



The
Oakwood
Historical Society

— *Make History With Us* —

The Historian

Preserving the past, present, and future of the Oakwood Community • Spring 2021

Far Hills Speaker Series

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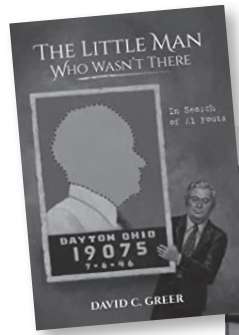
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The Little Man Who Wasn't There: In Search of Al Fouts

Sunday, March 21, 2 pm – 3 pm, Online Zoom Webinar

This event will be presented as an online Zoom webinar. Please register to attend. If you have not used Zoom before, you will be prompted to install the Zoom client.

In a Dayton Daily News article Al Fouts was described as “a little man who cast a deep shadow in downtown Dayton. He was the size of a jockey, rarely seen

without a necktie or a frown, a fixture in the rough workingman’s taverns on West Third Street. This glum leprechaun on a barstool was an inviting target for a cutting remark, but nobody was that stupid. Everyone knew Fouts was pure underworld.”

The discovery of a an unusual thank you letter written by Dayton lawyer John M. Eikenbary to Fouts for a Christmas card Fouts sent became the seed that grew into *The Little Man Who Wasn't There: In Search of Al Fouts*, David Greer’s third book. Fouts had been a crook since the age of 18, when he was arrested for burglary. He graduated to safe-cracking and manslaughter and was busted from California to Georgia. No sooner was he released from jail for one scheme than he hatched another. Well after prohibition ended, Fouts sold illegal, untaxed liquor from the rooming house he owned. It was so popular that even the bar association catered its picnics with his whiskey. *The Little Man Who Wasn't There* explores the impact of a modest, but noteworthy Al Fouts’ career on Dayton’s more colorful history.

David Greer is a Dayton Attorney, Oakwood resident, and author of three books dealing with the legal system and some of its more notorious criminals: *Sluff of History’s Boot Soles: An Anecdotal History of Dayton’s Bench and Bar*, *God is Merciful: The Colorful Career of John E. Egan* and his latest book, *The Little Man Who Wasn't There: In Search of Al Fouts*.

Join the Oakwood Historical Society and Wright Memorial Public Library for entertainment and education. Whether you are a history buff or just interested in learning more about the place you live, the Far Hills Speaker Series has something new for everyone.



The Dean, Dillinger, and Dayton Ohio

Sunday, April 18, 2 pm – 3 pm, Online Zoom Webinar

This event will be presented as an online Zoom webinar. Please register to attend. If you have not used Zoom before, you will be prompted to install the Zoom client.

Two larger-than-life figures: John Dillinger, who would later be named the nation’s first “Public Enemy No. 1,” and Police Chief Rudy Wurstner, who would



Volume 9 • Issue 1 - 2021

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**THE
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HISTORICAL
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**2021
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become the nation's "Dean of Police Chiefs," are connected with Dayton. While Dillinger was in and out of Dayton over a 5-month period in 1933, Chief Wurstner served Dayton for 50 years. Most histories address Dillinger's time in Dayton as time spent with his local girlfriend, Mary Jenkins Longnaker. Mary was not a gangster moll and Dillinger's coming to Dayton happened before the famed Allen County jail escape. The local story is more involved and is a mix of facts and folklore.

Author Steve Grismer will introduce other gangsters and mobsters with Greater Dayton connections – such as local crime figure Al Fouts, the more infamous Chicago mobster George 'Bugs' Moran, gangster Al Karpis, and others. The many figures and events from the Gem City's past provide an astonishing untold legacy.

Stephen Grismer is a retired Dayton Police Sergeant with over 25 years in policing. Steve now serves as a Trustee for the Dayton Police History Foundation, an organization dedicated to the preservation of Dayton Police history. A graduate of the University of Dayton with a degree in Communications and a minor in Criminal Justice, Steve is also a state-certified police instructor and lectures at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Dayton. Steve is the author of the book *The Dean, Dillinger and Dayton Ohio-Legend-Lore-Legacy* and played a significant role in establishing several exhibits at Dayton History including "Patrolling the Streets in Dayton."

