



## Summer Programming At a Glance

### JUNE

#### Debut of the Schantz Park Historic District Walking Tour Booklet

Saturday, June 24 • 10:00-12:00 noon  
Schantz Avenue Gateway  
Schantz Avenue and Oakwood Ave,  
Oakwood

### JULY

#### Old Fashioned Picnic

Sunday, July 23 • 5:00 p.m.  
Long-Romspert Homestead  
1947 Far Hills Avenue, Oakwood

### SEPTEMBER

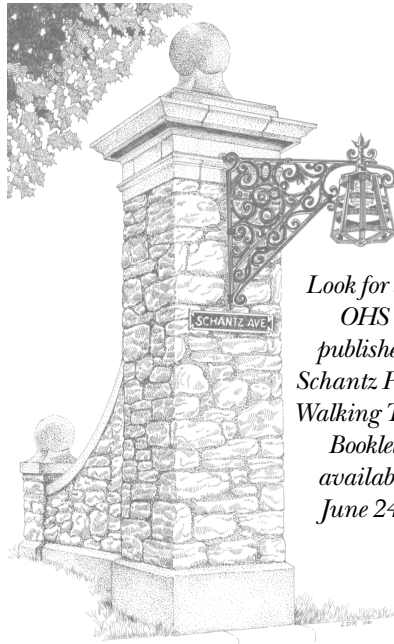
#### Home Restoration Fair

Saturday, Sept. 23 • 9:00 a.m.  
Smith Elementary School  
Oakwood

## A little help, please!

The Oakwood Historical Society is looking for someone to handle the labeling and bulk mailing of our newsletter and other promotional mailings. This job is a simple but very important one for the Society, and if you would like to take it on, **please call Anne Rasmussen at 534-1981.**

## The Schantz Park Historic District



Look for the  
*OHS*  
published  
*Schantz Park*  
*Walking Tour*  
*Booklet*  
available  
*June 24!*

Schantz Park is Oakwood's first and only neighborhood on the National Register of Historic Places. When the nomination was presented to the National Register in the 1990's, the Register lauded it as one of the finest nominations they had ever received.

In 1880, German immigrant, Dayton civic leader, and successful entrepreneur Adam Schantz, Sr. purchased 108 acres of land in what is now Oakwood. Although he did not expect to live long enough to see the final result, he tasked his family with the challenge of turning this property into the most desirable residential district in the Dayton area, distanced from the noise and challenges of the industrial city.

After his death in 1902, his son, Adam Schantz, Jr., who shared his father's energy, business acumen and civic loyalty, took over the direction of the development that was to become Schantz Park.

Platting began in earnest after

1907. The Dayton Flood of 1913 spurred further interest in Oakwood with its higher elevation above the flood plain of the Great Miami River and its tributaries. John H. Patterson, founder of NCR, also envisioned Oakwood as a Progressive Era bedroom community to Dayton and encouraged his management staff and other employees to move there.

Part of the Schantz's overall vision was to provide houses for several different economic levels. Deed restrictions and lot sizes changed on each street, but all of these homes were the best of their time. Even the earliest houses were architect-designed modern homes of the era.

Schantz Park is unusually rich in early 20th Century American architecture and detail. Craftsman is the architectural theme of the district, but very intact examples of Tudor, Italian Renaissance, Spanish Eclectic, Mission, Queen Anne, Georgian and Colonial Revival are well represented. Rare styles such as Châteauesque, Beaux Arts and International can also be seen there.

The primary architect for homes in Schantz Park was Louis Lott, but other notable architects such as Ellason Smith, Walter Schaeffer, and Albert Pretzinger contributed as well.

The Olmsted Firm did the landscaping of Schantz Park, as well as Hills and Dales Park. The Olmsted brothers were the son and stepson of Frederick Law Olmstead, designer of New York's Central Park and Niagara Falls' Victoria Park to name only a few of his notable achievements.

After Adam Schantz, Jr. died, his estate was distributed, and no lots were sold for several years. After the estate

*continued on page 3*

# A note from the President

## OHS Committees

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*Please get involved...*

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For those of us who attended any of this year's "That Day in May" celebration, we know what an incredible day it was! Fabulous weather helped frame the day, but rain or shine, the true essence of the celebration was, and always is, community pride and gratitude.

