

Preserving the past, present and future of the Oakwood Community • Summer 2007



Inside

President's Note	2
In Memorium	2
Society Recent News	3
Feature article: <i>Forrer Blvd. Vintage Panoramic Photo</i>	4-5
Feature article: <i>The Man Who Owned Oakwood</i>	6
Old-Fashioned Family Picnic Reservation Form	8

Society to present Tour of Oakwood Parks

Between its nature preserves, playgrounds and quiet little parks, Oakwood has always appreciated and protected its green spaces. Year after year, Oakwood has kept its "Tree City, U.S.A." designation and made every effort to preserve the trees which are so much a part of the Oakwood community.

On June 23rd, the Oakwood Historical Society will feature a walking tour of Oakwood's most renowned nature areas: Loy Garden, Elizabeth Garden and Houk Stream. Participants will learn about the fascinating history, horticulture and wildlife of these beautiful green spaces, and a gathering at scenic Smith Garden will complete the tour. The tour will begin at 10:00 a.m. at Smith School. Vans will transport participants from Smith to the parks.

There are already plans to hold this tour annually during different seasons to better appreciate the ever-changing, natural scenery of the woodlands. The tour is free and open to the public. Watch for details soon and join us for a walk in the woods in the middle of town!

Annual Old-fashioned Family Picnic coming in July

*It's a real nice way
To spend the day
In Dayton, Ohio
On a lazy Sunday afternoon in 1903"*

— from "Dayton, Ohio 1903" by Randy Newman



A small portion of the vintage panoramic photo shown on pages 4-5 of this newsletter.

On July 15th, the public is invited to join the Society at the Annual Old-Fashioned Family Picnic on the grounds of the Long-Romspert Homestead at 1947 Far Hills Ave. Delicious food and cool drinks under tall shade trees become the priority of the evening from 5:00 - 8:00 p.m.. K.D.'s Kettering BBQ will be the favored (and flavored) feature again this year. Enjoy tours of the house and the beautiful gardens, or just sit back and visit with your fellow citizens on a summer evening. There will be special displays, demonstrations and a few surprises in store at this family-oriented event.

Tickets are \$11 for adults and \$4 for children under 12. Reservation postcards and an announcement in the local media will be out soon. Handicapped parking is available at The Homestead. Side street parking is recommended or enjoy a walk to the picnic through Oakwood's scenic neighborhoods. **See reservation form on the back of this newsletter and mark your calendar for July 15th.**

OHS Committees

Please get involved...

Archives & History

Harry Ebeling • 293-0611
hebeling@aol.com

Education

Mackensie Wittmer • 294-2831
mwittmer@gmail.com

Facilities/Grounds

Maintenance

Mark Risley • 294-2537
therisleys@ameritech.net

Events/Programs:

Teresa Prosser • 293-8506
teresa.prosser@sinclair.edu

Fundraising/Finances

Lisa Kell • 299-2267
charybdismom@yahoo.com

Preservation

Harrison Stamm Gowdy
643-4075
stammgowdy@sbcglobal.net

Public Relations/ Newsletter

Anne Rasmussen • 534-1981
arasmussen@woh.rr.com

A note from the president

Your Oakwood Historical Society continues to grow as an educational resource for the community. Throughout the year, presentations and social events are planned which highlight Oakwood's contribution to the Dayton area, the nation and the world.

Additionally, many educational articles appear in this newsletter that highlight Oakwood's remarkable past.

