



1947 Far Hills Avenue  
Dayton, OH 45419

## Moraine Park School - Progressive Education

*--Harry Ebeling*

*For 10 years, from 1917 to 1927, a private school operated in the suburbs. The school is mentioned in writings about the 1920s and often referenced in the history of the Moraine Country Club. This article provides a brief overview of this progressive school and ends with references for those who would like more information.*

**M**oraine Park School, an exclusive experiment in education, was an idea conceived by Charles F. Kettering and Colonel E. A. Deeds and grew partly from their dissatisfaction with the Dayton Public Schools. They enlisted the help of Arthur E. Morgan, chief engineer with the Miami Conservancy District who had a background and interest in progressive education. Morgan advertised for the headmaster position and received 2,500 applications from all over the country. Taking a month off from the conservancy, Morgan traveled the country interviewing prospects and retaining Frank D. Slutz from Pueblo, Colorado, as the first headmaster. The school opened in 1917 with 33 boys in grades 5 through 11 in several buildings donated by Kettering.

The first buildings were a greenhouse and power plant on Kettering's property at the corner of Stroop Road and what is now Southern Boulevard. The greenhouse was remodeled for classrooms and later for a gym and administrative offices.

By 1920, the school campus had expanded to 13 acres and included a building for grades 1 through 4, another for grades 5 and 6, and a cottage for girls. The cottage was located across Stroop Road at what is now the north half of the Moraine Country Club clubhouse. A later expansion included a Junior School on Robert Boulevard in downtown Dayton. By 1923, the school enrollment was over 200.



*The Study Hall, used by Senior Students*

True to its charter as an experiment in education, the school did not adhere to the traditional classroom format of reading, recitation, and testing. The concept that education is only partly secured through books and the printed page is merely a tool to assist in education was a founding principle. Teaching the "mastery of the arts of life" (skills needed in life) was another. Students engaged in business enterprise, self-government, community planning, and projects. Elaborate monthly reports were sent to the parents commenting on the child's language and math skills and physical and ethical development based on 10 fundamental Arts of Life.

Classroom instruction was designed to include practical applications of everyday problems; classes were frequently governed by chairmen appointed by the class with the teacher present only to make any necessary decisions and, therefore, playing the part of referee.

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## Message from the President

In late July, The Oakwood Historical Society was presented a Heritage Award by Dayton History at its annual meeting. We are so proud to receive this award, a high point in the past 25 plus years of work, turning an empty shell in need of maintenance into a show place for the history of Oakwood.

We were able to do this as a small and entirely volunteer organization, and all the volunteers were vitally important. There are so many people to thank--from Harry Ebeling who wrote the application and has been the rock behind the historical society for decades to Phyllis Miller whose artist's eye and hard work made it a home.

We have past presidents who made sure the work was moving forward--people like Jeanette Kruer, Ron Versic, Teresa Prosser, and Mark Risley. We also have special friends like Bill Hager who spent hours "sweet talking" Ethel Romspert into leaving the home to the newly formed Oakwood Historical Society in 1985 to the support of the city of Oakwood and the Oakwood Rotary.

But most important we have the dedication of members who offered challenge grants and knowledge from descendants of the Long and Romspert families. People like Everett and Margie Yowell, Tony and Bill Winger, Marilyn Sheehan, and Ed and Evie Herrman.

Thank you all for your generosity and support. Every person who has contributed by becoming a member, volunteering to help out at an event, or contributing to renovation projects has been part of the story of the Homestead. We are honored to have you all part of the society and the community.

The award is on display at the homestead. Drop by at our next event and take a look!

This year was also another first for our society as we had the support of a summer intern, and we are grateful for her hard work and dedication. You were introduced to Jessica Mickley in the last issue of the newsletter and it seems fitting we share her thoughts on her experiences.

