



The
Oakwood
Historical Society

— *Make History With Us* —



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Calendar & Events



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Historian

Preserving the past, present, and future of the Oakwood Community • Summer 2017

Railway Transportation & the Rise of the South Suburbs

--David Schmidt

During the early years of the Twentieth Century, railways had a brief but important role in transporting passengers over moderate distances between Dayton and the scattered residential areas to the south of the city. Local railways included both steam and electric powered systems, with electric railways being more popular for passenger service due to their convenience and flexibility. Electric railways generally followed existing roads, ran frequently, and maintained reliable schedules. The electric rails cars were also able to stop and start relatively quickly, which lent them to serving more locations than steam locomotives. Further, unlike their steam-driven counterparts, electric rail cars were free of smoke and dust, able to climb and descend relatively steep grades, and able to run on trackways requiring lighter-grade rails and less ballast. However, both steam and electric rail transportation were important to local commerce and both had fundamental influences on the development of the earliest suburban plats to the south of Dayton.

As the Miami Valley area grew during the Nineteenth Century, the Miami and Erie Canal supported local agriculture and helped the development of Dayton's early industry. Canal boats transported farm products and manufactured goods from Dayton and brought to the area raw materials and manufactured goods that were otherwise unavailable in the Miami Valley. During the height of the canal's influence ca. 1829-1850, Dayton was a major center for businesses that processed meat, liquor, tobacco, and flour. Dayton also had a strong manufacturing industry that produced such products as farm implements, carriages and wagons, furniture, paint and varnish, and clothing. Many of Dayton's manufacturing businesses were located within hydraulic power districts that stood in the city during the middle and late Nineteenth Century. These districts were served by swiftly-flowing channels of water that drove water wheels providing rotary power to mills and factories.¹

As the local economy grew, businesses in Dayton using hydraulic power gradually converted their operations to the use of steam and electricity, which were derived from burning coal. Local demand for coal was a major factor in the development of regional railroads that brought coal to Dayton from sources in southeastern Ohio. Soon after their tracks were laid, these railroads also began carrying other raw materials and manufactured products to and from Dayton. This coincided with the development of horse-drawn street railways that provided transportation to the citizens of Dayton over relatively short distances within the city. This mode of transportation was a welcome improvement over walking or riding in horse-drawn carriages and carts over muddy and unpaved roads.

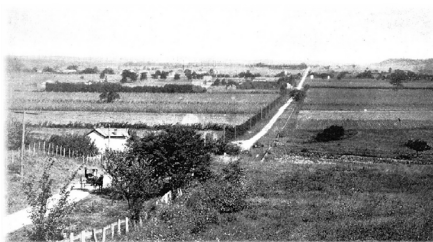


Figure 1

The dawn of the Twentieth Century was a pivotal time in the area to the south of Dayton. In 1900, farms dominated land ownership and use south of the city (Figure 1). Local farms, which averaged from about 100 to 120 acres of land², prospered as a result of recent developments in farming technology and initiatives to share agricultural information via societies and fairs.

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Message from the President

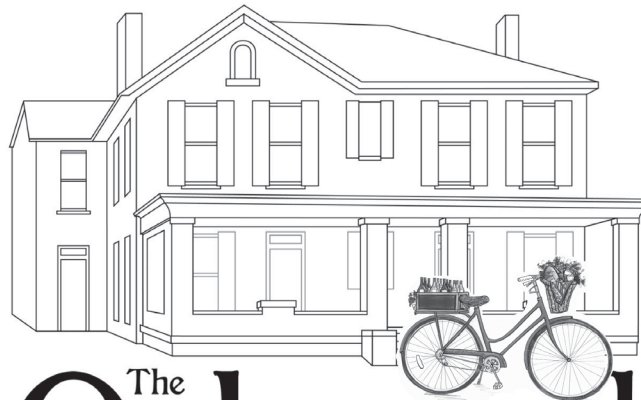
It has been so good to see so many of you so far this year, not just at Dorothy Lane Market but at the Wright Library, at our *Far Hills Speaker Series*, at local tours of gardens or The Homestead or Hawthorn Hill, and at events at The Homestead including the annual *Taste of Wine and Cheese*. We come together to celebrate the unique qualities and history of Oakwood, and to build our future as a community for our families.

We are amazed at how we get phone calls and emails from you with new tidbits of interest or to ask us questions about your house or a unique item. We thank you also for sharing items, memorabilia and documents that you want added to our archives, which continue to grow to the benefit of future historians.

