

The Far Hills Business District circa 1930 – 1953

By Harry G. Ebeling

The south end of the Far Hills business district has changed a great deal since the 1930's. You may remember that the buses turned around at Dell Park Avenue rather than circling the block at Arrow Wine.

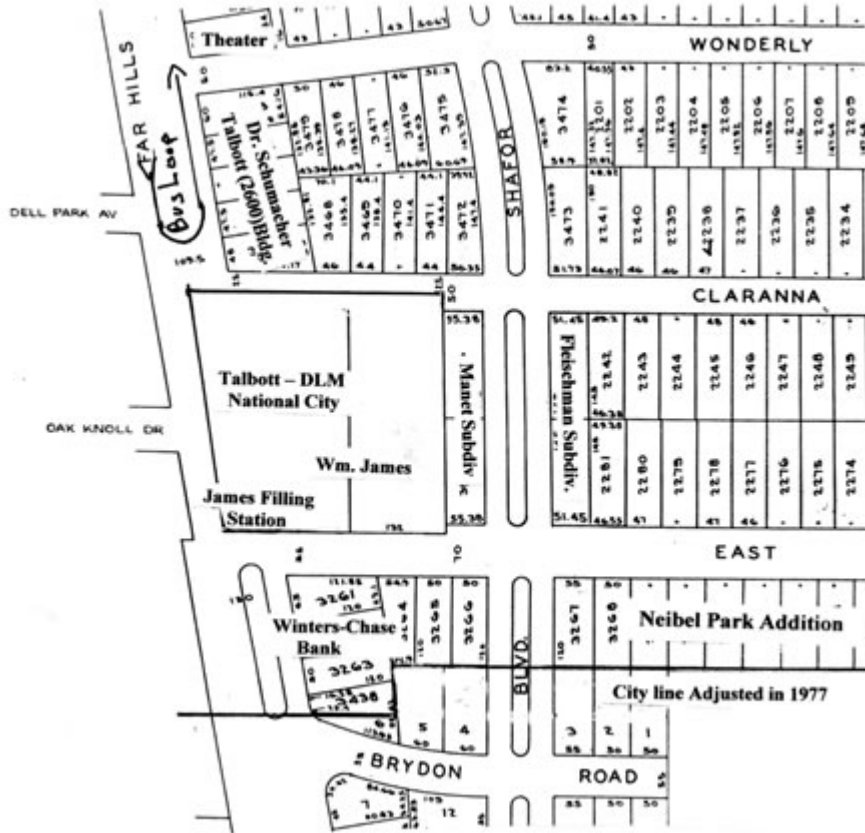
That's because Oakwood didn't acquire the street land from Wonderly Avenue to East Drive until 1956. Recall the discussion of the Wonderly Farm and its partition of the east part (85 ac.) into three parcels for the children of Jacob Wonderly. The west section closest to Far Hills was set off to Elmer, who sold it to Isaac Fallis, who sold parcels to various people, finally selling the south three acres to William James in 1914. James farmed it until 1929 when he built a small two pump Shell filling station at the corner of East Drive and Far Hills Ave. It had those wonderful pumps that you had to fill up the glass at the top by pumping and then let gravity drain the gas down to the automobiles. It also had a rack that stood about four feet off the ground and accommodated a car for greasing, oil changes and maintenance. James operated the station from 1929 to 1949.

James' widow sold 17 acres, including the station and a house, to the city in 1949 to accommodate the widening of East Drive. She sold the rest to the Talbott Corporation in 1950. They built the Dorothy Lane Market in 1953, and after several investors owned the building, it was sold to Norman Mayne in 1983.

The eastern part of the original acreage was sold in 1931 to D.H. Maney and C.G. Fleischman who dedicated Shafor Boulevard between Claranna and East Drive when platting their land. Shafor Boulevard stopped at Brydon Road where it bumped into Clarence Neibel's farm.

The Talbott Corporation bought most of the Wonderly-Claranna block in 1950 for the purpose of building the office building and parking lot which was completed in 1956. The building has gone through several owners including Galbraith of Columbus, a real estate investment trust, and Dayton Properties and became known as the 2600 Building. More importantly, the Talbott interests deeded one half of Claranna Avenue and the part of Far Hills Avenue needed to widen them so that we now have the Far Hills Business District with four lanes through from Dorothy Lane. It was a considerable bottle neck when Far Hills narrowed to two lanes from Wonderly Avenue to East Drive until 1952.

A further impediment to traffic flow was getting from the intersection of Far Hills and Dorothy Lane to the intersection of Shroyer Road and Dorothy Lane. It's hard to imagine but it wasn't a straight shot because Dorothy Lane wasn't there! When entering the Dorothy Lane intersection from any direction, you had to go two blocks north to East Drive, and go four blocks east/west parallel to Dorothy Lane, and turn back to the intersection before proceeding to either east to Wilmington Pike or west to South Dixie. Anna (Wonderly) and Clarence Neibel planned to plat the Brydon Road and Dorothy Lane section of the Neibel farm but the Depression interfered, and they lost their unplatted land to the bank. Developers Walter W. Huber and Alex Simms acquired the area of the planned streets and put them through in 1939 and 1941.



When the Neibels first started building, they held a contest to name the street between Dorothy Lane and East Drive. An Oakwood student submitted the name of the street in Columbus where his grandparents lived. He won with the name Brydon Road. Bob Pool, long time Oakwood resident and former teacher at the high school was their student and he remembers receiving a check for \$25 at a high school assembly.

A short lived landmark stood at the corner of Dorothy Lane and Far Hills Avenue where Arrow Wine now stands. The Custola was a stucco one story building with two white Polar Bears on their hind legs standing guard out side. It was a classic drive-in right out of the movies, where cars nosed in and "car hops" came out for orders. Service was on aluminum trays with sliding arms that held them in place against the car door by hooking them over the rolled down window. It's specialty was an ice cream float made with Vernors Ginger Ale. Vernors, like beer, is an acquired taste, but with ice cream, it tastes great. You can still buy Vernors but it isn't the same. There was another Custola for the Fairview crowd on Salem Avenue just beyond Goody Goody, where the Key Bank is.

Custola was run by Claude Avery and went out of business after about two years. It may have been affected by gas rationing. Avery also owned The Coffee Pot Restaurant at 2419 Far Hills, at the corner of Hilltop. In 1941, he opened a restaurant at the corner of Traction Ave. and West Schantz Ave. which later was given the address of South Dixie. It obtained a liquor license in 1946, and began advertising "Fine Foods, Liquors, and Dancing," In 1947, a new owner, Neil Swafford took over and it became Neil's Bar & Restaurant and later Neil's Heritage House.