



1947 Far Hills Avenue  
Dayton, OH 45419  
(937) 299-3793

## Early Dayton Automobile Manufacturers

--Mark Risley

In the early 1900s, automobile manufacturing was like “dot coms” were in the 1990s. Everyone wanted to get in on the horseless carriage which seemed to be an invention that was here to stay. Being on the cusp of inventiveness, Dayton was sure to be a real player in the automotive industry. By the time of the Great Flood of 1913, there were several automobile manufacturers in Dayton. In time, only a few survived nationwide.

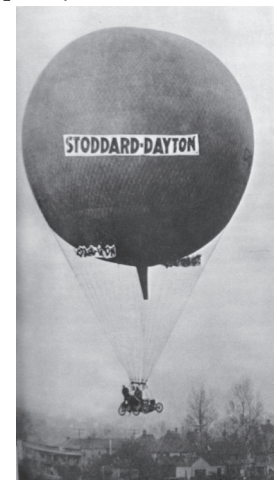
Though based in Detroit, Maxwell Motor Company had two plants in Dayton. The Dayton Electric Car Co. showed that the electric power idea as an early concept for automobiles. The electric starter and other innovations were invented here and were applied to all makes of automobiles throughout the world.

Two auto manufacturers stood out in the Dayton industrial market. They were the Dayton Motor Car Co. and the Speedwell Motor Car Co.



Manufacturer John Stoddard had a desire to build exceptional cars in Dayton. He had become wealthy in the 1800s making linseed oil products, agricultural implements and bicycles. He also had interests in early street rail systems in Dayton. Wanting to get involved in the burgeoning automotive industry, he sent his son Charles to Europe to study car manufacturing techniques there. They soon established the Stoddard-Dayton line of automobiles in 1904. Their goal was to build very high quality runabouts, touring cars and limousines (these had 28 coats of paint!).

One of the first to sell Stoddard-Dayton motorcars was Carl G. Fisher of Indianapolis. He featured them as one in a line of cars at what was the first automobile dealership. Fisher was the consummate pitchman. As a promotional stunt in 1908, he attached a Stoddard-Dayton runabout to a helium balloon and flew it over Indianapolis. After it landed, he *seemed* to drive it back into town (the car on the balloon had its engine removed for weight purposes and an identical car was driven out and used for the return trip). Fisher also helped establish the Indianapolis Motor Speedway in 1909. It was probably no coincidence that a Stoddard-Dayton won the first race there. In 1911, a Stoddard-Dayton was the Pace Car for the inaugural Indianapolis 500 race and served again in this capacity in 1913 and 1914. Fisher went on to design the Dixie and Lincoln Highways and was essential in the development of Miami Beach, Florida.



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Website: [www.oakwoodhistory.org](http://www.oakwoodhistory.org)

E-mail: [info@oakwoodhistory.org](mailto:info@oakwoodhistory.org)

2014  
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## Message from the President

After a long, cold winter and a seemingly short spring, it's nice to enjoy the summer months. At The Homestead, the flower gardens are intentionally planned to provide colorful blooms throughout the warmer months. Painting and other outdoor maintenance continues, often with help from Oakwood students and Boy Scouts.

Programs and events are a major part of the summer activities for the Society. In May, the annual "A Taste of Wine and Cheese" enjoys growing community participation and success as it has become an annual tradition.

Three years ago, the "Classics on the Lawn" Car Show and Open House event was initiated and has already become one of the area's favorite events for vintage automobiles. The Far Hills Speaker series continues in conjunction with Wright Memorial Public Library. In September, "The Mound Builders" will end this season's speakers series with a look at Ohio's ancient inhabitants, their cultures and their earthen structures.

The youth garden programs have also been successful as young people learn to raise and make their own food while gaining an understanding of how life was lived from primitive hearth to modern kitchen. The children's summer history camps have also been a hit.

Watch our website for updates on all of the activities of The Oakwood Historical Society. The interest, participation and support of our membership and the community help to keep the Society and its programs going. Our thanks to all who contribute to these efforts.