And what an amazing city we have to be grateful for! From our meticulously cared for homes, our wonderful schools, and our lovely green spaces, to our dedicated citizens and committed town leaders, our beautiful children and strong family ties—wow!—places like Oakwood are few and far between.

And there is nothing better than a celebration like "That Day in May" to reignite our passion for preserving and maintaining everything that makes Oakwood special. On a day like "That Day in May," we can almost hear the words of Oakwood's founding citizens blowing in the breeze, the voices of all the people who envisioned the reality we are so blessed to live in now. We can see the ideas that formed our commu-



*Fun on the OHS float: left to right are Annie Bartlett, Harrison Gowdy with daughters Emery and Elliott, Mackensie Wittmer, Leslie Rasmussen, Josie Dayspring, and Anne Rasmussen*

nity reflected a century later in virtually every aspect of Oakwood living. Most importantly, we can see it in the eyes and feel it in the hearts of all the people we encountered—at the pancake breakfast, at the fun-run, on the parade route, at the carnival, or at the battle of the bands. We are the beneficiaries of true civic genius, and it becomes not only our gift, but our obligation, to preserve these ideals so that all future "That Day in May" celebrations will reverberate with the same gratitude and pride we all experienced this year.

With all this in mind, the Oakwood Historical Society presses forward with more educational outreach, more interesting programming, and more fun community get-togethers. Look through the pages of our second quarterly newsletter, and you'll find all sorts of new and exciting activities. And if you find a place you'd like to jump in and help, our board of directors will welcome you with open arms!

Teresa Prosser, OHS President



*Mackensie Wittmer running alongside the OHS float and passing out programming leaflets to onlookers.*

## Thank you, John Gray!

For once again providing your tractor and wagon for the Historical Society to use in the "That Day in May" parade!

# Schantz Park *continued from page 1*

was settled in 1953, the most popular architectural style was the Ranch, of which there are several fine examples in Schantz Park. These new houses reflected the dramatic change in architectural styles by mid-twentieth century.

Oakwood has always attracted the type of people with an appreciation for

and the wherewithal to preserve and maintain their properties, making the entire city one of America's most intact early 20th century communities. Schantz Park specifically has achieved and continues to maintain the unique, garden-like setting desired by its original dreamers.

## *Schantz Park Historic District Walking Tour Booklet Debut*

On Saturday, June 24, from 10-12 noon, The Oakwood Historical Society will debut the newly published Schantz District Walking Tour Booklet by hosting a self-guided tour of the Schantz Park neighborhood. OHS members will be posted at the entrance gate to Schantz Park on Schantz Ave. handing out complimentary tour booklets. Members will also be stationed throughout the neighborhood to answer any questions about the homes, the architecture or the neighborhood. This educational outreach project was made possible through the combined efforts of The Oakwood Historical Society and The Oakwood Rotary Foundation. The tour booklet will be available continually at the Oakwood City Building, Oakwood Community Center, OHS events and other outlets.

## Harman/Smith third grade's annual Outing for History

May is the time to let enthusiastic third graders explode out of their classrooms for field trips to the Long-Romspert Homestead. Eight groups of 20 youngsters, led by SUV-driving mothers and teachers, got the full treatment by Harry Ebeling, who confided in them the story of the "secret house" hiding behind the stucco covering. They learned about the farm buildings, including the former barn, the milk shed, and the summer kitchen with its huge fireplace and dinner bell.

Then they were shown the Henry Long house, built in 1867, from hand made local bricks, and heard the story of the families who shared it. Kitchen utensils always interest these children and they were impressed by hand tools used to do every day tasks.

After seeing the sleeping rooms with the rope beds and chamber pots, they were shown the 1922 "Arts & Crafts" second house that was added, illustrating the difference between the



*Third graders from Harman School pose on the front steps of the Homestead for a group picture.*

two eras. Artifacts such as the police call box rounded out the tour, and many questions followed. One hour is about the attention span for this age, but they got the message—Oakwood wasn't always Graeter's Ice Cream and electric trolleys—life was hard!

