

Early Clintonvillites placed a firm foundation

By DON HOLLENBACK

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In a previous article, timed for the Whetstone Fourth of July Celebration, references were made to "other stories": one dealing with the actual purchase of Whetstone Park and the other with the creation of the Park of Roses. Both were results of people-action. These results clearly show the kind of people who have made Clintonville a good place to live.

Who were, and still are, the people who filled the houses and apartments on those orderly, straight-lined streets borrowed from Worthington's English grid plan? They started just before the turn of the century and by 1920 had replaced all of the dairies and most of the farmland between Arcadia Avenue and Rathbone Road.

These were men and women connected to Ohio State University, government agencies, insurance companies, major industries, utilities, professionals and later on attached to Battelle, Ranco and Chemical Abstracts Service. Many worked in the retail and service industries like the great department stores: Lazarus, the Union, Dunn-Tafts, Morehouse-Martens, the Fashion, Montaldo's, Moby's and Madison's.

There is a slight comparison here at the close of the century in that those also were times of upheavals in employment. Some had been robbed of finishing college by the Depression; some had lost good salaries for the same reason. Companies were changing, cutting back and economizing. Advanced training or educational opportunities were few.

But these were second generation people from the farm, from the land. Hard work and self-reliance were already built in when they hit the city. If there is any hallmark of the Clintonvillite of this foundation period it is the term "self-reliant."

They started churches where there were none.

They created sports and athletic programs where there were none.

They sponsored Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Campfire and Indian Guides where there were no sponsors.

They created cooperative efforts to deal with the Depression, crime, better water supply and drainage, fun things to do and much more. In some respects they got good basic training in "fighting city hall" to both get things done or to stop unwanted intrusions such as the state fairgrounds where Marburn is today, heavy industry along Morse Road, a major sewage treatment plant between Columbus and Worthington and a Morse Road connector across the Olentangy.

Of course there were individuals pre-eminent in making this foundation.

There were groups of individuals often acting as a single force.

There were those who were on stage for brief but important parts.

There were those whose lives spanned the life of the community.

Here are a few key persons in their respective categories that come to mind and with apologies to the ones I've missed:

Recreation

Mike Adams at Olentangy Village Bowling Center; Orr Zimmerman with sons Dick and Bob at Olympic Beach Pool; Bill Taylor, "Cookie" Stevens, Jack Mathews, Ray Hass, Robert Ray Jones and many others in founding the Clintonville Boys Association; Nick Barack, long-time city recreation director and resident of Indian Springs Drive; and North High Coaches Mike Hagely, Chuck Gilbert and Dick and Hugh Hindman made Clintonville a fun place to live. During the 1940s, a resident of West Dunedin Road, James A. Rhodes, conceived the idea of the Knot Hole Gang for kids to attend Columbus Red Birds games.

It is hard to realize that these were often financially hard times for the city of Columbus. While such redoubtable people as Ethelyn Williams, one of seven founders of the Clintonville Woman's Club; William A. Loar, Republican committeeman; Golda Mae Edmonston, first woman council president; Roland Sedgwick, attorney and veterans leader; Ruth Rabold, CWC building manager;



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Four notables who worked for a firm foundation in sports and athletics in Clintonville were: row one - (from left) "Doc" Rymer and Bill Taylor, Olympic Beach and Clintonville Boys Association founder; row two - (from left) Merrill B. "Cookie" Stevens, teacher, principal and CBA leader for many years, and Ted Barclay, Olympic Beach and later aquatics coach at Denison University.

er; professor Lewis Chadwick, OSU's arboretum's namesake and Kiwanis International leader; Carl Arend, local funeral director and civic leader, and many others kept up a steady pressure on City Hall on behalf of the community, they often chose to step aside when money was scarce and let another section of the city have the improvement.

The athletic people carved out their own ball diamonds and football fields with private equipment. School buildings with gyms were rented by money from the Lions, Civitan, Kiwanis, churches and women's groups. For more than a year after Whetstone Recreation Center was opened there was no money to staff it. The Advisory Council — the first one for Columbus — and the Youth Council — also a first and led by Barbara (Bash) Nicklaus — took over and staffed the center during normal hours with volunteers helping the new director.

The Clintonville Boys Association and its offshoots were, for 25 years or more, the only structured program operating out of the Whetstone center and also utilizing the facilities of many other buildings to meet the demands of 2,500 participants.

