

Centennial Reflections

*Essays from the
Oakwood Historical Society*

Who bought, sold and inherited what to who in early Oakwood

By Harry G. Ebeling

There are a couple of areas right in the middle of Oakwood that need attention in this series. One is Elizabeth Gardens, which winds gracefully through the streets of Raleigh Rd., Woodstock Dr., Ashridge Rd. and Devereux Dr. It borders Elizabeth Gardens Park on the west and south, thus giving rise to its name. It was platted by Harrie P. Clegg of the Oakwood Street Railway in 1925. The 27.48 acres were assembled in three parcels: 10 acres purchased from H.E. Parrott sliced off of the 38 acres he had purchased from Henry Long on the south side: part of lot 90 and all of lot 91 of the original plat of Oakwood purchased from Harry I. Schenck: a large 16.7 ac. central parcel purchased from Oliver Gothlin.

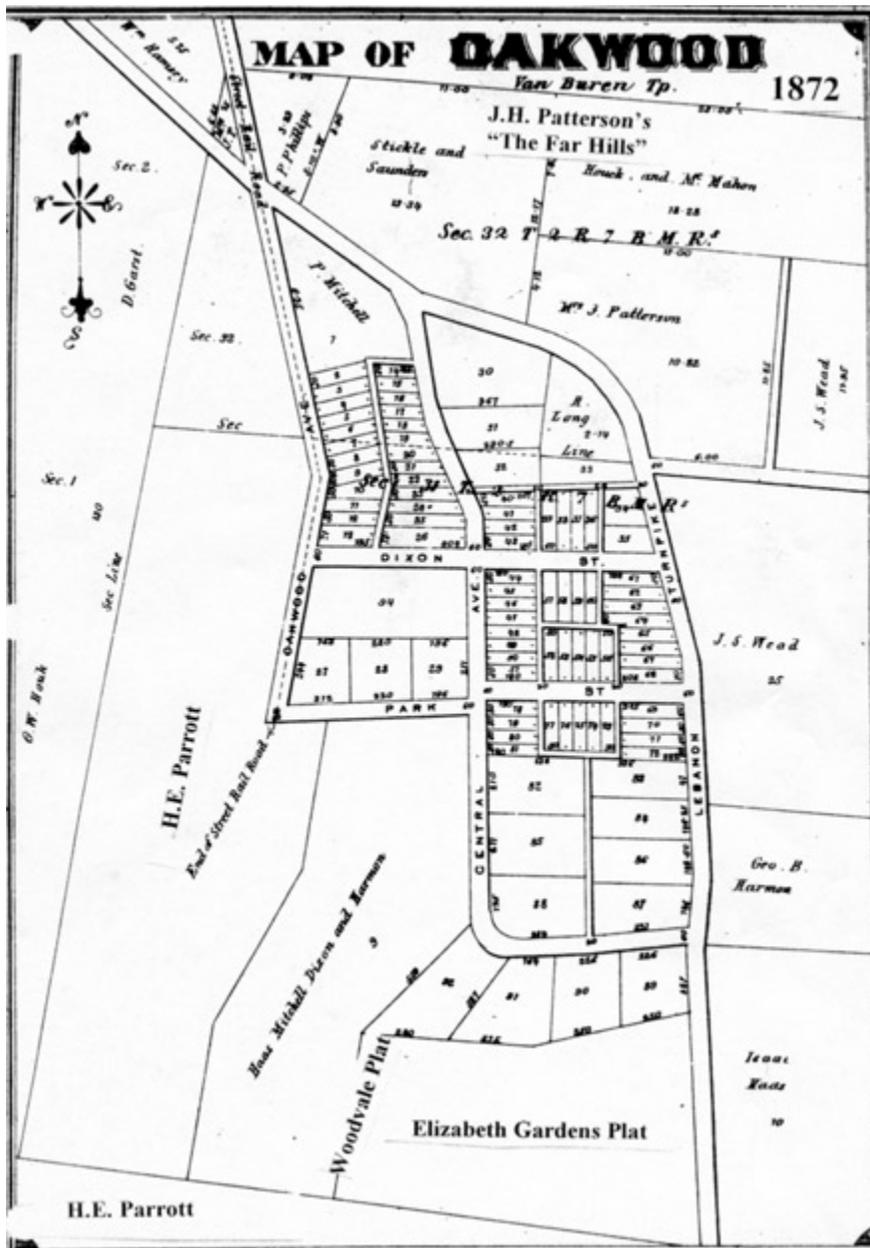
It was intended to be exclusive, like the houses designed by prominent Oakwood architect Harry I. Schenck on the west side of Raleigh Rd., but the depression interfered with many plans and in 1928 it was replatted into smaller lots so that most of the building took place in the 1930's. Schenck's house at Harman and Ridgeway was excluded. It also excluded the 1.5 acre tract at Ashridge and Far Hills sold to Mary Long Wiley in 1898, and Elizabeth Gardens Park.

