



## Oakwood Historical Society Seeks Volunteers

Do stories and events of the past fascinate you? Would you like to learn more about the history of Oakwood's people and places? Are you interested in sharing our city's history with visitors of all ages and backgrounds? If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, then we would love to speak with you!

The Oakwood Historical Society is currently seeking individuals with a pride in our community's heritage to lead tours of the historic Long-Romspert Homestead. No prior experience is needed – just enthusiasm and interest in the stories we tell and the programs we offer.

Training of individuals to be historical interpreters will be conducted at the Homestead during the museum's public tour hours from 1:00 until 3:00 on October 18. If you would like to volunteer but are not available on that date, we're happy to arrange more convenient training times to fit your schedule. All training materials will be provided to you at no charge.

To learn more, or to make your reservation to attend training, contact Alex Heckman at 937-829-4390 or [wheckman@hotmail.com](mailto:wheckman@hotmail.com)

## New Sign Beckons Visitors to Historical Society

The Oakwood Historical Society recently installed a new sign at their headquarters, the Long-Romspert Homestead at 1947 Far Hills Avenue. The prominent wording is "House Museum" which best describes the Homestead since a recent three-year restoration to the home. The house, outbuildings, and grounds now tell the story of the development of the area, from its beginning as a 1860s farm through the decades until it became part of a 1920s suburb. Unique to the Homestead are four separate kitchens depicting the evolution of the American kitchen from a primitive hearth to a fully-equipped early-twentieth century kitchen with modern appliances.

The new sign was made possible by a donation from the City of Oakwood. It was designed by Scott Smith, produced and installed by Dan Cummins, with stonework by Chris Van Dam.

The Long-Romspert Homestead is open to the public from April through October on the first and third Sundays of the month from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM and other times by appointment. Admission is free. The society also sponsors programs, events, and activities at which time the Homestead is open.

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## OHS Committees

*Please get involved...*

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# A note from the president

Summer is well underway and quickly coming to an end as we head into the fall season...and once again, it is time to reflect.

With the summer came more and extremely well-received children's programs, a new sign in the front yard, and a new and predictable opportunity for the community to enjoy the Long-Romspert Homestead with our regularly scheduled open houses!

On the first and third Sundays of each month from May to October between the hours of 1-3pm, the Homestead is open for tours and for browsing. With trained docents in the lead, tour goers become acquainted with the story of the Homestead and the families who lived there. Visitors also learn how that personal story reflects the story of Oakwood and, indeed, the nation as a whole. It is a unique aspect of the Homestead that this one home can tell such a broad story and it is this that truly makes the Homestead a gem in

our community. If you have not yet visited, please consider it soon; you will be glad that you did!

With the fall also comes thoughts of next year, and that means a time to consider nominations to the new board, which will start in January. If you are interested in serving with a great and enthusiastic group of people, you might want to consider throwing your name into the hat...and you can do that by contacting Vice-president Mackensie Wittmer (mwittmer@gmail.com) by the end of September.

Yes, much has happened this year...and there is much yet to be done as the Oakwood Historical Society and the Long-Romspert Homestead continue to tell the story of Oakwood...and we always need more story tellers! This is your society and your community. Won't you join us?

*--Teresa Prosser, President*

## Odd Visitor at Historical Society

The open grounds of the Long-Romspert Homestead, headquarters to the Oakwood Historical Society, have often been the range of indigenous Ohio wildlife such as squirrel, opossum, raccoon, groundhog, deer and various wild birds.

Recently, a turtle was found in the driveway observing the cleaning of the Summer Kitchen at the back of the property. The Red Eared Slider seemed healthy and full grown, but showed signs of dehydration. A semi-aquatic reptile, this turtle was probably looking for a new habitat.