# WANTED: NEW BOARD MEMBERS

--Harrison Gowdy

The Oakwood Historical Society is growing! We continue to evolve and grow as an organization and need your help! The Historical Society has lots of opportunities! In addition to our emphasis on preserving and sharing local history we are also a small business! We need help advertising, promoting, retaining sponsorship, managing our finances, and growing our volunteer base. We also have lots of outreach opportunities that need leadership! Our garden spaces continue to grow and our children's gardening program has opportunities to grow and expand with your help. We would also like to develop more programs using our wood burning stove, working loom, and more. But we need volunteers interested in helping make these dreams a reality. So, if you are looking for a creative and rewarding way to get involved in your community – look here! We would love to hear from you! Contact Harrison Gowdy at 937.416.5991 or stammgowdy@sbcglobal.net

**Get more info on our website or give us a call!**

www.oakwoodhistory.org • 937.299.3793

## And now a few words from our summer intern:

*--Mahaley Evans*

Going into my very first internship (which was actually my first experience working with any historical organization) I practically had no idea what to expect. I clearly knew I'd be doing primary research, but to what extent that research would be, I was clueless. The project that I assisted the historical society with was a unique one, I'm told, because of the degree of independence I was given. In the long run, I'm extremely grateful that I was let alone to sit at the library with a pile of city directories and eight tabs of Ancestry.com open on my computer, attempting to figure out just why a certain Harry Hatcher was listed at a completely different residence than the one I just had confirmed him at 5 minutes before. And I did figure it out. Thanks to the guidance of my two supervisors Jacquie Housel and Mackensie Wittmer, I was able to piece together the information they needed and come up with a coherent result. The independence I was given will no doubt prove useful in my future endeavors.

Now onto my research and the "coherent result" that I speak of. Using census reports, city directories, and personal histories, I compiled a list of original homeowners for various houses in the Maysfield and Houk plats. These two plats make up the neighborhood called Maysfield, which includes those streets that I researched during my internship – Southview, Haver, Maysfield, and Rubicon roads, along with portions of W. Thruston Boulevard and Kramer Lane.

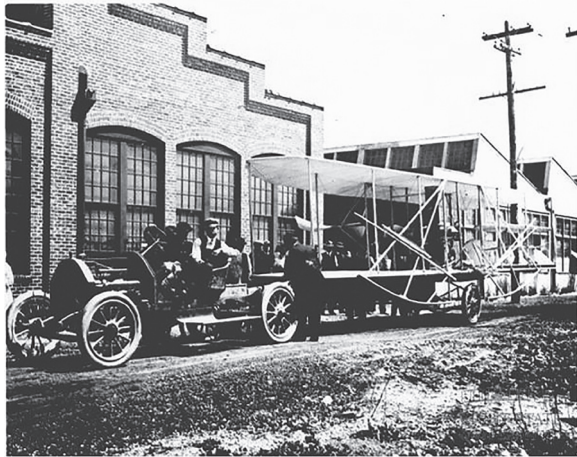
The residents of this neighborhood primarily moved from small homes in Dayton to larger and more impressive houses in Oakwood during the 1910s and 1920s, a time when the town was considered to be countryside. To uncover the stories behind these families, I visited the Dayton Metro Library, Dayton History's archives, and Wright State's archives and special collections, but spent the majority of my time at Wright Memorial Library and Oakwood's own city archives.



After the organization and further research by board members, the final product will be a walking tour of the Maysfield neighborhood, similar to those that the historical society has organized in the past. I am eager to continue my involvement with this project as I hope to participate in the presentation of the walking tour when the time rolls around. This project not only gave me a chance to work on something that I found interesting and (believe it or not) fun, it allowed me to establish connections within the profession, meeting people and absorbing all the advice that they offered. I can't thank the Oakwood Historical Society enough for giving me a beneficial and practical experience in the vast world of doing historical research.