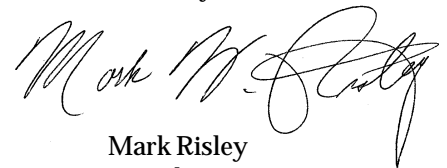
The Long-Romsperst Homestead is developing into a true representation of how people lived in times past for students of all ages to enjoy. Over the years, furniture, paintings and decorative arts have been collected representing the many time periods through which the house has passed since the original section was built in 1867. An early dining room is currently being restored in period wall treatments and furnishings and is slated for completion later this year. Unique to The Homestead, there are three separate kitchens representing the 1860s, the turn-of-the-20th century and the 1920s. "The

Evolution of the American Kitchen" is a program that is currently being formulated to show this fascinating aspect of the Homestead's evolution. Funds received from membership dues, sales of Society publications, admissions to events and your donations are essential for continuing the educational programs and displays for which the Society has become known.

Please know that your support is greatly appreciated and put to productive, educational uses.

As Oakwood approaches its centennial, it is reassuring to know that the Oakwood Historical Society has so much community support for its efforts. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Mark Risley
President

Society remembers two loyal friends

Harry K. Oxrider

Harry K. Oxrider, President of The Oakwood Historical Society in 2000 and 2001, died April 20, 2007. He learned about us by working with his wife, Joanne, who served as president of the Oakwood Historical Society in 1997. Together, they were a team that contributed to many events and helped the Society prepare for its growth years. As president, he oversaw events such as a tour of the Old Courthouse, an antique & collectible show at Polen Farm, a program about the Bombe decoding project at NCR by Debbie Desch, an afternoon fundraising tea with the Shiflers, the "I Knew the Top Nazis" program by John DoJibois, My Father—L.L. Program by Jim Custer, an Easter egg hunt, a Halloween costume party, and two picnics and annual meetings.

He was always there for us. Within organizations like the Historical Society, there are always dozens of jobs that need doing....opening and closing, toting and fetching, cleaning and polishing...the list goes on and on. Team Oxrider was always ready and smiling.

Harry never lost interest in us, always asking about friends and events, even in the past year and a half when a

stroke kept him on the sidelines. I checked on him a couple of times a month and heard about his therapy progress, his children and grandchildren, and his friends who called. In April, we played Chinese Checkers – and he beat me! I was on vacation when he passed away – but I have good memories.

Bonnie Hupman

Bonnie Hupman, our immediate past treasurer and a Board member, died May 17 at Hospice of Dayton. Bonnie had been battling cancer for the past year and gave up her position on the Board for 2007. She was so efficient that the transition was completely smooth. Bonnie leaves her husband Richard, her mother Dorothy Fudge, and three stepchildren. A native of Xenia, and a graduate of Wright State with a B.A. and an M.A. in accounting, she is a former employee of D.P.& L. She was a member of the First Church of Christ Scientist where she was treasurer. Bonnie came on the Historical Society board in 2004 and participated in its activities with a happy attitude toward all our activities. We will miss her smiling face.

—Harry Ebeling

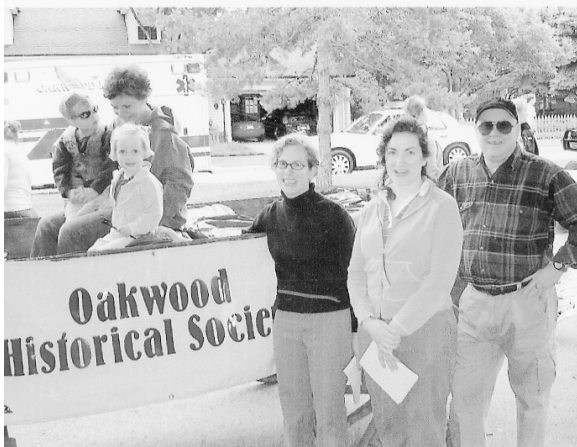
Society contributes to new LCNB branch



OHS archivist Harry Ebeling provided the community's newest business, the Lebanon Citizens National Bank, with vintage photo images of Oakwood collected by the Society over the years. These photos were reproduced and framed as part of the interior decoration of the lobby and offices of LCNB. On May 15th, the branch held its Grand Opening at its location on Far Hills Ave. In appreciation of the photo images, LCNB presented the Oakwood Historical Society with a donation and has mounted a plaque in the lobby crediting OHS with the photos. Mark Risley, Oakwood Historical Society president, is shown here accepting LCNB's donation for the photos.

