



The Historian

Preserving the past, present, and future of the Oakwood Community • Fall 2020

Message from the President

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to permeate every aspect of our lives. For the past seven months, we've navigated our new reality and, as a community organization, the Oakwood Historical Society has sought new ways to continue our mission. Our dedicated Board members meet monthly via zoom. We've made the painful decisions to cancel our Wright at Home Tour and our education programs. While the fall Far Hills Speaker Series will take place virtually, the 2020 Holiday Home Tour will be rescheduled for December 2021.



Tiffany Rubin
President of Oakwood
Historical Society

Despite and because of these adjustments, we are maximizing the time to strengthen our internal operations and complete major structural renovations to our buildings. Through the generosity of member donors, a new customer relations management (CRM) software program has been employed by Barb Miller and Leigh Turben that will significantly improve our ability to engage with and maintain our membership. Linda Pearson and Larry Bilderback worked with Boy Scouts to rebuild the springhouse and finish the carriage house. The distribution of housing blueprints is complete, allowing homeowners to help preserve our history. Other Board members are quietly pursuing projects that align with the Society's mission to preserve Oakwood's notable history.

We miss our interactions with you; we are doing our best to stay positive and productive. This issue of *The Historian* continues to capture your COVID-19 stories. Future generations will want to know how we lived our everyday lives during the pandemic.

Warm regards,
Tiffany Rubin
President

2020 Holiday Home Tour Rescheduled for December 2021



Debra Edwards, the coordinator for the year's Holiday Home Tour, announced that the 2020 tour will be rescheduled to December 2021. "We have seven wonderful homes in the Schantz Park Historic District to feature," said Edwards. "This delay is disappointing for all involved, but the tour will be enjoyed more when the time for social distancing has passed."

You Now Have the Option to Receive *The Historian* Electronically

The Society's new customer relations management (CRM) software program makes it possible for members to receive their newsletter, *The Historian*, through email. Members who prefer to receive a digital newsletter may contact the Society at membership@oakwoodhistory.org or call (937) 299-3793 and leave their name and email address.



Inside

Message from
The President 1

Covid-19: Residents
Share Their Stories .. 2

Far Hills Speaker Series
Fall 2020 6



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experiencing
at this moment
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COVID-19: Residents Share Their Stories

As the coronavirus forces significant changes in our daily lives, *The Historian* continues to capture the ways Oakwood residents adjust to the situations the pandemic poses. The Society appreciates the thoughtful words and observations submitted by residents willing to help us record this history. The Society holds that these stories illustrate this pandemic's impact, allowing future generations to understand the singular event that so changed the way we lived our lives in Oakwood in 2020.



Joe Fulford

Profession: retired WPAFB engineer and Board President, Wright Memorial Public Library

Household: two adults

Recent discovery: Your younger siblings will take unflattering screenshots of you on Zoom when you are struggling to find the correct buttons.

Biggest concern: "Keeping our patrons and wonderful library staff safe while bringing Wright Library back into operation."

Joe is a big fan of the Oakwood Historical Society and loves the partnership the library maintains with the Society to present the Far Hills Speaker Series. In a typical Oakwood sidewalk conversation, like those that take place at the bakery counter at Dorothy Lane Market, Joe was asked by a Society member how the library Board and staff were coping with COVID-19's impact on library operations.

Joe expressed considerable relief that, despite the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown in March and the six-week voting postponement, the new 1.5 mil library operating levy passed with 2/3rds of Oakwood's citizenry in favor—a resounding vote of confidence. He had a hint that the election might go well when, on Friday the 13th, the last day the library was open, the Library experienced a 400%+ uptick on materials checked out—an increase that nearly cleaned off the new arrival shelves in the front reading rooms.

Another example of the library's importance to the community was the resourceful father who knocked urgently on the Library's door at 8:30 am the morning after the Governor had announced schools would be closed for the pandemic; he wanted to know if the library would remain open because he needed to secure a WiFi connection for his 12-year-old child's studies. Such insights into the pandemic's disruption proved critical, and library staff quickly responded with some very "out-of-the-box" service adjustments during those first few days, like moving WiFi access points to extend WiFi access closer to the area of street parking.

