

## PARTIAL TOUR OF ROCKY RIVER'S HISTORICAL SITES

- Start at Civic Center (on City Hall Campus at Wagar & Hilliard)
- Lakewood Park Cemetery, 22025 Detroit Road
- Site of first sawmill in vicinity of Elmwood & Detroit
- Hahn's Grove (later Beach Cliff Place/Beach House, 22455 & 22500 Lake Road)
- Bradstreet's Landing, 22400 Lake Road
- Beach Cliff - Avalon Drive (formerly Lake Road)
- Evergreen, home of Governor Reuben Wood (SW corner of Avalon & Wagar)
- Rocky River Clock Tower, Lake & Morewood Pkwy.
- Old Stone Wall (north side of Lake Rd., across from Bearden's and gas station)
- Site of Cowan Pottery Studio (19621 & 19633 Lake Road)
- Rocky River Basket Company (next to Cowan property, on east side)

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- Cleveland Yachting Club (200 Yacht Club Drive, off eastern Lake Rd.)
- Rocky River Depot (on north side of Depot Street)
- Ingersoll Hardware (first in Mitchell Sotka Antiques bldg. on Old Detroit, then at 19333 Detroit)
- Old Town Hall (on north side of Old Detroit Road-tall building with steps-next to Tartine's)
- Wright's Tavern/Silverthorn Inn/Westlake Hotel/Westlake Condominiums, 19000 Old Lake Rd
- Candyland (19015 Old Lake Road, where Salmon Dave's is today)
- Detroit Rocky River Bridge (Old Lake Road & Detroit)
- Beachcliff Theatre/Beachcliff Market Square, 19310 Detroit Road
- Treats Tea Room, 1325 Linda Street (now Tommy's Place)
- Site of Schlather Estate, now the Cliff Towers Condominiums, 2039-2089 Wooster Road
- Site of Macbeth home, just north of intersection of Wooster & Center Ridge Roads
- Rocky River Public Library & Cowan Pottery Museum, 1600 Hampton Road
- Old RR High School/RR Middle School, Riverview & Lakeview Roads
- St. Christopher Church, 20141 Detroit (school is at 1610 Lakeview)
- End at Civic Center

## **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

**(Lolley the Trolley Tour for RRPL Staff Day, 10/18/2012)**

Excerpt from an 1876 book about early Rocky River by William Payne entitled  
*Cleveland Illustrated: A Pictorial Handbook of the Forest City*, pp. 195-196—

“A charming drive and one that is taken by hundreds every week during the summer, is the road to Rocky River....Rocky River itself is a spot made highly attractive by nature, and which has been made more so by liberal and judicious expenditures. The river seeks the lake through a deep ravine, the banks of which, near the mouth, are crowned with handsomely arranged grounds, open to the pleasure seeker. Large and well-kept summer hotels and houses of call are in the immediate neighborhood, and in the river are a number of neat sail and row boats on hire. During the entire summer the grounds are thronged with picnic parties, who go there by the road, or by the Rocky River Railroad, or by the several small steamers that run regularly, or by special charter, from the city.”

**Welcome to our tour of Rocky River’s historical sites! Some are well known sites, others are not so well known. Even those who live in River may not be aware of the city’s history. Much as we’d like to tour the entire city, it would take 2 or 3 hours to do it properly. Thus we are focusing on the northern and central portions of RR. We hope you enjoy the tour and come away with a little more knowledge and a lot more pride in the city where we work. Also we hope you will gain more appreciation for the historical photos and maps in RRPL’s Lower Level.**

**First, I’d like to introduce you to our Lolley the Trolley driver, Don. I’m Carol Jacobs, curator and librarian. This is Julie Mortensen, from Adult Reference, who works with the media and local history collections. You may wonder why we are doing this tour—we thought it would be a good idea to provide more than one voice narrating this tour. Also, about 10 years ago Julie and I were on the board of the RR Historical Society where we worked on the archives and did several programs together. It’s great to work together again!**

**Let’s get started with a few basics about Rocky River—its earliest history goes back to the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. RR’s first political formation was as part of Rockport Township, created in 1819. Lakewood was also a part of that township (as East Rockport; RR was West Rockport). Eventually RR became independent and reformed itself as a hamlet in 1891, a village in 1903, and a city in 1930. When it became a city it was barely 5,000 people, and today it is a little over 20,000 people. RR is located about 9 miles west of Cleveland and it occupies 4.2 square miles. Rocky River is bounded by water on two sides—the Rocky River on its east side, and Lake Erie on its north side. On the south it is bounded by Fairview Park and on the west by Bay Village and Westlake.**

**The area remained predominately rural and resort-like until the 1920’s and 1930s, when the transition to a residential area began. The city became a desirable place to live due to its proximity to the river and one of the Great Lakes, the clean country air, and the easy connection to the city of Cleveland thanks to two main bridges—one was the Detroit Road or Rocky River Bridge (various versions starting 1821) and the Hilliard Bridge (1926).**

## GREENHOUSE HISTORY/TRUCK FARMERS

Through the 1940's, greenhouses and truck farms dominated the area, but there were some small business areas along Detroit and Center Ridge Roads. You might ask—what is a truck farm? The farmers of Rocky River sold their produce directly to local stores, and they also “trucked” their goods into Cleveland where they were sold at such places as the West Side Market. So no middlemen were involved.