Join the Oakwood Historical Society and Wright Memorial Public Library for entertainment and education. Whether you are a history buff or just interested in learning more about the place you live, the Far Hills Speaker Series has something new for everyone.

The Oakwood Historical Society Launches Historic Marker Program

The Oakwood Historical Society is launching a new project dedicated to commemorating sites of historic significance to the City of Oakwood. Sites chosen for this recognition will represent places that have proven to be of interesting value to our community's heritage.

Each historical bronze marker will include a description of the site's importance in the early history of Oakwood. Our goal is to share and make more widely accessible to the public Oakwood's rich and interesting history, and to help preserve this history for future generations.

Our first historic marker, which we hope to install this fall, will commemorate The Runnymede Playhouse for the significant contributions that took place there during World War II.

We plan to have our second marker installed in early 2022 to mark the 150th Anniversary of the Town of Oakwood.

Other historic markers under future consideration are: The Kramer Pleasure Gardens, Four Mile Tavern, First Library, First School, the Woodlands Indian Mound, Lookout Tower/Schantz Grove, Schantz National Historic District, Long-Romsper Homestead and others.

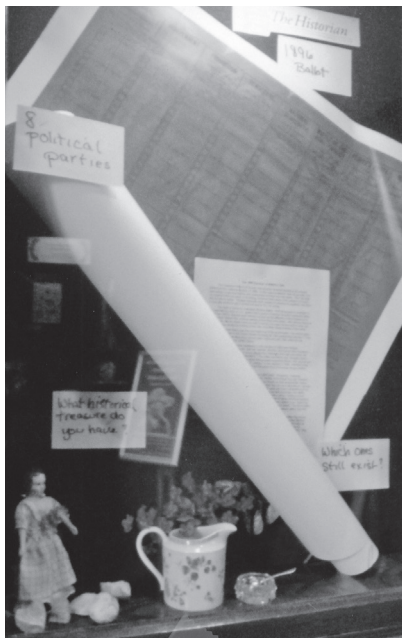
We welcome community input on this project. Anyone interested in becoming involved may contact Debra Edwards, Oakwood Historical Society Preservation Chair, at dedwards@oakwoodhistory.org.

Contributions for this program would be appreciated and are critical to its success. Donations can be sent to The Oakwood Historical Society at 1947 Far Hills Ave. Please note any contributions as for the Historic Marker Program.

Historical Displays at Wright Library

When the Wright Memorial Library in Oakwood did a renovation, there was now a display case in the South Reading Room. I thought that the Oakwood Historical Society could volunteer to fill it each month. Discussion with the library administration resulted in their eager assent.

The following are samples of exhibits that have been curated by Carol Holm and the Oakwood Historical Society's friends:



1896 Presidential ballot

- Victory in Europe – VE Day, May 1945
- Vintage Radios
- White House Christmas Tree Ornaments
- Money from Around the World
- Imagine Having Tea with the Lincolns
- Golden School Days 1865-1945 in Oakwood

The most recent one presently at the library is the 1913 Flood. An 1896 ballot has also been shared with our patrons.

How do exhibits get developed? Often community entities step forward. Other times it is networking. The University of Dayton had a workshop on Community Actions that Promote Social Justice and Equality. There, the curator was referred to Anne Shimomura in Indianapolis who was

willing to share museum-type items and so an exhibit “Loyal Americans in Concentration Camps” which documented the Japanese-American removals from the West Coast in early 1942 was prepared. C. Uchiyama of the Monterey Peninsula also sent items for this exhibit.

If you have interesting historical items, please be willing to share.



