



The Historian

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Preserving the past, present, and future of the Oakwood Community • February 2022

Digitizing Historical Records, A Project in Partnership with the City of Oakwood

by Tom Morrow

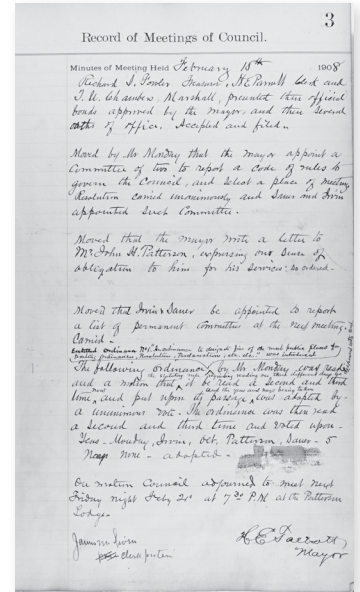
Several months back, a few of us in The Oakwood Historical Society were researching the history and background of Katharine Wright Park, which is the land upon which the Wright Memorial Library was built. How we (Debra Edwards, Karen Bartley, David Schmidt and I) got into this particular "wormhole" is not as important as where we ended up.

The information we had on the park in our archives was scant. We could back into who owned the land, and who bought the land, and the fact that several transactions took place in the mid-1920s which conveyed the land to both the School Board (for Smith School) and to the City (for Katharine Wright Park).

Our thought was to go to the City and to see what information might be available regarding the property and how it came to be part of the City. After comparing notes, we came to realize that we had basically the same info, e.g., "who owns the property" but not a lot else.

Next, we approached the City to ask whether we could look through the City Council Minutes. They were agreeable, and so we curled up with the Council Minutes from the 1920s (the transactions took place between 1923 and 1929) on a Friday, and we each took a book, and began to page through them. As one of us would find something, we'd sing out, and Debra would capture the page on her cellphone. You can imagine, this was not a very efficient process, but we unearthed more information. In doing so, we realized there is much historical information buried in the discussions and subsequent legislation which comes through Council. The only way to get at the material was to page through the minutes, which are semi-bound in books. We asked whether the minutes had ever been digitized, and the answer was no. So, TOHS offered to begin to scan and use Optical Character Recognition (OCR) to digitize the documents, provided we could keep a copy for our own research.

Over the last several months we've been scanning pages and providing the material back to the City as we digitize it. Below, you'll find the scan of the first Village Council meeting in February 1908. Council Minutes remained in longhand until 1924. The City has been pleased with our efforts and we've been happy to help and hope we can continue to work on projects of mutual interest with them.



Notes from the Archives...

Our archives contain quite a few oral histories of past Oakwood residents. While these recordings are merely reflections, and should only be considered as factual when substantiated, they do provide an interesting, sometimes amusing and an otherwise forgotten glimpse of Oakwood's past. One such and persistent tale is that of Orville Wright and the visit of President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

On October 12, 1940, Franklin D. Roosevelt met with Orville Wright at Wright Field. The president's motorcade included a stop to the Downtown Dayton Courthouse, where he addressed a crowd estimated at 100,000. This was during FDR's run for a third term, and they were joined by former Ohio Governor James M. Cox.

The motorcade later made its way toward Governor Cox's Trails End mansion, wending through Oakwood for a planned luncheon. According to Oakwood resident Fred Rieger's oral history, when the motorcar arrived near the intersection of Patterson Road and Dixon Avenue, "The car had to hesitate because of Far Hills traffic. Well, here's Franklin D. sitting in the back and Orville Wright and he didn't look too happy."

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Letter from the President

Dear Members,

As the incoming president of The Oakwood Historical Society, I am both honored and excited to take on this position and help usher the Society into 2022.

There are so many individuals who have volunteered their time and talents over the years—but I'd like to first thank our previous president, Tiffany Rubin, and all our board members for handing over such a strong and viable organization. Tiffany will continue with the Society this year, chairing several of our events.

We are pleased she will continue to share her valued talents with us. We are also welcoming Sara Dinwoodie to our board. She will be heading up our newsletter content and this is her inaugural edition. We hope you like it!

The Oakwood Historical Society spends as much time looking forward—maybe more – than we do looking into the past. Our goal is to offer you engaging and interesting events and activities and to share topics that are both historically significance and relevant to today's interests. We strive to be an important contributing source for the community.

