands of years of freezing and thawing, making parts of Oakwood a beautiful area with a geological history of its own.