The library staff expertly shifted gears while working remotely. The Youth Services Department quickly set up virtual storytimes on Facebook Live and rolled out Dial-A-Story—three-minute recorded tales read over the phone by Wright Library's librarians. As the calls kept coming in, Joe knew the library also had a role in disseminating to the community accurate COVID-related information from the city, county, and state.

After cancelling the regular March 16 library Board meeting, the library conducted the next few sessions virtually for the first time; those went smoothly. As one might imagine, Joe and the Board, as well as Director Kristi Hale and Fiscal Officer Mary Hopton, spent a lot of time discussing impacts on patrons, operations, finances, and personnel. Like many business owners struggling to get

answers, Joe and other Board members were briefed on fiscal scenarios based on thoroughly analyzed but still uncertain projections.

Although the delayed election and pandemic issues required unprecedented effort, Joe said he is proud that Wright Library has managed to serve as a forum for discussing issues related to racism and social justice, another significant issue that has received new attention at this same time. Over the last two years, the library has hosted authors for book discussions and helped patrons discuss Islamophobia, the challenges of being Jewish, and the difference between being “not racist” and “antiracist.” The staff displayed an exhibit outside the closed building, created in part by the Smithsonian Institution, called “Choosing to Participate.” It inspires dialogue, engagement, respect, and participation in our community as part of the library’s vision of enriching minds and transforming lives—an effort more important than ever in Oakwood as it learns more about the question and debate around bias in contemporary society.



Will Fleming

Profile: 12 years old and member of Boy Scout Troop #236

Household: two adults, two children

New discoveries: Cooking is hard but fun, wood has to be soaked to weave and bend it, river water can be purified two different ways.

Will wants to earn his Boy Scout Eagle Award and knows that that will require years of work and the meeting of many requirements. To that end, he signed up for the virtual scout camp sponsored by the BSA Miami Valley Council. Oakwood Camp Director Tracy Cunningham encouraged campers to pursue merit badge requirements, sleep outdoors in tents, and prepare their own food. It wasn’t the scout camp experience Will had envisioned. “I’d rather have campouts in person and be away from my family,” Will confessed. “I like to work more with other scouts to cook and stuff. It was hard to do some of the merit badges by myself.”

Will wasn’t exactly alone. His parents allowed up to three additional scouts to visit “Camp Fleming” at different times throughout the two-week period. Each scout had his own tent and work area, and each boy took responsibility for making his own meals. Over thirteen scouts participated. Will describes a typical camp day: “Activities revolved around meals. As soon as I woke up, I started a campfire, logged into a virtual flag raising, and then watched videos that taught me scout skills such as knot tying, outdoor cooking techniques, fishing tool use, bicycle maintenance and kayaking safety. To meet merit badge requirements, I wove two baskets and a camp chair, and presented a virtual cooking demonstration for other scouts. In late afternoon, scouts returned to prepare dinner and joined me for scooter races, a ten-mile bike ride, water balloon competitions, a 5K run, and campfire activities.”

When asked about how he deals with pandemic life, Will was clear. “It’s hard. It’s confusing. My life and everything feels unorganized. I hate wearing a mask. It is annoying, sweaty, and makes me feel uncomfortable. I don’t like it at all and I hope it ends soon. I like seeing my friends and being outside with them. But it is hard because I feel like I can’t see everyone and I can only be with a small group of people.”



Bahar Omrani

Business Owner: Bahar & Reza Couture

Observation: People are generous with their resources.

Women who have interacted with Bahar Omrani are immediately taken by her “can do, we can make this work” attitude. They come to her haute couture shop in Oakwood because they want something to fit perfectly. Bahar’s business is to imagine, design, and solve figure-focused problems, which is why when the pandemic surfaced Bahar proactively sought ways to apply her resources where they were needed.