One such goal this year is to improve and up-date our recording of history. Our archives is a treasure, and its continuance remains the foremost purpose of the Society. It is now in need of maintenance, general care – and brought in line with today's archival practices, so we can continue to record our history for current and future generations. We also hope to spotlight and share with you some of the more interesting and sometimes amusing artifacts found in our archives during the coming year. You'll find the first glimpse in this edition.

Some of our archival work this past year included the digitizing of Oakwood City Council meetings, starting with the first council meeting on February 18, 1908, by our historian Tom Morrow. You can read about this huge and important undertaking in his article starting on the cover of this newsletter.

Another goal is to further educate and inform the community as to our history through both our new historic marker program – which has had widespread support, including the City of Oakwood and especially John and Mj Gray, and Dan Turben – and through our current programs, such as the Far Hills Speaker Series, in conjunction with Wright Memorial Public Library. You'll find this spring's line-up of engaging speakers listed in this newsletter, all coordinated by our own Donna Rosenbaum.

So our mission this year is simple: Record, Preserve and Share.

As we embark upon our 150th anniversary of the first platting of Oakwood, our hope is that current Oakwood citizens will become even more familiar with four very important names... Isaac Haas, Patterson Mitchell, William Dixon, and Gabriel Harman – men who first inspired to make Oakwood a town, and a place to live.

Watch our upcoming newsletters, website and emails for more information on these four visionary men and the first platting of Oakwood – and how you can join in the celebration and festivities of the 150th Anniversary of "The Town of Oakwood".

Wishing you all the best in 2022,

Debra Edwards

President, The Oakwood Historical Society

50 Years Ago in Oakwood

The following are highlights captured from the City Council Minutes Digitization Project. We look forward to going “back in time” and sharing more highlights from the Digitization Project in future newsletters.

- Miss Sara Ann Faul, who worked for the City of Oakwood since 1948, recently passed. City Manager Foell remarked her contribution to the City could not be expressed in words and that she was one of the most dedicated employees who had ever worked for the City.
- Mr. Foell reported that the Regional Transit Authority tax issue had passed by an overwhelming vote both within the City of Dayton and the City of Oakwood. The RTA will be meeting to develop the necessary steps in preparing for the purchase of the City Transit Company.
- The Little Exchange requested stairs be constructed between the rear of their property and the recently constructed Park Avenue off-street parking lot. The Winters Bank steps on Park Avenue will be within the right-of-way but existing legislation allows this to be done in certain circumstances. This legislation also provides that the City will be held harmless from any liability arising out of such placement of steps.
- The Library has requested that they be permitted to construct a driveway from Telford to the rear of the almost-completed building extension. Mr. Foell noted that the rationale behind this request lies with the need to permit easier access for teachers dropping off books used in their classrooms. Council noted that driveway construction would reduce the green space that the Library Board had indicated they were most anxious to preserve.
- The City is still working with the County in trying to develop a paper recycling approach. Mr. Foell noted that because the County municipalities agreed to have all burnable trash disposed of at the incinerator that this agreement would have to be adjusted before a recycling project could be started.
- Mrs. Stanley Herr and Mrs. D. R. Hughes, leaders of Junior Girl Scout Troop 1058, presented a summary of a project recently accomplished by the Troop. The troop measured various species of trees within the City to determine which trees were the largest with the hope that this might lead to a friendly competition within the community. Patrol leaders from the troop then reported to Council their findings, indicating that the largest Oakwood trees were evenly distributed in terms of their location versus the east and west side of Far Hills Avenue and the north and south sides of Patterson Road. The champion oak tree in Oakwood was located on Oakwood Avenue and the largest tree was an elm tree located on the Schantz Avenue side of Oakwood High School.
- Mr. Foell indicated that he placed Chief Donald E. Porter on permanent medical leave and recommended that the leadership void within the Safety Department be filled by appointing a Public Safety Director with an administrative background rather than a Chief of Police who has traditionally come from the ranks of the Safety Department itself. Mr. Foell noted that the position of Public Safety Director is presently provided for under the City Charter and that traditionally the department head has assumed the title of Chief reserving the position of Public Safety Director to the City Manager.
- Mr. Foell noted that he feels the Department needs direction that would combine administrative talent with the existing expertise in various operational matters and that filling of the vacancy in this manner would work toward that end. Council moved and seconded the recommendation of the City Manager to appoint Mr. Michael J. Kelly to the position of Public Safety Director, effective immediately.
- Council approved the appointment of Miss Dorothy Bussinger to the position of Clerk of Council, and Mr. Jack Carter as Service Director, filling a vacancy left by the retiring Mr. Harry Carter.