"Working with The Oakwood Historical Society has far exceeded my expectations of a summer internship. I am so proud that I was able to accomplish so much in just 10 weeks and the board members have all been more than helpful. I enjoyed discovering exciting pieces of Oakwood and Dayton's history while experiencing the current life of the city. What I have gained most from this experience is that I've developed the confidence to take the direction of a project into my own hands while establishing connections with others to create something efficient and unique!"

I hope you enjoy this issue of the *Quarterly*. You'll see its focus is on schools, but there are some other surprises too.



Linda Pearson

## Committee Reports

### Archives & Acquisitions

A top hat with container was a recent donation. Made in London, the hat is in near perfect condition and is very old—mid-1800s.

### Cataloging

Jessica, our summer intern, started the long project of registering, tagging, and photographing every item in the house and entering the data in PastPerfect; she also created a step-by-step guide for using the software.

### Education

The children's gardening program continues through October; two additional "bonus" sessions were held with some picking and weeding.

### Facilities/Grounds

Work on the grounds was limited due to the heat; a fallen limb damaged the neighbor's fence, but he was able to repair it himself.

### Research & Outreach

Oakwood Historical Society volunteers are preparing the document to list the Wright Memorial Library to the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register is the federal government's official list of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects deemed worthy of preservation. The library, which was built in 1939 in the Tudor Revival style, is important for its architecture, for its role in the community, and for its association with the Wright family.

## Moraine Park School (Cont.)

In 1922, the school adopted policies that stated it was to remain a decidedly experimental preparatory school and would work with colleges and universities in the interpretation of entrance requirements. It stressed that "how to study" was more important than how to recite. In 1925, the school board hired John M. Martin and Charlotte Pierce. (Martin was to become the much admired and nationally renowned speech teacher at Oakwood High School; Pierce later taught at Harman Avenue School at it was then known.) These announcements were made to parents in a newsletter, which also denied accusations that the school had been too lax in its admission standards and was "snobbish" and an exclusive school for the sons of the wealthy. In fact, tuition was charged on a sliding scale, adjusted to a family's income to encourage a diverse student body.

The school frequently operated at a deficit, but because it had the backing of a number of prominent Daytonians, it remained open through the 1926-1927 school year when Kettering withdrew his support. Kettering had been named vice president of General Motors in Detroit in 1925 and was spending the major part of his time out of town. Coincidentally, 1926 was the year his son, Eugene, graduated.

It cannot be doubted that the school had the backing of a prestigious group of citizens when one looks at the names of the Board of Directors: Colonel E. A. Deeds, Charles F. Kettering, Fred H. Rike, Orville Wright, and Arthur F. Morgan. Added later were H.B. Canby, W.A. Chryst, Robert Patterson, H.I. Schenck, R.D. Funkhouser.



*Junior School*

Many families whose names may be familiar to Oakwood residents sent their children to the school. Among them were Alfred Jones, David Rike, Horace Wright, Charles W. Deeds, Robert Davies, Adam Schantz, Ernest Stockum, Ted Chryst, Nelson Emmons, Charles Freehafer, Anthony Haswell, Robert Henry, Gertrude Schantz, Frederick Kuhns, Fred Hooven, Brooks Heathman, Robert Patterson, Jr., William Hadel, Robert Herbruck, Corwin Smith, William Schantz, Elizabeth (Liza) Davies (Allen), Kenneth Allen, Donald Kohr, Louise Groves, Martha Chryst, Eleanor McCann, Jim Jenkins, Harry Schenck, William Patterson, Helen Guion (Ebeling), Janett Jaeger, Thomas Patterson, Robert B. Crew, Elwood Roggie, Robert Larkin, and Eugene Kettering.

Read more about Moraine Park School online at [www.daytonhistorybooks.com](http://www.daytonhistorybooks.com). Search for *After a Year—Moraine Park School, 1917—1918* and *A Statement of Policy for 1922—1923*.

