



The
Oakwood
Historical Society

— *Make History With Us* —

Historian

Preserving the past, present, and future of the Oakwood Community • Fall 2016



The Miami Valley's Water Heritage

—David Schmidt

Travelers arriving at the Dayton International Airport are greeted by signs and video displays promoting the availability of large amounts of fresh groundwater in the Dayton area. These advertisements, which are sponsored by the City of Dayton Department of Water, state “Dayton is Ready for Business” with 1.5 trillion gallons of fresh water available for business and industry. A similar campaign by the Dayton Development Coalition asserts “The Dayton Region is H₂Open for Business” and features a regional map identifying where wells can draw at least 1000 gallons per minute of groundwater with no slowdown in flow. This promotion of local water resources is targeted to businesses that rely on large quantities of fresh water for their operations, such as those engaged in aquaculture (the farming of fish and other animals and plants for food) and the production of pharmaceuticals, beverages, paper, electronics, and other manufactured goods.

The availability of large amounts of groundwater in the Miami Valley area is due to the unusually large size of the region’s aquifer system. This valuable resource is framed by a large network of deep channels that were cut into the local bedrock by an ancient river system. Later, during the “Ice Ages,” enormous glaciers transported into the region large quantities of sand and gravel that buried most of these ancient stream channels. This fortunate sequence of geologic events produced the local buried-valley aquifer system, which is supplied by rain and surface water that becomes purified as it percolates downward through sand and gravel and into the aquifer. The Miami Valley’s aquifer system is one of the cleanest and most abundant sources of fresh groundwater in the country.

The availability of large amounts of groundwater is just one example of how the Miami Valley’s unique water resources have shaped the history of the area. As glaciers melted back during the Ice Ages, they released torrential flows of water that established much of the region’s modern surface drainage system. Dayton was settled at the confluence of two of the area’s modern rivers, the Mad and Great Miami Rivers, and also on a floodplain. When the federal surveyor Israel Ludlow laid out Dayton in 1795, local natives – probably of the Shawnee tribe – warned him that the area became inundated with water from time to time.¹ Indeed, during the 1800s Dayton had several floods, including a major one in 1866. This was followed a few decades later by the devastating flood that struck Dayton and areas downstream during March 1913.

In the face of the 1913 Flood, John H. Patterson directed recovery efforts, turning his National Cash Register Company into a headquarters for rescue and relief. He was also instrumental in raising and donating funds for what eventually became the Miami Conservancy District, which built local dams and took other measures to control regional flooding. During the years immediately following the flood, real estate sold quickly in some of the higher-elevation areas surrounding Dayton. East Oakwood, which stands more than 200 feet above downtown Dayton, began to be platted during 1913 and its elevation did not go unpublicized by local developers.²

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Message from the President

"Summertime...and the livin' is easy." (*"Summertime"* - Ella Fitzgerald, 1958)

We so enjoy the summer season that often causes our minds to fill with sweet memories of simple good times & things from the past. And The Oakwood Historical Society gives you opportunities each summer to connect with those memories and pass them on to our families. Warm breezes, fragrant flowers, fun events, good friends!

In July, dozens of Oakwoodites took a walking tour of our gardens and woods in the wilder parts of town. In August, over one hundred people took the time to attend our car show, Classics on the Lawn, featuring vehicles ranging from a Model T to a Tesla. Our guests enjoyed *Central Perc European Café* delights, explored the grand variety of cars, walked through our traditional gardens, and toured our Long-Romspert Homestead.

Pokemon Go has popped up at The Homestead! We hope you do, too, to enjoy the rest of this year's activities sparked by our energetic volunteers and supporters. Our *Far Hills Speaker Series* begins in September, tours are planned, and our *Christmas Holidays at the Homestead* will usher you into that magical time of the year.

