



The
Oakwood
Historical Society
— *Make History With Us* —

The Historian

Preserving the past, present, and future of the Oakwood Community • Winter 2019

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Message from the President

As my term comes to a close, I reflect on the last two years with pride, marveling at our accomplishments. Our ultimate goal has been and is to establish the Society as a relevant and integral part of the Oakwood community, and I think you'll agree that we have done some amazing work and strengthened our Society for future growth.

Reasons to Celebrate

Oakwood's Holiday Home Tour – Telephone ticket sale inquiries we are currently receiving indicate that by the time you read this message, we will have already celebrated a very successful second home tour. I view our home tour as our signature annual event. It exposes more than 500 people to Oakwood's rich history, and it involves more than 40 homeowners and docent volunteers. The tour epitomizes the Society's goals of educating and strengthening our identity and sense of community. Revenue gained from this event helps ensure our ability to maintain the Homestead buildings and pursue our goals to preserve and promote Oakwood's history. I also relish the spirit of hospitality the tour exudes, a reflection of the care that goes into its planning and execution by so many homeowners and volunteers. It's my firm hope that this tradition will become as integral to our community as our That Day in May, Ice Cream Social, Holiday of Lights Festival, and Scarecrow Row traditions.



Our Partnership with Dayton History – Our second largest fundraiser is Wright at Home - an event we host with Dayton History. The event draws over 500 visitors year after year. Dayton History staffs the tours of Hawthorn Hill, and the Society gives the tours of the neighborhood. Our collaboration, however, extends far beyond this single event.

Dayton History lends its expertise, shares its resources, and looks for other ways to partner with us in more ways than I can succinctly capture in this annual message. I am particularly grateful to Alex Heckman, Dayton History Vice President for Museum Operations and an active Oakwood resident, for the counsel he has provided me during my time as President. We greatly value our partnerships with Dayton History.

Support the Historical Society and Save on Your Taxes

If you are 70 ½ years or older, a charitable contribution to the Oakwood Historical Society made directly from your IRA can help preserve our community's history while likely lowering your tax bill.

Talk to your CPA to learn more about how you can help support the great programs presented by the Oakwood Historical Society.



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HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

**2019
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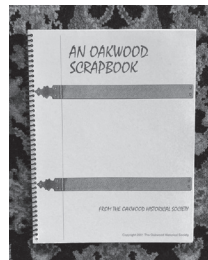
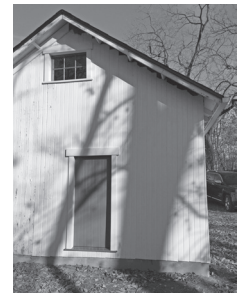
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The Grand Old Dame is Looking Fabulous – The Long-Romsperst Homestead and House Museum is truly a gift for all of Oakwood to enjoy, and we take great pride in preserving this local treasure of, arguably, state and national import. You may not have noticed that the foundation has been repaired, the basement has been waterproofed, new stucco was applied to the south wall, and the exterior has been painted, but we hope you will always view the Homestead as a source of pride in the community and an architectural embodiment of Oakwood's rich history.



House Cleaning – You must wonder why I consider “House Cleaning” to be a significant accomplishment to celebrate. It's because it opened so many new opportunities for us. Last year we did an assessment of everything that was stored in our two basements, the carriage house, and garage. Four roll-off dumpsters, and one lawn sale later we could finally see the hidden potential of our properties. Once the carriage house was cleaned, a volunteer suggested that it would be a beautiful place to host a wedding, baby shower, family reunion, or a class. Now several events are on our calendar. And, after cleaning the two basements, we now have room to archive some of our more extensive collections and to store materials needed for our education classes and social events. The garage will continue to function as a garage, but it will have more room for our tools and equipment. Yes, house cleaning may seem humdrum, but it has opened up new possibilities for our work of preserving and promoting the history of Oakwood.

