

Kirtland Hills: A Village of Stories, 1926- present

Local history can be as unique as the county it comes from. Though Lake County is Ohio's smallest of 88, it is the one with perhaps the most intriguing past. It is home to nine cities, nine villages and five townships. This month, let's dive into some of the interesting people and places from the **Village of Kirtland Hills**, an area under 13 square miles. with a population just over 692.

In 1922, renowned **New York's Central Park** landscape architect **Frederick Law Olmsted** was secured to develop a plan for the 400-acre **Kingwood Farm**. The distinguished

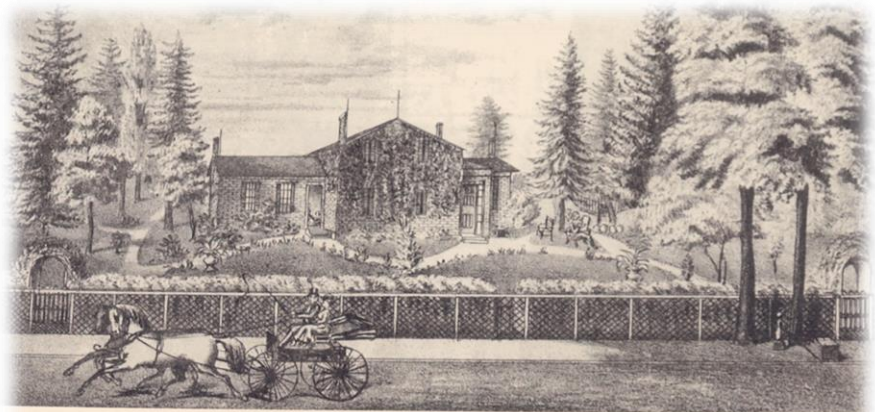


Frederick Law Olmsted



"Kingwood" is one of the largest estates in Lake County, comprising 600 acres of fertile valleys, uplands and forest. The Manor House occupies an elevated site affording entrancing views in all directions. "Kingwood" farm breeds Holsteins, Morgan Horses and Chester White Hogs. At the recent Lake County Fair, Kingwood Morgan and Kingwood Ethan Allan, two superb Morgans, won first prizes, and a Holstein Yearling Bull was awarded first prize.

designer transformed the **Capitol Grounds** in Washington D.C. and the surroundings for Chicago's **World's Columbian Exposition** (Setting for the book **The Devil in the White City**).



"Whippoorwill," Kirtland's home, constructed of native sandstone in 1839.

Next a **Union Club** meeting in 1925 was called by new resident **Leonard C. Hanna Jr.** to officially name the village. The name chosen was **Kirtland Hills**, honoring **Dr. Jared Potter Kirtland**, a prominent

19th century professor, physician and naturalist. He discovered the lovely **Kirtland Warbler** and the village was



Evidence of Kirtland's extensive gardens remained in 1953. In this Cleveland Press photo, an Osage tree which had grown to great heights in 1877.



incorporated in October 1926.

Its first officers were elected in a stable at the Chillicothe estate of **Elton Hoyt**. The

shuttered **Riverside Elementary School** on Baldwin Road became the Village Hall through 1952. The current Village Hall followed later that year and improvements were made in 1997. A little-known tidbit was the early 1930s village entrance signs, four total, were designed and made by resident **Ora Steele McFarland**

(1879-1948). These iconic sign posts were decorated for Christmas beginning in 1972, a tradition still in force thanks to the first efforts of Mrs. Barbara Hoyt and Mrs. Caroline Butler.

