



THE HISTORIAN

Preserving the past, present, and future of the Oakwood Community
Spring 2025

Wright at Home

On Saturday, April 26, The Oakwood Historical Society and Dayton History hosted Wright at Home. This special Oakwood event provided visitors with an opportunity to tour Hawthorn Hill, the stately home of Orville Wright and the Wright family. The Wright at Home event featured an open-house style experience in which knowledgeable docents provided stories about the home where Orville, Katharine, and their father, Milton, lived. Guests also had the opportunity to meet Stephen Wright, the great grandnephew of Wilbur and Orville Wright.

In addition to the house tour, docents took participants on a neighborhood walking tour, where they learned about an early member of the “Barn Gang,” a group instrumental in the practical use of early automobiles, and a well-known architect who designed many of the prominent homes and buildings in both Oakwood and Dayton. Docents also told the story of an Oakwood resident credited with the early success of Frigidaire and the rags-to-riches life of a German immigrant who earned the title “Maker of Machines.”

After the tours, everyone relaxed with some light refreshments, including Orville’s favorite cookies. Thank you to everyone who volunteered for and attended this event!



oakwoodhistory.org
info@oakwoodhistory.org

Children's Victory Garden Summer Program



In honor of the 80th anniversary of the end of WWII and the various code breaker activities held in our area this summer, we are calling our garden a Victory Garden.

According to the Smithsonian Institute, by 1944 over 40% of American food came from gardens in individual citizens' yards.

At the Oakwood Historical Society, we grow vegetables, fruits, herbs, and pollinator friendly flowers, just as the Victory Gardens did. Children will plant, tend, harvest, and prepare food from our garden.

For Grades 1-4.



Sunday afternoons, 3:30–5 p.m.

8 sessions:

May 18

June 1, 15, and 29

July 13 and 27

August 10, 24

Location:



1947 Far Hills Ave,
Oakwood OH 45419

Cost: \$140 per child for non-members
\$115 per child for members

Register at Oakwoodhistory.org

Questions? Contact Linda Pearson at Garden@OakwoodHistory.org

Gardening since 2010. A MetroParks community garden.

Rosé in May

Saturday, May 17, 2025

4PM-7PM

After That Day in May!

We're thrilled to invite you to a special gathering hosted by The Oakwood Historical Society!

Join us for an evening of wine sipping, tasty snacks, and friendly faces. Whether you're a long-time local or new to the neighborhood, this is a perfect chance to meet new friends in a relaxed, welcoming setting.

Tickets are \$35 per person and can be purchased at oakwoodhistory.org.

*****Must be 21 or older to attend. *****

**Long-Romsperth Homestead
1947 Far Hills Ave Oakwood, OH 45419**

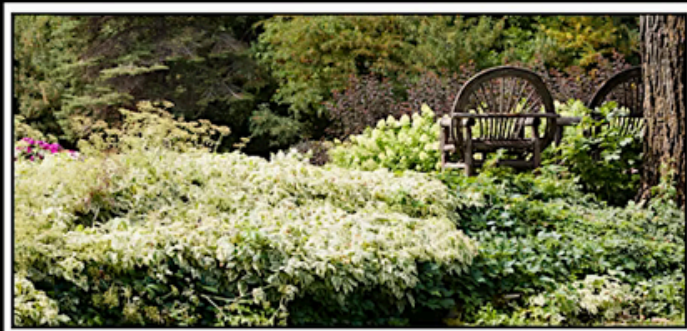
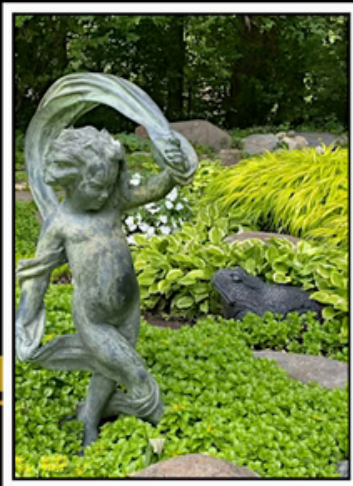
Garden Gems Tour with The Garden Club of Dayton

Saturday, June 14; 9:00 am - 3:00 pm

On June 29, 1922, Katharine Houk Talbott of Oakwood gathered a group of her gardening friends at her home, "Runnymede," to form a garden club. The stated objective of the Garden Club of Dayton then was and still is "...to stimulate the knowledge and love of gardening; to aid in the protection of native trees, plants, birds, and other creatures and to encourage historic preservation, civic planting, and the general knowledge of nature."

For this year's presentation, members will take us on a walking tour of seven gardens in Oakwood, Kettering, and Washington Township.

Get tickets at gardenclubofdayton.org.



GARDEN GEMS TOUR 2025

How The Oakwood Historical Society ended up at the Long Romsperth Homestead

Ethel Romsperth and Bill Hager

Author's note: With this being the 50th anniversary year of the historical society, and the 40th anniversary of the historical society moving into its current museum home, this article is being taken out of mothballs and updated. There were other important early members who helped start the historical society, and befriended Ethel. Their stories will be in later articles.