Carriage House Renovation – In the past, our carriage house has been an underutilized building, serving primarily for storage. We recognized its potential after it was cleaned and started plans for renovation. That was easier decided than done. The back of the building was severely riddled with termites, which meant that we had to exterminate first and then repair the foundation and rebuild the structure. Upon further assessment, we realized that we needed a new roof and, in order to use the building for classes and events, the cracked and buckled cement floor had to be removed and a new cement floor poured. To complete our renovation, we also repaired the front doors of the carriage house. At one time, a small door was cobbled-out, which detracted from the architectural appeal and integrity of the building. Once renovated, this building will be used for future events, classes, and rentals, providing an additional source of revenue for the Society. We are proud to have preserved this wonderful piece of Oakwood's history for future generations to enjoy. We are also pleased that the Board voted to dedicate the newly renovated carriage house to one of the Society's founders, Harry Ebeling (1932-2018).



Return of a Classic – Harry Ebeling was a dedicated historian who documented Oakwood's past in several books and articles. One of Ebeling's books was The Oakwood Scrapbook. Several Board members have suggested that the school district make it required reading, and I agree. Sadly, it is out of print, and the original manuscript was composed on a typewriter. I am pleased, however, to tell you that with the help of some new technology, a

talented Board member, and two interns, we were able to digitize the book. We plan to again publish The Oakwood Scrapbook in the first half of next year. In addition, we were able to compile the other articles Ebeling wrote during the Centennial and prepare them for future publication.

Social Media – What does a historical society have to do with social media? Everything! Between Facebook and Instagram, we have almost 2000 followers. Our fun and engaging posts have included “Then and Now,” pictures of Oakwood homes, “Guess the Antique” (my personal favorite), and “Did you know?” capturing interesting facts about Oakwood’s history. Enjoy these daily posts by friending us!



The Best Darn Newsletter in the Land – Not only are our newsletters attractive and professional, they tell you about upcoming events and relate stories about Oakwood’s past. Our newsletters serve both to keep local history known and document the happenings of now that eventually will interest future generations.

Order in the Archive – You may not be aware that the Society has a physical archive in the basement of the City Building. Harry Ebeling started the archive, and he knew where everything was. Sadly, when Ebeling died, no one else had his ability to locate documents quickly. This summer, we had the pleasure of hosting two interns and a super volunteer who worked tirelessly to create an index for identifying every address, name, and date in the archive. So now, when someone asks us a question about an individual or place in Oakwood, we know where to find the information in the archive.

Digital Archive for Property Preservation – One of the most common requests we get is from homeowners who are seeking information on their properties. Last year we asked the City to provide the Society with a listing of all the properties in Oakwood. We then interfaced city records with county records and downloaded all the available online data specific to each Oakwood address. We now have a digital archive that lists all properties in Oakwood, including platting information and homeowners’ names. Ongoing, the digital file will serve as a repository for the Society to store the pictures and information on individual properties.

Our Partnership with the City – The City has always valued the work of the Historical Society. As continued demonstration of this appreciation, City officials have dedicated space to house the Society’s archive, made public records readily available for our research, and included articles about our activities on the City pages of the Oakwood Scene. We truly appreciate the City’s support and assistance.



Keeping Up with the Times – Historical societies, to remain relevant, must change with the times. This past year our Events Coordinator took some of our traditional events to a new level. Our wine tasting after That Day in May reached a new demographic because it was publicized primarily through social media and offered online ticketing. Classics on the Lawn was advertised on the radio the first time. Based on the success of these events, the Society’s hopes to use similar formats for future events.



A New Series of Classes – Last year, the Society’s Education Coordinator introduced a new series of classes called “Homemade at the Historical Society.” Students learned vintage, but ageless skills such as churning butter, baking bread, hand sewing, and fresh pasta making. Our most popular event teaches participants how to make “Fat Rascals, Butter & Tea.” If you don’t know what Fat Rascals are, you’ll just have to come to next year’s session.

Our Partnership with Oakwood Schools – Every year, the 3rd graders from both Harman and Smith visit the Homestead for a day of educational and fun activities. It is one of my favorite events. I love to watch the children’s faces as they marvel at learning about the “days of old.” It’s also rewarding to see them return as seniors in high school to do service when we often hear them say that our history has left its mark on them. It makes me reflect on how integral the Society has become to off-site school programming. We are pleased to continue helping the District organize and archive its collection of school photos, books, and memorabilia.

OHS Committees
Please get involved . . .

