

Centennial Reflections

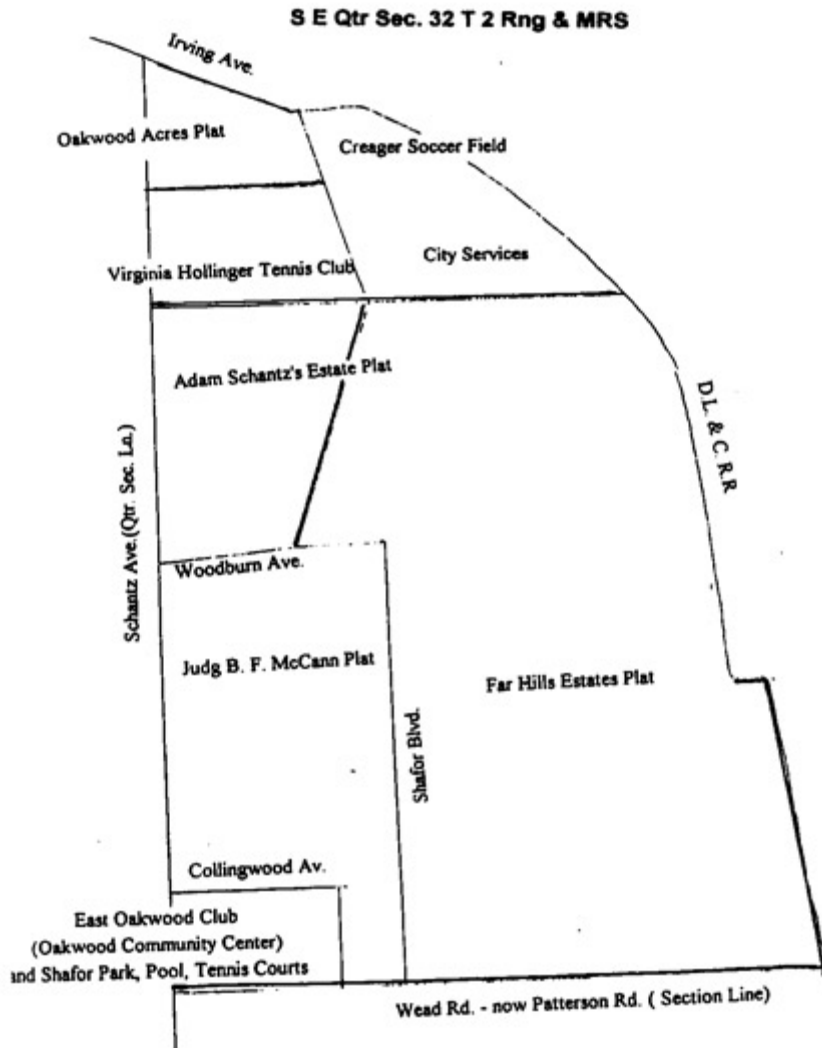
Essays from the Oakwood Historical Society

Northeast Oakwood a study in complexity

By Harry G. Ebeling

There is a corner of Oakwood which is entirely too complicated to trace completely. So I will summarize. (See An Oakwood Scrapbook, pp. 39-40)

Thinking back to what we have discussed recently, you will note that the northeast sector hasn't been addressed. Remember that Col. Robert Patterson owned over 2,000 acres of Montgomery County by patent from the United States. His very careful will left this area to his son, Francis, who sold 26 acres to Thomas Brown, who in turn sold it to the State of Ohio for the Asylum, and he sold 71 acres to John Wead. Patterson sold 80 acres to Robert Wead, who sold 15 acres to John Wead, giving him control of everything west of the railroad, east of what is now Shafor Blvd., and south of what is now Irving Avenue to Wead Rd., which John H. Patterson had renamed Patterson Rd. in 1909.



Robert Wead sold 19 acres to Schmidt & McHenry who had a sand and gravel operation. Then by a series of conveyances through Brockschmidt, it was sold to Jefferson Investment, who sold the east part to the city, and the west part to the Board of Education in 1929. The city stored materials and equipment there until it created Creager Field for soccer. The new service building was built on that land in 2000 and named for David Foell, former Oakwood City Manager.