The Oakwood Historical Society had been in existence for most of a decade without a physical home before the Long-Romsperth homestead became the official heart of the Society. Before that, TOHS met at Wright Library and kept some bookshelves and filing cabinets there.

This part of the story involves Ethel Gilbert Romsperth, the owner of the house, and C. William (Bill) Hager, a local realtor and Oakwood Historical Society member with interest in historic preservation and historic neighborhoods. Ethel was the widow of H.H. Romsperth. They were the last remaining members of the Long/Romsperth family living in the house since it was built in the 1860's. The couple had no children, and she had become reclusive in her later years.

With Ethel having married into the Long Romsperth family and moved onto the property at 1947 Far Hills in 1910, she was certainly an early member of the new community of Oakwood which had incorporated in 1908. Ethel was a very bright woman with a college degree. She trained to become a teacher, but married before she could begin her career. At that time and even into the mid-century, women were mostly hired only when single; married women were not hired in order to make room for married men to be employed. She belonged to many clubs, societies, collected information on many topics, and was very involved in her church. Growing dahlias, exotic to Dayton, was one of her long-time hobbies.

How The Oakwood Historical Society ended up at the Long Romspert Homestead

Ethel Romspert and Bill Hager

In her early years at the house, she and her husband would sometimes hold moonlight dances on full moon nights in the summer. In addition to participating in the family gravel pit and rental businesses, Harry was a composer. Both he and Ethel played piano, so they had a great mutual interest in music. There was no electricity in the neighborhood yet, so the parties were held by only moonlight, with a fiddler and refreshments. The Shroyers (her husband's sister Maud Romspert and her husband who lived in the house next door) and other friends would come to enjoy the evening.

Naturally, as a long-time community member, she was invited to attend Historical Society events when the Society officially began in 1974. As the bicentennial of our country approached, many local historical societies were being founded all over the country and Oakwood was one of them. Ethel was a good fit, being a member of an early settler family and living in one of the early homes in the area. She had developed a bond with Bill Hager and attended events with him and his wife a half dozen times or so.

According to Bill, he and Ethel first met in the 1970's when several events occurred. Their first acquaintance occurred when Bill took a choral youth group to sing at the Methodist church on Salem Avenue where Ethel was the pianist. Their second meeting was when he came to the house to help her find roofers who could bid on repairing her leaking slate roof as she was very thrifty but wanted things done right. Perhaps it was his realty background that made her ask him. He found her in her garden where she cultivated dahlias, and when they went indoors to discuss the roofers, Bill noticed her piano. He asked to try it out and played a Chopin waltz.

How The Oakwood Historical Society ended up at the Long Romspert Homestead

Ethel Romspert and Bill Hager

This led Ethel and Bill to forge a connection based on music. Both were expert pianists, and she suggested that they have piano playing sessions at her house. Ethel had two pianos, an upright which she played in the 1920s living room while Bill played a spinet in the adjoining dining room which at that time was an open area. On Saturday afternoons they could sometimes be found playing for each other, usually classical music or hymns from her hymnals.

While Ethel had become a recluse to most of the world, she did manage to get an invitation to ride in a 1910 Lambert automobile in the 1976 That Day in May Parade. (This was the first official That Day in May Parade!) She asked Bill to ride with her. When the parade ended, the driver, Mr. Billy Lambert, Jr., drove them back to her home at full speed, which thrilled her greatly. This appreciation for speed will figure in later events.

As time went on, Ethel told Bill that she was getting tired. She threw out her dahlia bulbs instead of replanting them each spring; she said she was too tired to attend meetings anymore. She started giving away some of the furnishings in the house, saying she didn't need them anymore. She called a local church to come pick up her piano music. Bill was there when the man came to get the music. She gave him everything, but as the music was going out the door, she decided she wanted to keep one piece. She chose "My Way".

Several times Bill broached the topic of what Ethel planned to do with her house. She was undecided, although her original thought was to give it to the Germantown Historical Society since she was originally from Germantown. Then one night, in 1984, she suddenly called and "gave me (Bill) two hours to call everyone (the TOHS board)." She said she was seeing her lawyer the next day and asked if I thought we could take care of her home."

How The Oakwood Historical Society ended up at the Long Romspert Homestead

Ethel Romspert and Bill Hager

The next morning there was an official signing at the house. In attendance were Ethel Romspert, her attorney David Bart who had drawn up the document to Ethel's specifications, attorney Bob Jefferis, the president of the Society at the time, and Bill Hager. The house was to be conveyed to the Historical Society after Ethel was no longer living there. She was at that time on a waiting list to move to Otterbein, the Methodist retirement community in Lebanon.