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(Open)

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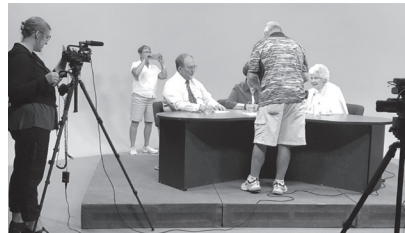
Website

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Our Partnership with the Library – Eight years ago, we asked the Wright Memorial Public Library to partner with us in offering a speaker series focused on the history and culture of Dayton and Oakwood. That was the start of a great partnership. Over the last two years, we've had some fantastic presentations under the umbrella of the Far Hills Speaker Series, from enjoyable conversations with Abe Lincoln and Mary Todd to the riveting stories about Dayton's secret role in WWII. Over 200 participants attended each of our presentations on WWII!



Preserving History – With the success of our WWII presentations, the Society decided to conserve the information by producing professional videos. The Miami Valley Communications Council (MVCC) volunteered its expertise and facility to produce four separate videos: Dayton Code Breakers, Polonium in the Playhouse, George Koval – A Russian Spy in Our Midst, and A Conversation with Project Engineer for the Dayton Project Betty Halley Jones. The videos were burned onto two disks, and we are packaging them together to be sold by the



Society – just in time for the holidays. One highlight of my time as President has been the pleasure of interviewing Betty Halley Jones. Her dedication to our country deepened my resolve to make her stories and the stories of others known through the Historical Society's efforts to preserve our community's history.

Teamwork – None of the above efforts would be possible without an amazing Board and super volunteers. They are extraordinarily talented, fun to work with, and generous to a fault. While they prefer that I don't mention them by name, I honor their wishes by expressing my personal gratitude for their work and dedication to the Society. These volunteers work tirelessly and unselfishly to promote and preserve the work of the Society and the rich history of our community.

Dedicated and Generous Sponsors and Supporters - Most of all, we thank our generous supporters and sponsors who provide the financial foundation for the Society.

Financial Strength – Because of our generous supporters, our timely and relevant execution of fundraisers and events, and our ability to better manage our money, we are more financially sound than we have been in seven years. Congratulations to all who have contributed to making this so.

Talented Slate of Officers for 2020 – When concluding a term of office, one often reflects on what should have or could have been done, lamenting that there is yet so much to do. That is why I am so pleased with the slate of officers for 2020 who bring new talent and enthusiasm to the continued good and important work of the Society.

Thank you for your support, encouragement, and dedication. I will continue to serve on the Board of Directors, so please keep making history with me.

Respectfully yours,

Leigh Turben,
President

Renew Your Membership

If you think your membership to the Society has expired, it probably has. If you are waiting for a kindly reminder, this is it. Please take the time to renew your membership today to celebrate the work accomplished this past year under the extraordinary leadership of President Leigh Turben.

Thanks to our Holiday Home Tour Home Owners and Docents

We are an organization that depends mightily on volunteers, and orchestrating the complexity of the annual Holiday Home Tour requires a full array of these dedicated and generous individuals. This event exposes more than 500 people to Oakwood's history and projects a culture of hospitality that we think is important. Not incidentally, this event has also quickly become the Society's best fund raiser.

The Board of Directors wants to recognize the volunteers who make this tour possible.

Our Organizers

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Irvin Harlamert
Chair Leigh Turben
Co-chairs Tiffany Rubin
and Laura Bettinger

Our Tour Sponsor

Laura Bettinger with
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Tom Morrow
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Roger Crum

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who lent their cars
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A Taste of Wine and Cheese

The Oakwood Florist

Dorothy Lane Market

Wright at Home

Dayton History

Annual Family

Photo Event

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Annual Meeting: New Leadership and Orville Wright Remembrances

Oakwood Historical Society members unanimously elected its Board of Directors at its annual meeting on November 7, 2019. Current President Leigh Turben welcomed the new leadership of Donna Rosenbaum Cooper and promised that she plans to continue “making history” with Donna as a fellow Board Director. Vice President Tiffany Rubin expressed what everyone in the meeting was feeling: “Leigh, we thank you for the unbridled energy and talent you have brought to the Board for the past two years, and we are most appreciative of your leadership.”