Connect with history, and *Make History With Us!*

Carol Holm
President

The Perfect Day for *Classics on the Lawn*

On Sunday, Aug 21st, the grounds of the Long-Romspert Homestead House Museum was adorned with thirty-four of the Dayton area's finest vintage and unique automobiles as The Oakwood Historical Society presented its 6th annual *Classics on the Lawn* Car Show and Open House. Sponsored by *Houser Asphalt* with lunch offered by Oakwood's own *Central Perc European Café*, over 100 visitors enjoyed the cars of days gone by and tours of *The Homestead* house and grounds. After weeks of hot and rainy weather, it turned into the perfect day for the occasion. Plans are already underway for next year's event.



Home to Harvest Program Announcement!

The Oakwood Historical Society is happy to announce a new partnership event with Dayton History! Come to the Patterson Homestead at 1815 Brown Street in Dayton on November 12 between 12 noon and 6:00 p.m. for our *Home and Harvest* Program.

This event will showcase one of Dayton History's historic gems. The Patterson Homestead was constructed 200 years ago and was the home for one of Dayton's most influential families. *Home and Harvest* will give guests a glimpse into the life of Colonel Robert Patterson, his wife Elizabeth and eight of their children who arrived in Dayton and settled permanently, calling it their home.

Home and Harvest will be a celebration of the Pattersons and their creation of a home and community. Take a tour of the surrounding community, enjoy warm cider and treats, and learn about the lives of these early Daytonians and how they made an old log cabin into a family estate! Ticket reservations can be made through Dayton History at (937) 293-2841 x127 or Education1@daytonhistory.org.

**Get more info on our
website or give us a call!**
www.oakwoodhistory.org
937.299.3793

The Miami Valley's Water Heritage (cont.)

Surface waters weren't just a menace to the early people in the Dayton area. Thompson's Party, the first group of permanent settlers to arrive in the area, used the Miami River to journey from Cincinnati into what is now Dayton on April 1, 1796. Later settlers used surface water to power mills for producing flour, lumber, and fabric. By the 1850s, several dozen mills stood along the Mad River, the Miami River, and some of the secondary streams flowing into those rivers. Among these mills was the Patterson family's grist mill (Figure 1), which was powered by the flow of Rubicon Creek and stood for many years as a landmark near the present-day intersection of Brown and Caldwell Streets.³



Figure 1

Surface waters also supported the Miami and Erie Canal, which was begun in Middletown during 1825. It was extended northward into Dayton during 1828 and eventually completed to Lake Erie during 1845. The canal was a vital means of transporting people and goods across western Ohio prior to the widespread development of railroads. Planning and building the Miami and Erie Canal was a major challenge due to the topography of western Ohio. To the south of the Bellefontaine area, water flows toward the Ohio River whereas to the north of Bellefontaine water flows into Lake Erie. Successful navigation across these separate watersheds required the design and construction of a complex arrangement of reservoirs, feeder streams, and locks, which was a significant engineering accomplishment of the time.

Water also provided a source of energy for several hydraulic power districts that stood in Dayton during the mid-to-late 1800s. These districts were important factors in Dayton's industrial development and were built around mill races, which were channels carrying swiftly-flowing streams of water into mills and factories. In most facilities the water turned an overshot water wheel that provided rotary power to a shop floor. This occurred via a line shaft to which belts were attached and used to turn machinery such as saws, drill presses, lathes, and carding machines. A tail race would channel water from the facility and into a nearby section of canal or river.



Figure 2

Dayton's hydraulic power districts included the Dayton View Hydraulic, the Cooper Hydraulic, the Lower Hydraulic and, perhaps most significantly, the Upper Hydraulic, which was constructed, owned, and managed by the Dayton Hydraulic Company (DHC). The Upper Hydraulic tapped the Mad River in the present-day area of Harshman Road and its mill race flowed into the northeastern section of downtown Dayton. The main businesses subscribing to the DHC stood in a row along the eastern side of Front Street between First and Third Streets. These businesses included the Mead and Nixon Paper Mill (a predecessor of the Mead Paper Company), which used hydraulic flow for both direct mechanical power and for generating electricity. The building formerly housing the mill still stands at the southeast corner of Front and Second Streets (Figure 2).