Within its borders, the village has three churches, each distinctly unique in its local and county history. **St. Andrew Episcopal Church** on Little Mountain Road became a diocesan reality in 1958, incorporated in 1959 and dedicated in 1960. The **East Shore Unitarian Universalist Church**, once on Center Street, was the brainchild of **Colonel Frank A. Scott**. From its 1920s origins, **Greystone Manor**, a 16th century English Tudor Manor House





arose. The opening of I-90 in the 50s saw the site sold to **Thomas and Ethel Peterson** of the **First Unitarian Church of Cleveland**. Its church history spanned 1961-1996 when it became a private residence, then a school. The third church to call Kirtland Hills home is the current **St. Hubert's**

Church. Originally built in 1892 and part of the Little Mountain Hotel Era, this **Church of the Transfiguration** was part of the **Pinecrest Hotel**. In 1916 the church was moved to the **Holliday House** property on Salida Beach and Lakeshore in Mentor-on-the-Lake. By late 1929, the church began its final trek to Baldwin Road. Still standing



today, one can attend services each Sunday and see an interior worthy of any Old World trek.

Four homes at one time were owned by the village. The **Cole House**, built by **Alfred Morley** in 1870, was renovated in 1947 and razed in 2000. The field on Chillicothe and Baldwin recall its past glory. Nearby was the **Hazeltine House**, the 1860s home of **John G. Hazeltine**. Jerome T. Osborne acquired the home decades ago. The **Boyer House** on Hart

Road was said to be built by **D.B. Hart**. It was burnt down in 1986. The final structure, known as the **Perkins House**, used to stand adjacent to Village Hall. Each history is worth exploring separately.

The **Kingwood Dairy** once stood on Chillicothe Road and was part of the **Sealtest** and **Lockie-Lee Company** histories. The original old farmhouse is now owned by the **Church of the Latter Day Saints**.





Another compelling local history involves **Levi Smith**. Family history dates back to 1774, with the Kirtland era account first being mentioned in 1800. Their family story is tied to the **Old South Church**. A gravestone near the intersection of Baldwin Road marks this and other local lore.



The one-room schoolhouse was built in 1894. Known by locals as **Riverside School**, it educated village children through 1920. **Leonard C. Hanna, Jr.** allowed the closed school to become the first village hall and police department. It served that purpose until 1952. **Anthony Ocepak** purchased and remodeled the school as his own residence. In 1988 the family donated the site to **Lake Metroparks**. Today it serves as a museum and educational program center for all children and residents to experience.



Totalling over 3162 acres, the **Holden Arboretum** calls Kirtland Hills home. Modeled on **Harvard University's Arnold Arboretum** and begun in 1931, this botanical masterpiece was the gift of mining magnate **Albert F. Holden**. He sought to create a living memorial to his deceased wife and daughter through a trust for the purpose.



Shadybrook Farm, the former site of the **Lake County History Center** was home to the **Arthur D. Baldwin** Family. Hailing back to the 1900s, its 1926 rebuild still stands today. Designed by **Abram Garfield**, son of **President James A. Garfield**, it was a 543-acre working farm. Its history will be told on another day.



The last story to be shared this month is that of the former estate of **Leonard C. Hanna Jr.** **John Wanamaker**, of Philadelphia store fame, sent a buyer to England in 1923 to purchase, disassemble and transport three authentic daub & tattle manor houses. Once stateside, one house, which dates to 1492, had its first reconstruction in 1925 and found its way to County-Line Road for Cleveland Industrialist **Edmund S. Burke**'s pleasure. Hanna purchased it in 1945, and moved it to Kirtland Hills. Re-erected, expanded and updated, it became part of his 300-acre estate and included a pool, pool house, covered bridge, gate house, clock tower,





gatekeeper's home and more. Hanna, a scion of Cleveland's wealthiest family, hosted events for his celebrity friends including **Cole Porter, Marlene Dietrich, Gene Tunney, Gloria Swanson, Clifton Webb, Joan Crawford** and even **Eleanor Roosevelt**. On a side note, I close with the documented fact that Hanna welcomed village neighbors to swim



in the beautiful pool on many summer Sunday afternoons.

Hanna's ashes were strewn on the lush property when he died in 1957.



Beautiful Kirtland Hills has an interesting history, one easily recounted on a drive down its scenic back roads. Do start your trip into the smallest county's history with a stop at this hidden gem named for **Dr. Kirtland**, the region's first ornithologist.

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