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Centennial Reflections
Essays from the Oakwood Historical Society

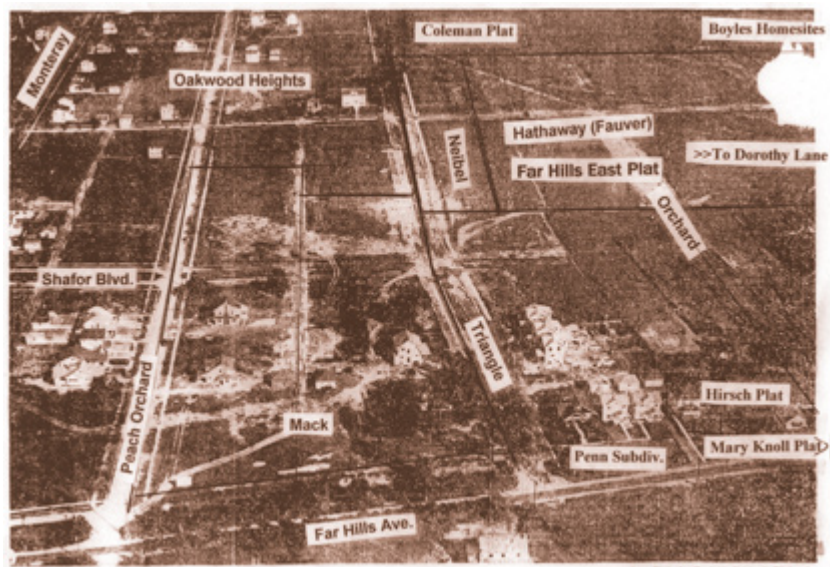
Oakwood's south side –
1815 to today

By Harry G. Ebeling

The Far Hills shopping area from Peach Orchard to the city limits has never had a name that officially identifies it. We just refer to it generally as “the Oakwood Shopping Center” or the “Far Hills Shopping Center” or more recently, “The Shops of Oakwood.” That’s because it just grew, building by building, along the street, gradually converting houses or building new shops. It’s only one lot deep and by zoning ordinance it’s protected from encroachment into the residential areas behind the strip. This has created traffic and parking problems, but we seem to have accommodated.

If one looks at the plat maps and aerial photos from the Maysfield collection taken in the 1920’s, we see where the houses are that peek out above the shops and it becomes apparent that this has been a slow pattern of change, not without controversy.

The southerly most section of Oakwood, from Peach Orchard Road and Triangle Avenue and to East Drive, and from Shroyer Road to Fairmont Avenue, was on a farm that was split up among family members like other large tracts. These 100 acres were originally part of a Patent to Joseph Coleman created in 1815. He sold this part in 1840 to James Maxton who sold it in 1840 to Ann Wonderly. When she died in 1871, she left it to her son William, who built a farmhouse in 1873, which still stands at 205 Dell Park Avenue. He had two families due to the death of his first wife, and his will filed in 1879 directed that the property be divided into parcels on the east and west side of Lebanon Pike (now Far Hills Avenue).



The 76 acres on the east side from Triangle to East Drive he left to his three children from his first marriage. He directed that it be Partitioned when the oldest came of age. This was done in 1883, resulting in three relatively equal tracts:

Lot A – east – to Charles, who sold parcels to individuals who ultimately platted them: a. Coleman 1928, b. Oakwood Terrace 1927, c. Boyles Homesites 1927.

Lot B – middle – to Annie, who with her husband Clarence Neibel, platted Far Hills East Plat in 1925. They named one street Wonderly and another Claranna (Clarence and Anna).

Lot C – west – to Elmer who sold parcels to individuals who later platted them: a. Penn plat 1925, b. Hirsch Plat 1931 (Oakwood Club). c. Mary Knoll 1930, d. Fleischman Subdiv 1931, e. D.H. Manney Subdiv. 1931, f. Widman, Waldman, James tracts. The City of Oakwood platted part of these to extend Claranna Avenue to Far Hills in 1950, making possible the development of the Talbott Building and Dorothy Lane Market. William James finally sold his filling station at the corner of Far Hills and East Drive in 1952, permitting the completion of four lanes on Far Hills in front of what is now Dorothy Lane Market, and eliminating a bottle neck.

The 25 acres on the west side from Hilltop to south of Oak Knoll and from Far Hills West to Fairmont Avenue, he left to his second wife Sarah. She died in 1903, leaving a trust for the benefit of their daughter Elizabeth. In 1916, she and the Trustee filed a Disentailment action (translation – unwind this deal and give me the money). In 1920, the court permitted the sale to Miles Kuhns, who platted Oak Knoll Plat. The house at 205 Dell Park Avenue still stands as a remarkable example of a restored early farmhouse. The front door has been repositioned to face Dell Park and has been updated by adding a family room and garage, taking on a Colonial Revival appearance. Another part of this farm was sold to Carl Shultheis who platted Alpine Terrace Plat.

A strip of 20 acres off the north of the original Patent next to Peach Orchard Road south to Hilltop was sold by Joseph Coleman and parceled ultimately to Richard Holton, Miles Kuhns, and Carl Shultheis, who sold unplatted tracts for homes on Peach Orchard Road and to investors on Far Hills Avenue. The strip on the east side between Peach Orchard Avenue and Triangle Boulevard you may recall, was sold by Joseph Coleman to John Shroyer.

The strip between Ridgeway Road and the lots on the west side of Fairmont Avenue had been purchased by John H. Patterson who created a bridle path known as Panorama Road and then Ridgeway Road.

The lots on East Drive were platted by Clarence and Anna Neibel in 1931. East Drive was the only way to get between Far Hills and Shroyer Road until 1939 when Dorothy Lane finally connected them.