The DHC charged reasonable rates and maintained good relationships with its subscribers. However, during the late 1800s the company gradually began losing customers due to the increased availability of steam and electric power. By the early decades of the 20th Century, the DHC's mill race was no longer needed. This left the company with extensive land holdings in a long and narrow corridor roughly paralleling Springfield Street. During this time Frank Hill Smith, who was an Oakwood resident with a background in the design and construction of commercial, industrial, and residential buildings, married into the family that established and operated the DHC.

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The Miami Valley's Water Heritage *(cont.)*

Mr. Smith became president of the company, directed the drainage and development of the mill race⁴, and successfully converted the DHC from a provider of hydraulic power to a landholding and development company. Mr. Smith also directed many other construction projects in Dayton and in other major cities in the eastern United States. He also served as a consulting engineer for the construction of the Dayton Art Institute and the former Rike-Kumler building in downtown Dayton.⁵

The DHC's mill race originated near the Mad River's divergence around Rohrer's Island (Figure 3). The flow of water into the race was facilitated by low dams that raised the level of the river along the south side of the island. This arrangement has been repurposed and now serves a well field for the City of Dayton. The dams installed by the DHC still stand and support the flow of water into a series of ponds that have been excavated into the sand and gravel on the Rohrer's Island well field. The ponds serve to quickly recharge the aquifer under the island, into which several wells have been extended to an average depth of around 125 feet. Water is pumped from these wells, channeled to a facility for testing and treatment, and dispersed to the City of Dayton and other local municipalities that purchase water from Dayton.



Figure 3

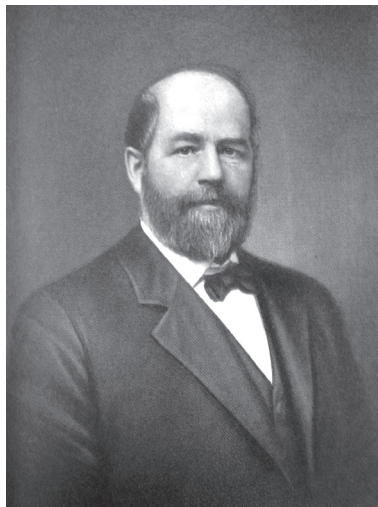


Figure 4

Along with the well field at Rohrer's Island, there are many other examples of important use of the Miami Valley aquifer system. The aquifer was crucial to Dayton's economic development and emergence as a powerhouse of manufacturing. During Dayton's industrial heyday in the early-to-mid 20th Century, many dozens of companies, including paper companies, foundries, soap companies, breweries, and other manufacturers made abundant use of local groundwater. These companies included the Riverside Brewery, which was owned and managed by Adam Schantz, Sr. (Figure 4), a very successful businessman living in Oakwood. Mr. Schantz developed and patented a process for purifying municipal water, which consisted of spattering the water over heated rocks, prompting the precipitation from the water of lime and other dissolved minerals. This process also aerated the water, which improved the taste by removing dissolved gases and other impurities. Mr. Schantz used the water, which he named "Lily Water" after the flower on the Schantz family's crest, for brewing. He also bottled and sold Lily Water. Oakwood's Hollencamp family was also involved in brewing and operated a company that stood on

Brown Street just south of the Oregon District.

Dayton's peak brewing industry occurred during the 1880s, when steps in the brewing and bottling process began to be mechanized. During this time Dayton had more than a dozen major breweries that produced a wide variety of ales and lagers and employed hundreds of local citizens. Nationwide Prohibition, which was enacted during 1920, ended the golden age of brewing in Dayton and the jobs of many Daytonians. A few local brewers remained in business during Prohibition by changing their offerings from beer to other bottled beverages such as soft drinks and dairy products. Prohibition was repealed during 1933, which put a few local breweries back into business. More recently, Ohio has relaxed some of its brewing laws and regulations, which has resulted in the proliferation of small breweries in Dayton and in many other cities in Ohio.