That Day in May Parade fun for all

The Oakwood Historical Society was well represented in the 2007 "That Day In May" parade. Our thanks to John Gray who drove OHS members and some of their children down Shafor Blvd. in his vintage tractor and buckboard wagon as they threw candy to the throngs and passed out flyers for the upcoming Oakwood Parks Tour event.



The weather cooperated as attendees and paraders enjoyed the festive atmosphere of this Oakwood tradition on a beautiful spring day. Year after year, the Oakwood Rotary Foundation continues to produce a premier event in the "That Day In May" celebration.

Committee Reports

Events/Programs— Teresa Prosser

Potluck supper talk highlights the first president—

This year's traditional Pot Luck Supper was held on April 26th at the Lutheran Church of Our Savior. As well as lots of delicious, home-cooked treats, attendees enjoyed a very comprehensive talk on President George Washington by local author and historian, Tom Cecil. Interesting facts, brain-teasers, the debunking of many myths and a courtroom skit on President Washington's youthful endeavor to remove his father's cherry tree highlighted Mr. Cecil's presentation. Featured players in this humorous skit were Rob Mitchell as young George Washington, William Clark as the Judge, Marilyn Sheehan as the Probation Officer, Jim Sheehan as the Constable and Mark Risley as George's father. A good time was had by all.

"Restoring your home" presentation very informative

On May 17th, the Society hosted a talk on "Restoring Your Home". Mr. Neal Oxman of The Durable Restoration Company (sister firm of The Durable Slate Company) gave a very comprehensive presentation which covered slate roofing, gutters, mortar repair and wood restoration. From roofs to foundations, Mr. Oxman touched on the proper techniques and sciences involved in preserving classic homes and buildings. Due to the interesting thoroughness in which the topics were covered, we hope to have Mr. Oxman for a return presentation at a future event.

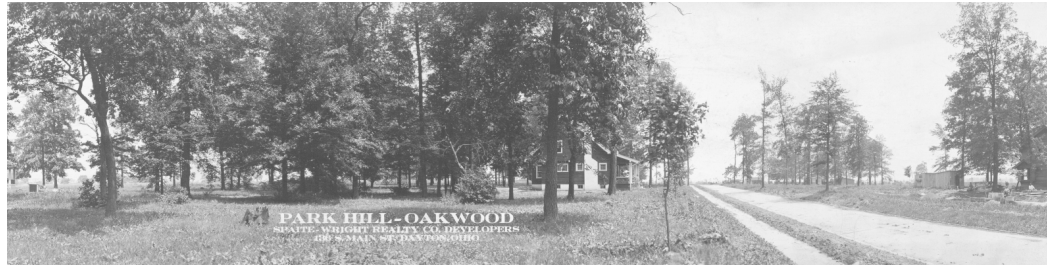
Historical Pictures/Videos *still* WANTED

OHS members, thank you so much for your support of the Documentary Film Project. It has been so wonderful to answer your phone calls and view your *priceless* private collections.

However, we are still missing sections of our past. We are looking for both photographs and motion pictures of dances at the YMCA or the high school, the Parkmoor, Parks Pharmacy, Brownies, the Tea Room, the Far Hills business district with the movie theatre, Krogers, etc. It would also be nice to have images or footage of graduations both grade school and high school. We are also looking for “slice of life” images from the 1950s, 1960, and 1970s such as kids riding bikes, early footage of That Day in May, swimming at the Garner Pool, etc.