The transfer came sooner than anyone would have expected. Ethel had been in the habit of gunning her car from Wiltshire Avenue across the intersection on Far Hills Avenue to get up into her driveway. She told Bill that her husband had said she would not need to plow snow off the driveway if she were going 30 miles per hour as she crossed Far Hills. At that speed she could get all the way up the drive and into the garage without stopping. Later in 1984 she had been out running errands at Dorothy Lane Market. She followed her usual route up Wiltshire Ave and entered the intersection on Far Hills without noticing an oncoming car. She was hit and her 1969 Ford sedan spun around. She was taken by ambulance to Kettering Hospital, and while there she fell, broke her hip and was transferred to Otterbein. She never recovered from her broken hip.

How The Oakwood Historical Society ended up at the Long Romspert Homestead

Ethel Romspert and Bill Hager

In 1985 the house became available to the Historical Society. All the remaining furnishings were willed to the Montgomery County Historical Society (now Dayton History), so The Oakwood Historical Society inherited an empty building. Loren Gannon, a professor at the University of Dayton, helped to get the house on the National Registry of Historical Places in 1987. Thus, the new life of the Long-Romspert Homestead Historical House Museum began at 1947 Far Hills Avenue. One that would bring new adventures to a house that had already seen plenty over the years, and more visitors than the reclusive Ethel had invited in in some time. Over the last few years, some of the original furnishings have been returning to the Homestead from Dayton History as it organizes its collections. The new life has thus been able to merge with pieces of its past.

To learn more about the generations that lived at the Long Romspert House Museum, visit our recently recorded video, available at oakwoodhistory.org/oak/lectures.html#102.

References

Produced by John and Barbara Moraites. "Ethel Romspert [Film]." A Program of the Oakwood Historical Society, March 2005.

King, Edwin. "Oakwood Historical Society Oral History Project." Summer 1977. Last interview in the book with Ethel Romspert.

Hager, C. William, interviews by Linda Pearson. January 2014, Oakwood, Ohio.

THANKS TO OUR NEWSLETTER SPONSORS!



Officers
Jeremiah Jenkins
President
Open
Vice President
Debra Schenk
Treasurer
Karen Bartley
Secretary
Linda Pearson
Business Manager

Board
Jill Brooks
HHT Coordinator
Tonya Dickie
Homestead Interior
Coordinator
Ann Febus
Membership Coordinator
Linda Pearson
Education Coordinator
Sotheavy Jenkins
Social Media Coordinator

Committee Chairs
Carol Holm
Outreach Display
Kent Miller
Graphic Designer
Phyllis Niemeyer Miller
House Museum
Consultant
Jonathan Pearson
Website Administrator
Donna Rosenbaum
Far Hills Speaker Series

Historical Research/
Archives
Debra Edwards
David Schmidt

Board Meetings
*Fourth Monday of each
month at 7 p.m.*

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Dear Members and Supporters,

It was wonderful to see such a strong turnout for this year’s Wright at Home Tours, presented in conjunction with our friends at Dayton History. Your support continues to inspire our work!

We’re extremely excited about two upcoming Dayton Codebreaker events featuring Sir Dermot Turing, nephew of WWII codebreaker Alan Turing. He’ll be speaking on May 8 at both the International Peace Museum and Carillon Historical Park - both rare opportunities to connect global history with our local community.

We’re also adding a special touch to Oakwood’s beloved That Day in May celebration this year, with a “Rosé on That Day in May” gathering to extend the festivities with a casual, social toast to the season.

Looking ahead, our Children’s Victory Garden summer program will commemorate the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II, offering young participants hands-on experiences and lessons tied to this important moment in time.

Additionally, we’re eagerly preparing for our 50th anniversary celebration—a significant milestone for both the Society and Oakwood.

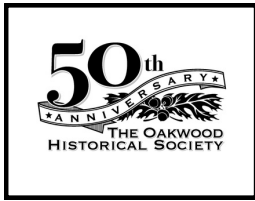
We have a full calendar of engaging events planned for the rest of the year. Whether your interests lean toward architecture, preservation, or local lore, there’s something for everyone to enjoy.

None of our work would be possible without the care and dedication of our board members, committee chairs, and volunteers. Your commitment makes everything we do possible and I can't thank you all enough.

As we plan ahead, we’re looking for new volunteers and board candidates who are passionate about preserving Oakwood’s heritage and giving back to the community. If that sounds like you or someone you know, we’d love to connect.

Warm regards,

Jeremiah Jenkins
President, The Oakwood Historical Society



**THE OAKWOOD
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**
1947 Far Hills Avenue
Dayton, OH 45419

THE OAKWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP FORM

Membership Categories (check one)

- ☐ Individual \$25
- ☐ Family \$35
- ☐ Business \$50
- ☐ Bronze \$75
- ☐ Silver \$100
- ☐ Gold \$200

\$5 Discount (check if applicable)

- ☐ Student ☐ Senior ☐ Active Military

Please make checks payable to:

The Oakwood Historical Society

Mail checks to:

1947 Far Hills Ave Oakwood, OH 45419

Learn more at oakwoodhistory.org
or scan the QR code



Date _____ Name _____

Spouse/Partner _____

Business/Organization _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____ Email _____