Victory in Europe



Vintage Camera Collection



Remembering Those Who Served



Oakwood School Days 1865-1945

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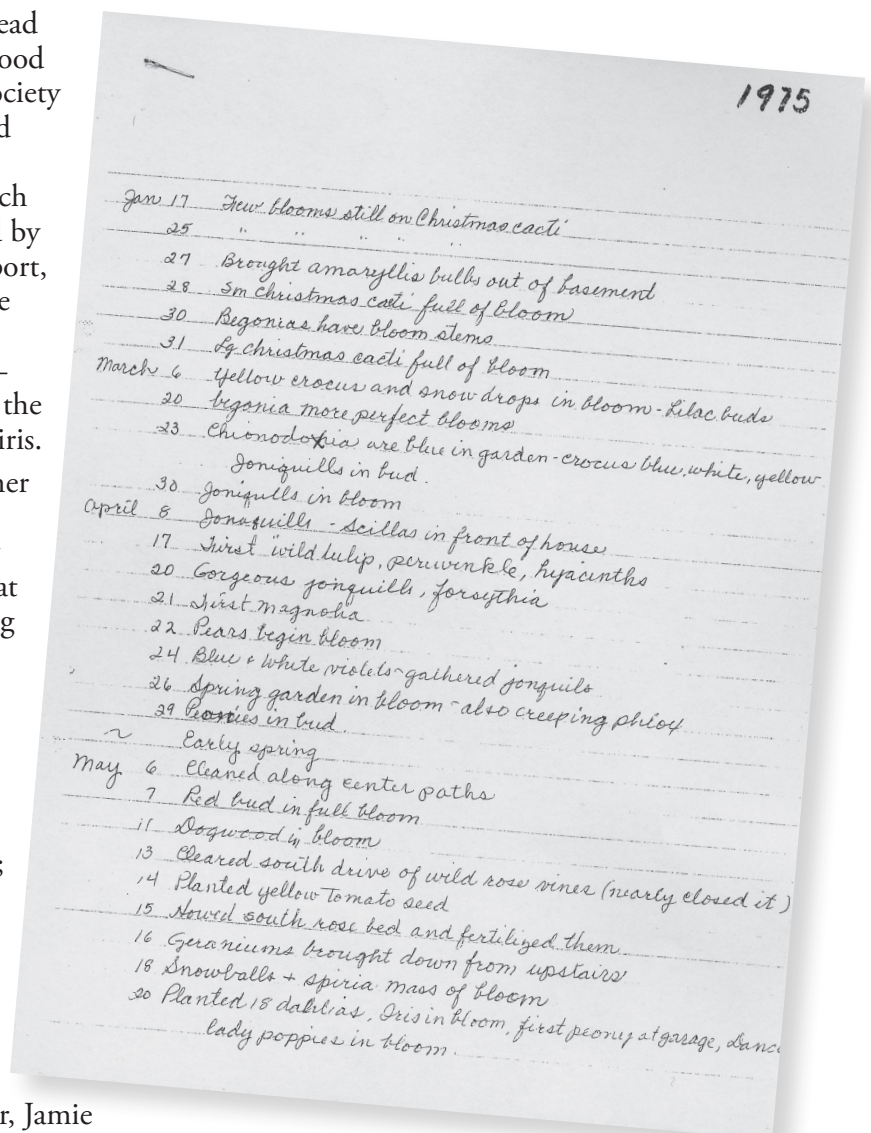
“Ethel Ethel, How Does Your Garden Grow?”

The Homestead of the Oakwood Historical Society is surrounded by plantings, many of which were selected by Ethel Romsport, the long-time owner of the Homestead – they include the peonies and iris. Ethel loved her gardens and meticulously recorded what was blooming or what she planted or groomed. Here is a copy of her 1975 garden book; compare it to what you expect or observe in the coming weeks.

Our gardener, Jamie Sheehan, has copies of pages of Ethel's garden book. Jamie has followed that and added additional plantings which were shared by Jean Woodhull, who helped found the Oakwood Historical Society.