One of the early greenhouse families was the Gasser family. Their business and farm were located on the west side of Wooster Road, south of the Center Ridge intersection. Joseph M. Gasser had a successful flower and vegetable business in downtown Cleveland, and in 1883, he bought a house with 67 acres in Rockport. Starting with one small greenhouse, Gasser's property eventually covered 15 acres with flowers and tropical fruits grown under glass— including oranges! A windmill pumped water from a cistern while potbelly stoves kept warmth in the greenhouse. Joseph Gasser died in 1908, but his greenhouse continued under family management until 1927.

Among the many other greenhouse families were the Hoag's, the Christensen's, and the Schneider's. Their greenhouses and farms were prolific along Center Ridge, Detroit, and Wooster Roads. The Christensen Farm was located at 2434 Wooster Road, right where I-90 now exits. Charles Christensen emigrated from Denmark and came to Cleveland during the business Panic of 1873. He eventually settled down to raise seven children on his farm. He established the first vegetable greenhouse in Rocky River, which sold cabbage, beets, carrots, & tomatoes, and also such fruits as rhubarb, grapes, blackberries and raspberries. The Christensen's at one time owned 6% of the total geographical area of RR.

The greenhouses slowly died out due to high operating costs and the construction of I-90 and other Ohio area highways. One by one they gradually closed or moved, and the land was taken over by developers. Probably the last family greenhouse to close was Kaiser's, located on Northview Ave between Hilliard and Westway Drive. It closed earlier this century, and around 2005, the River Place condos were erected on the site of the old Kaiser's Greenhouse.

## LAKWOOD PARK CEMETERY

In 1914, land on western Detroit Road in Rocky River was purchased to create Lakewood Park Cemetery. The mausoleum, made of granite and marble, was built in 1921. The office was built in 1957. The cemetery covers 55 acres. The goal was to make it look like a park, so all the grave markers are flat.

Many famous people, both local and national, are buried here, including the following:

**Jess Bell**: Chairman of the Bonnie Bell cosmetics firm and promoter of physical fitness (his father founded the company)

**Clint Brown**: Major League baseball pitcher who played 15 seasons for the Cleveland Indians and the Chicago White Sox)

**Nev Chandler**: Sportscaster and voice of the Cleveland Browns

**David H. & Richard E. Jacobs**: Real estate developers and owners of the Cleveland Indians

**Sammy Kaye**: Celebrated musician and band leader during the 1930s-1970s; he graduated from RR High School in 1928; went to Ohio University where he first formed a band to help pay his college expenses; played at inaugurations of Presidents Nixon and Reagan

**Herb Score**: Major League baseball pitcher who played for the Cleveland Indians and the Chicago White Sox; later became a sports broadcaster

**Louis B. Seltzer**: Editor of the Cleveland Press, 1928 - 1966

**Vernon Stouffer**: Famous restaurateur, founder and president of Stouffer Foods

Last but not least, **R. Guy Cowan** is also buried in Lakewood Park Cemetery. R. Guy Cowan was a prominent ceramics pioneer and founder of the Cowan Pottery Studio located here in RR during the 1920s and early 1930s. Cowan Pottery is a beautiful form of American art pottery that was quite famous and well-loved in its day. In recent decades it has enjoyed quite a bit of resurgence in popularity. Unfortunately the Studio did not survive the Great Depression. Guy Cowan was heartbroken over the failure of his Cowan Pottery Studio in late 1931. At the time, Mr. Cowan was in his late 40's and still needed to find a job but couldn't find the right one in this area. Thus he eventually moved to Syracuse where he had a good position at Syracuse China for the last 25 years of his life. He died in 1957 of heart failure, and had chosen to be buried in Rocky River, along with his wife & parents and several other family members. It is so appropriate that this is his final resting place-- it was here in Rocky River where R. Guy Cowan had seen his greatest success.