Thank you so much for your support. This film’s success is due to your generosity. Please contact Harrison Stamm Gowdy at 643-4075 or at stammgowdy@sbcglobal.net

Vintage Oakwood Redisc



“A picture is worth a thousand words”. It’s a phrase often heard, but it always seems to ring true. Never more so than in an intriguing, vintage, sepia-toned, panoramic photograph of an early Oakwood housing development which was recently brought to the attention of the Oakwood Historical Society by Dan and Doris Lentz from their family archives. Of unusually panoramic dimensions (6.5” X 54.5”), the photo is a fascinating technological accomplishment for the era.

The homes in the photo look familiar, but the wide-angled aspect make the road look deceptively “curved.” However, this streetscape is recognizable as the first block of Forrer Blvd., between Far Hills Ave. and Shafor Blvd. A close look at the lettering at the bottom of left section states, “Park Hill-Oakwood, Spaite-Wright Realty Co. Developers, 136 S. Main St. Dayton, Ohio.”

Below are three blowup sections from this photo that show portions of the panorama in close up.

The craftsman style homes highlighted near the center of the panorama are 68 and 64 Forrer Blvd. There is a prairie style home at 50 Forrer, another craftsman at 40 and an American bungalow at 30 Forrer. To the left, another bungalow at 131 Forrer appears to be the only home that has been built on the north side of the street when the photo was taken. All of these homes are still standing today.

In front of 64 Forrer, we see a group of craftsmen and what appears to be the developers, all standing proudly in front of their fine effort. A small sign next to the door reads, “Acme Lighting Co. Dayton, Ohio”.



68 and 64 Forrer Blvd. with craftsmen and developers posing for the picture



Prairie, craftsman and bungalow on the north side of Forrer Blvd.

Oakwood Photo Uncovered



By dating county records and vehicles in the photo, the year is around 1920. The foliage on the trees and angle of the sun places it about the month of June at midday. Although the immediate area is among mature trees, farm crops can be seen planted in the background in the open area which is now the park between Wright Library and Edwin D. Smith Elementary School.

On closer inspection, we find a large truck at the corner of Shafor and Forrer, tool sheds, concrete mixing equipment, a horse-drawn wagon, automobiles of the era, and laborers enjoying their lunch break. At 40 Forrer, more workmen sit on the front steps watching the photographer at work. In the right portion of the image, where Forrer meets Far Hills, a small, brick, Tudor style structure stands in the boulevard. This was most likely the sales office for this section of the Park Hill development. In the area where Schantz meets Forrer, there is a tree intruding into the sidewalk by the small, triangular park there. That tree still stands today causing many pedestrians to take a momentary diversion around its territory. Still farther in the distance, the top of a vintage trolley car can be seen as it rolls along its route on Far Hills Ave.

This photograph is a fascinating look into the early development of Oakwood in regard to architecture, construction standards and techniques, transportation of the era and street layout.

It's also a stroll down a familiar, tree-lined boulevard on a sunny afternoon long ago. It's truly a picture worth a thousand words.



Gallop homes on the southern part of Forrer Blvd.



Sales office in the center boulevard at Forrer and Far Hills

Vintage Forrer Blvd. Panoramic Photo Print Now Available

With the assistance of the City of Oakwood, the original photo has been faithfully and professionally reproduced. The Oakwood Historical Society is now making available unframed prints of this unusual 6.5" X 54.5" panoramic photo. If you are interested in Oakwood history, a collector of vintage photographs, a past or current resident of Forrer Blvd. or just interested in a unique wall decoration, this print would make a distinctive addition to your home or office. Each print is \$45.00 which includes shipping and handling. Please make your check or money order payable to "The Oakwood Historical Society" and send it to:

OHS/Photo

1947 Far Hills Ave.

Dayton, Ohio 45419

Please include your return address and allow 2-3 weeks for delivery. It's truly a picture worth a thousand words. Thank you.

The Man who Bought Oakwood— Isaac Haas

Committee Reports

Facilities/Grounds

Mark Risley

The grounds of the Long-Romsper Homestead have greened up nicely this spring. The gardens are showing off their finery and give a different appearance every few weeks as the plantings go through their seasonal cycles. Our thanks to **Jamie Sheehan** whose expertise continues to make the gardens a beautiful setting for The Homestead.