After enduring a photo shoot, a night in a large, plastic container and many worried looks

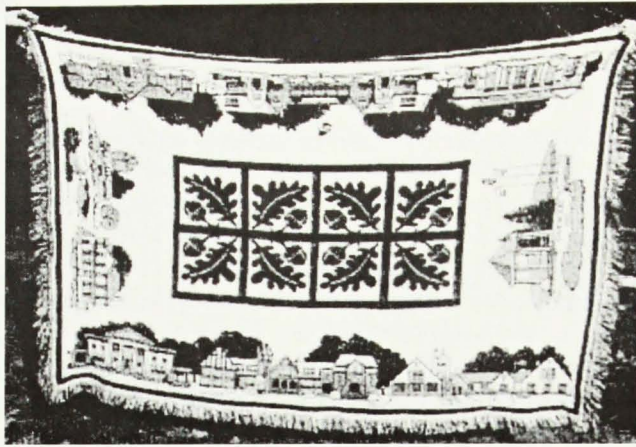


from the house cat, Ol' Slider was set free in a local nature preserve. He was last seen enjoying a refreshing drink of water, delectable aquatic plants and a healthy swim before disappearing among the lily pads, far from Oakwood's busy streets.



# Do You Remember This Coverlet?

In 1994, a couple of mothers who were active members of the Oakwood Boosters Association sparked an idea for a fundraiser. Sue Perry and Laurie Franz put together a project for a coverlet with images of familiar Oakwood scenes



that would evoke memories for the owners for many years to come.

They traveled around the city, taking pictures of landmarks to include on the coverlets, images that would last for those who own one of the coverlets. The selected images are enduring places important to those who have lived and raised families in Oakwood. Included are Smith Gardens, Huffman Park, Hawthorn Hill, the City Building, the library, and the schools, surrounding an Acorn design.

The coverlets were heavy gauge navy and cream cotton, and they were both reversible and machine washable. They sold for \$60 and the proceeds went to the Junior and Senior High athletic programs. The historical society has one of these keepsakes which it sometimes displays at the Homestead.

## Victorian Summer at the Homestead



Above: Second and third graders making bread at the homestead.



Left: Fourth to sixth graders learn to play marbles.

## Committee Reports

### Education

#### Linda Pearson—

The Education Committee conducted two children's summer sessions during July. A newly designed program, *Victorian Summer at the Homestead*, was for students in grades 4 to 6. A second program, *1867 at the Homestead*, drew on material revised from last summer, and was for students in grades 2 and 3.

Parent evaluations have been overwhelmingly positive. Everyone liked the food preparation, the crafts, and the historical games. The biggest area of disagreement among evaluations was about sewing. Some want more; others want less. In general, people indicated they would like more programs for next summer, and possibly more than 3 days of programming per session. It has even been suggested that the programs could be expanded into the junior high age.

Our biggest challenge to adding programs is finding volunteers to help with the programs. We have been fortunate these past two summers to find volunteers who could help out during the program days.

The Education Committee was also involved in the British Scout homestead visit, which is described in a separate article.



## Committee Reports

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### Grounds and Facilities Mark Risley—

Other than standard tree/shrub trimming and weed control, it has been a quiet month on the grounds of the Homestead. A herd of deer has frequented the property grazing on grass and (unfortunately) garden plantings. On one night, two fawns, three does and four bucks (with full antlers) were spotted. Recently, a very lost Red-Eared Slider turtle was found on the grounds. It was captured and released in the lake of one of the local nature preserves.

Work is being completed on a summer garden in the lawn behind the 1920s kitchen. A period appropriate, white picket fence surrounds the new garden. When the old sign was removed, the address house numbers of the Long-Romspert Homestead were lost. New numbers are now prominently displayed to help all visitors in finding the Oakwood Historical Society (just in case they miss the new sign).

Electricity has been restored to the north outlets of Summer Kitchen and the electrical system there is being evaluated for updates.

Laura Long Romspert, Henry Long's daughter, received almost 92 acres of land on the west side of Far Hills Avenue in the settlement with her sisters and brother. This parcel, which included the Homestead farm house, was the residue of the quarter section that Henry had originally bought in 1856. In the early part of the twentieth century, Laura began selling parcels to investors who were beginning to envision a modern suburb south of Dayton. One of the most interesting negotiations is revealed in correspondence Laura had saved and is now part of the Oakwood Historical Society's archives. These remarkable files enable us to piece together some of her dealings. For example, we know that John H. Patterson acquired a 12-acre parcel at Peach Orchard and Ridgeway. He wanted to develop the area, then known as Panorama Ridge, as a riding trail. (Panorama Ridge is now Ridgeway Road.) There is a legend that Laura had refused to sell the land to Patterson because of the arrogant way in which he had approached her. This seems to be in doubt, because she sold 30 acres to two realtors who were representing Patterson on May 4, 1906.