## **THE FIRST SAWMILL**

**Now we're traveling towards the western end of Rocky River, where some of River's earliest history occurred.**

**The earliest settler in the Rockport Township area was Philo Taylor who came with his family from New York in the spring of 1808. He settled on the east side of the Rocky River near the mouth of the river—that's the Lakewood side today.**

**The first resident west of the Rocky River was Datus Kelley who in 1810 purchased that tract of land that was west of Wagar Road between Detroit Road on the south, and Lake Erie on the north. Kelley put up a saw mill on his land in the vicinity of Detroit and Elmwood Roads. This was probably RR's first industry. In 1834 Kelly sold his farm and moved to an island in Lake Erie now known as Kelly's Island. The person to whom Kelly sold part of his land was Reuben Wood, then a lawyer in Cleveland. Reuben Wood called his home in Rocky River, "Evergreen," and it was located on the southwest corner of Avalon and Wager Roads.**

## **HAHN'S GROVE/ BEACH CLIFF PLACE**

**Close to Bradstreet's Landing was a little resort area called Hahn's Grove. It was located off Lake Road near the bottom of the valley, just a little east of the Bay Village border.**

**Shortly after the turn of the last century, Starles Hahn and his wife Anna purchased ten acres of land near Bradstreet's Landing and the shore of Lake Erie. Cottages were built near the lake to provide additional income for the family. This popular summer resort consisted of about twenty cottages scattered randomly on different levels of the property. The spot became a favorite retreat for city dwellers and was the #9 stop on the old Lake Shore Electric Interurban Railway.**

**The impact of the Depression caused the site to fall into disrepair. The property was sold in 1946, and eventually an apartment and a condominium building were built in this area—one is the apartment complex called Beach Cliff Place (on south side of road), and the other is the high rise condominium erected in 1975 called Beach House (on the lake side of the road).**

## **BRADSTREETS LANDING**

**One of the first written references to Rocky River came from a 1764 expedition of a British Officer named Colonel John Bradstreet, a hero of the French & Indian War that had just ended in 1763. During the year following the end of that war there were lots of loose ends to tie up. Thus Colonel Bradstreet traveled from Fort Niagara, New York, to Fort Detroit in Michigan to bring supplies to British troops stationed there and to negotiate with the Seneca Indians in that area. Bradstreet's fleet consisted of 60 boats and 9 canoes carrying 1,500 troops and lots of supplies.**

**On Bradstreet's return trip along the southern shore of Lake Erie, he and his troops camped at what it is now known as Bradstreet's Landing. During the night a storm arose and Bradstreet's company lost almost half of its boats including much of their equipment and provisions. Only one fatality, however, has been documented.**

**This incident became known as Bradstreet's Disaster. The Colonel and his men took the remaining boats and returned to Fort Niagara, but not without a great deal of difficulty. Some of the troops had to return on foot since half the boats had been lost. A contemporary journal of this whole experience was kept by a member of the party named Lt. John Montrésor. This journal comprises an eyewitness day-by-day account of the journey, which is of course an invaluable primary source. One of Rocky River's current residents, Dr. Daniel Marsalek, has done voluminous research on this subject and is an expert on this early episode in Rocky River's history.**

## BEACH CLIFF TRUST BEACHES

In 1888 a local businessman named Clifton Beach purchased 427 acres of land along the lakeshore including Governor Rueben Wood's property located at Wagar and Avalon. By 1890 Beach's property extended from Detroit Road to Lake Erie, and from Bradstreet's Landing to the Oakwood estate of Daniel Eells. So by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the land along the Lake pretty much belonged to 2 people—Clifton Beach and Daniel Eells. Beach was elected to Congress in 1895 and served through 1899. Before he left for Washington, Beach sold an acre of his land on the southeast corner of his property to be used only for educational purposes—and that's where Beach School was erected in 1897. The Beach School building still stands today (greatly rebuilt and remodeled), and although it is no longer used as a public school, it still has educational uses, and among other things it is the home of the RR Historical Society's Archives (formerly in RRPL's Orange Room).

Clifton Bailey Beach died in 1902 and he's buried in Lakeview Cemetery, just beyond University Circle. His land continued to be farmed for a few years, but his house deteriorated. Finally in 1917, Clifton Beach's son, Chisholm, and his wife Adelaide sold the Beach property to a real estate developer. The land was to be developed into individual home sites, with the exception of four specific parcels along the lakefront that were to be held in trust for the benefit of all the new property owners (Wagar Beach area).

The developers hired an Englishman named Alfred W. Smith to plot and name the streets in the Beach Cliff area. Being very British, Mr. Smith favored the Tudor style of architecture and chose English street names, such as Cornwall, Avalon, Kensington, and Falmouth.

Clifton Beach's land in northwestern RR is what we know today as Beach Cliff subdivision #2. Beach Cliff #1 was the land owned in northeastern RR by Daniel Eells.