Mahaley Evans, Miami University '16

## Early Dayton Auto - *Cont*

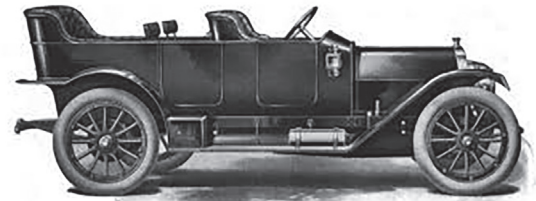


In 1909, Stoddard started The Courier Car Company to produce a more economical line of automobiles apart from the Stoddard-Dayton line. By 1912, Stoddard-Dayton had produced 25,000 cars. The company was then sold to the United States Motor Company which went bankrupt in 1913. Its Dayton interest was sold to Maxwell, which was then sold to Chrysler. This division eventually became Chrysler Airtemp in Dayton, specializing in air conditioning systems for homes, businesses and automobiles.

Having made his fortune, John Stoddard passed away in 1917 after serving on the board of the Miami Conservancy District which had established the Dayton area flood control system that is now used throughout the world.

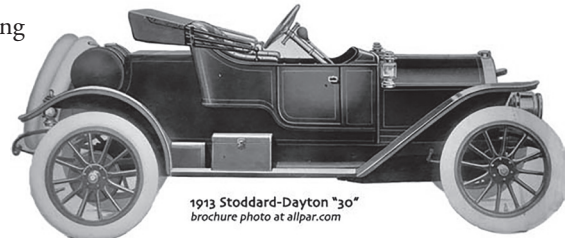
Pierce Davies Schenck was a metalworker who had an interest in cars, leading him to start the Speedwell Motor Car Co. in 1907. This was the first car company to use the term, "sedan" in its product description. In 1910, Speedwell provided temporary space in their factory for the manufacturing of airplanes by The Wright Airplane Co. for 10 months until the Wright Brothers' nearby factory building was completed. By 1914, they had built over 4,000 cars. However, Speedwell Motor Car Co. found that damage to the factory, its machinery and inventory from the Great Flood of 1913 in Dayton was too costly to overcome. The company folded and Schenck went on to become president of The Dayton Malleable Iron Company. He later founded The Duriron Company, thriving on the demand for metal products in WWI and beyond.

Schenck commissioned renowned architect Albert Pritzinger to design his large home at 414 Oakwood Ave. near "Five Points". Schenck Avenue in Oakwood's Schantz Park Historic District is named after him. Pierce Davies Schenck died in 1930.



Fine examples of many early automobiles manufactured in Dayton, including the Stoddard-Dayton and Speedwell, can be seen on exhibit at Carillon Historical Park.

On Sunday, August 24th, The Oakwood Historical Society will host their annual "Classics on the Lawn" Car Show and Open House from noon to 4:00 PM at The Long-Romsperg Homestead House Museum, 1947 Far Hills Ave. Admission is free, "The Homestead" will be open for tours and a lunch by Central Perc European Café will be available for a nominal fee. The car show will feature quality classic and special interest automobiles from museums, collectors and private owners from around the Dayton area. Come and enjoy the cars, the food and one of Oakwood's oldest and finest homes.



## The President & the Aviator

--Mark Risley

Autumn 1940. War is raging in Europe and Asia. America's involvement seems eminent.

Concerned by World events, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt is surveying the readiness of America's military by visiting installations throughout the country.

Wright Field near Dayton, Ohio is foremost in research and development for the U.S. Army Air Corps. On October 12th, FDR comes to Dayton and meets his old presidential running mate, former Ohio Governor James M. Cox with whom Roosevelt ran as a vice presidential candidate in 1920. President Roosevelt visits Dayton's VA Center, Wright Field and, that evening, would address a Courthouse Square crowd estimated to be 100,000.