Join us for our summer activities! Share your talents and interests with us! Call us or go visit our website!

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

Carol Holm
President



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A Taste of Wine & Cheese



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Railway Transportation & the Rise of the South Suburbs *(cont)*

Educational efforts and advances in such methods as selective breeding, the use of labor-saving equipment, and soil management spurred increases in livestock, production of dairy products, and the yields of staple crops such as wheat, corn, tobacco³, oats, rye, and potatoes. Increases in agricultural production in turn resulted in a greater need to efficiently transport agricultural goods to markets. Increases in farm prosperity also raised farm income, which helped finance improvements in education and increased literacy in rural areas. In response to these developments across the rural landscape, local newspapers expanded their coverage of agricultural news and information. The inception of Rural Free Delivery of mail in 1896 further reduced the isolation of the rural population and spurred the need for improved transportation between the city and the surrounding countryside.

Around 1900 the farmland to the south of Dayton was interspersed with a few settlements. “Shakertown,” the Watervliet Shaker Village standing to the east-southeast of Dayton, included 100 residents during its Nineteenth-Century peak. However, in the face of a declining population and financial difficulty in the overall Shaker organization, the village closed in 1900 and the remaining residents moved to the Union Village Shaker settlement in Warren County. To the southeast of Dayton, Beavertown stood around the modern-day intersection of East Dorothy Lane and Wilmington Avenue. Beavertown was one of Montgomery County’s earliest settlements and, by one account, was formed around a blacksmith shop that was established in 1812.⁴ The core of Beavertown was platted in April, 1874. During this time frame, Beavertown’s economy was driven to a large extent by several stone quarries that supplied “Dayton Marble”⁵ for a variety of needs throughout southwestern Ohio (Figure 2).



Figure 2

Centerville, standing nine miles south of Dayton, developed around the intersection of the Lebanon Pike (present-day Route 48) and the Miamisburg-Centerville Road. Like Beavertown, Centerville contained extensive deposits of “Dayton Marble,” which was quarried at several sites and used for constructing many of Centerville’s earliest homes.⁶ Of the quarries in and around Centerville, the Allen Quarry to the northeast of town yielded the most abundant and highest-grade rock. The quarry stood adjacent to a large tobacco farm that was cross-cut by the Toledo, Delphos, and Burlington Railroad, which was a narrow-gauge railroad built in 1881.



Figure 3

The high ground of Oakwood, standing just south of Dayton along the Lebanon Pike, was an attractive destination for some of the Miami Valley’s earliest settlers. Farming began in the Oakwood area around the turn of the Nineteenth Century and the area continued to grow afterwards, with many of its farms and summer houses being owned by some of the more well-off citizens of Dayton. The nucleus of Oakwood, standing along and near present-day Harman Avenue, was platted in November, 1872. This area was served by the horse-drawn Oakwood Street Railway (Figure 3) that began operation in the previous year.

To the south-southwest of Dayton, the communities of Dwyer, Alexandersville, West Carrollton, and Miamisburg stood within a short succession of one another. These settlements developed along the important transportation routes of the Miami River, Miami and Erie Canal, Cincinnati Pike, and the Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago, and Indianapolis Railroad. Like portions of Dayton, West Carrollton was served by a hydraulic canal that provided power to local mills and shops. The hydraulic canal originated at an oxbow in the Miami River, flowed along the modern-day path of the Great Miami River Recreation Trail, and emptied into the Miami and Erie Canal where the trail meets West Central Avenue near the Miamisburg/West Carrollton border (Figure 4). Miamisburg, which had the largest population of the settlements outlying Dayton, had many processing and manufacturing businesses that flourished in the presence of the Miami and Erie Canal and the other nearby transportation routes.