## **GOVERNOR REUBEN WOOD**

**Governor Reuben Wood was the 16<sup>th</sup> Governor of the state of Ohio, and he was also a resident of Rocky River. But he was born in Middletown Vermont, in 1792. He moved to Canada at age 15 and studied law. He was conscripted into British forces during the War of 1812, but he escaped and fled back to the U.S., where he served for a short time in the U.S. Army. After the war was over, he headed west to seek his fame and fortune.**

**Reuben Wood arrived in Cleveland in 1818 to practice law, and in 1819 he brought his family here aboard the first steamship to visit the city. As an exceptional trial lawyer, he gained a reputation for fair dealing and he soon entered politics. He was elected to three terms in the Ohio Senate. In 1834 he purchased Datus Kelly's farm in Rocky River.**

**Reuben Wood was elected Governor of Ohio in 1850 and narrowly missed being nominated for president in 1852 at the Democratic National Convention. The person he lost to was Franklin Pierce (probably not one of our more well-known presidents). Wood resigned the governorship in 1853 to become the American Consul in Chile. He retired one year later and returned to Rocky River.**

**Governor Wood's home, Evergreen, occupied the space that is now the southwest corner of Avalon and Wagar Roads. Many of the beautiful trees in the Beach Cliff area owe their origin to Reuben Wood's farm. You can see a large panoramic mural painting of Evergreen on the side wall of the auditorium at the RR Senior Center. And a copy of the original photo hangs on the wall of the Lower Level (across from the Auditorium).**

**Reuben Wood died in 1865. He and his wife, Mary Rice Wood, are buried at Woodland Cemetery (E. 69<sup>th</sup> & Woodland Ave.). The archives of the Rocky Historical Society contain the Reuben Wood family papers and correspondence.**

## **THE CLOCK TOWER**

**A local landmark known as the Clock Tower is celebrating its centennial this year! The first Clock Tower was built one hundred years ago in 1912 at the intersection of Avalon and Lake Roads. It was meant to be a gateway to the scenic Beach Cliff neighborhood. The original Clock Tower was built by George Dixon, who also designed Rocky River's Old Town Hall. In 1930 when Rocky River became a city, the Clock Tower became city property.**

**Unfortunately, in 1956, a storm with winds close to 100 miles an hour toppled the tower and damaged many homes around the area. Damage was estimated in excess of \$1 million. There are 2 photos in RRPL's Lower Level that show the Clock Tower in 1912, and in 1956 when it was toppled over by the storm.**

**It was not until 30 years later that a clock tower committee was organized and the city landmark was finally reconstructed in 1987. The new Clock Tower is an exact reproduction of the original 1912 Clock Tower and it was built by the R. W. Clarke Co. The Beachcliff Garden Club maintains the beautiful grounds.**

## **THE STONE WALL AND OAKWOOD BEACH**

**The stone wall which runs along the north side of Lake Road across the street from Bearden's was part of the original Eells Estate. The estate of Daniel Eells extended from the western bank of the Rocky River to the west boundary of Kensington School (opened 1927), and from the north side of Lake Road to Lake Erie.**

**The area known as Oakwood Beach, and later Beach Cliff #1, was owned by Daniel Parmalee Eells from 1878 until his death in 1903. He owned the land that forms a pointed cliff between the mouth of the Rocky River and Lake Erie which was known as "Eells Point." Originally this property was known as Tisdale Point, after its owner Erastus Tisdale, who built a summer vacation resort on this site. You can see a large painting of Tisdale Point on the first floor of Rocky River Library.**

**Upon Mr. Eells's death, Mathers & Gilbert, a small real estate office, sold the land dubbing the area Oakwood-on-the-Lake. Oakwood Beach still exists as beach land and is held in trust for the homeowners in the original Oakwood subdivision known as Beachcliff #1.**

**As an interesting footnote, Daniel Eells's grandson, Howard P. Eells, Jr., played a role in the management of the Cowan Pottery Studio during the late 1920s. When the Pottery went into receivership in late 1930, the Court chose Howard Eells to be the friendly "receiver" or administrator during the Pottery's last year of existence.**

## COWAN POTTERY STUDIO

These buildings were the home of the Cowan Pottery Studio from 1920 through the end of 1931. The Cowan Pottery was actually founded in Lakewood in 1912-1913 (near the corner of Nicholson & Detroit) by a ceramic engineer, artist, and teacher named R. Guy Cowan. The Pottery in Lakewood closed in 1917 when the U.S. entered World War I. The Pottery then re-opened here on Lake Road in Rocky River in 1920.

When Cowan bought this property in RR, 2 buildings were already on the site—an old farmhouse and a green barn. Over the decade of the 1920s about 8 more buildings were built, and most of them are still standing today. The little house that you see on the right is the original farmhouse that served as the showroom. The oldest part of that building dates back to around 1850. It is now being nicely restored. The white stucco building on the left was to be the new showroom but before it was completed the pottery closed on December 31, 1931 due to the effects of the Great Depression.

In 1935 Walter Barrett purchased this property from the bank, and from 1936 to 1957 it was the site of the Barrett Creamery, which, during the 1950s also included a very popular ice cream parlor. The property is still owned today by the Barrett Family, and the buildings are rented out to private businesses. Tom Barrett manages the property today.

Under the leadership of R. Guy Cowan, the Cowan Pottery produced both unique and expensive ceramic art works and thousands of affordable everyday items such as bowls, vases and candlesticks. All items produced at the Pottery, however, were held to the same high artistic standards. By the end of the 1920s, the Cowan Pottery Studio was producing about 175,000 items per year that were sold coast to coast and even in Canada. People came from all over to visit this busy pottery studio and manufacturing center, located in a little village that barely had barely 5,000 people at the time. Visitors came not just from the Cleveland area, but from all over the country and even the world—especially countries where pottery production was strong such as England, Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Japan.