In Memoriam It is with sad hearts that board of The Oakwood Historical Society announces the passing of our fellow board member and property manager, Larry Bilderback. Larry joined our board in 2019, and served as our Property Manager since 2018. For many years prior to joining our board, Larry, along with his wife, Jo, worked tirelessly in helping to maintain the House Museum property. He will be greatly missed by our community, and we were fortunate to benefit from his energy, enthusiasm and expertise. Our thoughts are with his wife and family.

Discover the Art, History and Joys of Maple Sugaring

Join The Oakwood Historical Society at The Farm, home of John and Mj Gray, on Saturday, February 19 at 1:30 p.m. and discover how to tap a Sugar Maple tree, and watch how sap becomes a delicious syrup. A great wintertime activity for the entire family – and you'll learn first-hand how you can do this time-honored tradition at home.

You'll also learn a bit of the history of sugar maple tapping in pioneer Oakwood, and how NCR's former Sugar Camp got its name.

This is a free outdoor educational activity, weather-permitting – but space is limited and advance reservations are required. Visit our website at oakwoodhistory.org for more information.



2021 – A Year of Creativity!

by Leigh Turben

For the Historical Society, 2021 was a year of creativity, out-of-the-box thinking, and newly designed events to accommodate COVID restrictions and concerns. Here is a recap of 2021, and we look forward to an even better 2022.

Our Far Hills Speaker Series flourished under the careful guidance of Donna Rosenbaum. The Spring presentations were conducted virtually through Zoom, and when COVID restrictions were lifted in the summer, we were able to hold in-person presentations. Because so many of our members enjoyed the virtual series, we videotaped the live presentations so anyone who wished could view the presentations. We offered six intriguing presentations in 2021, and attendance was better than we could ever have anticipated. Many thanks to the Wright Library, with whom we partner, and Donna for their creativity and programming.

It has been our pleasure to host the 3rd graders from Smith and Harman Schools every May for their annual day trip to the Long-Romspert Homestead and House Museum. Under the supervision of Education Director, Linda Pearson, and with masks and smaller groups, we were able to welcome students over several days in May. This was the first year we included the outbuildings in the tours, including the restored carriage house and spring house, and our summer kitchen and 1920 garage. Brian Mettling kindly parked his Model T in the 1920 garage, which delighted the students. It was a fun and educational event, and we look forward to seeing the 3rd graders again in 2022.

Linda also planned and facilitated our summer children's gardening program for grades 1-4. It was a fun-filled, learning program for budding gardeners.

While we were unable to schedule some of our traditional events in 2021, we implemented a new, single-house tour organized by Debra Edwards. Debra selected a lovely historic estate on Park Road for our aptly named "Hidden Manor Tour" on June 19. This stunning English Tudor, with its steeped pitched slate roof and quintessential turreted tower was built in 1927 on land once owned by John H. Patterson as part of his extensive Hills and Dales Park. 136 tour guests thoroughly enjoyed the beautiful architecture and learning about this historic estate.

We were able to continue our Fall Family Photo Fundraiser in October. Linda Pearson organized this event, with local photographer Betty Cochran photographing 17 families on the beautiful grounds of the Long-Romspert Homestead.

The Holiday Home Tour is our largest fundraiser of the year, and we worked very hard to safely offer this tour in December 2021. Tour Coordinator Debra Edwards selected five amazing homes in the historic Schantz District for the tour. Many thanks to the homeowners who opened their homes and made this popular event possible. Thanks also to the Lutheran Church of Our Savior for graciously allowing us use their facility, and include in the tour the historic Frederick Patterson home that they own and maintain. 60+ volunteers provided their time and talent to make the Holiday Home Tour a success.

Our Membership has been steady from 2019-2021 with 196 active members and sponsors, and 484 friends of the Society. COVID-permitting, we hope to open the Homestead for a membership drive in 2022.

Financially, the Society has been able to weather the storm without taking any funds from our endowment, which continues to grow in this bullish market. In 2021 we had to be smart about our finances; we reduced the maintenance fees associated with the Homestead and House Museum; offered a new COVID-friendly fundraiser; adapted some of our existing events to meet the challenges of COVID; and are so very thankful to our loyal members, sponsors and donors who have been exceptionally generous.