Patterson was not the only person with an interest in Laura's property. According to an original signed letter from Hugh Chalmers, General Manager of NCR, dated June 1, 1906, he wanted to buy about 16 acres adjacent to John H. Patterson's 30 acres for \$300 per acre. The letter is very condescending in tone, using such phrases as "I am not making you this proposition for the purpose of dickering with you on the price." "I feel that in offering you \$300 an acre for your land I am paying twice as much as anyone else would possibly pay you ... and very few people ... could afford the money that will be necessary to develop it." He offered to come out to see her if she would call Mr. Councilman, his assistant, to make an appointment.

Laura did phone Mr. Councilman, but for unknown reasons, she refused Chalmers' offer. However, she stated that she would sell only to Mr. Patterson or Mr. Chalmers, and that she appreciated the improvements that Chalmers planned to make. In a follow-up letter from Chalmers dated June 16, 1906, he repeated that the portion of the property he was offering to buy was off the back end of her property, which was the cheapest part. He said that he was not interested in the peach orchard because of the quality and quantity of peaches (apparently a sticking point). He was willing to let her have the growing crop. He stated that he was having the letter delivered to her, but he wanted her to know that his time was too valuable to dicker with her over money - this offer was his limit. He concluded the letter in a more cordial tone, thanking her for her time and the courteous manner in which she and her daughter had received him, and stated that he hoped that they would become good friends if not neighbors. Apparently her daughter Maude had been in on the negotiations. This further suggests that he had taken the time to come to see her. This letter was to be delivered by his second in command, Mr. Minich.

Laura must have softened, because a contract was signed shortly thereafter, prepared and witnessed by V.E. Minich. According to the terms of the contract, Romspert agreed to sell five acres, including part of the peach orchard leased to G.W. Lawson, for \$300 an acre, including a



# Romspert: Businesswoman!

erry Ebling

60-foot access strip to Far Hills, subject to her right to half the growing peach crop and contingent upon J.H. Patterson releasing his option to purchase. On July 11, 1906, a deed transferring 12.11 acres to Chalmers was recorded. Chalmers had already bought a five and a half-acre tract from Henry Parrott on May 26, 1906, and a ten-acre tract from James A. Young on June 7, 1906, which included Panorama Road. Then, on July 13, 1906, Chalmers sold all four parcels to J.H. Patterson, thus wrapping up the creation of Ridgeway Road. The two references to Mr. Patterson in the negotiations suggest that the folklore about Laura refusing to deal with him is just that, especially in view of the fact that she had already sold 30 acres to his realtors on May 4, 1906, referenced in the first letter.

Of equal interest are three pages of a four-page letter from John H. Patterson, presumably to Hugh Chalmers, trying to interest him in purchasing from 20 to 40 acres from Will (sic Walter) Carr on West Schantz Avenue. This was the area which Carr later developed into Carrmonte Plat in Southern Hills. Double-spaced and typed on 11 X 14 " paper, Patterson's letter speaks glowingly of the beauty of the area and its timber, which was worth half the price of \$400 per acre asked.

The letter went on at great length, describing the proximity of the land to the NCR factory and the Dayton Country Club. Patterson suggested that a settlement of houses for working people could be built at the west end, with a meeting house, club house, and tennis courts. He dropped names, mentioned horse paths past Mrs. Talbott's and Mrs. Houk's houses, and described the interest of Robert Dickey in the area. He suggested that friends could come over from the Dayton Country Club and watch golf from the porch of the house Chalmers would build there. Patterson concluded his letter with the thought that that a development would pull traffic away from Lebanon Pike (now Far Hills Avenue), where escalating prices between Four Mile House (at Peach Orchard Road) and "Far Hills" (his home) meant it would be years before there would be any development, partly because it was so far from the loop (at five points). This was Patterson at his persuasive best.