Cowan Pottery was popular throughout the 1920s, 1930s and even into the 1940s due to its beautiful glazes, its distinctive shapes, and its very modern, chic look. Cowan was most well-known for its Art Deco pieces and some of those pieces even appeared in movies of the 1930s and 1940s. As you know, the work of the Cowan Pottery Studio can be seen today at the Cowan Pottery Museum at our Library.

## **BASKET FACTORY**

**Next door to the Cowan Pottery, on the east side, is a large brick building that once housed the Rocky River Basket Factory. To make the baskets, huge logs were boiled in outdoor pits to soften the wood before it could be cut into small strips for basket-weaving.**

**The company was started by a group of greenhouse owners, headed by John Hoag, who also helped to establish the First National Bank of RR. The greenhouse owners needed baskets to market the items grown in Rocky River's greenhouses.**

**Archival photos from the Cowan Pottery next door showed that the Basket Factory's products were also used at the Pottery in order to hold and store the Studio's ceramic creations. Sadly, the Basket Factory was heavily damaged in a spectacular 3-alarm fire in 1941. Happily, the building was soon rebuilt and today it houses, among other things, the Inner Bliss yoga studio.**

## **CLEVELAND YACHTING CLUB**

**Here we are passing the entrance to the Cleveland Yachting Club located on an island at the mouth of the Rocky River. The club has been located on that island for over a hundred years, since 1906. The original CYC club house was located in downtown Cleveland on the E. 9<sup>th</sup> Street pier. It was moved (by water) to Yacht Club Island in the Rocky River in 1914.**

## **TRAIN STATION**

**This train depot was built for the Nickel Plate Railroad in 1882. It is essentially unchanged and is one of the few depots still being used by the railroad on its original site. The trains no longer stop here, but the building is still in use by the railroad. In 1964, the Nickel Plate RR was taken over by the Norfolk & Western RR (later became the Norfolk & Southern RR).**

**The stone fence behind the depot (on the other side of the trees) was the entrance to the Daniel Eells estate. The fact that Mr. Eells was a major investor in the railroad might have had something to do with a station being located here in Rocky River.**

**On the site of the Beachcliff Building on your right was Hoag's Coal yard. Here tons of coals were unloaded from rail cars to heat Rocky River's greenhouses.**

**The Cowan Pottery backed right up to the railroad and was just a block or two away from the train station. This was quite convenient for the shipping and receiving of the Pottery's supplies and its finished products.**

**On the corner of W. 192<sup>nd</sup> and Detroit was one of the stops of the Lake Shore Electric Interurban Railway, which offered service from Cleveland to Toledo from 1901 to 1938. Another stop was at Wagar and Detroit, and another was at Hahns Grove and Bradstreet's Landing.**

**Now we will travel to Rocky River's original downtown on Old Detroit Road.**

## **INGERSOLL HARDWARE AND OLD DETROIT ROAD**

**Francis Ingersoll set up Ingersoll Feed and Seed in the old downtown section of Rocky River on Detroit Road and Blount Street (now Lake Road) in 1890. The two story building consisted of supplies on the first floor and storage on the second. Ingersoll's later moved to the south side of Detroit Road close to Heinen's and eventually became known as Ingersoll's Hardware. The first site where Ingersoll's was located is now the home of Mitchell Sotka's fine arts and antiques store. After over 110 years in business, Ingersoll's closed in January 2012, and the void was filled by Ace Hardware which opened a store at 20200 Detroit Rd.**

**Most of the buildings in the old downtown area were erected in the late 1800's. Also located here was Mitchell's blacksmith shop owned by Rocky River's first mayor, Mark Mitchell, who emigrated here from England and became Mayor in 1903.**

**Rocky River's Old Town Hall opened 1909 and housed not only City Hall but the police and fire station, and the City Jail. For a few years before RR High School opened in 1919, high school classes were held at the old Town Hall—the students must have gotten quite an education! The Town Hall on Detroit was used until 1954 when the new City Hall complex on the corner of Hilliard & Wagar was built. Today the Old Town Hall is known as the Dixon Building, after the man who built the building.**

**To the right of the Old Town Hall building, where Tartine's is now located, was the garage that housed Rocky River's first fire truck. A few years ago Rocky River was fortunate enough to be able to purchase this 1925 fire truck from a collector. It is trotted out from time to time for special occasions.**

## **SILVERTHORN INN/WESTLAKE HOTEL**

**Ever since 1816, there has been some kind of inn, tavern, or hotel on this site where today the Westlake Condominiums are located. First came Wright's Tavern in 1816. This tavern was the site of many township meetings back in the days when Rocky River and Lakewood were both part of Rockport Township.**