Religion

Just about every denomination flourished in Clintonville, including some independent and inter-faith ones. The first suburban Jewish mission, Beth Tikvah, was formed on Indianola Avenue at Walhalla Road. For many years the faiths joined together for an Easter sunrise service in Mike Hagely Stadium. One year, in advance of the service, *The Booster*,

carried an "ear" at the upper corner of the front page which was simply: "5:45." For weeks readers tried to figure out that it was just the time of Easter morning sunrise.

From many churches come strong links to an active and progressive population. They backed secular youth groups, formed bowling teams and even leagues, entered teams in all kinds of sports, assisted those in need and often became involved in fateful political decisions such as preserving the trees on East

North Broadway and settling disputes about the location of the proposed Riverside Hospital and the nearby North Free-way entry into Interstate 71.

Those who had a sustained outreach into the community at large must include the Rev. Fagan at Immaculate Conception, Bishops F. Gerald Ensley and Lance Webb at North Broadway United Methodist, the Rev. Ray Dronfield at Overbrook Presbyterian, the Rev. Moech at Clinton Heights Lutheran, Sheridan Bell at Maple Grove United Methodist, William E. Ashbrook at Calvary Bible and the Rev. John Byron at St. James. Among lay leaders of all faiths was Charles A. Jones, once secretary to Sen. Frank B. Willis of nearby Delaware and a founder of the American Education Press and *My Weekly Reader*. Others would be C.O. Callahan at Calvary Bible and Stanley A. Mauck and H. Jack Jones at North Broadway United Methodist.

The Diocese of Columbus made a major commitment to its educational program with the building of Bishop Watterson High School on East Cooke Road and the appointment of the Rev. Edward Spiers as principal, later succeeded by Robert Durant, an equally capable

and respected educator who guided the utilization of North's Hagely Field as a better home base for Eagles' games.

Community action

In 1942 a dynamic visionary named Mrs. Frank Hiatt set her heart on establishing a woman's club. She was coming off the failure of operating a center-city club whose prospects were dimmed by the onset of World War II. Her dream was to be realized in one of the most successful ventures of its kind in any city, culminating in today's Clintonville Woman's Club and facility. Another people-action foundation is formed.

More people-action came from the Kiwanis Club of Northern Columbus (1928), the Northern Lions Club, North Civitan Club and as part of the move to de-centralize came the North Columbus Jaycees, a significant sponsor of the Fourth of July and the Flags on High.

In 1941 the very first community-action organization in Columbus, the Clintonville Community Council was formed. It was patterned along the Presbyterian lines of the Founding Fathers in that representatives were chosen from all duly recognized groups in the community which included churches, schools, service clubs, women's clubs, athletic teams, political parties and more.

The need for such a group came out of the tremendous effort to have the West North Broadway bridge built. It is still the only new bridge location over the Olentangy in more than 100 years. The war was coming on and the role of Civil Defense called for lots of volunteers. The Community Council was ready to meet the increasing challenges of urban problems as well as to back our troops from the homefront.

Later on in the 1970s and 1980s the council was replaced by the more formal liaison of a commission-type system with elected commissioners. But the Community Council was for more than 40 years another people-action foundation maker for Clintonville.

Education

People-action foundations would not be complete without the mention of those dedicated to education, both formal and informal.

On the formal front are the public and parochial schools led by outstanding principals and staffed by competent teachers who were, for the most part, themselves deeply involved in whole community welfare as well as their profession. On the informal side is the library — once Clintonville, then Beechwood and now Whetstone but always counted as the one with the greatest circulation in the system. Gone but not forgotten are those head librarians: Mildred Worley, who father later became mayor; Mildred Taylor and Mrs. Alexander.

The faculty and Principals Harry Swain and Ed House along with Carl Spangler, Carroll Woodruff, Meta Gregg, Earl Hickman, Dave Shaw and Les Susi made Columbus North one of the finest high schools ever.

Principals C.A. Pollock and Dorothy Diehl at Clinton, Vance Smith at Crestview and Carl Brenning at Dominion were also notables in Clintonville education.

Business people

Finally there are the business-commercial and professional people-action groups, which often stretched as far south as Hudson Street and north into Sharon Township when there was need for concerted action to stop the government from closing a post office sub-station, to solve parking problems and to take a close look at the implications of the coming of a commercial phenomena — the shopping center. The present chamber of commerce and the Greater Northern Business-Professional Association are outgrowths of many such groups formed since the mid-1920s — some large and powerful, some weak and ineffectual and yet all contributed their share to the community's firm foundation.

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