## Committee Reports

### **Preservation— Harrison Stamm Gowdy**

The Preservation Committee has been busy working on the final touches of the Schantz Park Walking Tour. It will be available to the public in late June. They are also in the initial stages of their "preservation handbook," with more information on this project to come along with the date for completion. They are always looking for members interested in architecture, history, and preservation to get involved. If you'd like to become an active member please contact Harrison Stamm Gowdy at 643-4075.

### **Newsletter/Public Relations— Anne Rasmussen**

Outside their routine responsibilities, The Newsletter/Public Relations committee continues to work with other OHS committees on two main projects: developing the OHS website, and producing the Schantz Park Historic District Walking Tour Booklet. They hope to have the website up and running some time over the summer, and the walking tour booklet is scheduled to come out at the end of June.

**OHS on the web now:** While the website is under construction, you can find out more about the Oakwood Historical Society by visiting [mvcc.net/oakwood](http://mvcc.net/oakwood). To take a photo tour of the Long-Romspert Homestead, click on the "other resources" link. You can take a slide show tour, room by room or take a video tour of the property both inside and outside by clicking on the box at the bottom.

## Committee Reports

### Education — Mackensie Wittmer

#### Schantz Park Historic District Walking Tour Brochure

A subcommittee of the Education Committee has been working for over a year researching, planning, designing and publishing the first in a series of self-guided walking tour booklets of Oakwood neighborhoods.

This first walking tour booklet covers the Schantz Park Historic District. The booklet contains an historical overview of the neighborhood, a guide to historic architecture, a map of the walking tour route, and a listing of selected homes and their architectural characteristics.

The committee and the entire OHS Board are extremely excited and proud of this publication. They hope it will become an enjoyable and educational self-guided resource to help community members learn more about the historical significance of the neighborhoods and homes in which they live.

The Schantz Park Historic District Walking Tour Booklet will debut on Saturday, June 24. See article, page 3.

### Facilities — Tracy Clare

Restoration Season is upon us once again and the Oakwood Historical Society's Restoration Crew is seeking your help. The next project is to restore the 1<sup>st</sup> floor sitting room located between the parlor and the OHS office space. As we continue to make every effort to adhere to National Historic Register standards and keep with the era in which the Homestead was built, we would like to hear from OHS members about decorating motifs and ideas. Get those creative juices flowing and give us your ideas. We look to begin work on the next room early this summer. Please contact Tracy Clare at 299-8432 if you are interested in assisting with the design of the next room.

# Fiddlesticks!

"Fiddlesticks!" is a rather dated exclamation of frustration from another era. Most adults remember it from our grandparents. Certainly our children and grandchildren don't recognize it at all. But to many older Oakwood citizens, "Fiddlesticks" brings back memories of a column that ran for 20 years in the *Oakwood Press*, our weekly contact with the local news.

Ralf Kircher, local advertising executive, started writing humor columns for his college paper at Ohio University around 1928. And, as he said, "That's what caused all the trouble." In the years between 1934 and 1954, he became known in the area for his columns known as "Fiddlesticks," written under the pen name Fagin Fogg.

Starting out during the Depression working for Hugo Wagenseil & Associates, he attempted to keep his identity secret from his employer in order to hide his moonlighting activity. His son, Dudley, recalled that he was often amused by his companions on the bus as he rode to work, by their comments about his latest piece, which he always dutifully agreed with.

By 1938 he started his own advertising agency, Kircher, Helton, & Collett, which survived for many years. His writings appeared in four books from 1941 to 1976, entitled *Fiddlesticks*, *There's a Fly in This Room*, *Wrap It As a Gift*, and *Gypsies Have the Right Idea*. The last one, introduced by Erma Bombeck,

says that he wrote in an era that spawned other genius-insanity, such as H. Allen Smith, Robert Benchley, and Max Schulman.

At any rate (which is the kind of transitional phrase that Kircher indulged in), let me reminisce about the columns, their wide ranging subject matter, and the sheer innovation of being able to come up with a weekly column for so many years. He was not above repeating a column on occasion, but who can blame him, and he always picked good ones. He also engaged the services of friends and contemporary local writers to fill in while he was on vacation and then used them as launching pads for subsequent columns.