Food Preservation

by Linda Pearson

Since ancient times, gathering and safely preserving food has been one of mankind's biggest preoccupations. There have been many ways to do it, but in this article, we will focus on one of the more recent methods invented, canning, and how it was used in the average Dayton area home in the latter part of the 19th century, during the time that one of Oakwood's first families, the Longs, lived in what is now The Oakwood Historical Society's House Museum on Far Hills Avenue.

Canning emerged during the Napoleonic era, when inventor Nicholas Appert responded to the French government's call for a better means to preserve food for army and naval use. His invention involved tightly sealing food inside a glass champagne bottle with a cork and heating it to a certain temperature. It didn't take long for canners to discover that high heat, tight sealing, and a lack of air were crucial for safely preserving foods—or failing that, pickling the food in vinegar. But it wasn't until after Louis Pasteur discovered microbes that anyone understood why this was the case.

Not long after Appert's initial invention came cans of cast iron, used by arctic explorers. The iron cans were so thick that they had to be opened with a hammer and chisel or a heavy-duty knife. In fact, this was precisely how manufacturers recommended customers open cans! Although it was easier to open later

versions of cans, which were made from thinner steel, it was still over 50 years before the first can opener was invented by Warner. Early can openers took practice to use, and the version we know—consumer friendly with a serrated wheel—was actually invented in the 1920s.

PINE-APPLE JAM.

Peel pine-apples, carefully cutting out black specks with a pen-knife; grate on a coarse grater. Use one pound of sugar to one pound of pine-apple; boil until clear (about three-quarters of an hour). Put in small glass jars, and seal up.

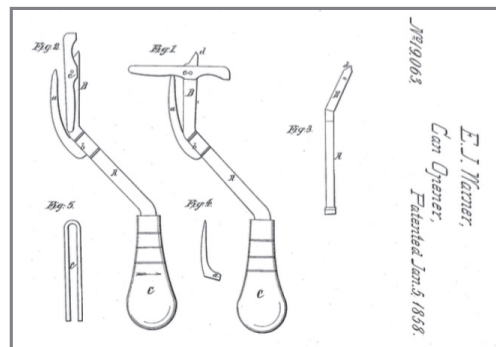
Canning in steel was done mainly by larger manufacturers. At home, people mostly used crocks or glass to preserve food, although home can soldering was used on occasion. In our copy of the 1873 First Presbyterian Cookbook from Dayton, there is a recipe for canned corn that contains instructions that uses cans and solder on metal lids. Instructions are mostly the ingredients rather than steps on how to save the prepared ingredients. For example, the corn is to have all air removed, but doesn't explain how.

For the most part, however, jars were sealed with corks (which was easier if using small openings in the top) or other sealants such as melted lard or melted wax; it was also common to use several layers, with salt brine or heavy sugar syrup as the first layer, to better preserve and protect the food. This cookbook has almost no recipes using metal cans, but many from the earlier types of canning.

The Ball brothers invented better sealing techniques after 1880, after this cookbook was written. Various types of lids were used. However, the most popular modern type, the two-part lid, was invented in 1915 by Alexander Kerr.

Canning reached its apex during WWII, but there have been several revivals since, both during the back-to-earth movement of the 1970s and today with COVID. In fact, access to enough canning supplies has been a problem over the past few years, as many people have turned back to canning.

Cases of food poisoning continue to happen from time to time. For this reason, the USDA continued to release updated canning guides through the 2010s, alongside warnings to disregard any earlier guides.



Far Hills Speaker Series – Spring 2022 Program

We are proud to present our Spring Far Hills Speaker Series, in partnership with Wright Memorial Library. Please join us! The lectures will be presented at Wright Memorial Library. Current Health Department guidelines will be adhered to; lectures may be presented virtually depending on current guidelines.

Discovery and Renewal on the Huffman Prairie

Sunday, February 20 at 2:00 p.m., Wright Memorial Public Library



David Nolin was the director of conservation for Five Rivers MetroParks. During David's tenure with MetroParks he led the acquisition of land and the habitat management program. Mr. Nolin is actively involved in the protection and restoration of the Huffman Prairie State Natural Landmark and the Beavercreek wetlands.

As the spring season starts, it is the time to think of green, growing, and flowering plants. While Huffman Prairie and the Wright brothers are synonymous, Huffman Prairie in the 1830's was a place of discovery where botanists found and identified new prairie plant species. Mr. Nolan will walk us through the history of the prairie from its 1800s surveying to the ongoing effort to continually renew and sustain the Huffman Prairie.