On the inside, work has begun to convert a rear storage area of the house into an exhibition gallery where displays can be presented during open houses and tours. The dining room in the original section is also being restored with repairs to the plasterwork and original style wallpaper and stenciling being applied. Work on both projects are scheduled to be completed later this year.

In 1870, Isaac Haas, businessman and an early investor in real estate and builder of fine homes in Dayton, had a vision for a tract of property becoming the most desirable place to reside in the Dayton area. Convincing others to join him, they began with three acres of the land purchased from Henry Eugene Parrott for \$1,152. They then purchased 78.95 acres in Sections 31 and 32 from a foreclosure sale against the estate of John Stephens.

With investors Patterson Mitchell, Gabriel Harman, and William Dixon, they laid out the streets and lots, and in 1872, recorded a plat, giving it the name "Oakwood." But Oakwood was mostly farmland and woods, and the sale of building lots didn't take off, despite their efforts.

Haas, born in 1820, had come from Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania with his parents in 1835. He established himself in the tannery and harness business. He married Mary Gebhart, a native of Somerset, PA in 1851. About 1856, he joined with Patterson Mitchell as a partner at a shop on Ludlow St. between Second and Third streets. They also had tanning yards at the west-south docks at the Main St. bridge.

He bought and sold real estate in large and small plots. According to a 1920 article in the *Dayton Daily News* by Harriet Gebhart, it was his connection with the First Presbyterian Church (later The Central Reformed Church), and its construction at the NW corner of Second and Ludlow streets that attracted him to the building business. He ordered the workmen to tear down the steeple and rebuild it because it did not meet his high standards.

He had bought the church property at a sheriff's sale in 1856 and sold it to them at a profit but sold the



Isaac Haas' Oakwood home at 505 E. Schantz

church building for one dollar.

He acquired land at W. Fifth Street between Wilkinson and Perry that had been a cemetery from the same church for \$31,000 in 1869, the bodies having been removed to Woodland Cemetery with Court approval. He then developed it with several large houses and, in 1871, sold part of the land which was restricted to use as a railroad station for \$20,000, subject to \$10,000 mortgage that was assumed. This land was bought by the City of Dayton in 1864 for an extension of Wilkinson St. This created a reversion to his heirs. The \$30,000 proceeds were divided among his heirs (a pleasant surprise). He lived at the SW corner of Fourth and Main streets (Reibold Bldg.) and did not build in Oakwood for himself for another 15 years.

He bought a half interest in 178 acres in Section 31 of Van Buren Township from Jonathan Winters, who had bought it at a partition sale from the heirs of Col. Robert Patterson. When he defaulted on the mortgage loan in 1872, Winters bought his interest. One hundred acres of this purchase was sold to Adam Schantz and became the nucleus of the Schantz Estate Plat. He retained the tract between Sorrento and Mahrt and north to an alley for his house at 505 E. Schantz, which he built in 1882 and stands as a monument to his vision and his perfectionist standards as a

continued next page

Elementary students take annual tour of the Long-Romspert Homestead

Third graders from Smith and Harman elementary schools tour the Homestead each May. Shown here is one section from Harman School. There are four! Smith School is scheduled to send five sections over! These youngsters were quite astounded (and repulsed) by such things as chamber pots. Of more interest were the narrow closets, the rope beds, the Weazel (for winding yarn – as in “Pop goes the Weazel”), and the police call boxes. They took turns ringing the dinner bell in the summer kitchen. They looked a little skeptical of the tour guide (Harry Ebeling) when he told them that he had attended Harman when there was only one section of third grade!



Haas *continued from page 6*

builder. It is built from stone from the quarry nearby (where the Virginia Hollinger tennis courts are now). The lumber came from local trees. He constructed the stone gate which is still the entrance to Schantz Park and curbing for the street back to his house.

