

Centennial Reflections

Essays from the Oakwood Historical Society

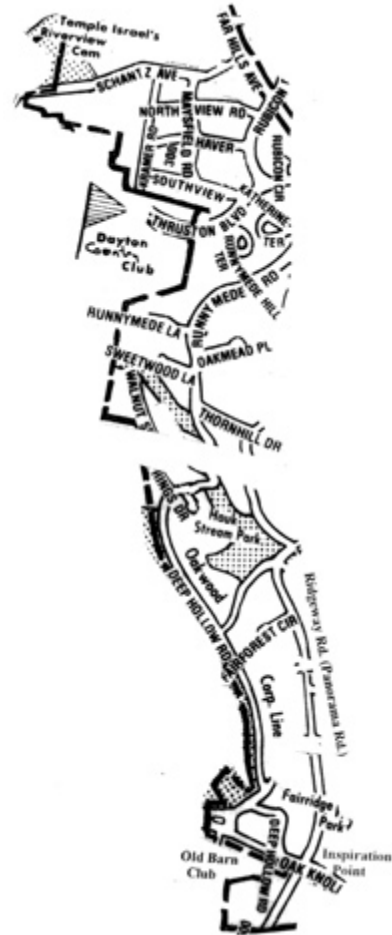
The western leg of Oakwood (1852 - today)

By Harry G. Ebeling

I undertake describing the establishment of west Oakwood reluctantly because it's difficult to explain in words and wasn't done by laying out nice straight streets. But how can we ignore the rolling hills and woody areas that define so much of the beauty of our city? You will remember the explanation of the geology of this area in the first section of this series where we delved into the topographic differences between the east and west sides of Far Hills Avenue. These same influences caused our early settlers, who wanted privacy and space away from the bustle of the city, to seek out what is now the Dayton Country Club and Hills and Dales sections.

The area along West Schantz Avenue from Beth Abraham Cemetery east to Oakwood Avenue was a half section, originally part of Col. Robert Patterson's 2,000 acre Patent. A 50-acre parcel was sold to Henry Brown, his son in law and compatriot in the War of 1812. After many sales of tracts, this became the area of homes facing Sugar Camp.

The south half section was originally patented to Jesse Hunt who sold a substantial part to Horatio Gates Phillips, ancestor of many prominent Oakwood families. Through a series of sales, 24 acres became the property of George Cook, a canal boat captain who built a residence which stood until 1970. He sold it to Maj. Luther Giddings, a patriot of the Mexican War, who in turn sold it in 1852 to Col. James Findley Harrison (grandson of William Henry) who named it "Maysfield." Harrison sold it in 1866 to Edward A. Parrott, brother of Henry Parrott, who became the developer of Forrer Road and Oakwood Avenue. Parrott sold it to Dr. Henry Hatcher in 1906, who platted the Maysfield subdivision in 1913 (Sometimes erroneously referred to as the Hatch Plat). To him we owe the streets between West Schantz Avenue and Southview Road and between Kramer Road and a line behind the houses facing Maysfield Road. The rest of the land from Maysfield to Far Hills Avenue and from Northview Road to Thruston Boulevard. was platted by the Houk Estate in 1922, in cooperation with some prominent families such as Kuntz and R.N. King.



Giddings also sold 32 acres to Daniel Garst who sold a small two acre parcel near the corner of Far Hills Avenue and Rubicon Road to David Gutwein in 1904. He had a family of 17 children so he built a house with 13 rooms on the hill

where the four family white apartment is located behind Huffman Park. He platted five lots in 1907. Early resident Edith Beacham, in an oral history by the Oakwood Historical Society, tells of growing up there.

The rest was sold by Garst to Hon. George W. Houk and it became the cornerstone of the Houk property in Oakwood. When George was elected to Congress and moved to Washington D.C. he gave the property to his daughter Katherine, who, with her husband Harry E. Talbott, expanded the house into the well known "Runnymede" which stood until the mid 30's at the top of the hill where Katherine Terrace is now. This is next to the site of the famous Runnymede Playhouse where polonium was developed for the atomic bomb during World War II.

The next quarter section to the south was originally Patented to David Worman and, after several sales came to Theodore Barlow, who sold to William Kramer who established Kramer's Winery and pleasure gardens. His widow sold to the Dayton Country Club in 1907. Barlow also sold 103 acres to Elizabeth P. T. Houk in 1903, thus creating the remainder of the 160 acres of Houk property which winds through beautiful roads such as Runnymede, Oakmead Place, Sweetwood Lane, Walnut Springs Drive and Thornhill Drive.

Parcels in this area were transferred to family members for creation of landmark estates such as George H. Mead & Elsie Talbott Mead's "Little Woods" at 1000 Runnymede Road (recently subdivided). There are also the classic Tudor at 1215 Runnymede built for George Shaw Greene and Daisy Talbott Greene (named "Excelsior", and the Mansard French revival built by Nelson S. Talbott on Carter Talbott Circle off 1600

Runnymede Road. These areas became part of Oakwood in annexations of 1911, 1912, and 1928. Their addition to the natural beauty of the city was recently recognized by the city's purchase of five acres for the new Centennial Park on Runnymede Rd.

South of the Houk-Talbott tracts and west of Far Hills were by in large acquired by John H. Patterson around 1906 as a part of a plan to create exclusive home sites for his executives and to create a public park to be called Hills and Dales which he ultimately gave to the City of Dayton in 1919.

The housing area was created from a bridle path known as Panorama Road which started at Dorothy Lane and went north to what is now Forrer Road. He created the Old Barn Club near Oak Knoll and Patterson Boulevard for his employees. At the intersection of Oak Knoll and Panorama Road was a park called Inspiration Point. Later, as Ridgeway Road and Deep Hollow Road were developed, he sold a tract to his patent attorney Carl Beust. After his death, his son, Frederick, sold tracts to C.E. Steffey, Fred Rike, J.H. Baringer, S.C. Allyn, H.H. Hardman and Colin Gardner, All but the Allyn house still stand as beautiful reminders of another era.

While difficult to follow, this part of Oakwood gives ambiance to the area of brick paved roads with overhanging trees and sloping hills with intersecting private roads of which few suburban communities can boast.