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The Cleveland Heights Historical Society

2721 Colchester Road • Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44106-3650

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View from The Overlook

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Cleveland Heights' Liberty Row

By Ken Goldberg and Chris Roy

Trees have always been planted as symbolic gestures. And not only is Greater Cleveland a good example—it's one of the very first regions to coordinate a living memorial to soldiers who gave their lives in the First World War.

The memorial is "Liberty Row," a nine-mile string of white oaks running from Gordon Park along Martin Luther King Boulevard (originally Lower Boulevard but for years named Liberty Boulevard) up North Park Boulevard along the Doan Brook watershed and nearly to Warrensville Center Road along numerous Shaker Heights streets. Altogether, about 850 trees were planted, each with a round, engraved bronze plaque embedded in a cement base. Even today—more than 85 years after their installation—a great many of the trees and tablets survive. Here is their story.

A Head Start

Following the Armistice (November 11, 1918), American Legion posts, garden clubs, school children, communities and families around the country planted trees, usually as part of dignified ceremonies. Indeed, that very month, American Forests Association Board Chairman Charles Lathrop Pack called for "a new form of monument—a memorial that lives." Greater



Bronzes plaques are approximately 4.25 inches in diameter and .5 inches thick. Each contains the name of a fallen soldier and, in many cases, the day he died. On some plaques, a sprig of olive branches is still visible at the top and bottom. The markers were designed and cast by Fischer and Sons of Cleveland OH and cost \$10 apiece at the time.

Clevelanders lost little time; they mobilized to such a forceful extent that by Memorial Day, in 1919, the planting of a long chain of "Liberty Oaks" was already underway.

In fact, the plan for Cleveland actually began before the War ended. Cleveland Councilman

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The Cleveland Heights Historical Society, founded in 1983, is a state-chartered, 501(c)(3), not-for-profit organization.

Our Mission

The Cleveland Heights Historical Society is dedicated to preserving and promoting the diverse character and traditions of Cleveland Heights.

As a community-based historic organization, the Society encourages and facilitates greater knowledge, understanding and awareness of the heritage of Cleveland Heights.

Historic Event at Judson Park

The Cleveland Heights Historical Society will hold its **Fourth Annual Benefit** on Sunday Evening, **November 4**, at Judson Park.

Featured speaker will be **Klaus G. Roy**, Composer, Lecturer and Former Program Annotator for the Cleveland Orchestra, speaking about:

Classical Music in Cleveland: The Cleveland Heights Connection

For more than 100 years, the musical life of the Cleveland area has been stimulated and led by the residents of Cleveland Heights. Join us for a visual, musical and anecdotal look at the scores of ways that Cleveland Heights people, events and structures are linked to Cleveland's musical preeminence.

Evening activities also will include live chamber music, coffee and pastries, and a short tour of Judson Park.

- Date:** Sunday Evening, November 4, 2007
- Time:** 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
(tours and chamber music begin at 6:30)
- Venue:** Judson Park, 1801 Chestnut Hills Drive
Cleveland Heights Ohio
Auditorium inside Chestnut Hills entrance
- Admission:** \$25 per person to be collected at the door.
Deming and Severance Level members of the Cleveland Heights Historical Society are entitled to one free admission.
- Parking:** On Chestnut Hills Drive or in the parking garage off of Ambleside Drive (signs will direct you through the garage to the auditorium).
- Call:** 216-932-2571 for information and reservations
(or send an e-mail to heightshistory@aol.com)

Liberty Row

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Jerry R. Zmunt, in a July 7, 1918 article in *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, noted: "This is a splendid way of honoring our boys. It is particularly fitting that one of our finest boulevards in the city be chosen. The naming of trees after our dead heroes is the best tribute we can pay them, and their names will thus be perpetuated in a living thing." The American Forest Association applauded the idea and urged other communities to follow suit.

Making It Happen

Under the leadership of Councilman Zmunt, Cleveland Director of Parks and Public Property Floyd E. Waite, and City Forester Harry C. Hyatt,

a path was selected. On July 15, 1918, Ordinance 47590 was passed—"relative to changing North Park Boulevard, running through Ambler Park, Rockefeller Park and Shaker Heights Park from Cedar to Center Road to 'Liberty Row.'" The reference to North Park Boulevard within Cleveland City borders is confusing (even though the Shaker Lakes themselves are owned by the city of Cleveland) and it is unclear over what time span the planting was accomplished. Still, the obvious intent was for Liberty Row to begin at Gordon Park by Lake Erie; move along what had been Lower Boulevard through Gordon, Rockefeller, and Wade Parks; wind up Ambler Drive into Cleveland Heights; and then continue along North Park Boulevard through Cleveland Heights and Shaker Heights. This path would

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"We then planted trees, which today still stand there all along North Park Boulevard."



