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Holidays at the Homestead

Once again, the Long-Romspert Homestead is ringing in the holiday season on Sunday, December 14th from 1:00-3:00 pm with a community-wide open house. The newly restored first floor will be decorated in the styles befitting its three different time periods, and there will be refreshments for everyone's enjoyment. There may even be a fire in the Summer Kitchen and warm apple cider to take the nip out of the air! Join us...and bring a friend!

Victorian Winter at the Homestead

Following along in the new series of children's programs, which began this summer with *Summer at the Homestead*, education coordinators Linda Pearson and Lisa Kell have planned a holiday program for elementary-age children. Scheduled for those empty days between Christmas and New Year's, there will be three sessions of two and a half hours each. Entitled *Victorian Winter at the Homestead*, these sessions will be held on Tuesday, December 30. This will enable Linda and Lisa to accommodate a larger number of children and a

wider age range than was possible in the summer session. Activities include a craft (orange pomanders spiked with cloves), food making/eating/cleanup, Victorian games, and some practice with Victorian etiquette. If there is enough time, further craft and story activities are also planned. The fliers were recently distributed at both elementary schools and posted at the Wright library. If response to the winter program is as well-received as the summer program, spot will fill quickly! For more information, please call Linda at 648-9702. See page 5.

2008 Final Restoration report

by Phyllis Miller and Teresa Prosser

The restoration of the Homestead's first floor is officially completed! We did it!...and it's a huge WOW!

In just under ten months, the entire first floor of the Homestead and the entire Summer Kitchen have transformed into the beginnings of a legitimate house museum designed to serve the educational needs of the entire Dayton area. The story that the Homestead tells is three fold: the story of the people who called the Homestead home; the story of Oakwood's history and development; and the larger story of our Country as it moved from the post-Civil War rural culture to the early twentieth suburban culture.



The Homestead's Summer Kitchen

We timed the completion of the first floor to coincide with the summer festivities of Oakwood's Centennial and publicly debuted the Homestead's transformation with two events in July. First, there was the private preview open house held from 4-7 pm on Friday, July 25th with Harrison Gowdy, Mackensie Wittmer, and Phyllis Miller serving as docents and Teresa Prosser and Harry Ebeling serving as hosts. It was a great success with Mayor Judy Cook, Dayton

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Committee Reports

Preservation

Harriston Stamm-Gowdy—

The Preservation Committee spent most of last year supporting other projects. Members worked on the restoration of the Homestead along with assisting with tours and the interpretation plan of the first floor.

We also provided research and wrote articles for the historical society's quarterly newsletter as well as doing research on individual house histories for Oakwood citizens. These house histories generate donations and memberships for the society along with expanding our knowledge of Oakwood's past.

The Preservation Committee was also active in the tour of John Gray's home. The tour was a great success, and we appreciate Mr. Gray's generosity and support.

Members of the committee also played an important role in the City's centennial celebration by working on the film *Oakwood: Our Home on the Hill* (currently for sale). The film is 30-minutes in length and expands on the story told in the book *Oakwood: The Far Hills* (re-printed this year and currently for sale). The film places Oakwood into its larger historic context as a first-tier Progressive suburb and brings that story full circle with the New Urbanism movement.

The Preservation Committee is planning to spend 2008-2009 working on the preservation handbook, an architectural history and guide to basic preservation techniques.

A note from the president

What a year! That just about sums it up. I reluctantly assumed the President's mantle another time because of The Centennial of

Oakwood and since I was already committed to the program in several capacities. But I could not have dreamed of and received any better support from our board than if I had designed them from scratch.

What a great group to work with! It seemed like we all fit like parts of a puzzle to accomplish a program of activity that was better than we had been able to do for many years. There were enough new faces with enthusiasm for tasks that fit their skills and just the right mix of experienced hands to see that we stayed on course.

There were several education/social occasions to start us off in the winter as we ramped up our fundraising efforts toward restoration of the Homestead. Then we had a great kick-off fundraiser thanks to the support and generosity of John Gray donating "The Farm" for a tour. A couple of education programs by out-of-town speakers enhanced the spring offerings.

By summer, our two-year effort to produce the made-for-TV program on a CD was introduced at the high school and has been very popular. The City is giving us the profits from the sale of the CD, and the CD's are selling for family and Christmas gifts. Our archives were available to the skilled writers of the Centennial Book which was produced by the City with support from NCR and community businesses. This is also available for family and Christmas gifts. We reprinted a Centennial Edition of our

history book, *Oakwood: The Far Hills* now available again after exhausting our original 1983 supply.

