

View from The Overlook

THE JOURNAL OF THE CLEVELAND HEIGHTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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Whatever became of Park School?

By Robert Gaebler

The editors of View from The Overlook thank Robert Gaebler, former Park School student and current Illinois resident, for submitting the following article. Anyone who possesses additional information about Park School is encouraged to contact the editors of this publication at www.heightshistory@aol.com or Mr. Gaebler at rgaebler@earthlink.net.

Although I only attended Park School in Cleveland Heights for two and a half years, part of second grade and third and fourth grade, before it closed in 1942, the school left a deep impression on my life, and probably started me on a lifelong pattern of creative problem-solving, just as its founders might have wished. But the great mystery about Park School is that much of its history remains obscure. Finding traces of this school which had such a large impact on my life in the late 1930s was almost impossible. Histories of Cleveland and Cleveland Heights make almost no mention of

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A school among the trees, close to the heart of nature

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1930; The Park School of Cleveland "A school among the trees, close to the heart of nature... Here will be a laboratory for the study of nature in its own environment, and a natural setting for the play of children."

The Cleveland Heights Historical Society



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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!

We hope you'll join us on Wednesday, November 16, at the College Club of Cleveland Heights for

“Views From, and Across, The Overlook”

the Cleveland Heights Historical Society's second annual fundraiser.

Keynote speaker at this year's event will be John Grabowski, Krieger-Mueller Associate Professor of Applied History at Case Western Reserve University, Director of Research at the Western Reserve Historical Society, and editor/author of the “Encyclopedia of Cleveland History” and “Cleveland: Then and Now.” Dr. Grabowski's topic will be:

“Overlooking Little Italy: Italian Immigration and the Folks Who Lived on the Hill”

The Historical Society will also present rare views of Overlook Road and discuss its history as:

Cleveland Heights' First Millionaires' Row

Additionally, attendees will have the opportunity to enjoy early jazz selections played by pianist, teacher and recording artist Greg Slawson; and receive guided tours of the College Club, one of Overlook Road's grand old mansions.

Date: Wednesday, November 16, 2005

Location: The College Club of Cleveland Heights,
2348 Overlook Road

Time: 7:00 PM to ~ 8:45 PM

Admission: \$20 per person, \$30 per couple

(Deming and Severance Level members of the Cleveland Heights Historical Society are entitled to one free admission and a second admission for \$10).

Admission will be collected at the door.

Reservations: Call 216-932-2571. Leave a message with your name, phone number, and number of people in your party. If you have any questions, please mention them in the message and we will call you back.

Park School

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Park School except as the institution from which Temple Anshe Emmeth bought the land upon which Park Synagogue now rests. It has bothered me greatly that a school which had so great an impact on the early formation of my character should have virtually vanished from the Earth without a trace. So my recent trip to Cleveland focused on cracking that mystery, and I did have some modest success.

At first I found almost no reference to Park School in any sources. A search of the local newspaper, the Heights Press, at the Cleveland Heights Library, made no mention of Park in the year it closed, 1942. The Cleveland Heights Historical Society had no information on it and neither did the Western Reserve Historical Society. Finally, in the Special Collections section of the Case Western Reserve Library, Sue Hanson found a brief History of Park in a History of Cleveland, which I have quoted in full below.

Park School flourished for nearly a quarter-century as one of the area's pioneer progressive schools. It was founded in 1918 by a group of area Vassar alumnae who wanted to provide a type of kindergarten unavailable in Cleveland. Early sponsors included Dr. and Mrs. Alexander McGaffin,

Henry Tucker Bailey, Mrs. Wm. Feather, and Mrs. Charles Thwing. The first kindergarten was located in a room at the Day Nursery and Kindergarten Assn. on E. 98th St. and later moved into a house on Adelbert Rd. As higher grades were added, the school leased quarters from the Cleveland Tennis and Racquet Club in Cleveland Hts.



The Press Saturday School Page, January 5, 1924

"Inclination Is Their Leader and Guide; Park School—Where Children Are Developing Along the Most Natural Lines—Dip, dip, dip. Into the hot, melted paraffin go the growing candles. Later other Park School children may use them to adorn the cutest placecards imaginable. Left to right the miniature dippers are Kathleen Webster, Kathleen Firestone, and Betty Baudauf."

In 1929 Park School moved into a group of inexpensive frame buildings constructed on part of the Rockefeller estate at Forest Hills on Euclid Heights Blvd. The twelve acre site was granted outright to the school by John D. Rockefeller three years later.