Patterson's conclusion tied the proposal to Laura Romspert, saying that he "would have never paid her \$300 for the same hill side had I to do it over again. It is not worth the money, and Mr. Cramer's (sic Kramer's) property at \$290 is cheap compared with what I paid Mrs. Romspert, which is the highest piece of property I bought, and she has such an exorbitant idea of her property that I would advise you to do nothing until you have investigated the Carr property thoroughly. Sincerely yours, signed John H. Patterson."

In view of Patterson's enjoyment of horse back riding in the Panorama area and his later creation of building lots along Ridgeway Road, one wonders about the sincerity of this pitch. In any event, Chalmers got into one of the classic disputes with John H. Patterson shortly after the purchase and left NCR to go to Detroit where he developed the Chalmers Detroit automobile. By that time, the 92 acres inherited by Laura had been reduced to the two-acre plot that surrounds the Homestead.

## Committee Reports

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### Membership

#### Teresa Prosser—

Membership records are now updated. Thanks to all for renewing!

### Preservation

#### Harriston Stamm-Gowdy—

The Preservation Committee is making headway on the Preservation Handbook. We hope to have it out in 2010.

### Programs and Events

#### Kjirsten Goeller—

A program for the Founders Day / Annual meeting is being planned so be sure to put the date on your calendars:

November 12th from 6-9 is the projected date and time. In October, the OHS will again be joining the fun and submitting a scarecrow for Scarecrow row, so if anyone has some great "theme" ideas, be sure to pass them along. Before we know it, it will be time for the Holidays at the Homestead event, which will be December 13th from 1-3, and we look forward to seeing everyone at the last event of the year and to celebrating a very busy, very successful Programs / Events calendar year for the OHS. Thank you for the continued support, and we hope to see you at many of the OHS 2010 programs and events.



# Historical Society Busy Telling the Story

## Committee Reports

### Archives and History Harry Ebeling—

Our archives at the City Building are bulging! Efforts continue to make them easy to use by anyone who is looking for something. The city installed an electrical outlet so a computer/printer can be used. The Police Departments' historical files are under review recently, and plans are underway for a display based on the material to be mounted in the new Museum Room this fall.

## Wish List!

In the course of our restoration work, we have found "gaps" in what we need to complete the staging of several rooms. Perhaps somewhere in your attic, garage, or back closet, you might have one or more of the items listed below. If so and if you are willing to donate, please let Teresa know by calling her at 293-8506 or emailing her at [teresa.prosser@sinclair.edu](mailto:teresa.prosser@sinclair.edu).

Because the society is a non-profit organization, your donation is tax-deductable. Thanks for your help!

- Antique Victorian era wash bowl and pitcher
- Antique China head doll
- Antique Victorian artwork
- Persian style throw rugs
- Twin size sheets (top and bottom)

The Oakwood Historical Society has had a busy spring and summer providing educational programs and tours to a variety of groups and organizations.

**March 7** welcomed a den of fourteen Tiger Cub Scouts and their fathers, who got a mini-tour and some craft activities before

breaking loose in the yard on a beautiful day for games lead by Scout leaders Caleb Kell and Leo Schenk. The loyal fathers lingered in the background and got acquainted with the history of the Homestead. The boys took home bags with their unfinished "pomander" projects to work on.

**March 23** was an opportunity for the Oakwood City Council to tour the restored Homestead and see the updates of the past two years, guided by President, Teresa Prosser. Then they settled down for a work session in nineteenth Century surroundings.

On **March 26** we had our spring program at Sunrise Center for the benefit of sixteen of our senior neighbors and our membership. Ed Hermann presented his careful history of the National Road, focusing on the Cumberland Trail portion in Maryland and Pennsylvania. Having the program at the Sunrise Center meant that many wheel chair- and walker-bound seniors, who otherwise could not have attended, enjoyed the program. Cookies and refreshments provided some time to chat.