Although the picnic had to be cancelled due to scheduling problems, we made good use of the yard and Summer Kitchen with the enthusiastic support of our new board member Linda Pearson and her family. We have had two youth programs which have been great successes and have given us the confidence to plan bigger and better ones. Linda's son and Scout Troop 101 put the finishing touch to the Homestead with a Herculean effort to complete the brick walk around to the front, thus making the several tours for groups more hospitable.

By far the banner event of the year was completing the main floor restoration of the Homestead which we introduced in July at special open houses. We could not have done it without the participation of our members and friends who contributed generously. But the real work was done by Phyllis Miller and Teresa Prosser who conceived, planned, and executed the telling of the Long-Romspert story so that history is alive and well in the community. We have already started the restoration of the upstairs with their leadership...and with generous financial support of the unforeseen but much appreciated gift of the late Emil Miller and a grant from The Dayton Foundation.

I just keep rattling on! Thanks to you all...and please read the Committee Reports and see what other things have made this a year to remember!

Harry G. Ebeling, President

It's time!

As 2008 is coming to a close, it's time to renew your membership for 2009! Your membership not only entitles you to the Quarterly Newsletter but also to the satisfaction of knowing you are helping to support the work of your historical society, the keepers of our history. So, won't you take a minute or two and renew your membership now? You'll be glad you did! Please just complete the membership form on the back of this newsletter and send it in today. Thank you!

Meet the new board members!

While the majority of the 2008 Board is continuing from this year, two members are brand new! So, we would like to introduce to you Linda Pearson and Alex Heckman...

Linda Pearson and her family arrived in Oakwood from northern California two years ago. She had a minor in history in college and graduate work in Special Education research which built on her interest in child development. Over the years, she has worked at UCLA in educational research with a dozen professional publications and various grant proposals under her belt and in Massachusetts coordinating special education programs. Since the arrival of children, her work has been as a volunteer, including behind the scenes theater and costume work to support her daughter's interests as well as designing and leading numerous scout programs for both her son and daughter. This background in education, research, and children's programs dovetails well with her new role in the Oakwood Historical Society as the coordinator of children programs.

Alex Heckman is the Director of Education and Museum Operations for Dayton History, Montgomery County's official historical organization. A Dayton native, Alex is a local history enthusiast and the author of numerous articles and pamphlets about Carillon Historical Park and its exhibits. He received his Master of Public Administration degree in 2005 from the University of Dayton. He has appeared on nationwide broadcasts on both The History Channel and The Travel Channel. Alex and his wife, Emily, joined the Oakwood community in 2007. They have a 15-month old son.

Oakwood: The Far Hills

The popular standard history of Oakwood, the centennial edition, is a reprint of the 1983 publication with an introduction spanning the 25 years since it was first published. The original book is in demand but no longer available. Many residents have a copy in their libraries and have bought them for their children and families as a priceless memory of life here.

This reprint, available in soft cover, is offered by **preorder order only**. Prepaid orders will be taken by the Oakwood Historical Society for delivery in April/ May 2008.

Mail your check for \$25 to:

Oakwood Historical Society
1947 Far Hills Ave.
Dayton, OH 45419

Indicate "The Far Hills" on the Memo on the check

Add \$2.00 for Postal Delivery

You will be notified when they can be picked up

Enclosed is my check for \$ _____ for _____ copies of the reprint of *Oakwood: The Far Hills*. Please reserve in my name.

() I will pick up at the Historical Society. Please notify me at the phone number below:

() Mail to me at the below address. Additional \$2.00 for postage is added

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Committee Reports

Education

Linda Pearson—

This year the historic society continued the practice of providing tours of the Long-Romspert Homestead to all of Oakwood's third grade classes. The tour requires marshalling the forces board members in various roles. Board members are now able to wear new historic costumes appropriate to the time periods they portray and to interpret daily life in early Oakwood to the students. The tours provide brief sketches of daily life during the three primary time periods of the Homestead's construction and expansion.: circa 1865, 1908, and 1920.

In addition, discussions began in late March about the possibility of organizing a summer program at the Homestead for Oakwood students. The goal was to make the history of their town more personal and approachable and to increase children's knowledge of how people lived in earlier times. This effort was organized by volunteers Linda Pearson and her college-age daughter Sarah, recently arrived in Oakwood from out-of-state with an interest in local history. The decision was made to begin with a small summer program, while building networks to involve as many people and organizations in the community as possible so that this could become a community based and community responsive program.

Preparation for the first *Summer at the Homestead* program involved research in the Society's archives, history reference books, via historical internet sites, and visits to local historical interpretive sites, including a meeting with the education coordinator and historical

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Election of 2009 officers and board members

On November 19th during the Founders' Day Dinner and Annual Meeting, the general membership voted in the 2009 Officers and Board Members. Congratulations to all!