[Cleveland Heights land records show this happened 6-16-1932. -RG] Enrolling about 150 students, the school aimed to stimulate children to think for themselves rather than merely acquire knowledge through rote learning. Desks were arranged informally, and pupils were provided with brooms and wastebaskets to keep their own classrooms orderly. Miss Mary E. Pierce was director for most of the school's duration." [Speaking of arranging desks informally, I remember that in second grade we moved all the desks to the periphery of the room so that the entire middle of the classroom could be devoted to a map of Cleveland, painted on the floor with water-soluble paint. About the address on Adelbert Road, it was where University Hospitals now stand, built on the old Park School site in time for me to be born there in 1932! -RG]

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Park School

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Only one year after adding a 12th grade and celebrating its first high school commencement, Park School closed in 1942 due to faculty dislocations caused by World War II. Its site was acquired by the Cleveland Jewish Ctr." [i.e., Congregation Anshe Emmeth, 11-25-1942 for \$51,500. -RG]

The buildings that housed Park School are still intact, except for one building and an enclosed passageway which succumbed to fire several years ago. A half dozen years ago I peered into my old fourth grade classroom, where we studied dinosaurs and the planets back in 1941, and saw above the blackboards the same pictures of planets and dinosaurs that hung there 60 years before! On the most recent trip in 2003 I visited the old lunch room/gym/auditorium, and found several of the old orange mugs I used to drink milk out of 63 years ago! Words can't begin to describe the joy of drinking once again from a cup which has been thought to have been destroyed for almost two thirds of a century! Who says you can't go back?

Another piece of the puzzle was clarified by Rabbi Armond Cohen of Park Synagogue. Rabbi Cohen is now in his 90s, and was instrumental in buying the Park School land for Congregation Anshe Emmeth back in 1942. He had had personal contact with John D. Rockefeller back in New York and knew some of the history of Park School before it became the home of Park Synagogue. It seems that Rockefeller had built rather nice homes in the area around what later became Park School, and some of the folks who settled there wanted a private school nearby for their kids. So Rockefeller made land available so that Park School could move to the land off Ivydale in Cleveland Heights, the same land now occupied by Park Synagogue.

Rockefeller continued to be a supporter of the school, often making good its operating deficit at the end of the year. But in 1942 he had an audit done of the school finances and learned that many families were not paying any tuition, and he may

have begun to feel that they were freeloading on his generosity. The withdrawal of Rockefeller's financial support was more the death knell for the school than any dislocation of teaching staff caused by the war.

Rabbi Cohen reports that after the Congregation bought the school, he went to the principal's office and found the school records, which he believes may still be in the basement of Park Synagogue. Among those papers was an operation manual which stipulated, among many other things, that Park School should never enroll more than 10 percent Jewish students. Exclusionary clauses were quite common in those days, and a 10 percent quota may even have been generous for its day in the eyes of the non-Jewish community.

Apart from that, the student body was fairly mixed, although class pictures do not show any black or Asian students. My own family was of very modest means and must have been one of the ones subsidized by Mr. Rockefeller. But one of my classmates, Charlie Baker, was the grandson of Newton D. Baker, who was mayor of Cleveland from 1912 to 1916 and Secretary of War in Woodrow Wilson's cabinet during World War I. Another student, Betty DiMaiores, was the niece of a powerful Cleveland politician. In a lower grade were the twin daughter and son of a prominent psychiatrist on the staff of Western Reserve University Hospitals. I suspect a complete student roster, if we are ever able to find one, would reflect a broad spectrum of middle-class Cleveland society of the time.

All of this takes us far beyond what we knew when I planned my trip to Cleveland. The two remaining unsolved mysteries of Park School are, (1) what happened to the school records? and (2) is it possible to find or reconstruct a list of the faculty and students who attended Park? Perhaps the basement of Park Synagogue will yield the answers to these questions.

Editor's note: Additional reference material and photos are available for viewing at the Superior Schoolhouse.



Photos courtesy of City of Cleveland Heights Department of Planning & Development.

Original site of Dean Dairy on Mayfield Road near Ivydale.

Drive By History: **DEAN DAIRY**

By Mazie Adams

Next time you're stuck in the construction traffic on Mayfield between Lee and South Taylor Roads, take a good look at the U-Haul building. Did you know that this building was once a thriving dairy, right here in Cleveland Heights? Orville A. Dean founded Dean Dairy on this spot in 1884.