Edward Spear, a retired social worker who has always lived in Cleveland Heights, recalls a very special day in his young life.

"When I was in the fourth grade, which would have been in 1921, I remember a very unusual day in our lives. This was soon after World War I and Marshal Ferdinand Foch, the great French hero, was in Cleveland being honored by the community. On this particular November day there was a caravan with Foch, Ambassador Myron T. Herrick and other notables traveling up North Park Boulevard. All the kids were dismissed from school to witness the procession. We lined the roadway with wonderment in our eyes, seeing the famous general and the whole entourage passing slowly past.

We then planted trees, which today still stand there all along North Park. If you look, you will see a little round bronze plate embedded in a cement stone with the name of a soldier who gave his life in the war. All the way running up from Harcourt, every tree is dedicated to a fallen soldier. If you ever drive by, just stop and read the inscription. They were small saplings when we planted them; now they're getting rather stately."

(Recollections of Edward Spear, as published in "In Our Day" by Susan Ringler Jones, © 1975 by Heights Community Congress.)



Liberty Row

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take advantage of Cleveland's East Side chain of parkland. Additional memorials would be planted and installed later in other areas, including oaks around Sterling Playground at East 31st and St. Clair and sycamores in front of the Tom Johnson monument on Public Square.

In an August, 1918, issue of *American Forestry*, Editor Percival Sheldon Ridsdale praised the concept of "trees for the dead," stating that the fallen soldiers "are to have living monuments. Their memory will literally be kept green." He further claimed that these "Victory Oaks" would doubtlessly be preferable to "marble columns." And he noted that "there will be an oak tree planted there for each Clevelander who makes the supreme sacrifice. It will bear a bronze tablet inscribed with his name and military record. The planting of the trees will be made a civic ceremony in which the relatives of each hero will participate ... The trees will be, in their very greenness and robust strength, reminders of the youth who gave their vigor to win the war."

Planting and casting began shortly thereafter, and by May of 1919 a dedication ceremony was held. Concurrent with the event, a poem by W.R. Rose was printed in *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*. It concluded: *The little trees that line the way / Sad symbols of a nation's pride / Are etched against the wintry gray / Oh let them live for those who died!*

A Living Memorial

In 2007, a good percentage of North Park's Liberty Oaks and plaques remain intact. Those along Martin Luther Drive have fared less well—often succumbing to theft and sudden encounters with out-of-control automobiles. Nevertheless, the spirit of the Oaks and the majesty they bring to our cities are uncompromised. For many years American Legion Glenville Post 130 decorated the plaques. On patriotic holidays, flags are still placed by at least some of the remaining markers.

CHHS thanks Sabine Kretzschmar of the Shaker Historical Museum for providing much of the resource material used to develop this article.

Left: A pair of Liberty Oaks on North Park Blvd.

Cleveland Heights: A Restful Place to “Take the Cure”

By Mazie Adams

In the early 1900s, Cleveland Heights was billed as a restful escape from the hustle and bustle of downtown Cleveland. By the 1920s, however, area residents could find even more rest and care at one of two Cleveland Heights sanitariums.

Rest Haven, “The Sanitarium in the Heights,” was located at 14274 Superior Road, now the site of the Motorcars Toyota Dealership and Police Precinct 1. The exclusive business resided in the former Stone residence. Moritz Stone, who lived on Mayfield Road, built the home in 1909 for his son Isaac. Isaac Stone lived in the home until 1927, when he moved to 2509 Overlook Rd. However, the business was short lived, and does not appear in the 1928 *City Directory*. In 1928, the house was deeded to the Heights Orthodox Congregation. Beginning in the 1930s, the Stone residence became the long-time home of the Heights Orthodox Jewish Center.

The Cleveland Polyclinic was located at 1905 Lee Road in a house that was built in 1914, on the southeast corner of Lee and Superior. Run by Mrs. J.H. Hasson, the Cleveland Polyclinic specialized in “tubercular and psychopathic cases.” Patients enjoyed the services of a resident physician, Swedish massages and a chauffeur service. The Cleveland Polyclinic advertised in the 1928 *Topics*, but also was short-lived. It is not listed in the 1927 or 1928 city directories. The house was demolished in 1953 to make way for what is now Mo & Sons Sunoco.



While both institutions did not last long, they prided themselves in keeping their patients “contented and happy” and were housed in two of Cleveland Heights’s beautiful, old homes.

Above: *Cleveland Polyclinic Ad From Topics, 3/31/28.*
Thanks to Craig Bobby for locating.

Right: *Rest Haven, 14274 Superior Road*
(roughly Mayfield and Superior).