The 2020 Board of Directors

Executive Board

Donna Rosenbaum Cooper,
President
Tiffany Rubin, Vice President
Laura Bettinger, Treasurer

Robert Bettinger, Secretary
Linda Pearson, Business Manager

Directors

Larry Bilderback
Carol Holm
Tom Morrow
Leigh Turben

New officers assume their positions in January.



After the serious business of elections, Alex Heckman, Dayton History Vice-President of Museum Operations, added levity to the evening by sharing amusing anecdotes about the Wright Brothers. Heckman is widely regarded as an expert on the Wright Brothers, and when he talks about them, it is as if they are family members.

The first anecdote Heckman disclosed was from a reminiscence of Orville's nephew, Alfred S. “Pekah” Andrews. Pekah shared: “By this time our family again was living in Dayton. Because of Wilbur's death, Orville had lost interest in working and spent a great deal of time with the children. He worked hours building a solid sled on top of two airplane skids while Bus and I impatiently watched. Finally when it was finished, he attached it to his car and took us for a ride of about 20 minutes. What a ride! We were drenched from head to foot with the slush thrown by the car wheels. Our frantic yells could not be heard in the car. No mention of sled rides was made after our return from that one trip.”

The incident, recorded in his Grandfather Wright's diary of January 4, 1913, states matter of factly, “Orville fixed a sled for Horace and Pekah, and took them out riding at night behind his auto.”

The second anecdote Heckman shared is from a reminiscence written by Orville's niece, Bertha Ellwyn Wright Steeper. It reads: “Our daughter, Margaret, was married June 23, 1946 to Robert Edwards and Uncle Orv was asked to the wedding. At seventy-five, he drove the distance from Dayton, Ohio to Lawrence, Kansas and back by himself. The bridegroom's parents were also from Ohio and likewise drove to Kansas. On the way they were overtaken and passed by a fast moving car with Ohio license plates. It was Uncle Orv in his Hudson flying at a low level.”

Heckman confirmed that Orville was notorious for “taking flight” through the streets of Oakwood.



***Make Your Event
Something Special
at the Homestead***



The Long-Romsper House Museum and Homestead is open for tours upon request, and can be rented for meetings, family reunions or picnics, showers, birthdays, or other festive occasions. For information call (937) 299-3793.

Dayton's Secret Role in World War II DVD Released for Sale

The 2018 Far Hills Speaker Series featured four presentations on Dayton during World War II. Hundreds of residents attended the events, and many people requested information from the presenters. Society President Leigh Turben contacted the Miami Valley Communications Council, and with its help and expertise, the lectures were filmed, edited, and burned to DVD disks.

The packaged disks are what the Society regards as just the first of a series of lectures to be known as "Voices of Historical Oakwood." Remarking on the production of these disks, Turben expressed, "We are excited to preserve and make these lectures widely available, and we think the demand for other stories to be told will be great." The process of producing these permanent records perfectly aligned with the Society's goal of capturing, sharing, and preserving local history.

The DVD entitled *Dayton's Secret Role in World War II* includes four separate stories:

Dayton Codebreakers

Historian Jim Charters presents his findings on Dayton's clandestine role in WWII. Charters reveals the remarkable story of Joseph Desch, the WAVES, and the Dayton Codebreakers.

Polonium in the Playhouse

Linda Carrick Thomas, the granddaughter of chemist Dr. Charles Thomas, tells the story behind the Manhattan Project's secret chemistry work conducted in her family's Runnymede Playhouse in Oakwood, Ohio.

The Spy in the Manhattan Project

Mound Laboratories Scientist Dr. Donald Sullenger divulges how George Koval, an American scientist working on the Dayton Project, actually was a Soviet intelligence officer, recognized posthumously as a Hero of the Russian Federation.

A Conversation with Betty Halley Jones

In her own words, Betty Halley Jones discloses the personal sacrifices she endured to work in a top-secret environment leading several atomic bomb detonator development programs during her 34-year career with Monsanto Chemical Company.

DVDs will be available for \$20 each on December 7. They'll be sold during the Holiday House Tour and open house at the Long-Romspert Homestead, as well as online through the Society's website, oakwoodhistory.org



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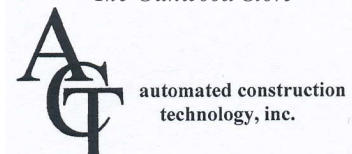
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