At 35 years old, Orville first started selling milk to friends and acquaintances. In 1886, he built a large farmhouse, which served as his family home, the dairy and the office for the company for 71 years. In the early years, milk was delivered by horse-drawn wagons. The delivery men dipped large ladles into the 10 gallon cans, and then poured the milk into each housewife's pitcher.

In 1920, Harry N. Dean took over the company from his father. By then, Dean's had grown to eight retail outlets and one wholesale store, with new machinery and equipment. During these

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DEAN DAIRY

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years, the Dean Dairy's many fine horses were displayed at shows and fairs throughout the area.

The war years were difficult, with food rationing and drivers leaving for the front, but luckily for Dean's, dairy products remained in demand. Grove P. Dean, grandson of Orville, originally moved east to try his hand in other businesses, but was drawn back to home. Under his guidance, Dean's converted most of the wagons from horse drawn to automotive, although some horses were still used. Rubber tires were added to these "very modern units" to cut down on noise during early morning deliveries.

Wilburt McCarthy, who retired in 1975 after 40 years as a Dean's milkman, remembered delivering "to the home every day then, seven days a week. We'd go out and load up the wagons at two or three o'clock in the morning and we'd put in our 10 to 12-hour work day. The pay wasn't much for a milkman."



Photo caption to come.

In 1958, the old house was demolished and a new plant was built on the same site, 3211 Mayfield. This has now become the U-Haul store. The "modern two-story office building, designed in true colonial style" included all the amenities required for a successful business that then served more than 50 communities in northeast Ohio. Dean's delivered "regular milk, homogenized vitamin D milk,



Photo caption to come.

Golden Guernsey Milks, chocolate milk, Gurn-Z-Gold low-fat milk, coffee and whipping cream, skim milk, butter, whipped cream, cottage cheese, trim low-calorie cottage cheese, buttermilk, Pace margarine, orange juice, goats milk, Reddi Whip, sour cream, yogurt, orange drink and ice cream." Many of these items were also available in local stores.

"Dean's had the best chocolate milk, barring anyplace," remembered milkman McCarty. "It was really out of this world. In the summertime, we sold to a lot of house painters. And we'd sell off the truck to those fellows all the time, buttermilk and chocolate milk."

In their 75th anniversary brochure, the company explained the improvements in quality control. "The laboratory in the modern dairy plant is an integral part of its operations. Among its various functions is the testing of milk for butterfat percentage. Testing both chemically and bacteriologically is done on the farmer's raw supply and on the finished product. In addition, analyses are made of new and present products for continued improvement... Raw milk specimens are subjected to microscopic examination for conformation to Dean's rigid quality control standards."

Dean's milk was "one of nature's most important foods" and most "every person can benefit in

well being and energy with a daily intake of one quart of milk." Even Dean's buttermilk was "slimming and satisfying."

Cleveland Heights mayor Ed Kelley worked for Dean's Dairy in the early 1970s, following in the footsteps of his grandfather, milkman William Rapp, his uncle, father and brother. Mr. Kelley filled 500 sacks of ice for the milk trucks each day. Since the trucks were not refrigerated, the milkmen used the sacks to keep the dairy products cool during deliveries. Mr. Kelley worked during the summers and after school in the early fall, until the temperature dropped. He also worked as a weekend night watchman, listening to Casey Kasem's Top 40 on the radio. His favorite memories of working at Dean's were the wonderful stories the drivers shared with him. "The drivers were very kind to me," Kelley remembered, "and they encouraged me to stay in school and go on to college." Dean's was "a great place to work," although going from



Photo caption to come.

the hot summer weather outside to the cold air of the cooler could be a shock.

Two other dairy companies operated in Cleveland Heights as well. Hillside was started in 1932 and located on Center Road (now Warrensville), near Noble and Mayfield. Many people remember the wonderful tours of Hillside Dairy and their delicious lunch counter. Hillside is also remembered for having one of the first female milk drivers. In one month, they had 18 drivers called up for service in World War II, so they hired the "first feminine milk-carrier, six feet, 170 pounds." Bruder's dairy opened in the early 1900s. One of Bruder's busiest retail stores was located in what is now Seitz-Agin Hardware.

Innovations in refrigeration and the proliferation of convenience stores and supermarkets in the 1970s signaled the end of small dairies that specialized in home delivery. People no longer wanted the more expensive, home-delivered milk products. However, many Cleveland Heights residents have fond memories of the milk truck making regular deliveries throughout our community.



Photo caption to come.

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The Cleveland Heights Historical Society

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