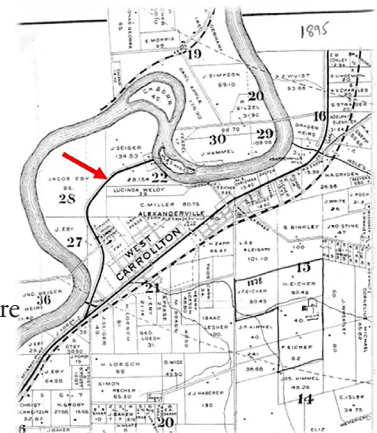


Figure 4

Railway Transportation & the Rise of the South Suburbs *(cont)*

Meanwhile in Dayton, the early 1900s saw the continued rise of the city as a major center of manufacturing and other industry. Large companies such as the National Cash Register Company, the Barney and Smith Car Works, and the Davis Sewing Machine Company, along with numerous machine shops, foundries, and breweries, employed thousands of local citizens. Many of these people lived within a short walk of their employers. Other residents, driven by an interest in more spacious housing and the desire to live away from the noise, pollution, and congestion of the city's industrial areas, lived in Dayton's residential plats and commuted on the street railways that had seen large growth and expansion during the latter half of the Nineteenth Century. These formerly horse-drawn railways rapidly began converting their operations to electrical power in the late 1880s in the wake of recent improvements in electric traction motors and the invention of systems for streetcars to connect to electricity in overhead wires. These technical developments also led to the birth of "interurban" railroads that traveled between cities and towns and across intervening rural settings. The interurban systems, which were characterized by swiftly-moving rail cars, ran as more or less a hybrid of street railway systems and traditional steam railroads. Interurban railways quickly became very popular in the Midwest in the early 1900s, with Ohio leading the United States in the number of interurban railway companies and miles of track.⁷

In the south Dayton area, railway developments and expansions during the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries greatly increased passenger service and commerce between the city and outlying areas. In 1889, the newly-formed Dayton, Lebanon, and Cincinnati (DL&C) Railroad, which was a steam-powered railroad, purchased the narrow-gauge rail line passing on the outskirts of Centerville and soon began providing freight and limited passenger service to the region. The DL&C's initial route served points between Lebanon and a northern terminus to the east of Dayton known as Lebanon Junction.⁸ In 1912, the DL&C completed a western branch into downtown Dayton. This route followed the valley of Rubicon Creek along portions of Oakwood's northeastern border with Dayton. The DL&C's tracks crossed those of the Oakwood Street Railway near the National Cash Register Company, just south of the present-day intersection of Brown and Caldwell Streets.

The Oakwood Street Railway converted its horse-drawn service in May, 1895 to an electric-powered route that ran southward from downtown Dayton along Brown Street and Oakwood Avenue to an end loop at Oakwood's Five Points intersection (Figure 5). The following year, the Dayton Traction Company established a route between Dayton and Calvary Cemetery. This route ran southward from downtown Dayton along Route 48, diverged southwestward just north of the modern-day Pointe Oakwood area, and continued to the main entrance to Calvary Cemetery on the Cincinnati Pike (present-day South Dixie Avenue). The following year, the route was extended to Miamisburg along the general route of the Cincinnati Pike. To the east, the Dayton-Xenia Traction Company (D-X) opened an interurban line in 1900 that ran from Dayton to Xenia via Belmont. Later that year, the D-X opened a branch that extended southward from Belmont to Spring Valley. The southbound route from Belmont followed present-day Smithville Road to its intersection with Wilmington Pike, continued southward along Wilmington Pike through Beavertown to SR 725, and then traveled eastward along SR 725 through Bellbrook and to an ending loop at Spring Valley.



Figure 5

The development and expansion of railroads serving the area to the south of Dayton prompted the development of suburban plats along the railroads' routes. In Oakwood, Adam Schantz Sr., who was a successful brewer and businessman, envisioned an upscale plat within his extensive landholdings that bordered the Oakwood Street Railway's route along Oakwood Avenue. Mr. Schantz passed away in 1902 before fulfilling his vision; however his son, Adam Schantz Jr., carried forth his father's plans by establishing "Adam Schantz's Estate Subdivision" in 1907. This plat contains many of Oakwood's finest homes and was listed in 1992 (as the Schantz Park Historic District) on the U.S. National Parks Service's National Register of Historic Places.

In 1912, the Spait-Wright Realty Company established the Park Hill plat in the northwestern section of east Oakwood. Park Hill is bordered by Far Hills Ave. to the west, Patterson Road to the north, E. Schantz Ave. to the east, and Spirea Drive to the south (Figure 6).