She wanted to use her machinery to supply protective gear for medical personnel.

Contacting the Dayton Health Department, Bahar learned the greatest need was to repair the elastic on 75,000 N95 masks that had been in storage. Finding the elastic posed the first problem. Bahar posted a video on her social media to notify her almost 13,000 followers to secure elastic inventories.

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Please get involved

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The next challenge was organizing the mask distribution to the many volunteers willing to use their equipment to replace the elastic vital to the mask. Her objective was to restore the gear before COVID-19 cases peaked.

Bahar downplays her ability to mobilize such an extraordinary feat. She shares only that the experience allowed her “to meet and get to know new people.” She repeatedly mentioned the help she received from her professional network: Maria Gossard Designs, the Theater Department at Sinclair Community College, and the Dayton League of Women Voters. “It was gratifying to find a significant way to make a difference when everything seemed suddenly devastating,” concluded Bahar. Editor’s note: Bahar gifted the first masks she made to her business neighbors, the employees at the UPS Store.



Carol Enns

Profession: elementary school teacher

What you have learned: The pandemic required me to trust the development and decisions of an adult child.

A person who naturally exudes positivity, Carol ably adjusts to the unexpected. Still, she wasn’t exactly prepared for her very sensible and responsible daughter, Lauren, to meet a boy in September, become engaged in April, and get married in July. “Planning a wedding takes more than a year,” thought Carol when Lauren explained on Mother’s Day that she wanted to get married in early July.

Lauren explained there was no good reason not to get married. She and Curtis were sure of their commitment to one another. They both had completed their educations, were professionally employed, and shared a common faith. COVID-19 made being together almost impossible. They both had roommates who dallied with social distancing, there were no public places open for them to meet, and their jobs in hospitals and schools put them at risk to each other. Being married would allow them to be together, to live together as they wanted.

Through Zoom, Curtis asked Lauren’s parents for their permission and blessing. “Two Zoom conversations and many questions later,” Carol laughs, “Curtis had the go-ahead and planned ‘the ASK’ Lauren anticipated was coming.” “It pleased my husband and me that Curtis proposed at the conservatory so we could be present to celebrate,” shared Carol.

Lauren knew everything depended on making decisions that would allow their immediate families to be safely present. Carol explained that the ceremony took place in the groom’s parents’ backyard. Seven tables were spaced for the grandparents, the pastor couple, the health-compromised brother, and several other family units. Guests received face masks, hand sanitizer, and matches for the fireworks to follow dinner. A family friend, gloved and masked, served appetizers and food. Carol describes it as “a wonderful day for families.”

Getting the maid of honor on-site proved challenging. Lauren’s sister, Kristie, went back and forth with Delta Airlines for days before deciding it would be best to drive four hours from Winnipeg, Canada to Fargo, North Dakota, and then catch a domestic flight to Columbus. She came knowing she would face a two-week quarantine at an Airbnb under the Royal Canadian Mounted Police’s eye upon returning, but that didn’t deter her.

Carol was resigned to their plan for a stay-at-home honeymoon in their new rental house. Still, she feels her prayers have been answered that her daughter would marry a man who would “love God and her daughter, and that the two would care for each other with His love and purpose.” COVID-19 just tested their resolve.



Tom Jackson

Profession: retired WPAFB, Senior Scientist, Hypersonics

Household: three adults

Greatest pandemic regret: After working for 43 years, I retired so I could visit my grandchildren and travel, and now I can't.

The day he received a handwritten, personalized note from a Jehovah's Witness, Tom was surprised. He isn't part of that faith community, yet the person writing the letter addressed him by name. The Witness wrote, "I'm writing to you because I am unable to visit you in person, and I'd like to share something encouraging." She then cited several passages from Psalms and the book Revelation. Finally, she cautioned Tom to take care and stay healthy and left her contact information.