Prior to the 1970s, extensive use of groundwater by Dayton businesses and utilities resulted in the drawdown of the local aquifer. The water table underlying the City of Dayton dropped by more than 20 feet between the 1940s and the late 1960s. This drawdown was accompanied by extensive development in many low-lying areas adjacent to the Miami River. During the 1970s, Dayton lost much of its manufacturing base, which resulted in reduced use of groundwater and less draw from the aquifer.

Since the 1970s, the water table below Dayton has risen to its earlier levels, which has resulted in flooding in basements and other lower-level areas in facilities near the Miami River. These include the Montgomery County Administration Building, Sinclair Community College, and the University of Dayton Arena, all of which were built during the late 1960s and early 1970s when the water table beneath the City of Dayton was at its lowest. Maintaining dry conditions in these facilities has required the costly installation and maintenance of pumps and drainage systems to channel groundwater away from buildings and to the Miami River.

In the meantime, many areas of the United States are suffering from the effects of insufficient amounts of ground and surface water. In Florida, extensive pumping of groundwater for urban water supply and irrigation is contributing to the development of sinkholes and the contamination of aquifers by the intrusion of seawater. In the Colorado River Basin, demand for water from the river for agricultural, municipal, and recreational purposes far exceeds the supply. This situation has prompted bitter legal battles among farmers, municipalities, and environmentalists. In Southern California, residents are faced with costly and controversial water desalination initiatives and restrictions on water use.

Although some ordinances exist in the Miami Valley that are designed to protect the local aquifer from contamination, Dayton has little of the regulation on water diversion and use that exists in water-stressed areas. This business-friendly approach, the abundance of groundwater in the Dayton area, and the scarcity of water resources elsewhere have significant economic implications for the Miami Valley. Successful promotion to business and industry of the availability of fresh water in the Dayton area may bring more water-intensive businesses to the region and increase local employment opportunities. Water, the natural resource that has so influenced the history of the Miami Valley, may be the key to the economic revitalization of the area.

Notes

¹ Hinds, C.C., 2013, Columbus and the Great Flood of 1913: The Disaster that Reshaped the Ohio Valley, History Press, Charleston, SC, pp. 108-109.

² Additional information about Oakwood's development in the wake of the 1913 Flood is available in issues of The Oakwood Historical Society's Quarterly from Summer 2012 and Spring 2013.

³ Prior to the 1920s, Rubicon Creek flowed in the open along the southern edges of the University Dayton and National Cash Register areas. When the Patterson Grist Mill was demolished during the late 1800s, stone from the mill was used to build a culvert to channel Rubicon Creek beneath Brown Street.

⁴ Frank Hill Smith developed the former mill race by constructing along it a series of wide and narrow commercial and industrial buildings.

⁵ Houk, G.W., 2001, Frank Hill Smith and the Dayton Hydraulic Company, privately printed, Dayton, OH, 176 p.

Figure Captions

Figure 1. The Patterson Grist Mill. (Dayton Metro Library)

Figure 2. Building formerly housing the Mead and Nixon Paper Mill, 2016. (Photograph by the author)

Figure 3. Origin of the DHC mill race (arrow) at the south side of Rohrer's Island. (U.S. Geological Survey, Dayton Quadrangle, Ohio, 1906, reprinted 1948, 1:62,500, Reston, VA, U.S. Department of the Interior, USGS)

Figure 4. Adam Schantz, Sr. (Hover, J. C., & Barnes, J. D., 1919, Memoirs of the Miami Valley, Chicago, Robert O. Law Co.)

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Fall Events Scheduled for The Society

Autumn will prove to be a busy time for The Oakwood Historical Society as the year wraps up.

October 2: *Discover Woodland Days: A Walking Tour* at Historic Woodland Cemetery.

October 9 & 16: *Annual Family Photo Shoot* at The Long-Romsperst Homestead House Museum.

October 22: *Hidden Oakwood Walk* a guided, autumn season nature hike on the wooded trails through three of Oakwood's parks.

November 17: *The Annual Meeting of The Oakwood Historical Society* being held at St. Paul's Episcopal Church.