The part west of Shroyer Road was sold in 1949 to The Virginia Hollinger Memorial Tennis Club. What did the city or the school board have in mind for this land? The club sold 4.25 acres to William Green who platted it in 1954 to create Shafor Circle.

John Wead's 1893 will left the remainder of the railroad/Irving Avenue property for the benefit of his daughter, Nancy Davis. In 1913 her children sold 8.226 acres between Woodburn Avenue and Hollinger, and Schantz Avenue and Shafor Blvd., to Will I. Ohmer. In 1919, Ohmer traded it to the Adam Schantz Estate in order to get Lookout Drive and the Schantz lookout tower area for his home. (See Schantz story) The estate platted it into Adam Schantz's Estate 2nd Subdiv. In 1923.

The Davis heirs sold 16.684 acres to Judge B. F. McCann who platted it in 1920. This acreage sat between Woodburn and Collingwood Avenues, and from Schantz Avenue to Shafor Boulevard. Some of the acreage at Schantz and Patterson was sold to Walter

Shafor, who then sold it to the East Oakwood Club. The sales brochure states that the opening of Shafor Boulevard and Schantz Avenue will make this "the highway for the whole country south of the city." The investors behind this venture were J. Edward Sauer, Mary F. Legler, Walter Shafor, Adam Schantz, Jr., McCann, and John H. Patterson. Pretty heavy stuff!

The Davis family was finally forced into a Partition action and the remaining 53.74 acres between Schantz Avenue and the railroad, from Patterson Road to the service facility, were sold in 1919 to John H. Patterson. He conveyed a strip to the city to continue Shafor Boulevard north, creating the winding road down the hill to Irving Avenue. After his death, his children sold it to Grant Nichols who platted Far Hills Estates in 1928. One has to wonder what plans John H. had for this area.

Mentioning the property trade of Adam Schantz with Will I. Ohmer brings up the subject of the Schantz Lookout Tower. It had been built by Adam as a sales promotion for the lots in Schantz Park. The 50-foot tower was built on un-platted land at a point 250 feet above the city center and featured picnic tables and playground equipment around the base. Visitors gained access via a set of steps from the east end of Schenck Avenue, or by a road from the bottom of the E. Schantz Avenue hill that ran up Lookout Drive to the tower past a large spring-fed pond. Once at the top, day trippers and locals could enjoy the view of the entire city, as well as the lots for sale below. It was a popular spot for about eight years, but as we noted previously, Prohibition affected both beer sales and Adam's dream of building a house there for himself.



Will I. Ohmer, a U.D. graduate, was somewhat of a mechanical genius, and was the founder of the Recording and Computing Machine Co. He was a brother of John F. Ohmer of the Ohmer Fare Register Co. His company employed as many as 9,000 employees and became successful in WW I building precision equipment. He was in a position to have great plans for this spectacular site when he agreed to build a house on it within four years after his 1919 purchase. Well, the ways of the world can be harsh, and his plans changed. With the end of the war. He built a summer home around the base of the tower, naming it Gracemont for his wife and daughter. In the 30's it was rebuilt, scaling down the tower, as a year round home. A circle driveway which was open to all went all around it and took advantage of the view. Built on five levels with a tower study, it had seven bedrooms and servants' quarters. During WW II it was rented, as were many Oakwood homes, as quarters for Wright-Patterson AFB officers.

In 1928, Ohmer platted the area into Gracemont with 10 lots and his house on a 4.5 acre tract but never sold any lots. In 1949 his daughter replatted it, sold all but the house, and created Lookout Ridge, a private road. In 1956, the house lot was replatted into Sec. 2 creating five lots and the cul de sac on Lookout Drive. The house was torn down and the late Tony Wenzler built another, making full use of the view that Adam Schantz Jr. had used for the tower back in 1913 for selling lots.

Many city maps still show Lookout Drive going through from E. Schantz Avenue to E. Thruston Boulevard but it was never built, much to the consternation of delivery truck drivers, because of the sheer impossibility of the difference in elevations. The street has been vacated and the narrow strip reserved for the steps from Schenck Avenue quieted. The view is still fabulous but the terrain below is different.