The following books are also excellent references:

- *FDR's Utopian: Arthur Morgan of the TVA*, Talbert, pp 41-44
- *A Road to Creativity: Arthur Morgan: engineer, educator, administrator*, Leuba, pp 135-7
- *Grand Plans—Business Progressivism and Social Change in Ohio's Miami Valley 1890—1929*, Judith Selander, pp130—155



*Moraine Park School: Now*

## Oakwood Schools—From the Beginning

Ask anyone what first comes to mind when asked about Oakwood and “good schools” will be one of the first responses. Residents of Oakwood have always made education a priority—one that has continued throughout the decades. Enjoy this look back at the rich and proud history of our schools!

-- Harrison Stamm Gowdy & Mackensie Wittmer

1



### First School, circa 1846

- Located at corner of Far Hills & Oakwood Avenues (Five Points); now a park
- Grades 1-8
- School year: end of October to about April 1st
- John H. Patterson attended

2



### Red Brick Schoolhouse, 1896-1909

- Located one block west of Far Hills Avenue on West Schantz Avenue; now Sugar Camp/Pointe Oakwood
- Two classrooms, one for grades 1-3 and the other for grades 4-8

4



### First Kindergarten, 1911

- Located in a bungalow on the Mead estate

1850

1900

3



The "Green Barn," original building of the Oakwood school. Probably taken in 1910 or 1911. (Kettering-Oakwood Times)

### Green Barn, 1909-1913

- Converted barn on northwest corner of Harman and Dixon Avenues
- Four classrooms, grades 1-8
- 26 students in the first year and 96 students by 1912
- In 1912, first and second grades moved to the 3rd-floor ballroom on the Talbott estate
- Still part of the current Harman Elementary School

5



### Harman School, 1913—

- First called Harman Avenue School; now Harman Elementary School
- Original building design (no longer visible) by architect Louis Lott; 1916 addition by Dexter and McClure (1916); most recent addition by Reutschle Architects.
- Original landscaping design by Olmsted Firm\*
- First served grades k-8; in 1921 student enrollment was 197 and kindergarten was moved to the Runnymede Playhouse on the Talbott estate
- In 1921-1922, the 9th-grade class stayed at Harman until Oakwood opened a high school so they could be the first class to graduate from the Oakwood Schools
- Before the high school was built, students went by streetcar to Steele or Stivers in downtown Dayton
- Today Harman serves 500 students in grades 1-6

*\*The Oakwood Historical Society recently acquired the plans from the Olmsted archives.*

6



**Oakwood High School, 1924—**

- Located on the former farm of Gabriel Harman, one of the first four founders of Oakwood
- In 1924, 125 high school students marched from Harman Elementary to the new high school
- The 1924 graduating class had the 9 students who had stayed at Harman Elementary
- The 1925 graduating class had 15 students
- Today the high school serves 680 students in grades 9-12

9



**Lange School, 2000--**

- The Julian and Margorie Lange School
- Made possible by gift by Rich and Kitty Lange in honor of his parents; Julian was an Oakwood High School graduate and Margorie was a lifelong volunteer in the school system
- Located in Kettering
- This year's high school graduating class was the first kindergarten class at Lange School.
- Today the school enrollment is 119

1950

2000

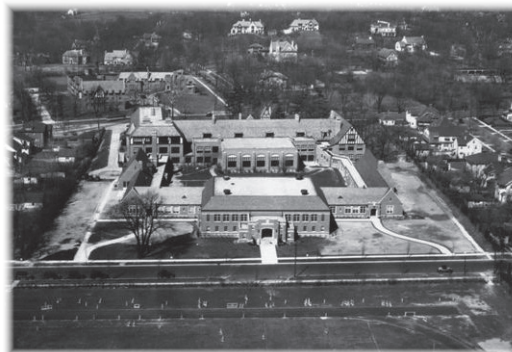
7



**Smith School, 1926—**

- Classes were first held in five cottages located along Shafor Boulevard
- Building designed by Schenck and Williams
- Opened in 1926 with 309 students and an elaborate ceremony as students walked from Harman Elementary to the new school
- Originally named Shafor Boulevard School, it was renamed Edwin D. Smith School in 1940 to honor Smith who was president of the school board for 14 years
- Today the school serves 516 students in grades 1-6

8



**Oakwood Junior High School, 1931—**

- Designed by Schneck and Williams
- Built on an athletic field and connected to the high school
- Opened in 1931 for grades 7-8 previously part of the elementary schools
- Today the school enrollment is 367

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Please get involved...