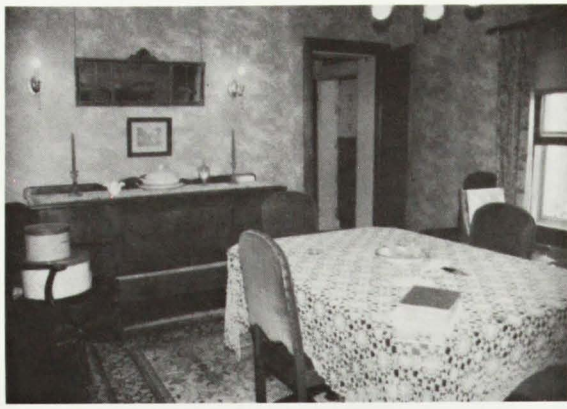
On **March 30**, the society presented a review of the Centennial planning and activities to the Kettering Optimists and their guests the Dorwood Optimists. At the meeting, Harry Ebeling told them of our busy year in 2008. We hope we made them wish they had joined the fun!

On Saturday, the **4th of April**, we hosted 28 members of the University of Dayton *Lifelong Learning Institute* program for a tour of the rehabilitated homestead and an eye-opening review of Oakwood history. Three groups were led by Harrison Gowdy, Harry Ebeling, and Mark Risley. This program introduced a new group of people from all over Montgomery County to "The Oakwood Story" and what's hiding *inside* that stucco building.

**April 9** welcomed The Women's Republican Council of Oakwood for their spring meeting at the Homestead. Eighteen ladies on the full tour saw the newly finished project and had a chance to get a feel for the interesting families that lived there for 120 years. Many were members of the Historical Society but hadn't seen the latest additions and updates or seen our new written tour guides placed around the house on stanchions.







*The dining room, ready for guests.*

On **May 7**, we hosted the Sinclair Community College Learning in Retirement class on photography. Fifteen members used the Homestead as background for experiments in natural lighting photography using our many articles of furniture and their placement as backdrops. They were very enthusiastic and

many vowed to return to continue shooting.

On **May 8**, Harry Ebeling presented a Power Point program to the Oakwood Rotary Club. It was an update of our two years effort to create a Museum. It also reviewed the history of the Homestead for those who haven't seen our facilities. Despite the early hour of the meeting, I'm told it made reasonable sense.

In **May** we hosted three wheelchair residents of Sunrise Home for a downstairs tour of the Homestead. One lady was 102 and another was 94!

The real surprise and reward for our work in restoration and updating the Homestead has been in the response to our Sunday Open Houses. On the 1st and 3rd Sundays since April, we have been open for casual tours. Small groups and individuals have been stopping in regularly. Everyone enjoys the tours provided by Board Members and reading the *self-guided texts* placed in all major rooms. You're invited, but hurry: the Open Houses end in October!

## Final Notice: Membership Renewal

It's time to renew your membership for 2009! Your membership not only entitles you to the Quarterly Newsletter but also to the satisfaction of knowing you are helping to support the work of your historical society, the keepers of our history.

So, won't you take a minute or two and renew your membership now? You'll be glad you did! Please just complete the membership form on the back page of this newsletter, and send it in today. Thank you!

### Is this your last newsletter?

Before sending the next Quarterly Newsletter, we will be cleaning out our records of folks who have not renewed. The newsletter is the way we spread the word about all the things we're planning for your enjoyment. If you haven't already renewed, please complete the membership form below and send it in today. Thank you!

## The Gallery Gift Shoppe

The society offers several items for sale in our Gallery Gift Shoppe; questions or requests can be made through our website at oakwoodhistory.org or by calling 299-3793.

### **Oakwood: The Far Hills Centennial Edition**

The standard history updated in 2008  
\$25.00 plus \$2.50 for mailing if desired

**An Oakwood Scrapbook**  
History and remembrances – 2000  
\$15.00

**Oakwood Tour Bus tour of homes for Anniversary of Flight – 2003**  
\$5.00

*A Place to Live*  
**Schantz Park Sales Brochure**  
– 1914 (reprint)  
\$20.00

**Notecards of the Long-Romspert Homestead**  
By artist David Smith  
\$2.50 for set of five

**Memorial Brick**  
Call for details and order form  
\$100.00





THE OAKWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
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### Oakwood Historical Society Membership Form

**Membership Categories (please check one)**

- Student ..... \$10.00
- Individual Adult ..... \$20.00
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- Business ..... \$30.00
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**The information that you submit will be used only by the Oakwood Historical Society and not given or sold to outside parties. Please make check payable to: Oakwood Historical Society Mail to: 1947 Far Hills Ave, Dayton, OH 45419**