Within a few years of the platting of Park Hill, several neighboring plats were established, including Shafor Heights (1915), First Addition to Park Hill (1915), and Park Hill Second Addition (1919). The Spaite-Wright Realty Company promoted First Addition to Park Hill with a photograph showing a panoramic view along Forrer Boulevard and the construction of the Craftsman-style houses that stand along the southern side of the street (Figure 7). The southward expansion of housing developments in east Oakwood led the Oakwood Street Railway to extend its service southward along the Lebanon Pike (Figure 8), with end loops progressively moving southward and culminating at Monterey Avenue in 1918.⁹

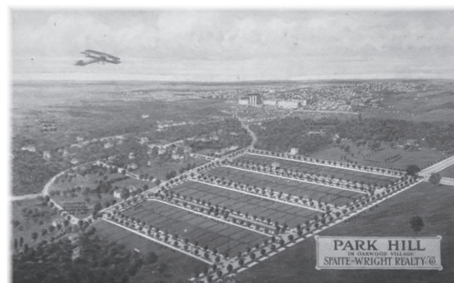


Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8

Meanwhile, Sylvester Carr, a Dayton lawyer and businessman¹⁰, platted to the west of Oakwood a neighborhood informally known as “Carrmonte.” The neighborhood consisted of plats named Carrmonte (1902) and Carrmonte Subdivision (1903) and stood east of Calvary Cemetery along the interurban railway route between Dayton and Miamisburg.¹¹ In 1906, Berkeley Heights was platted along the same route and to the south of Carrmonte by the Dayton Real Estate and Investment Company. Berkeley Heights stands northeast of the present-day intersection of South Dixie Avenue and West Dorothy Lane.¹² The names “Carrmonte” and “Berkeley Heights” fell into disuse during the 1920s and the area comprising those neighborhoods became known as “Southern Hills.”

To the east, the completion of the DL&C Railroad’s western branch in 1912 coincided with the platting of the Pasadena neighborhood by the Spaite-Wright Realty Company. The DL&C route cross-cut Pasadena, which was established just west of Beavertown. Despite continued service along the D-X interurban route along Wilmington Pike, Beavertown had undergone a recent slowdown in commerce and development due to a dwindling supply of high-quality rock in its quarries. However, along with the platting of Pasadena, several factors soon contributed to a revitalization of the Beavertown area: (1) the presence of the DL&C Railroad and the freight and passenger service it offered; (2) the construction of a railway station in Pasadena (Figure 9); (3) the opening of the Pasadena Lumber Company¹³; (4) the selection of Pasadena by the Board of Education in Van Buren Township as the site for a new school building (Figure 10)¹⁴; and (5) the development of nearby Oakdale. Oakdale was platted in 1912 by the Suburban Realty Company to the northwest of the intersection of Stroop Road and Wilmington Pike. The plat stood adjacent to both the D-X interurban and DL&C routes, which crossed at a commuter waiting area on Wilmington Pike known as Roslyn Station.¹⁵

Passenger railroad service between Dayton and points southward remained strong prior to World War One as the south suburbs flourished and expanded. However, around 1917 the interurbans began to falter due to high operating expenses and other financial difficulties. Later, the 1920s “Age of the Automobile” marked a decline in patronage on the steam, interurban, and street railway lines as automobile ownership became more affordable. Further, a resulting increase in automobile traffic led to an increase in the development of paved roads, which also reduced the need for railroad tracks.

In 1918, the D-X abandoned its route to the south of Roslyn Station, which stood at the DL&C crossing and just north of the present-day intersection of Wilmington Avenue and Stroop Road. In 1920, the D-X further limited its service along its southern branch to points between Belmont and Beavertown.¹⁶

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In 1923, the D-X fully abandoned its southern route from Belmont.¹⁷ The Cincinnati, Lebanon, and Northern Railway, which succeeded the DL&C Railroad, discontinued passenger service between Dayton and Lebanon during 1928.¹⁸ In early 1936, the Oakwood Street Railway converted its rail-based service to trackless trolley buses.

By the 1930s, the interurban route through Southern Hills had come under the ownership of the Cincinnati and Lake Erie (C&LE) Railroad, which had purchased and combined other routes in the region. During the 1930s, the C&LE's primary revenue was from the transportation of freight, although the railway also maintained passenger service throughout much of western Ohio. However, the C&LE was unable to generate significant income due to the financial impact of the depression, competition with automobiles and the trucking industry, and the closure of freight carriers that partnered with the C&LE. In 1939, the C&LE discontinued freight service and reorganized its passenger service as the Dayton Suburban Railway, which provided passenger service between Dayton and Southern Hills until closing in September, 1941.¹⁹ This closure marked the end of passenger railroad service to the suburbs south of Dayton.

The James F. Dicke Family Transportation Center at Carillon Historical Park houses several historical railroad cars and other informational displays about local transportation history. Additional information about local railroad systems is also available at www.daytontrolleys.net and its affiliated sites.