Jamie was hired in 1992 by Marge Rich, president of the Society, after it was clear that volunteers were unable to consistently attend to the gardens. Jamie, originally a bookkeeper, but mentored by her father and grandfather to love gardening, was



first hired to do the entire yard and gardening needs of the Meyer-Boehmer Funeral Home that used to stand on Brown Street. In 1991, Jamie decided to work full time as a gardener; she finds that she is working every day from April to November in the gardens around our area. And she works at our Homestead.

When asked what plants are at the Homestead, she notes that most are perennials: daylilies, hosta, Queen of Prairie, black-eyed Susan's, phlox, roses, aster, mums, Solomon's seal, and ferns.



Oakwood Historical Society Board Member Becomes New City Council Member

Leigh Turben, a 31-year resident of Oakwood, and past president of The Oakwood Historical Society was sworn in as Oakwood's new City Council member. Monday February 1, Chris Epley resigned from Council after being elected in November as a judge on the Second District Court of Appeals in Dayton.

Turben who has served on several community boards in recent years, was the pick by Oakwood City Council among 14 applicants to succeed Chris Epley. According to Mayor Duncan, Leigh "is best qualified to serve our community at this time." She has served for eight-years on the board of the Oakwood Historical Society, functioning as Membership Chair, Assistant Treasurer,

Vice President and President for two terms. In addition, Leigh participates on the Advisory Council of the Wright Memorial Public Library, the Oakwood City, Budget Review Committee, and the Consumer Board for Dorothy Lane Market. "Through my civic participation and contributions, I have demonstrated that I am a person who can bring change and add value," Turben said in her application to the City.

She will serve until Dec. 31, 2021 and can seek election this November, according to the Oakwood city charter. Turben can seek a two-year term beginning Jan. 1, 2022 to serve out the unexpired portion of the seat or may run for a full four-year term, according to the city.

Please join us as we congratulate Leigh on her recent appointment.

New to Oakwood?

How do you learn about the city?

How did Dayton end up with an independent village in its vicinity that is only about three square miles in size? Why is Oakwood surrounded on many sides by Kettering and Dayton while Moraine is situated to its west? What about Hills and Dales Park? Why is it not within Oakwood boundaries? What is the history of this small town in Montgomery County?

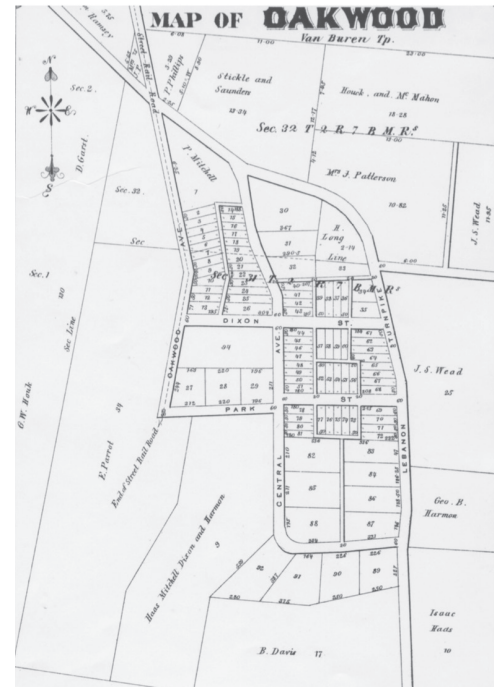
Maybe newcomers notice the park at the corner of Far Hills and Schantz with its large “Oakwood-Incorporated 1908” sign and the flags declaring it a Tree City. Maybe they recognize that something is very different once they pass Dorothy Lane (going north) and enter the shopping district of Oakwood. Maybe they wonder about the large and unique homes especially on the west side of Oakwood or they observe the numerous parks, schools, or pedestrians in this town. How did all of this evolve?

The answers to these questions can be found in a number of sources, including the local historical society. The Oakwood Historical Society has focused on discovering and preserving the history of the area.