Committee Reports

Facilities and Grounds—

Mark Risley and Marilynn Sheehan

Thanks to the efforts of expert gardener, Jamie Sheehan, the grounds of the Long-Romspert Homestead have enjoyed another year of adding to Oakwood's aesthetic beauty. The gardens bloomed brightly throughout the spring and early summer. A long, dry spell toward the second half of summer was kept at bay by Jamie's watering regimen. The garden beds are now at rest for winter and a colorful, warm autumn has helped volunteers in keeping the grounds in order late into the season.

In September, strong winds from the remnants of Hurricane Ike brought down many limbs, but there were no major losses to the trees or damage to the property. Clean-up took several days, and power was out for nearly a week, but we fared much better than many other Oakwood residents. The trees at the Homestead are being reassessed for any further possible attention.

A change in tenants at the adjacent rental house brought in a family from Colorado who is enjoying the home and Oakwood's schools, services, history and architecture.

Lastly, a huge "thank you" goes to Scout Troop 101 for extending the brick walkway from the side of the house to the front. This enhances the access to the Homestead entrance for tours and visitors from the parking area at the rear of the property. We realize this was a very involved and strenuous project and those efforts are greatly appreciated.

Next year, there are more improvements planned for the Homestead site, including a new sign! Stay tuned!

Officers

Teresa Prosser – President
Mackensie Wittmer – Vice-President
Harry Ebeling – Treasurer
Harrison Gowdy – Secretary

Board Members

Phyllis Miller Lisa Kell
Linda Pearson Alex Heckman
Marilynn Sheehan Mark Risley
Karen Fleming Kjirsten Goeller

Restoration report, continued from page 1

Foundation Barbra Stonerock, Dayton History Gwen Haney, members Jim and Marilynn Sheehan, donor Tom Metz, and councilmen William Duncan and Steve Byington (along with wife Laura) in attendance. The community-wide open house on Saturday, July 26th from 10-2 was an equally huge success with close to 100 people (many never having been to the Homestead before) visiting the Homestead. Serving as docents were Mark Risley as the "context" setter/greeter in the 1865 parlor, Phyllis Miller in the 1865 part of the homestead, Harrison Gowdy in the 1920 part, Kjirsten Goeller in the 1908 kitchen, Harry Ebeling in the 1908 kitchen and then in the 1920 living room/dining room, and Marilynn Sheehan in the summer kitchen. Ed and Evie Hermann and Everett and Margie Yowell served as front porch greeters. Arlene Graham from Fiberworks also did spinning wheel demonstrations. During both events,



1920s H. Romspert office. 2nd floor restoration underway!

comments were highly positive both about the restoration work and about the gallery exhibit. Teresa, the events organizer, sends a sincere thanks to all who helped make these events the success they were...and with special thanks to Phyllis Miller for her guidance and talent and to Karen Fleming for doing the beautiful calligraphy on the donor acknowledgement.

Work has already begun on the second floor, and we are again well ahead of schedule for completion. Because we are a community educational resource, we also plan to hold open hours each month during which time people can stop in and tour the Homestead, its outbuilding, and its site. More details will follow!

The Committee would like to once again thank everyone who contributed financially and who contributed their time and talents to make this dream a reality. Thank you!



The Homestead's Summer kitchen

Victorian Winter at the Homestead

crafts! games! etiquette! chores! eating!

Where: Long-Romspert Homestead
(home of Oakwood Historical Society)
1947 Far Hills Ave, Dayton Ohio 45419
Activities will take place in the 1908 Kitchen

Date: Tuesday, December 30, 2008

Cost: \$12

Time: Three sessions: 9:00 -11:30 a.m. or
1:00-3:30 p.m. or 5:00-7:30 p.m.

Who: Children Grades 1 through 5

Phone Contact: Linda Pearson in Oakwood at 648-9702

Mail Registration to: Oakwood Historical Society, 1947 Far Hills Ave,
Dayton OH 45419

This activity is not school sponsored nor affiliated with Oakwood City Schools. Permission to distribute or display material does not imply agreement of its contents by either the administration of the school, the Superintendent, or the Board. Registration for

Victorian Winter at the Homestead

Name of Parent(s) _____

Name of Child/Children _____

Grade Level(s) _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____

Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

Email of Parent(s) _____

Please prioritize choice of session: ___ 9-11:30 ___ 1-3:30 ___ 5-7:30

You will be notified by phone and email of your assigned session.