**Rufus Wright sold his tavern to Jacob Silverthorn in 1853. Both Wright's Tavern and the Silverthorn Inn served as Rocky River's unofficial community center. The Silverthorn was known for its fine food and drink, and it was a popular social center until it was torn down in 1920 to make way for the Westlake Hotel.**

**The Westlake Hotel was built as a luxury residential hotel. It opened in 1925 at a cost of \$3.5 million (that was about the same amount of money that it took to build Severance Hall six years later over on the other side of town). Because of its relatively close proximity to the Cleveland Airport, its visitors included Amelia Earhart, Admiral Richard Byrd, Wiley Post, and Charles Lindbergh. The Westlake had a serious fire in 1962, and in 1983 it was converted into condominiums.**

## **CANDYLAND**

**Across from the Westlake Hotel, Candyland was a RR landmark for generations of children and their parents. The store opened in 1913 and was located where the popular restaurant Salmon Dave's is today. The shop not only had candy, but an ice cream parlor at the back. In addition, it also sold cigars! It was operated by the Sougianis Brothers until it closed in 1949.**

## **THE DETROIT BRIDGE**

**Some form of a bridge has spanned the Rocky River in the vicinity of Detroit Road ever since 1821. This was critical for Rocky River's accessibility for people from Cleveland and other points east. The first modern Rocky River Bridge was completed in 1910. This bridge had five approach arches to the main arch-- three on the west side and two on the east. The central arch spanning the river was 280 feet long, making it the longest un-reinforced concrete arch in the world at that time.**

**The bridge had two sets of streetcar tracks and the roadway was 40 feet wide with eight foot wide sidewalks on either side. The bridge's opening celebration included music and a parade of 1500 decorated automobiles. For many years the bridge was lauded for its innovative design and beauty. After years of use, however, the bridge deteriorated and became the site of many traffic jams. A new bridge was built in 1980. Happily, three of the original arches were saved. The Bridge Building built on top of these arches now houses the USB Bank & Financial Services Co.**

## **BEACHCLIFF THEATRE**

**Construction began in 1934 on the big screen art deco style movie theater, The Beachcliff, which could seat nearly 1,300 people (1,287). The theater at 19310 Detroit Road was built by the Rocky River Development Company at a cost of \$200,000.00. Modern air conditioning and the latest theater equipment were installed. Besides the theater building which had an elegant 80 foot lobby and crystal chandelier, the structure contained four store front shops (one was Jan Dell Flowers). The Beachcliff Theatre opened in 1937 with a musical called "Sing and Be Happy," starring Joan Davis and Tony Martin (just died on 7/27/2012 at age 98).**

**Many early Rocky River High School graduation ceremonies were held in the theater due to its size. In 1977, the Beachcliff Theatre closed and was re-developed into Beachcliff Market Square which housed specialty shops, restaurants and offices. Today the Beachcliff continues to be a unique Rocky River landmark with a variety of specialty shops and eateries. In recent years, it has seen quite a revival, and these days the parking lot always seems to be full.**

## **PARSONS CT./ALLEN CT./SMITH CT. – HOMES OF WORKERS**

**This area of eastern Rocky River between Lake and Detroit Roads was the home of many of the workers and technicians who earned their livelihoods at the Cowan Pottery Studio. The workers liked this area because it was affordable and close to their workplace. The artists did not live here, but many of the mold makers, glaze technicians, kiln operators, and pottery inspectors did. Eight of those workers came from the same family, the Brunt family. All the pottery workers felt a strong loyalty to the Cowan Pottery and took great pride in their work. R. Guy Cowan, the founder and guiding spirit behind the Pottery lived in Lakewood close to where his first pottery had been, but he spent most of his time in Rocky River. His children helped at the Pottery, as did his parents, who actually lived on the Pottery grounds (in the old Showroom).**

## **TREATS TEA ROOM**

**Many of you probably remember Treats Tea Room, located south of Detroit on Linda Street in an old Victorian House. It was owned by Richard and Jim Olson, who were also serious Cowan Pottery collectors. And this was immediately evident when you walked in the Tea Room. They decorated every nook and cranny with Cowan Pottery. Their collection was almost as large as the Library's, and they owned some pieces that we don't have. It really gave a unique atmosphere to the restaurant. It was always fun to recommend Treats to the Cowan Pottery Museum's tour groups that were looking for a good place to eat before or after their tours. Early in 2010, the Olson's closed the restaurant, packed up their Cowan collection and put it in storage. The restaurant, Tommy's Place, now occupies the old Treats site. The Olson Brothers still own the buildings in which Tommy's and the Wine Bar are located.**

## **RRPL'S EARLY DONORS: THE SCHLATHER'S & THE MACBETH'S**

**We're going to take a little ride on Wooster Rd. because it was in this area where Leonard and Sophia Schlather had their estate. The Schlathers were important in the Library's history--you've heard of the Schlather Room and have seen the portrait of Leonard B. Schlather. Sophia Schlather, who was quite a bit younger than her husband and survived him for 38 years, gave many of the couple's fine art furnishings and 19<sup>th</sup> century European paintings to the Library. To this day those art works contribute to the Library's distinctive décor and ambiance.**