December 4: *Holidays at the Homestead* Open House at The Long-Romsperst Homestead House Museum.

For updates and more information, visit us at: www.oakwoodhistory.org.

Annual Fundraiser Photo Shoot in October

Our annual *Fall Photo Shoot* on the lovely grounds of The Oakwood Historical Society will take place on **Sundays October 9 and 16**. Our photographer, Betty Cochran, will be returning for her 4th year to take pictures of your family, pets, grandparents, or just you enjoying a lovely autumn day. We are offering the session for the last time at the original price of \$50.

The package deal includes a 20 minute session with as many or as few people as you would like, a CD with all the untouched photos available at the end, along with a written release allowing you to print them as you wish. As in past years, we will have several antique autos available to serve as props if you are interested, as well as some other vintage goodies. Get your photos at this great price while you can — spaces are limited. Sign up by emailing to Lindapinoh@gmail.com, calling the Long-Romsperst Homestead at 299-3793, or visiting our webpage at www.oakwoodhistory.org.

**New Volunteer Position Available - Newsletter Editor!**

The Oakwood Historical Society announces an opening for the position of *Editor* of the *Historian*, our newsletter.

This position involves:

- Staying aware of TOHS activities & schedule to keep upcoming newsletter content current and relevant
- Soliciting appropriate articles and photos
- Editing submitted articles to ensure clarity, excellent grammar & historical accuracy
- Getting print-ready articles to the TOHS graphic designer in an accessible format
- Working with the TOHS graphic designer to produce a high quality product on a quarterly basis

Please apply by submitting your resume and/or cover letter, or letter of interest, to info@oakwoodhistory.org

Hidden Oakwood Walk Parks Tour to be Repeated

Due to the overwhelming response to this tour in July, the *Hidden Oakwood Walk Parks Tour* will be held again in October.

Tucked into the heart of Oakwood is found a trio of natural parks that invite calm reflection and an appreciation of nature. Wright Memorial Public Library and The Oakwood Historical Society are teaming up to host a fun and informative walking tour through Loy Garden, Elizabeth Gardens, and Friendship Park at Houk Stream. Discover the history, natural habitats and geology along Oakwood's remarkable nature trails in a beautiful autumn setting.

The tour is scheduled for Saturday, October 22nd at 10:00 a.m. and will be conducted by Mark W. Risley of TOHS. This 1.5 mile walk will begin and end in front of Wright Library. Bottled water will be provided. Registration and walking shoes are recommended.

Visit www.wrightlibrary.org/HiddenOakwood or call 937-294-7171 for more information and to register. Also, visit www.oakwoodhistory.org for updates on this and other events of The Oakwood Historical Society.



The 2016 Far Hills Speaker Series Continues

After a summer hiatus, the *Far Hills Speaker Series* reignites with several programs designed to highlight the fascinating history of the area.

September 11: *Looking Towards the Future of Dayton as a River City* with representatives of the Ohio's Great Corridor Association, Leslie King of UD Rivers Institute and Amy Dingle of Five Rivers MetroParks.

October 16: *Following Famous Footsteps: A Century of Noteworthy Visitors to Hawthorn Hill* with Alex Heckman of Dayton History.

November 6: *The Classic Architecture of Oakwood* with Mark W. Risley, past president of The Oakwood Historical Society.

The *Far Hills Speaker Series* is co-sponsored by Wright Memorial Public Library and The Oakwood Historical Society. Programs are held on Sundays at 2:00 PM in the library lower level conference room.

November Ornament Making Sessions — New Event!

Mark your calendar for the **first weekend in November** as there will be lots of fun to be had making special holiday ornaments just in time for the holidays!

Sessions will be open to folks of all ages, so this could be a great inter-generational activity. Specific details will be coming soon, so watch on our web page (www.oakwoodhistory.org) for further announcements!



"The Oakwood Store"



CAROL J. HOLM
ATTORNEY AT LAW
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The information that you submit will be used only by The Oakwood Historical Society and will not be given or sold to outside parties.
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