Bletchley Park, Code Breaking and Dayton's Role

Sunday, March 20 at 2:00 p.m., Wright Memorial Public Library



Retired after 34 years of active duty in the Royal Air Force, Colonel Lloyd ended his military career as an Exchange Officer in the U.S. Air Force Sustainment Center. There he led strategic planning, partnerships with industry and a range of activities to modernize U.S. maintenance and supply chain operations, and more importantly build closer links between the U.S. and U.K. air forces. Colonel Lloyd now resides in Oakwood and brings to the community his love of military history and the lessons it brings to future generations.

The role of Bletchley Park in the United Kingdom only came to light in the late 1990s and even now is not fully appreciated for the impact it had on WW2 and through the present day. This talk will look at the impact of Bletchley Park, the relationship forged with Dayton, and how that relationship lives today in the closest intelligence sharing between any nations on the planet.

Becoming a Community: The Platting of Oakwood

Sunday, April 24 at 2:00 p.m., Wright Memorial Public Library



Oakwood resident Tom Morrow is a professional engineer, Vice President of the Dayton Railway Historical Society, and a former board member of the Oakwood Historical Society. Tom also has a love for historical trolleys and buses and has done extensive research on the history of Oakwood.

Oakwood celebrates its 150th anniversary of the original Oakwood plats. The early plat maps show the initial divisions of Oakwood land as it went from settlement to platted village. The "founders" of Oakwood, Haas, Mitchell, Dixon and Harman purchased land along the Lebanon Turnpike south of Dayton and subdivided it into smaller parcels and then attempted to sell the land for housing or other uses. This presentation will chronologically walk through the growth of the Oakwood community as houses were built and neighborhoods established.

The House Museum is Making History

While our Long-Romspert House Museum has mostly been closed due to the pandemic for almost two years, much has still been going on within its 150+-year-old walls.

We are now the proud recipients of some new-to-us antique Eastlake furniture which graces our 1863 gathering room. It looks lovely! We thank the donor for entrusting us with his family's longtime heirlooms, and to our own volunteer "elf" that carted the furniture to us all the way from Hamilton.

We've also been busy cleaning and redecorating our upstairs children's room, and also making way for a soon-to-be downstairs Reading Nook. Our hope is this new "library" will become a cozy place for our

members and community to browse through our growing collection of history books. In early winter, our roof sprang a leak. Enterprise Roofing was quick to come and repaired for a special low cost. Now we face the repair of some inside minor damage to a plaster wall and ceiling.

Scout Henry Bolmida was an indispensable volunteer in helping us decorate our porch for the holidays. It all looked very festive! He's seen on our front porch with board member Linda Pearson.



Notes from the Archives ... Continued from page 1

When the car “got to Dixon...Orville Wright had the car stopped and got out. Later we found out that he wasn't about to go to lunch with those damn Democrats. And he walked home.”

Orville was reputed to be a better flyer than a driver, as some oral histories claim. It is recorded in Bishop Milton Wright's diary, now part of the Wright Collection at the Wright State University Archives, that Orville almost ran down a nine-year-old just one day after receiving a warning.

June 29, 1913 – *It was a very hot day. Horace came in the afternoon and staid till after supper. Orville was threat(en)ed with arrest by a cop for rapid driving.*

June 30, 1913 – *It was a roasting hot day. Milton came in the evening and staid an hour. Orville ran the hose over my roof and adjusted the fan, so I slept comfortable. He came near running over a 9 year old girl who stopped in the way of his auto.*

In 1946, at the age of 75, Orville drove his car all the way to Lawrence, Kansas to attend his grandniece's wedding. The bridegroom's parents were from Ohio and likewise drove to Kansas. According to Ivonette Wright Miller who wrote in her Wright Reminiscences, as both made their way to Kansas, the bridegroom's parents were overtaken and passed by a fast-moving car with Ohio license plates. It was “Uncle Orville in his Hudson flying at low levels”.

Photo originally from Dayton Daily News.

The Oakwood Historical Society is Seeking a Volunteer Property Manager

This is a wonderful opportunity for a handyperson to oversee a well-maintained property. The role involves working with vendors such as roofing, landscape, plumbing and HVAC to ensure the property is fully operational and in good condition. The position requires some “household” handywork such as checking the lights, security system, winterizing, etc., but all heavy work, including the grounds, is done by professionals, overseen by you. Please email us at info@oakwoodhistory.org or call at 937-299-3793 for more information.

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THE OAKWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

1947 Far Hills Avenue
Dayton, OH 45419

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- Silver \$100.00
- Gold \$200.00

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

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