Among my favorites were his annual pieces on Income Tax Returns, the filling out thereof, and the responses from the IRS. Home ownership was a source of constant abuse. The title of his last book, *Gypsies Have the Right Idea*, comes from a long column on the trials of buying, dealing for, repairing, redecorating, and financing homes. The lead article of this book covers dealing with architects, lot salesmen, builders, home loan officers, and, yes, wives, and their various bites at the apple.

Time may have antiquated the idiom "Fiddlesticks!" but it certainly hasn't changed the subject of a good humor column much!

—by Harry Ebeling

## Hungry for a history lesson



On Saturday morning, April 29, over 70 people showed up at the front entrance of Woodland Cemetery to participate in an OHS sponsored historical tour of the chapel and cemetery grounds. Participants were treated to a wonderful history lesson, and they got their morning exercise in as well!

# The Olmsted Brothers' legacy in Oakwood

In 1919, Mrs. S.S. King wrote the Olmsted Brothers firm in Brookline, Massachusetts to contract them for the design of her seven acres located on Oakwood Avenue and known as Shadowbrook. Today, the majority of that landscape is located at 1150 Oakwood Avenue, the home of Cindy and Mark Garner. Brookholm is the historic name of



*View of the Brookholm garden from the 1920s. Photograph is part of the Dayton Garden Club's collection located at Wright State University's Special Collections and Archives.*

the Garner's house designed in 1924 by Louis Lott for the King family.

Mrs. King's property was an ideal setting for an Olmsted garden. It was a natural valley with a small stream running through it. Olmsted gardens typically fall within one of two styles—the "Pastoral" or the "Picturesque". The overall design goal was often the same—to produce relaxing and "unbending" garden that allowed one to escape from the tensions made by the strain noise and artificial surroundings of urban life. Olmsted gardens were often absent of distractions and demands on the conscious mind and no matter how limited the area, the firm sought to create a "perspective effect." This effect was created by increasing the sense of space through contrasting dark foreground forms with lighter, less distinct ones further away. This was often done using native plant materials and often avoiding the use of displaying the many new species of plants and flowers available at the turn of the century. The Kings, like many of their counterparts, were looking for this professional touch and this desire made the Olmsted Brothers the leading landscape architecture firm in the nation. It also helped to establish the profession of landscape design in the United States.

Frederick Law Olmsted estab-

lished himself as a landscape designer at age 35 after trying to be a sailor, farmer, writer, and adventurer. His first important commission was the design and construction of Central Park. This project brought him national fame, recognition, and clients across the United States. In 1883, Frederick Law Olmsted established his office in Brookline, Massachusetts, working until his retirement in 1895.

In addition to his practice, Olmsted Sr. had several apprentices helping to create the first "school" of landscape architecture. He provided them with reading assignments as well as practical experiences. Several prominent American landscape architects trained under Frederick Law Olmsted included his sons John Charles and Frederick, Jr., as well as Henry Sargent Codman and Charles Eliot, the two apprentices that Olmsted Sr. was grooming to take over the firm.

Codman directed the firm's work on the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago but died suddenly while working on the project. The next in line was Eliot who had left Olmsted in 1886, establishing his own office. However, in 1893, Eliot was asked to return and take over the leadership of the practice renamed Olmsted, Olmsted, & Eliot. Eliot was

*continued on page 6*

## Committee Reports

### Programming— Mark Risley

#### Home Restoration Fair

On Saturday, September 23rd, The Oakwood Historical Society will be presenting a Home Restoration Fair. This is a first-time ever event for the area and is directed to all owners of older homes who wish to restore their houses to their original, intended appearance. There will be vendors, craftspeople and presentations on restoration techniques. The event will be held in the Edwin D. Smith School gym, and the OHS is hoping for a good turnout for those eager to learn more about preserving their little slice of history. The event will begin in the morning and there will be a nominal admission fee. Watch local publications for more details and mark your calendars.

### Archives and Acquisitions— Harry Ebeling

The Archives Committee is busy packing up many of their archival files in preparation for the move to the basement of the new City Building. When the committee is not busy packing and moving, members are giving group tours of the Homestead. One recent tour, conducted by Board member Tracy Clare, was for the D.A.R. over the Easter weekend. In May, the committee hosted nine classes of third graders from the elementary schools. Another major project is the committee's involvement in the City's centennial program; the OHS archives are furnishing historic photos and other print materials to be used in centennial film documentaries, debuting in 2008, Oakwood's 100th anniversary.