Days later, Tom discovered that several of his neighbors had also received these same handwritten letters. "Although I am not generally comfortable discussing my faith beliefs with people whom I don't have a relationship," said Tom, "I was impressed that the writer had devised a pandemic workaround to continue her evangelization efforts." Tom wonders if the new normal for Jehovah's Witnesses will be to send letters in the mail rather than revert to their tradition of walking door-to-door to pray with potential believers.



Betty Hughes

Occupation: clinical mental health counselor

Household: two adults

Quarantine reading list: White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism by Robin DiAngelo, To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee, and articles about the 13th Amendment's impact.

Betty has written poetry since she was six years old. As is typical of poets, she is introspective. Betty writes about her daily experiences as a way to reflect upon and clarify her thinking. It's entirely new for her to share her poetry beyond a very close group of friends, and it was at their urging that she posted her first poem on Facebook. Betty conceded only because of her clinical experience. "I'm used to listening to people who feel discombobulated inside, and it's my job to help them put into words what they feel so that they can begin to make sense of it," she explains. "My friends made me realize that the way I was processing quarantine, social unrest, and racism issues through my poetry could potentially give voice to others." Making her poetry public is a leap; she desires only to help others, hopefully giving words to what they are feeling without offending people who think differently. "I am humbled," shared Betty, "when a person finds my voice helpful to his or her experience." Two poems Betty posted in July follow.

Be a Warrior

"I cannot wear a mask," you say,
 "It makes my freedom go away."
 But when our soldiers go to war,
 And wear full gear with masks and more,
 To buy that freedom that you tout,
 You cheer and wave your flag about.
 And when your doctor wears a mask,
 You never think it some strange task,
 But merely see it as your due,
 When they are taking care of you.
 So don't you see? It's our turn now.
 The frontline came to us somehow.
 So stand with courage. Wear your gear,
 Be battle proud. Bring victory near.

Untitled

Again, I must, re-tout my street,
 The wondrous people you can meet,
 And how I wish the world as whole,
 Could find a street that feeds their soul.
 So would that we could have a neighbor,
 As a luscious, diverse flavor,
 Lending to the stew of life,
 How I wish a world's that rife,
 With joy of vast diversity
 A taste that ends adversity.
 A joyful melding, cultures shared,
 A willingness of souls laid bared.
 I relish differences as life,
 Our differences should not breed strife,
 It's not bland sameness that I seek,
 I want to know all "other" speak.



Maggie McLaughlin

Household: two parents, three sisters

Profession: rising junior at Miami University

Greatest worry: being away from her elderly grandfather and falling behind on schoolwork and skill-building

On March 13, Maggie learned she had to leave Miami University immediately. What seemed like just a news story soon became an unwelcome and unsettling reality. As a studio art major, Maggie saw the remainder of the semester as an impossible feat following the complete transition to online, remote learning: “I didn’t have the motivation to do anything. I missed my friends, and I felt like I wasn’t learning anything. If I couldn’t be in the studio, what was my purpose?”

For her ceramics class, Maggie had to write two research papers instead of sculpting with a pottery wheel. Maggie certainly doesn’t blame the teachers for the lackluster end to her sophomore year. She still believes the school administration made the right choice, and she was even teased by her friends for showing an “excessive” level of concern about the virus.

Following the semester’s conclusion, Maggie searched for a summer job and was hired as a banquet server. Quarantine has allowed Maggie to resume various hobbies, including roller skating and other forms of exercising. The recent death of George Floyd motivated Maggie to become more conscious of racial inequity, and she has begun reading books by black authors. While Maggie misses the structure that comes with a routine, she is grounded by taking evening walks with her sisters and joining nightly Zoom calls with her friends.

Maggie desperately wants to go back to school: “I want to take studio classes and create again.” However, Miami recently announced the suspension of face-to-face courses until mid-September, leaving her with a difficult, albeit necessary, decision. She knows that if she returns to campus, she will not be able to visit with family members who have pre-existing conditions that put them at an increased risk. Maggie decided to take her classes online and remain at home for the fall semester. She doesn’t know where she will spend the spring semester, but her optimism makes her hope a vaccine solution will allow her to return to campus.