Being on the edge of the moraine, it had a lot of gravel, and was excavated for it early. It had originally been part of Daniel Cooper's patents and became the property of Daniel Garst. A large part of it behind lots 89 and 92 of the original Plat of Oakwood on the south side of Harman Ave. to the section line behind Ashridge Rd. and from Far Hills Ave. to Ridgeway Rd. went through several owners until it came to Oliver Gothlin in 1892. Earl D. Creager, who lived on Harman Ave. in a cottage similar to the one that is still there at 1177, recalled how his father managed a gravel pit in the area of Woodstock. He also recalled how garbage was dumped north of Ashridge.

In 1912, Gothlin leased a part of it to George Remple for farming purposes at \$120 per year. Remple lived on W. Dixon Ave. on the southwest corner of the first alley. His heirs lived there until 1967. The plot plan sketched on the lease shows a creek and a spring at about the intersection of Ashridge and Devereaux and prohibits the tenant from plowing across the creek so as to fill it. It further shows a house and a barn with a shed and two chicken houses and runs. This is apparently behind 1.5 acres on Far Hills Ave. and includes the four properties on Far Hills (#1221-1311) which he had sold, leaving an access lane on the north border beside the present Oakwood Manor. Note that as late as 1912, after the formation of the Village, Oakwood still had farms. We saw this in the Houk tracts.

The other area of interest is the original Plat of Oakwood, established in 1872 by Issac Haas, William Dixon, Patterson Mitchell and Gabriel Harmon to which we referred in an

earlier article. This is the core of the Village and the city, extending from the intersection of Far Hills Ave. and Oakwood Ave., up the hill along those two streets to the south side of Harman Ave. and Park Ave. Briefly, Haas had bought the 82 acre plot of ground and induced the others to become investors in his dream of creating a subdivision on the hill.



When the original owner who held the mortgage died, and his Administrator foreclosed, Gabriel Harmon came to the rescue and bought the unsold interests of Haas, while the other investors took lots for their investment. Harmon became the owner of most of Oakwood as it stood. Harmon died, leaving the unsold lots to his wife, who died in 1899 and left them to their children in severalty. Her Executor/Trustee sold some parcels, made a friendly partition and deeded the remaining lots to the children, from whom sales can be traced. Things went slowly at first because the concept of Oakwood hadn't caught on.

Lot 1 was sold by Mitchell's heirs to James Peters who built the house at 622 Oakwood as a "spec." house. When Oakwood didn't catch on, he sold it to Harrie P. Clegg who later acquired lots 2 & 3.

Lots 4, 5, 6 & 7 had been sold to various owners who sold to Elizabeth Dissinger, P.M. Harman's niece.

- Lots 8 & 9 were set off by the Trustee to William C. Harman and C.C. Harman
- Lots 10 & 11 were set off to Elizabeth Harman Porter who sold to Elizabeth Stoddard.
- Lots 12 & 13 had been sold by Haas to Dixon who sold to Elizabeth Stoddard.

You see how it's developing. The lots 18 thru 26 were acquired for the Harman Ave. School. Lot 30 at the corner of Harman Ave. & Harman Terrace was set off to Elizabeth Harman Porter and has had prominent owners such as Judge Carroll Sprigg, Frederick Patterson, Minnie Niebel and Charles Shook.

One shrewd investor bought the city building property from the Elizabeth Harman trust in 1919 for \$3,750 and sold it to the Village in 1921 for \$12,500. Mitchell's estate sold lots 52 – 56 to John R. Fletcher, who moved the house from W. Dixon Ave. to Park Ave. and in 1923 gave it to the School Board for a library, which served it well until 1939 when The Wright Library was erected. The commercial building he erected on Park Ave. still stands.

The alley shown on the original plat which extends from behind the city building to Harman Ave. was vacated in 1923. There was a water tower adjacent to Wright's Hawthorn Hill until Oakwood bought the company, went into the water business and built the tower on Ridgeway Rd.

But enough of this rambling around Oakwood. You've been introduced to the main players and the main parcels. There are about 75 recorded plats with history to them and numerous small plats of divided lots, but you must have feel for how we came to be what we are. From now on let's see what sidelights about people and events we can nose into.