*Rare photo of Wright (in right foreground) departing the presidential motorcade at Far Hills Ave. and Patterson Rd. in Oakwood*



*FDR, Wright and Cox reviewing personnel at Wright Field.*

But, no visit by such a high dignitary would be appropriate without paying homage to Dayton's most famous citizen, the co-inventor of the airplane and Wright Field namesake, Orville Wright.

In the afternoon, FDR gathers Cox at his estate, "Trail's End", in what is now Kettering. They then pick up Wright at his stately home, "Hawthorn Hill" in Oakwood. These famous three proceed in the presidential car, a 1939 Packard V12 open convertible, to Wright Field, east of Dayton. There they meet with Major General George H. Brett for the inspection tour. After viewing the air base and its personnel, they were to return to Dayton for dinner at Cox's "Trail's End".

Rumor has it that because of their political differences, Wright, a Republican, refused to break bread with Democrats Roosevelt and Cox and contentiously left the presidential motorcade somewhere along Patterson Road to walk home. However, then 14-year-old Oakwood resident and eyewitness, William C. Kamp, recalled that their parting was very cordial with Wright shaking hands with his fellow Daytonian and the American President before partaking of a healthy walk home from the corner of Far Hills Avenue and Patterson Road.

It is known that Orville Wright was a, somewhat, reluctant celebrity and would either avoid or abbreviate public appearances when he could. It is likely that Wright merely wanted to return home after a day in the limelight.

Regardless, on that early autumn day in 1940, Oakwood's most famous resident made an impression on presidential history.



*FDR and Wright share a light moment.*

**OHS Committees**

Please get involved...

**Archives & Aquisitions**

Harry Ebeling  
293-0611  
hebeling@aol.com  
&

**Cataloging**

Lisa Kell  
charybdismom@yahoo.com

**Education**

Linda Pearson  
648-9702  
lindapinoh@gmail.com  
&

Lisa Kell  
charybdismom@yahoo.com

**Events**

Board members (by event)

**Facilities/Grounds**

Mark Risley  
294-2537  
therisleys@ameritech.net

**Facilities/Interior**

Phyllis N. Miller, consultant

**Membership**

Leigh Turben  
lturben@woh.rr.com

**Newsletter**

Lisa Kell  
charybdismom@yahoo.com  
&  
Zachary Kell  
pixelshiftdesign@live.com

**Publicity**

Nicole Crawford  
305-0221  
nclcrawford@yahoo.com

**Research & Outreach**

Harrison Stamm Gowdy  
643-4075  
stammgowdy@sbcglobal.net  
&

Mackensie Wittmer  
291-2831  
mwittmer@gmail.com

**Website**

Joan Milligan  
479-1000  
milligan\_joan@yahoo.com  
&  
Mackensie Wittmer  
291-2831  
mwittmer@gmail.com

## History in the Making

### Oral History Project Update

--Harry Ebeling

We have been updating our miscellaneous taped and recorded interview files which keep a record of Oakwood and its management as reported by various City Officials and employees, as well as involved volunteers. They are a living history as seen from the perspective of those who "make things work".

This year we have brought our file up to date from the Centennial years when we recorded many residents and City employees to include: Norbert Klopsch, City Manager; Jay Weiskircher, Assistant City Manager; Judy Cook, Former Mayor; Carol Collins, Garden and Recreation Director; Alex Beberis, Police Chief; Kevin Weaver, Service Director; and Mark Risley, Past President of the Historical Society. We have plans to interview Mayor Richard Duncan and Past President Harry Ebeling.

### The Oakwood Farmer's Market: Kids, Dogs, Laughter and Sunshine!

--Leigh Turben

What could be better? On July 26, The Oakwood Historical Society joined a gathering of local growers, vendors and artisans for a beautiful day at the Farmer's Market! Amongst the homegrown fruits and vegetables, and homemade sweets and crafts, we added a bit of nostalgia by bringing some of our antiques to the market. Passers-by could guess their origin and, of course, we were there to give out hints and add a bit of history. Also on display and for sale were copies of our published books, walking tour guides, DVDs and ornaments - all highlighting the unique history of Oakwood. For the children at the market, we hosted a craft table where kids of all ages could make braided fabric necklaces, bracelets, headbands or key chains. We couldn't have done it without the help of our great student volunteers - Thank You!!

