

Centennial Reflections

Essays from the Oakwood Historical Society

A history of Oakwood's 'Fourth Estate'

By Harry G. Ebeling

"The Fourth Estate" is a rather dated reference to the press that has not survived the test of time. Nevertheless, Oakwood has had coverage from the print media since 1912. As is usual, the first publication owes its origin to John H. Patterson who sponsored The Oakwood Village Record in June 1912 and was the behind the scenes publisher for eighteen months until October 1913. Its editor was Frances Parrott and its stated purpose was "Published Monthly in the interest of Progressive Village Life." That was before the term progressivism was defined and became a popular movement.

It was a large (13" x 16") 12 page paper printed in rather small type on nice quality glossy paper at 5 cents a copy or 50 cents a year. It looked suspiciously like NCR factory publications and, when its successor started in 1917, it admitted that John H. Patterson had paid half the cost.

In the first issue, the postmaster pleaded with people to give their addresses as Rural Route 12, Dayton, Ohio, to avoid confusion with a town of the same name in northern Ohio – obviously before zip codes.

Subsequent issues pleaded for votes on the new school and later for voluntary subscriptions to help with construction. A wonderful issue has a full page chart describing the organization of the Oakwood Efficiency League. Later the editor suggests that Oakwood assign street numbers to houses and added that we could still use names to identify them if we chose to do so.

In February 1913 a series started on "Families That Have Influenced Oakwood" which is the source of much of our learning. By April 1913, it was reporting on Oakwood's participation in the flood, which became a turning point in our growth. By summer, the hand of Patterson was revealed in a campaign for the city manager form of government. The last issue reported on Oakwood's first Fair.

The Oakwood Record, published from March, 1917, to August, 1918, was a 6"x 9" pamphlet size paper again in small type and on glossy paper. Starting anew on a "broad co-operative basis" by a publication committee, it recognized Mr. Patterson's city manager idea. Published monthly at five cents each or fifty cents a year, the front page had little sayings in a box such as "Take the world as you find it," and "The whole world is our neighbor."

The Oakwood Record

"There is a Time
for Everything"

Wood Magazine Published Monthly
at Wood Village, near Dayton, Ohio.

July 1917

"Let Us Pledge
Ourselves to
Service."



This portrait of an Oakwood family, made some years ago, is re-published as a charming reminder of the younger girlhood of Miss Dorothy Patterson, whose marriage to Mr. Noble Brandon Judah of Chicago took place this spring at Far Hills. But the picture's chief value lies in the cheerfulness, youthful or mature, which radiates from each face. Cheerfulness in these times has a positive value which is emphasized in this issue of the Oakwood Record.

Volume I No. 5

Price 5 Cents

Articles were by such local contributors as Anthony Haswell an eighth grader, Walter Oelman, Mayor, and Frances Parrott, former editor of the Village Record. Articles ranged from poems, food types necessary for life, to the boy's camp movement and Paul Lawrence Dunbar. In the fall of 1917, there was a picture of volunteers wrapping bandages for World War I at the Oakwood (Harman) School. Supported by advertising from familiar names such as Lowe Brothers Paint, Kramer, Hadelier Hardware, The Schantz Estate, Shafor Plat, and The Rike-Kumler Co., its well-written articles tell much about the growth of Oakwood at an important time and is an invaluable resource for the historian.

The Oakwood Tidings was published briefly in the Depression by The Oakwood Publishing Co. with Clarence DeMarcus as Managing Editor. It came out every Friday at 2 cents a copy and \$1.50 per year. This was a full size newsprint paper which stated that it had 3,000 guaranteed circulation. It was heavy on school news including sports

coverage, church notices and Depression items, such as the appeal to residents to pay delinquent taxes. A citizens committee chaired by Mayor E.B. Tizzard had been formed to collect back taxes which amounted to \$453,199. The annual city budget projected a \$67,725 shortfall.

It used news wire material to fill in and carried U.D. sports events. The seventh Oakwood-Fairmont Thanksgiving Day football game, of course, took up considerable ink. The city adopted an ordinance forbidding teenagers under the age of 15 to operate a car. Mayor Lowell Rieger ended 19 years of service and Mayor E. B. Tizzard was elected. Regular advertisers included Drummond & Sloan and Oakwood Groceries, Schnitzel-Bank Bier Garden, Mills Tavern, and Coffee Pot Restaurant. A rare advertisement shows the interior of Hirsch's Grocery which is now The Oakwood Club. One of my favorites is the picture of the city police and fire department personnel and equipment at their spring inspection.

Starting in 1932, The Oakwood Press, an 11" x 17" newsprint weekly, was originally a free newspaper supported by advertising much in the style of the Dayton Shopping News. During World War II it started charging five cents a copy. It was published from 41 Park Avenue in the end unit of John Fletcher's commercial building. It was printed in a large cement structure behind it, which was purchased by the city in 1973. Its publisher was Gene Whitaker, whose claim to fame as far as I was concerned, was his yellow Cord convertible automobile which he parked out front. Thanks to the generosity of a former board member, we are the owners of a set of microfilm copies of this publication, which contain twenty-two years of Oakwood history.

The Oakwood Press took an aggressive stand on issues of public interest and carried news of school and athletic events as well as church and park happenings, honor societies, P.T.A. and women's interests. Classified ads filled several pages and it was the official publication for proposed ordinances.

The one thing which claimed universal readership was the column on the front page, "Fiddlesticks" by Fagin Fogg, a.k.a. Ralf Kircher. This tongue in cheek series which extended from 1932 to 1955 after the paper was sold to the K-O Times, could be counted on to garner the interest of our population right to the end. More of this another time.

News and features concerning Oakwood related matters is also carried by the Kettering-Oakwood Times, a publication started by local residents James and Susan Rike McConnaughey in 1956. Carrying some of the features of The Press, such as "Fiddlesticks" for a brief period, It was sold in 1978 and continued under the ownership of James Striplin. It was later sold to Amos Press, Inc., and in 2000 to Brown Publishing Co., its present owner.

In 1992, Oakwood resident, Dolores Winkler started The Oakwood Register. Originally a pipe dream of her late husband, Ralph H. Winkler, she started it up from the former office of the Skywrighter, which was published for the employees of Wright Patterson Air Force Base. It continues to grow and prosper, attracting increased advertising and readership over the past 15 years and featuring local news items of interest to, for and about the Oakwood community.