Committee Reports

Programs and Events— Kjirsten Goeller

The year 2008 has been quite a roller coaster ride for the OHS. We began in March with a successful program called "Helping Build America: The National Road" presented by Glen Harper from the Ohio Historical Society Preservation Office and followed up in April with the annual pot luck dinner. May got started with "Drive-Ins and Ranch Houses: Preserving the Recent Past". This too was to be hosted by Glen but an associate Barb Powers graciously filled in and made the evening a treat for all who attended. Let's not forget the wonderful John Gray event at his home, The Farm. The event was a major fundraiser for the Homestead's restoration. The weather could have been better, but The Farm was spectacular. Thank you, John! As summer rolled in, the Centennial events took center stage. Our "Picnic at the Homestead" event was taken off the calendar and will hopefully make a grand return in 2009. July was a big month for not only the Society but also the Community: The first phase of the Homestead's restoration was completed, and the community tours followed. Thank you to all who had a hand in this amazing feat. The Homestead has never looked better, and we eagerly await the completion of phase two. October came quickly, and the "Keeper of Memories" scarecrow went up. He came down early but was thoroughly enjoyed by those who caught a glimpse. If you missed him, he is also making an appearance in the Oakwood Register! November brought the Founders' Day Dinner and Annual Meeting being held at the Dayton Country Club while December will be celebrated with the "Holidays at the Homestead".

Committee Reports

Archives and Acquisitions— Harry Ebeling

Oakwood now has a place to display history through the use of artifacts, appropriately displayed in the Oakwood Historical Society's renovated Gallery. We can plan rotating exhibits with the backdrop of professional panels telling the history of Oakwood in ten year increments. We also have the start of a Gift Shoppe with our books, CDs, and memorial bricks as well as free literature and handouts available for our guests. Several Oakwood citizens have donated interesting and appropriate items that we use throughout the Homestead and summer kitchen as those on the Restoration Committee continue their work to accurately stage the rooms and tell the story offered by the Homestead. Through the generosity of Dayton History, we have been given many of the original items from Ethel Romspert's household furnishings. They have been gathering dust downtown since 1985, but they have been returned to their natural home. This has allowed us to tell the story of the family and the lady who made the Homestead possible. We have further consolidated our archives to the basement of the new city building and moved our office to the second floor in Harry (Hab) Romspert's office. As mentioned in the President's Report, we are appreciative of a grant from The Dayton Foundation which makes displays and telling of the Homestead story professional looking. You will enjoy the self guided tour being designed now for early completion. By next summer, we will have a house museum you will be proud of and will be a major educational asset to our community and beyond!

Centennial CD – available for holiday giving

Many of you have seen or heard about the CD prepared for the Centennial this summer. Maybe you have seen it, but if not, you should take advantage of the opportunity to get one for yourself and as a gift for family and friends. It traces the history of Oakwood from 1909, and before, and is professionally produced. Thanks to the support of NCR and the City, the sale profits go to the Oakwood Historical Society!

Many hours went into the preparation of this once in a lifetime CD that can be viewed with your family over the coming holidays or sent to them for their enjoyment in the years to come. Under the leadership of historical society vice-president Harrison Gowdy (chair of committee), Mackensie Wittmer and Harry Ebeling, with help from other community members, provided history details, archival photographs, and first-person interviews...culminating in countless hours editing and fine-tuning the script. The CD was outlined by Prof. Roy Flynn of the University of Dayton and narrated by Carl Day, well-known local broadcaster.

Copies may be purchased at the City Building/Cit Manager's Office on 30 Park Ave. for \$10 each. Get them while you can!

Education report, continued from page 3

costuming directors at Conner Prairie in Indiana and more locally-held meetings with several former and/or current staff at Dayton History and Carriage Hill. In addition, community resources for spinning and other handcrafts were located and consulted. Reproduction and other needed materials were located, borrowed or purchased, and prepared, including a few costumes for the participants to wear. The Oakwood High School theater department was also able to loan costumes.

The final result of this effort was a three morning program, *Summer at the Homestead*, held MWF June 23, 25, and 27. Fliers were distributed close to the end of the regular school year to all students entering third and fourth grade in the fall. Responses were immediate, and the class was full with several asking to be put on a waiting list by the time of the first class day. Fifteen students attended. In addition, several board members and community students and adults assisted with the hands-on delivery of the program.

Activities included daily chores (dishwashing, helping prepare and cleanup after food), an ongoing craft activity (small braided and sewn

rugs), a school house day including anecdotes from the memoirs of students in the early one room school house in Oakwood and historical fiction books on loan from the Wight public library, manners, behavior and responsibilities of children in 1865, laundry with a washboard, and a variety of outdoor simple games. Food was appropriate also to the time period. Students peeled and cored apples, ate fresh baked bread with apple butter, churned butter, and made ice cream. Emphasis was in learning through hands-on activities.