Notes

¹ Additional information about Dayton's hydraulic power districts is available in The Oakwood Historical Society's Fall 2016 issue of *Historian*.

² Dorsey, C.W., and Coffey, G.N., 1900, Soil Survey of Montgomery County, Ohio, Field Operations, Bureau of Soils, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC, p. 89.

³ Tobacco for filling and wrapping cigars was an important crop in the Miami Valley from the late 1830s through the World War One era.

⁴ Hover, J.C., and Barnes, J.D., 1919, *Memoirs of the Miami Valley*, Robert O. Law Company, Chicago, p. 44.

⁵ Additional information about "Dayton Marble" is available in The Oakwood Historical Society's Fall 2015 issue of *Historian*.

⁶ Motorists entering Centerville are greeted by signs stating the community contains "Ohio's Largest Collection of Early Stone Buildings."

⁷ Hilton, G.W., and Due, J.F., 1964, *The Electric Interurban Railways in America* (2nd ed.), Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA, p. 12.

⁸ Lebanon Junction stood west of Woodman Drive, just northwest of the present-day RootBeer Stande. Additional information about the DL&C Railroad is available in The Oakwood Historical Society's Fall 2015 issue of *Historian*.

⁹ This extension followed a route along the center of present-day Far Hills Avenue. The modern northbound route of Far Hills Avenue was used for two-way traffic running to and from the residential plats to the east of Far Hills Avenue whereas traffic through Oakwood followed a two-way route on what is now the western side of Far Hills Avenue.

¹⁰ Sylvester Carr was vice president of the Davis Sewing Machine Company and president of the Dayton Country Club.

¹¹ South of Carrmonte, this route, which is relatively flat and served the high speed of the electric car, ran between Carrmonte and present-day West Dorothy Lane along the modern northbound lanes of South Dixie Avenue. Concurrently, horse-drawn and automobile traffic followed a two-way route along the more undulating, present-day southbound lanes of South Dixie Avenue.

¹² This intersection is also where the “Hills and Dales Railway,” a service of the Dayton Power and Light Company, turned eastward to serve the NCR Country Club (present-day Community Golf Center), the Dayton Automobile Country Club (which later became the Old Barn Club), and the Moraine Park School, which stood near the intersection of Southern Boulevard and Stroop Road.

¹³ The Pasadena Lumber Company stood at the present-day intersection of East Dorothy Lane and Oakmont Avenue. The site later housed the Wagner-Wood Lumber Company.

¹⁴ Puderbaugh, D.A., 1926, Montgomery County School History and Annual, Christian Publishing Association, Dayton, OH p. 196.

¹⁵ Roslyn Station stood near the present-day Wilmington Branch of the Dayton Metro Library.

¹⁶ Hilton and Due, p. 260.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Hauck, J. W., 1986, Narrow Gauge in Ohio: the Cincinnati, Lebanon & Northern Railway, Pruett Publishing Company, Boulder, CO, p. 233.

¹⁹ Hilton and Due, p. 266.

Figure Captions

Figure 1. Rural landscape to the south of Dayton ca. 1900. The view is looking northward along SR 741 from the hill to the south of the Alexandersville-Bellbrook Road. (Dorsey and Coffey, 1900)

Figure 2. Mile marker standing near the intersection of Wilmington Avenue and Bigger Road. This artifact of early travel is composed of “Dayton Marble” that was probably quarried in nearby Beavertown. (Photograph by the author, 2016)

Figure 3. A horse-drawn car of the Oakwood Street Railway. (The Oakwood Historical Society)

Figure 4. Map of the West Carrollton area showing the route of the local hydraulic canal (arrow). (New Atlas Map, Montgomery County, Ohio, 1895)

Figure 5. Oakwood Street Railway car at the loop at Oakwood’s Five Points intersection. (The Oakwood Historical Society)

Figure 6. Advertising postcard for Park Hill issued by the Spaitte-Wright Realty Company. (The Oakwood Historical Society)

Figure 7. Detail of the promotional photograph made for the Spaitte-Wright Realty Company of the Forrer Boulevard area. (The Oakwood Historical Society)

Figure 8. Northbound car of the Oakwood Street Railway at the intersection of Wiltshire Blvd. and Far Hills Ave. (The Oakwood Historical Society)

Figure 9. The former DL&C Railroad station in Pasadena. Photograph taken ca. 1980s. (The Oakwood Historical Society)

Figure 10. Pasadena School ca. 1926. The building was later renamed Rose E. Miller Elementary School. (Puderbaugh, 1926)



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