### Membership—Jen Stoeker

The Membership Committee is currently working on a redesign of the membership brochure and also focusing on recruiting new members through events and programming.

## *How to start researching Olmsted Brothers projects:*

If you would like to research Olmsted Brothers projects, a master list of their projects can be accessed at <http://www.nps.gov/frla/> For the best research results, type in Ohio and Dayton. The Dayton Garden Club also has a collection of papers and historic photographs housed at Wright State University. These papers include a survey conducted in 1986 by Ball State University that briefly summarizes Dayton's individual Olmsted Gardens. There are also wonderful glass slides of several early members' gardens that can be reproduced for a fee. Wright State University has an online finding aid at <http://www.libraries.wright.edu/special/manuscripts/ms-288.html>.

### **Seibenthaler Company**

The Siebenthaler Company was established in Dayton in 1870 and was a major supplier of plant materials for the area. They also have an archive with several planting plans. A history of the company is available online at <http://www.siebenthaler.com/familyhistory4.htm>.

# The Olmsted Brothers

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the lead landscape architect until his untimely death from spinal meningitis in 1897. After these two untimely deaths, Frederick Law Olmsted's stepson and son established the firm as the Olmsted Brothers.

The Olmsted Brothers grew rapidly, and at its peak in the early 1930s they employed nearly 60 staff members with major projects in several states. John Charles Olmsted was the senior partner of Olmsted Brothers from 1898 to 1920. He had a particular flair for business management and produced thousands of new commissions around the country. John Charles led the office in comprehensive planning for metropolitan open spaces and park systems. When he died, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. took over his father's firm. Olmsted Jr. studied at Harvard University, where he later established the first formal training program in landscape architecture in 1900. He served as the senior partner from 1920-1949 and was at the forefront of his profession maintaining a lifelong commitment to conservation, and contributing to the legislation of the National Park Service.

The Olmsted Brothers' relationship with Dayton started as early as 1894 when John H. Patterson invited the firm to review his 80-acres at Hills & Dales. In 1903, the firm began working on its design with several other projects to follow. Of the 272 Ohio projects, 147 are located in the Miami Valley. Cindy Garner has found researching her garden to be both rewarding and frustrating. She contacted the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site hoping to find plans for her garden. Instead, she learned that the site is undergoing an extensive renovation and will not be opened until 2007. She was able to obtain copies of three letters between the Kings and the firm. These letters outline the King's desire to hire the firm. They also note that before the firm could visit the site, Mrs. King was sued by her neighbor Mrs. Clegg for destroying the beauty of a natural valley. The Kings found this lawsuit ironic due to the fact that Mrs. Clegg



*View of the garden today. Notice the springhouse is still intact along with the water feature, outdoor fireplace, and overall Picturesque landscape. Photograph provided by Mark and Cindy Garner.*

was a former client of the Olmsted firm. Cindy Garner also found late 1920s photographs in the Garden Club of Dayton archives located at Wright State University. Cindy hopes to restore the garden and so far has uncovered several rock features and has repaired both the water features and outdoor fireplace. As Cindy explains, "We fell in love with the property in the middle of January. It has many mature trees...oaks, poplar, walnut, maple, ash, cottonwood and locust—but much of the property was overgrown with honeysuckle. Despite its condition, we could tell the property and garden had terrific 'bones.' At the time we bought the home, we had no idea the garden was an Olmsted design. It is an absolutely enchanting setting, and a fantastic place for our children to grow up. Lots of hard work and research has gone into discovering what we really have. As we continue to uncover each area of the garden, we are amazed by the natural beauty of the property and how what remains of the original landscape design was so carefully integrated into the entire setting. Every day the garden offers up a new gift! It has been a wonderful and exciting labor of love."

*—by Harrison Stamm Gowdy*

# Oakwood – A forerunner to the New Urbanism Movement

Late this summer The Greene, a mixed-use development by Columbus-based Steiner & Associates, will open at the Indian-Ripple exit on I-675. While best known for the shops and restaurants it will bring to the area, The Greene claims to be a small community with shops, restaurants, offices, and residential spaces. The Greene is one example of the new urbanism movement.