The Historical Society and its members can provide information to the newcomer. The Society archives contain volumes devoted to the history of the area and city. Society volunteers organize a lot of activities that promote Oakwood’s history. In addition, publications promote understanding of Oakwood’s growth. For example, at the 75th anniversary of Oakwood, Bruce W. and Virginia Ronald wrote *Oakwood: The Far Hills to document the highlights of its development*. In 2001, Harry Ebeling’s *An Oakwood Scrapbook* was published. Both of these works were supported by the Historical Society. An updated version of the Scrapbook is being prepared. Oakwood’s Wright Library houses a nice collection of local history items.

Newcomers with school children will hear about the Historical Society because programs for them expose them to history. The Homestead located on Far Hills is a place to see how people lived in the past. Gardening activities, for example, show children how some things were done in the past.

If you are new to Oakwood and are curious about its history, join the Oakwood Historical Society – or just join in when something special is going on! It is a fun organization with many interesting members.



New Sponsor for the Historical Society

Maintaining a 2 acre, wooded lot is challenging, especially when the trees are 30’ tall! The Oakwood Historical Society takes care of the grounds and tree-lined drive at the Long-Romspert Homestead. Some of the trees were dangerously overgrown, threatening to do harm to their garage or any car parking along the wooded driveway. Property Manager, Larry Bilderback and volunteer/neighbor, Brian Sell, were able to trim the lower branches, but they obviously needed a professional for the taller limbs.

MBI, a local tree service in Waynesville, kindly offered to do the work as a new sponsor for the Historical Society. Given the right equipment and the skilled hands of a professional, MBI was able to remove and dispose of all the overgrown branches, making the grounds of the Long Romspert House Museum, beautiful and safe again. Many thanks to Larry and Brian and especially MBI for their generosity and professional service.



Branches being removed by MBI Job completed

Message from the President

Happy New Year, Volunteers, Members and Friends!

As we welcome in 2021, I would like to say that it has been my pleasure to be the Society’s President. My first year was busy and exciting although very different. We discovered some new ways to communicate within a climate of uncertainty. We were unable to host many events, with the exception of our outdoor distanced photo shoot “Capture a Moment in Time” and the “Schantz Park Walking Tour”.

We are also excited to report that our partnership with Wright Library, “The Far Hills Speaker Series” continued on successfully through a virtual medium. The absence of in-person events has allowed us time and space to update our buildings and possibly change up the displays and present you with something new.

We are looking forward to re-opening our Museum and hosting many returning annual events while possibly adding something new.

It truly takes a community to reach our goal of providing and maintaining our history. We are always looking for volunteers that are interested in a fun and interesting experience. Your donation of time helps both The Oakwood Historical Society and our community to grow.

We would like to thank all of our members, our donors, and the creative ideas and dedication of our volunteers including Leigh, Linda, Larry, Laura, Tom, Donna, Stuart, Debby E., Debra S., Phyllis, Kent, Carol, David, Karen, and Barb.

We can’t do this without you! Thank you for your ongoing generosity.

Tiffany Rubin
President



*Tiffany Rubin
President of Oakwood
Historical Society*

You Now Have the Option to Receive The Historian Electronically

The Society’s new customer relations management (CRM) software program makes it possible for members to receive their newsletter, *The Historian*, through email. Members who prefer to receive a digital newsletter may contact the Society at membership@oakwoodhistory.org or call (937) 299-3793 and leave their name and email address.



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The Oakwood Historical Society Membership Form

Membership Categories *(Please check one)*

- Individual \$25.00
- Family \$35.00
- Business \$50.00
- Bronze \$75.00
- Silver \$100.00
- Gold \$200.00

Receive a \$5 Discount *(Check if applicable)*

- Student Senior Active Military

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The Oakwood Historical Society

Mail to:

1947 Far Hills Ave., Dayton, OH 45419

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Last Name _____

Spouse/Partner _____

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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.