

Centennial Reflections

*Essays from the
Oakwood Historical Society*

Parrott family key to north Oakwood development

By Harry G. Ebeling

The influence of the Parrott family has to be recognized as very important to the development of some of the most beautiful and hard to describe areas of Oakwood. Two members of the family were pioneer owners of property in west Oakwood. Edward A. Parrott purchased Maysfield, a 24-acre parcel and home in 1867 from Col. James F. Harrison before the country club area was developed, and later sold it to Henry Hatcher who created the plat of Maysfield.

Picture a large "L" as shown on the accompanying drawing. It was acquired by Capt. Henry E. Parrott in two parcels, one from Henry Long (38.65 acres) in 1883, and one from Michael Garst (39.5 acres) in 1866. The 38.65 ac. parcel runs east/west from Far Hills at Park Rd. and encompasses Forrer Rd., to the Hills and Dales border of Oakwood. The 39.5 ac. runs from the intersection of Forrer Rd. and Oakwood Ave. in a northerly direction encompassing Oakwood Ave. to Katherine St. It also includes 5.69 ac. off lot 93 of the original Oakwood Plat. These purchases permitted the creation of Oakwood Ave., which was originally named Forrer Rd. all the way from Park Ave. to Far Hills.

The rambling area through the end moraine with the brick road, has many different styles of houses with beautiful trees, streams, wild flowers, and privacy. Most of the area is described by metes and bounds, meaning that it is not platted into nice neat rows of streets. Many of the original lots were subdivided for additional houses.

The Parrotts created Briar Hill and their personal residence, which was divided for their family, ultimately resulting in the private road we know as Briar Hill Rd. This was created in the will of Henrietta Pierce Parrott in 1922. It includes an 18 foot roadway and provides restrictions and the requirements that the owners of adjacent lots bear 1/5 of the cost of the road. The house burned to the ground in 1969 and houses have been built on the former grounds with an entrance driveway from Oakwood Ave. marked with a distinctive stone post.

At the north end of the strip, there was enough land to establish H. E. Parrott's Subdivision in 1897, consisting of 6.68 acres divided into 12 lots, later replatted into 16 lots between Oakwood Ave. and Runnymede Rd. and between Katherine St. and Walnut Lane. This created one block of West Dixon Ave. and later altered it to make the arc towards the end at Runnymede Playhouse.

Walnut Lane, part of the Parrott tract, is one of Oakwood's private roads, created in 1919 and 1923 by George S. Blanchard in agreement with the owners of five small lots. He included a sketch of his proposed plat which was never recorded and which included access rights to Oakwood Ave, and use of a roadway within the area. He also created restrictions providing that one sixth of the expense of maintaining the common road would be borne by the owners. The Oakwood Ave. frontage was to become the Carlton Smith house and gardens.

The land on both sides of Forrer Rd. and Oakwood Ave. was dedicated to the city and created Houk Stream Park in 1912 by the joint dedication by Elizabeth E.P.T. Houk, John H. Patterson and Henrietta E. Parrott. The families joined in a deed donating 12.43 ac., later added to by Patterson with 1.34 ac at the corner of Ridgeway Rd. The 2.98 ac. part at the corner of Forrer Rd. and Ridgeway Rd. donated by Mrs. Parrott was named Elizabeth Gardens in honor of her mother Elizabeth Forrer. (This park was renamed Friendship Park in honor of Oakwood's sister cities).

A plat recorded in 1914 renamed Houk Rd. to Runnymede Rd. and Forrer Rd. from the corner of Park Ave. to the intersection of Ridgeway Rd., to Oakwood Ave. It also continued Forrer Rd. from the intersection of Ridgeway Rd. to Far Hills including the condition "that at no time in the future will there be any damage to or interference with the trees then located on the property dedicated, and on the condition that no sidewalk be made at the grade of the present top of the bank, and further that the grade of the bank be in no way changed."

Adding to the beauty of this area is Loy Gardens Park created in 1929 in the will of Katherine Loy. It is 1.58 ac. extending from Park Rd. to Forrer Rd. and virtually connects to Friendship Park. It is next to the home of Henry and Katherine Loy and is dedicated to his memory.

Ridgeway Rd. wasn't extended from the Forrer Rd. intersection up the hill to Harman Ave. until 1925 and 1930 when Harry I. Schenck developed the Woodvale Plat. It was made possible by his acquisition of part of lots 92 & 93 of the

original plat of Oakwood. He designed the house at 999 Harman Ave. and those on both corners of Ridgeway and Harman Ave. and platted 11 lots along the west side of Ridgeway to south of the Raleigh Rd. intersection.

Ten acres from the east-west tract purchased from Henry Long was later sold to Harry P. Clegg to add to the development of Elizabeth Gardens plat which we know as the Raleigh Rd., Devereux Dr. and Woodstock Dr. area.

H.E. Parrott is remembered as the second Mayor of the Village of Oakwood from 1910 – 1913, and an original signer of the petition for creating the village. His daughter Mary Edward, married Nelson Clunet. The Clunets' daughter, Henrietta, married Robert Light; their daughter Mary Edward, married E. Rossiter Sawtelle; their daughter, Aimee, married L. Keith Wilson; and their daughter Natalie, married Roy G. Fitzgerald, Jr. These marriages produced graduates of Oakwood High School of the 40's & 50's who may be remembered by some of us.