*Oakwood's new retail building at Far Hills and Orchard Ave., which reflects a typical new urbanism design and scale.*

New Urbanism is a design movement that has grown in popularity since the 1980s and is present in many current projects throughout the Miami Valley. A full examination of this movement is beyond the scope of this article, but there are several basic elements in new urbanism design. First, new urbanism neighborhoods and projects are walking communities. They are designed to have a wide range of housing options, provide access to basic goods and services, and have opportunities for employment within the community. There is an emphasis on green, open spaces to be shared by the whole community. The stated goals of new urbanism design is to reduce the time people spend in traffic, rein in urban sprawl, and create a sense of community within a neighborhood.

The definition of new urbanism sounds a lot like the City of Oakwood, a community formed at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a generation before the modern suburbia movement and two generations before new urbanism. Because many of new urbanism's features (no school busing, attractive parks, and detached garages in the rear) are elements of neighborhoods from the pre-automobile era, the movement is sometimes also known as Traditional Neighborhood Design.

It is interesting to note that current construction/development philosophy strives to create a community that is similar to the one citizens of Oakwood have enjoyed for almost one hundred

years. It is also an opportunity to explore how the City of Oakwood is influenced by the new urbanism movement with infill projects (new retail building at Far Hills and Orchard Ave.) and new development (Sugar Camp). As part of the City of Oakwood's Comprehensive Plan, the city lays out its goals to preserve and protect the character of the community and provide basic goods and services in its business districts. For example, about 75% of homes are within a 5 minute walk (2,000 feet) from one of the shopping/business districts in or neighboring Oakwood (Brown St., Shroyer/Patterson, Park Ave, and Far Hills).

While new projects and neighborhoods spring up further and further from downtown along the southern outer belt of Dayton, the City of Oakwood provides a lifestyle many people are looking for today, and it can serve as a model of a walkable, liveable community. As a resident within walking distance of the new retail building on Far Hills, I am keeping my fingers crossed for a taco place!

—by *Mackensie Wittmer*

#### **Additional Resources:**

New Urbanism: definition and review  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New\\_urbanism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_urbanism)

The Greene/Steiner & Associates:  
<http://www.thegreene.com/>

City of Oakwood Comprehensive Plan:  
<http://www.ci.oakwood.oh.us/compindex.htm>

Smart Growth America  
<http://www.smartgrowthamerica.com/>

Congress for New Urbanism  
<http://www.cnu.org/>

## Annual Old-Fashioned Picnic

The OHS annual old-fashioned picnic at the Long-Romspert Homestead will be here before you know it! This year the picnic will be held on **Sunday, July 23. Social time begins at 5:00 p.m. with food served at 5:45 p.m.** Rob Wackerman will be playing his keyboard on the front lawn prior to the picnic.

Weather permitting, we hope to have several vintage automobiles on display to entertain the adults, and Mark Risley will definitely be bringing his esteemed Interactive Fossil Collection to entertain and amaze the children.

This year's menu will consist of broasted chicken, Texas BBQ, cole slaw, baked beans, fresh fruit, rolls and butter, all catered by K.D.'s Kettering BBQ, as well as lemonade, water, and beer (cash bar). And don't forget that our members will again be showing off their baking skills by bringing delicious homemade desserts!

The cost for adult members is \$11.00, adult non-members is \$13.00, and children (12 and under) is \$4.00. Please complete the reservation form on the back of this newsletter to reserve your space! No walk-ins, please.



**We're gonna party like it's 1899!**

So mark your calendars for  
**Sunday, July 23!**



THE OAKWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
 1947 Far Hills Avenue • Dayton, Ohio 45419

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# Old Fashioned Picnic

## RESERVATION FORM

(Complete reservation form & mail with check)

NAME(S) \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Adult members @ \$11.00 each ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Adult non-members @ \$13.00 each ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Children (12 and under) @ \$4.00 each ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Check enclosed for ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Make check payable to Oakwood Historical Society  
 Mail to **Doris Dobeleit,**  
**1901 Shroyer Rd., Dayton, OH 45419 (293-9747)**

### RESERVATION DEADLINE

**Tuesday, July 18**