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## Children's Programs

--Linda Pearson and Lisa Kell

The Seasons in the Garden program still has several months to run. Last month we made refrigerator strawberry jam, to learn a bit about preserving produce from the garden. Everyone took home their own jar of jam.

We don't have corn, but the tomato vines are about as high as an elephant's eye! During the heat in July, the plants grew taller without much blooming or setting on vegetables. The thirsty critters at the Homestead were doing their best to get into the garden and get some water by eating the plants. The lettuces were a casualty to their persistence. Now with the heat, we are overrun with robust vines, and the blossoms and veggies are beginning to grow. The bees are very busy flying from flower to flower. We'll be harvesting way into the fall!

Thanks to the horses at Five Rivers MetroParks, we'll be getting a load of fertilizer this fall to further enrich next year's garden.

## Coming Events

### 413 Wiltshire House Tour

**September 21, Friday: Members-only preview**

6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. \$10 per person

**September 22 and 23, Saturday and Sunday: Open House**

Noon to 4:00 p.m. \$5 per person

Be among the first to tour this remarkable home in the heart of our city (see the invitation on the next page.) Truly a "must see" and an exciting opportunity for society members! Oh, your friends are our friends so please invite them, too.

### Annual Photography Fundraiser

**September 29 and 30, Saturday and Sunday**

9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Homestead

Take advantage of the unique grounds and buildings at the Homestead. Sign up for a 20- minute photo session with an experienced photographer at the historical society. For \$50, you can bring as many or few people/animals as you want, and leave with a CD of all the photos taken during the session, to be used copyright free. Make reservations for your preferred time slot by calling Linda Pearson at 648-9702.

### Garage Sale

**October 20, Saturday**

8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Homestead

Find treasures on the grounds of the Homestead! Donations for the sale are also welcome; contact Carolyn Noonan for drop-off information at 937.299.7983 or cwelshnoonan@yahoo.com.

### Annual Meeting & Dinner

**November 14, Wednesday**

6:00 p.m. (start) at the Dayton Country Club

Join us to celebrate both the end of a successful year and especially our friends and volunteers who contribute so much to our ongoing work. After dinner, Tom Morrow, an Oakwood resident and street car/bus history buff, will present the development of transportation in our city. Watch your mail for an invitation with more details.

### Holiday Open House

**December 2, Sunday**

1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Homestead

It's the start of the season! Stop by the Homestead and see how people celebrated the season in decades past.

For more information about any of these events, visit our website: [www.oakwoodhistory.org](http://www.oakwoodhistory.org).

*Members-only preview*



# 1930s Time Capsule!

## **A Time Capsule Home Tour – A View of 1930s Oakwood**

Be among the first to experience this rare gem. Join us for a members-only tour of this virtual time capsule and discover what life was like in 1930s Oakwood. The Costas family owned and occupied 413 Wiltshire Blvd. for nearly 75 years, and the home and belongings are in a remarkable state of preservation.

Friday, Sept. 21. 6:30-9:30 p.m.  
Light refreshments, cash wine bar  
\$10 per person

413 Wiltshire Blvd, Oakwood, Ohio 45419  
This event is not handicap accessible.

937.643.4075

Oakwood Historical Society

[www.oakwoodhistory.org](http://www.oakwoodhistory.org)

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***The Oakwood Historical Society Membership Form***

**Membership Categories (Please Check One)**

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Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse: \_\_\_\_\_

Business/Organization (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

The information that you submit will be used only by The Oakwood Historical Society and will not be given or sold to outside parties. Please make check payable to: The Oakwood Historical Society, and mail to: 1947 Far Hills Ave. Dayton, OH 45419