If you missed us at the July Farmer's Market, don't fret. We are returning! Please join us on August 23, and try your hand at guessing the antiques! We'll have a whole new collection to amaze and delight you! Come and enjoy!

### Nifty Kid Stuff!

--Mackensie Wittmer

The society organized a small scavenger hunt this summer around Oakwood. It was designed for kids 5-10 to visit four locations around town and find a hidden clue. At the end of the hunt, the kids learned a secret code word to claim a prize at the City's Ice Cream Social on August 17. The secret code word was "Desch" - for Joseph Desch who lived on Greenmount and led the team to break the WWII Enigma code.

In August, several elementary and junior high children will help create a public art installation at Wright Memorial Library. The kids will melt clear plastic and spray paint it in a variety of colors. Then the plastic "bowls" will be mounted onto a tree in the front lawn. "There is nothing particularly historical about this project," says team leader Mackensie Wittmer. "However, kids have historically liked to play with fire." The tree will represent Seattle artist Dale Chihuly's work currently on display at The Dayton Art Institute.



## Announcements

**On Sunday, August 24th,** The Oakwood Historical Society will host their annual “Classics on the Lawn” Car Show and Open House from noon to 4:00 PM at The Long-Romspert Homestead House Museum, 1947 Far Hills Ave.

Admission is free, “The Homestead” will be open for tours and a lunch by Central Perc European Café will be available at a nominal fee. The car show will feature quality classic and special interest automobiles from museums, collectors and private owners from around the Dayton area. Come and enjoy the cars, the food and one of Oakwood’s oldest and finest homes.

Due to limited parking, guests are encouraged to park on side streets or enjoy a summer afternoon’s walk or bike ride to “The Homestead”.

**On Saturday, September 13th at 2:00 PM,** The Oakwood Historical Society and Wright Memorial Library will present “The Mound Builders” as the last presentation in this year’s Far Hills Speaker Series.

When early explorers came to the Ohio Valley region, they found numerous, mysterious earthen structures in the forms of mounds, enclosures and effigies. This program explores some of these earthworks and the ancient people who built them, their reasons and fates. It will also touch on new discoveries, some of the geological aspects of the areas in which the earthworks were built and recent theories on the first people to reach the Americas.

The presentation will be given at Wright Memorial Public Library by Mark W. Risley, president of The Oakwood Historical Society. Mark has given previous presentations on various topics from aviation and meteorology to Oakwood architecture and The Great Flood of 1913.



*Picture from 2013 show.*



## 2014 Calendar of Events

**August 24, 12:00 p.m. – Classics on the Lawn** - Our annual car show, Long-Romspert Homestead

**September 13, 2:00 p.m. – Far Hills Speaker Series** - *The Mound Builders*, Mark Risley, Wright Memorial Library

**September 28 & October 5 – Annual Photo Shoot** - Personalized session with local photographer Betty Cochran, Long-Romspert Homestead

**October 4 – Walking Tour of Schantz Park Historic District** - A unique walking tour of our first subdivision

**October 26, 2:00 p.m. – Far Hills Speaker Series** - *Public Transit in Oakwood from Early Days to the Present*, Tom Morrow, Wright Memorial Library

**November 29 – Holiday Ornament Workshop** - Make old-fashioned ornaments for display at our Holiday at The Homestead event, Long-Romspert Homestead

**December 7 – Holiday at the Homestead** - Enjoy vintage holiday decorations, hands-on crafts, and festive food and drink, Long-Romspert Homestead

You can find out more by calling 299-3793, or visit [www.oakwoodhistory.org](http://www.oakwoodhistory.org) for details on upcoming events. Join us!

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HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

1947 Far Hills Avenue  
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| _____ Family _____     | \$35.00  |
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