**The Schlather Estate was located on what is today the site of the Cliff Towers Condominiums. Behind the iron fence along Wooster Road on your left was their beautiful home. Mr. Schlather was one of Cleveland's largest brewers. He opened his brewery on the present site of the Great Lakes Brewery off W. 25<sup>th</sup> Street in 1857. When he died in 1918, his much younger wife Sophia continued to live at the estate in Rocky River until her death in January 1956. During World War II the back of the estate was used by the community to plant Victory Gardens.**

**A couple of years before her death, Sophia had given to the Library the very generous gift of \$100,000, which turned out to be one of the largest gifts to a public library at that time. This money is what paid for the library's first addition that was completed in June 1956 a few months after the time of Sophia's death. She did not make it to the opening ceremonies, but she was able to see most of the construction.**

**One of Sophia Schlather's good friends was Emily Macbeth who lived further south on Wooster Road (right where Macbeth Drive is, just before Center Ridge). Sophia and Emily worked together in the early 1920s to establish the Welsh Home on the site of the old Higley Farm on western Center Ridge Road. Emily and Thomas Macbeth went on to become heavily involved in the beginnings of Rocky River's first public library. In fact, in 1925 the Macbeth's donated the land upon which the Library still stands today, and that gift of land was worth about \$20,000. Emily Macbeth laid the cornerstone in February 1928 and served for many years on the library's board of trustees. You can see her portrait in the Library's Lower Level, across from the Auditorium. It's next to a photograph of the Library as it looked in 1928.**

## ROCKY RIVER PUBLIC LIBRARY & COWAN POTTERY MUSEUM

Just at the time that Cowan Pottery was coming to its height of popularity, the Rocky River Public Library opened its doors in November 1928. It was within walking distance of the Pottery, and it is known that R. Guy Cowan used the library and did some of his research there. There had been several subscription libraries in Rocky River (most notably the North Ridge Literary Society) but this was the first free public library and it quickly became a beloved institution and active community center. We are stopping here by the Reading Garden, and it was here where the original entrance was located.

Unlike many public libraries that were funded by external sources (such as the deep pockets of philanthropist Andrew Carnegie), Rocky River Public Library was supported entirely by local sources, right from the beginning. The land was donated by Thomas & Emily Macbeth in 1925, and the citizens of Rocky River quickly approved a bond issue in 1926 to fund the construction and maintenance of the library. The community has strongly supported the library ever since and values its library's independence and uniqueness.

When the library celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1978, it opened the Cowan Pottery Museum as part of its anniversary celebration. Since Cowan Pottery had achieved its greatest success and popularity in Rocky River, it made sense to house this distinctive art pottery in the public library, a center of the community, where people could enjoy and learn about their heritage. A generous private bequest had made possible the purchase of an 800-piece collection of Cowan Pottery, which included almost all of the famous pieces such as the Jazz Bowl and the Egyptian Maidens tile mural. Today the collection numbers almost 1300 pieces, most of which were donations.

Rocky River Public Library is special in many ways—thanks to its unparalleled public service, its technical and computer training facilities, scores of story hours, a popular teen center, a huge variety of programs, a user-friendly website with all kinds of databases, all kinds of media, and oh yes-- we even have books! In addition to all that, the library has a valuable collection of 43 framed historical photos & maps and 44 artworks adorning its walls. These collections nicely complement the Cowan Pottery Museum. Rocky River Library has the largest publicly owned collection of Cowan Pottery in the world! This year and next year we are celebrating the centennial of Cowan Pottery. In addition, next year in 2013 we mark the 85<sup>th</sup> birthday of the library, as well as the 35<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Cowan Pottery Museum.

## **ROCKY RIVER MIDDLE SCHOOL**

**Up until 1950 the site next door to the Library served as the location of the old Rocky River High School. Construction began in 1917, and it opened to students from grades 7 - 12, in 1919. There is a story that the tiles of the old high school's swimming pool were made by the Cowan Pottery, but this has never been verified.**

**Construction on a new high school at the corner of Wagar & Detroit Roads was completed in 1950. The old high school on Riverview & Lakeview then became a junior high and subsequently a middle school. In the late 1990s the old building was demolished and a new Rocky River Middle School was built in its place, which opened in 2000.**

## **ST. CHRISTOPHER CHURCH**

**St. Christopher Parish was formed in 1922, and the first church building, on the southwest corner of Detroit and Lakeview, opened in 1923. School classrooms were added soon after the building was rebuilt after a fire in 1925. The first 8<sup>th</sup> grade class graduated in 1934. Originally the parish served not only RR, but also Bay Village and Westlake which soon broke away and formed their own parishes by the 1940s. The church building that you see today dates back to 1953. Of course, there have been modernizations and additions since that time.**

## HOW SOME ROCKY RIVER STREETS GOT THEIR NAMES

Many of Rocky River's streets are named after early Rocky River citizens. Examples include Bates Road after Samuel Bates who came to Rocky River after the Civil War.