One immediate result of the publicity received by the summer program was a request to do a short, one-hour program for a group of Tiger Cub Scouts in September. We were able to pick and choose from program elements developed over the summer and deliver a Saturday morning session to a group of first grade boys. For this endeavor, we also located and purchased some more active period appropriate outdoor toys to engage the wiggles and large motor play interests of this younger age group. Feedback from this group was also excellent. At this point, we can accommodate similar groups with appropriate planning and advance notice.

45 Park Avenue: farm, library, and shop



...as a farmhouse

The small, white building standing across from the large city building on Park Avenue has a long and valuable story to the history of Oakwood. It started out as one of the first farm outbuildings in Oakwood. Today, it serves as the home to The Little Exchange, a gift shop, which is one of Oakwood's longest businesses in operation.

John R. Fletcher owned a sizable parcel of land covering what is today West Dixon Avenue to Park Avenue. In 1924, he donated and moved a small house to Park Avenue for the purpose of the Oakwood Library.

The library had started in the private Briar Hill residence and became a project of the Oakwood Efficiency League in 1913. The group solicited book donations from individuals and listed all 100 books in The Oakwood Village Record paper. The library moved into Harman School and was open to children and adults for a few hours a week from 1916 to 1923. In 1924, the library moved into the home on Park Avenue. Called the "Library House" or the "Park Avenue Library," the small house at 45 Park Avenue served as the library until 1939 when the library moved to its present location.

The Oakwood Board of Education still owned 45 Park Avenue and rented the house out for several years. First, it served as the home for Mrs. Thomas Russell (Helen), a widow that taught at Oakwood High School. Then it was a series of beauty shops from 1939 to 1951. At this time, Park Avenue was a bustling shopping district with goods and services for families and a popular lunch destination for Oakwood High School students. The few blocks along Park Avenue included a Kroger Grocery & Baking Co., the Oakwood Drug Store, Williams Market, a bakery, and Peterson's confectioners.

From the 1930s to 1950s, the Junior League Shop on First Street in downtown Dayton sold new and gently used items with proceeds supporting their charitable work. The volunteers would travel to major US cities and buy unique housewares, antiques, and décor to sell to Dayton customers and bridal registries. The store was eventually closed most likely due to tax reasons and expenses. However, four Sustaining members (or veteran, non-active members) started a new shop in Oakwood separate from the Junior League.

In 1950, three women, Mrs. George H. Mead (Elsie), Mrs. George Haig (Ruth), and Mrs. Walter S. Carr (Dotty), opened a small charitable gift shop in Mrs. Carr's home on the corner of Katherine Terrace and Runnymede Road. Called The Little Exchange, the home shop was in violation of a zoning ordinance, and the shop closed after the Christmas holidays in January 1951.

Mrs. Mead acquired 45 Park Avenue for the shop and generously donated the property and a sizable endowment fund. After extensive renovations, the Shop officially opened on Park Avenue in 1951 with thirty-one volunteers and two paid employees. Upstairs, a Nearly New Shop, featuring clothing on consignment, was operated by an additional twenty-four volunteers.

By 1958, Mrs. Mead was elected the first President of the Children's Hospital Society of Dayton whose goal was to build a children's hospital in Dayton. At this time, The Little Exchange board members chose to direct all of the shop's proceeds to the future children's hospital starting that year. Nearly ten years later, the first patients were admitted to the new Barney's Children's Medical Center. The store not only donated proceeds but made specific pledges over the years for special projects, such as an elevator, the respiratory department, neo-natal unit, and many more areas of need.

Over the course of fifty-five years, a number of volunteer leaders directed paid staff, major renovations, and daily operations. In the 1980s, volunteers instituted a Christmas Open House which to this day raises a significant amount of their holiday revenue. Today, the shop features specialty items and a bridal registry. It also provides an opportunity of a number of Oakwood residents to volunteer service hours and connect with others who would like to support the Children's Medical Center.

For more information on the history of the Wright Memorial Library visit: <http://www.wrightlibrary.org/about/history.htm>

For more information on the history of The Little Exchange visit: <http://www.thelittleexchange.org/History.aspx>



...as The Little Exchange today.



THE OAKWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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www.oakwoodhistory.org

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Oakwood Historical Society Membership Form

Membership Categories (please check one)

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Sustaining \$100.00

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Date: _____

First Name: _____

Last Name: _____

Spouse: _____

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Oakwood Historical Society Mail to: 1947 Far Hills Ave, Dayton, OH 45419