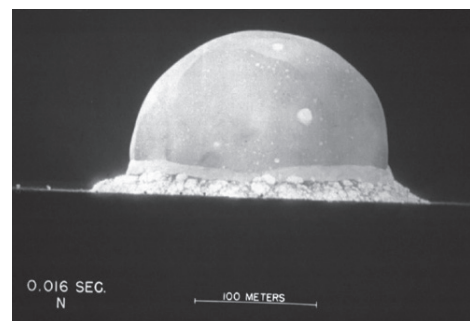
Far Hills Speaker Series – Fall 2020

The Oakwood Historical Society and Wright Memorial Public Library co-host the Far Hill Speaker Series with Oakwood and Dayton history presentations. These presentations are on Sundays at 2:00 p.m. and are accessible on a computer, tablet, or phone via Zoom. Once you register, you will receive a link through email to join the presentation. The Speaker Series went virtual last spring, and that was a well-received solution. If you need assistance registering, contact Wright Library at (937) 294-7171.

The 75th Anniversary of the Atomic Bomb: An Overview of the Manhattan Project in WWII – September 20

Register: <https://www.wrightlibrary.org/FHSSatomicbomb>

Testing of the first nuclear fission device took place in Alamogordo, New Mexico, on July 16, 1945. The following month, the atomic bombs “Little Boy” and “Fat Man” were detonated over Hiroshima and Nagasaki Japan, which led to Japan’s surrender and the end of World War II. Dr. Bob Bowman will summarize how the Manhattan Engineer District designed, developed, and produced these devices in under three years from the initial theoretical concepts for a fission chain reaction. This highly classified project involved thousands of workers, numerous supporting organizations, and the construction of major facilities in several locations across the United States. Dr. Bowman will discuss the accomplishments made by key individuals and some more obscure contributions by collaborating entities like the Dayton Project. Finally, Dr. Bowman will present brief descriptions of the science and engineering issues considered for each atomic bomb type.



Dr. Bob Bowman serves on the Board of Directors for the Mound Science and Energy Museum Association and is also active in several historical societies. Holding a Ph.D. in chemistry, Dr. Bowman was employed by Monsanto at the Mound Laboratory for 15 years.

The Old Barn Club and the Golden Age of Hills and Dales Park – October 18

Register: <https://www.wrightlibrary.org/FHSShillsdales>

John H. Patterson, the founder of the National Cash Register Company, owned hundreds of acres of land in Van Buren Township. In founding Hills and Dales Park, he used that land to recreate “the perfection found in nature and provide a place for city dwellers to enjoy the beautiful scenery.” Today Patterson’s natural legacy is one of the area’s most beautiful and historical parks. Dr. David Schmidt will present an overview of the most significant events of the establishment and early history of Hills and Dales Park, trace its distinguished equestrian history, and share stories about the people and events that took place there in relation to the legendary Old Barn Club. The club served as the hub of the park’s early social activities and made use of one of the park’s nine, Adirondack-style camps for picnics and parties during the early 20th century.



Dr. Schmidt is the Director of Undergraduate Programs in the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences at Wright State University. He is a consulting member of the Oakwood Historical Society and Chairman of the Society’s Far Hills Speaker Series.

How Oakwood Grew, Plat by Plat, 1872–1956 — November 15

Register: <https://www.wrightlibrary.org/FHSSOakwoodPlats>

By studying historical maps, reading through old deeds, and carefully examining county records, Society Board member Tom Morrow has established himself as an authority on how Oakwood evolved from a village to a city. He has tracked Oakwood’s growth, plat by plat, from 1872 to 1956. This presentation will interest residents who want to know who owned the development where their house was built and when their homes were constructed. Morrow has pursued this interest because he knows homeowners in Oakwood take pride in the history of their homes. Tom Morrow is a professional engineer, a 34-year resident of Oakwood, and a Board member of the Oakwood Historical Society.





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