Pease Drive was named for early pioneer Solomon Pease. And Ingersoll Drive honors Francis Ingersoll who started the dry goods & feed store that eventually evolved into a hardware business.

Other streets named after notable citizens or families in Rocky River include Beach Cliff Blvd. (Clifton Bailey Beach), Morley Ave. (early storekeeper), Schlather Lane (brew master), Macbeth Drive (library donors), Gasser Ave. (greenhouse family), Mitchell Ave. (first mayor of RR), and Wright Ave. (opened first tavern on site of Westlake Hotel).

Another prominent citizen declined a developer's wish to name a street for his family, relenting only on the condition that his name be spelled backwards. So Telbir Avenue was named after the Riblet Family.

Some streets and places have changed names over the years. For example, Wagar Road was formerly known as Columbia Road (Columbia Rd. in Westlake was originally known as Hall Road, after an early family). Detroit Road was called North Ridge Road, Blount Street later became part of Lake Road, and Wooster Rd. was known first as Mastick Road. You can find lots more about Rocky River history in a new book published by the RR Historical Society. The library holds 3 copies.

**\*THANK YOU FOR BEING A PART OF THIS TOUR!**

**\*DON'T FORGET ABOUT THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S NEW BOOK  
ON ROCKY RIVER HISTORY, ROCKY RIVER YESTERDAY!**

**\*ANY QUESTIONS?—CONTACT THE LIBRARY!**

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*(The following sites are near or related to the areas we have visited)*

## **THE WELSH HOME**

**On September 6, 1911, eighteen ladies met in a family home to organize the Ladies Auxiliary of the Welsh Society of Cleveland Ohio. Seven years later the society raised funds to assist impoverished retired Welsh and provide burial plots.**

**The first Welsh Home was opened in 1913 on Mayfield Road in Cleveland Heights to aged Welsh natives and their spouses. The home soon filled and the search more land and larger living quarters began.**

**In 1921, the Women's Welsh Club purchased 7 1/2 acres of the Higley Farm on Center Ridge Road. The original home was described as "having 9 bedrooms, 2 living rooms, 5 bathrooms as well as 6 cows, calves, a bull, and a house with an orchard and a garden. Sophia Schlather and Emily Macbeth were active in the establishment of Rocky River's Welsh Home.**

**By 1929, twenty nine elderly men and women lived at the home. As the years passed, the need for a new home became apparent. In 1963, the original farm house was razed and construction of the present Welsh Home began.**

**The Welsh Home was enlarged again in 1985. Today, The Welsh Home represents one of the leading nursing homes in the State of Ohio. Although Welsh heritage is no longer a requirement for residence, numerous items of Welsh tradition are displayed throughout the home.**

## **THE DUET BUILDING**

**This charming building, located on the west side of Wooster Road between Riverwood and Shoreland, was built in the 1920's and won an architectural award for style. Many shops occupied store space such as the Riverwood Drugstore that was on the corner during the 1940's.**

**The block also housed the Koch ("coke") School of Music. Founded in 1952 by Frederick Koch and his wife, the soprano Joyce Rowbotham, the school offered lessons for musical instruments & voice, and Dalcroze instruction. The school facilities included ten studios, a waiting room, an office, and a small recital hall. Today the upstairs apartments still have the original shelves for the sheet music with hand written labels such as classical, baroque etc. The Koch School evolved into Riverside Academy which is now part of the Beck Center for the Arts in Lakewood.**

## **ROCKCLIFF GRILL**

**O'Malley's Rockcliff Grill was originally owned and operated by the Carl Stein family until 1975. Initially, they operated a sandwich shop located on the east corner of Wooster and Hilliard Road.**

**The Stein family ran the very successful Stein Café on Public Square at the location of today's Terminal Tower. The restaurant was famous for its seafood and oysters.**

**The family lived in an enormous 20 room Victorian home at 2639 Wooster Road. The driveway was made up of crushed oyster shells that came from the downtown restaurant.**

**Carl Stein was also Mayor of Rocky River from 1918 through 1923 and again from 1932 to 1941. He also served as Vice President of the Rocky River Savings and Banking Company located across from the Westlake Hotel. In 1966 Carl Stein also built the Kiddie Klub nursery school on another section of his land on Wooster Road.**

**In 1938, the original sandwich shop was called "The Rockcliff." It was expanded and became "The Colony Restaurant," then changed names to "DaVinci's", and finally Pat Joyce took it over in 1975. Then the O'Malley's purchased the restaurant and changed its name back to "The Rockcliff" in 1992.**

**Once again, O'Malley's Rockcliff Tavern will undergo another change when the Historic Ferris Steak House (8700 Detroit--since 1946) takes it over in late 2012.**