His major interest in Oakwood was the purchase of the 78.95 acres for the original plat of Oakwood with his partners from John Stephens in 1870, giving him a mortgage. There were some minor trades of property, so that the plat contained 82 acres. Patterson Mitchell was his former partner in the tanning business. The investment in the plat created a serious drain on his capital since the lots in the plat were not selling. In 1875, he filed an Assignment for the Benefit of Creditors, and his Assignee (Trustee) sold his interest in remaining lots to Gabriel B. Harman. Stephens (the original owner) Administrator WWA sold Dixon's remaining interest at an execution sale to Harman in 1878. Harman divided the remaining lots with Patterson Mitchell, and they were able to distribute the many lots left among their heirs.

Another of his Oakwood ventures went sour also. He bought 9.93 acres (east of Far Hills between Dellwood

and Forrer Blvd. and back to Schantz) from Mary Brandon. This also got caught up in his Assignment for the Benefit of Creditors, and it was sold in 1876 to a group of investors. They held it for many years before selling it in 1919 to Albert Seibert whose Oakwood Real Estate Co. platted it into Park Hill Section 2 Addition in 1928.

He suffered a serious stroke about 1880 and was restricted to a wheel chair for the rest of his life. He still owned 17 acres which was whittled down to nothing by sheriffs' sales when he died. In 1890, he traded his Oakwood house to Herman C. Mahrt for a house at the corner of Oak and Bonner streets, where he died in 1897 without seeing his dream for a beautiful suburb come true. Out of this dream, he was able to salvage enough to leave each of his two children \$250,000, which was quite a sum in those days.

So it is that “the man who owned Oakwood,” as a newspaper article called him, died without getting credit for the concept although he had invested in some 200 acres of Oakwood before the flood made it an attractive idea.

—by Harry Ebeling

Committee Reports

Preservation— Harrison Stamm Gowdy

The preservation committee is continuing to work on the Preservation Handbook. This project keeps its core group of volunteers busy. It is very exciting to see progress being made, and we hope to have the handbook done by the 2008 Centennial.

The OHS Board is also starting discussion on next steps in the preservation of the homestead. The Long-Romspert Homestead is a unique property in Oakwood. Its history tells the story from our city's beginnings through its rapid growth in the 1920s. Within the homestead are three unique kitchens (c. 1865, c. 1890, and c. 1920). In 2002 and with your support, OHS was able to restore the oldest kitchen known as the summer kitchen. We are currently looking into restoring our newest kitchen which dates from the 1920s followed by our turn-of-the-century kitchen. The restoration of the 1920s kitchen is sensitive for it will serve both as an interpretation space and a working kitchen for OHS functions and our rental unit. We are hoping that as we plan this restoration that you, our membership, will assist through both financial donations and the donation of period pieces including cookbooks, dishes, and more.



THE OAKWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY
1947 Far Hills Avenue • Dayton, Ohio 45419

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Dayton, Ohio
Permit No. 1391

Newsletter Editor: Anne Rasmussen

Change Service Requested
Dated Material

2007
OAKWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OFFICERS

Mark Risley
President

Harrison Stamm Gowdy
Vice President/Secretary

Lisa Kell
Treasurer

DIRECTORS

Harry Ebeling
Mackensie Wittmer
Kjirsten Goeller
Phyllis N. Miller
Shanna Draper
Teresa Prosser

Old Fashioned Family Picnic

RESERVATION FORM
(Complete reservation form & mail with check)

NAME(S) _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____

_____ Adults @ \$11.00 each \$ _____

_____ Children (12 and under) @ \$4.00 each \$ _____

Check enclosed for \$ _____

Make check payable to Oakwood Historical Society
Mail to **Doris Dobeleit**,
1901 Shroyer Rd., Dayton, OH 45419 (293-9747)

RESERVATION DEADLINE
Tuesday, July 10