



Cornerstones

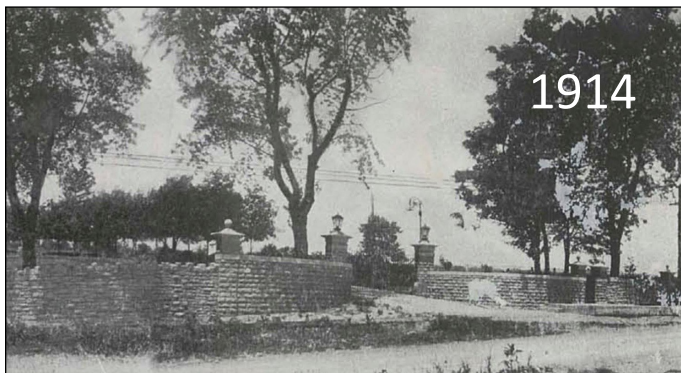
*Building on the past, present and future of the City of Fairfield
and Fairfield Township*

That Mysterious Stone Wall Along Pleasant Avenue

Compiled by Stephen Tillmann, Rich Piland and Scott Fowler

Fairfield residents often ask about the gray stone wall and iron gates on Pleasant Avenue near Harbin Park. Known locally as Hoovendon, the site is the last remnant of a country estate owned by three prominent figures.

The property began as Freeman G. Cary's Buckeye Fruit Farm. Cary, a noted horticulturist, educator, proprietor of Cary's Academy, and founder of Farmers College, developed a fine orchard and built his home near Mt. Pleasant Pike. Iron vehicle and pedestrian gates marked its entrance.



After retiring in 1861, Cary improved the 186-acre farm and built a country home. The stone wall likely dates to the 1860s or early 1870s. The farm included greenhouses, a vineyard, strawberries, extensive orchards, a pond, and a small lake that remains on the Lakeview Garden Center & Landscaping property. Cary died in 1888, and the estate was offered for sale.

The farm's landscape and architecture later drew Colonel John C. Hooven and his wife, Hannah Jane "Jennie" Enyeart Hooven. Its orchard, vineyard, strawberry fields, and pond remained defining features of the property. In fall 1894, Hooven purchased 42.5 acres of the estate and named the home "Hoovendon."

A prominent Hamilton businessman, Hooven was president of the Hooven-Owens-Rentschler Company and owned land that became Hooven's Addition to Lindenwald. Although he lived primarily in Hamilton, Hooven continued to improve his summer home. He installed an Italian fountain, landscaped the grounds and entrance lane, and restored the conservatory, greenhouses, and barn.

(continued on page 2)

Snapshots



Indian Summer Days—1981 * Sponsored by the Fairfield Sun

(LEFT) Fairfield Township's Brad Johnson, 10, came in second in the 1981 Indian Summer Days Pie Eating Contest. (Fairfield Sun photo)

(RIGHT) Country music legend Tammy Wynett performed as the headliner at the 1981 Indian Summer Days. (Fairfield Sun photo)



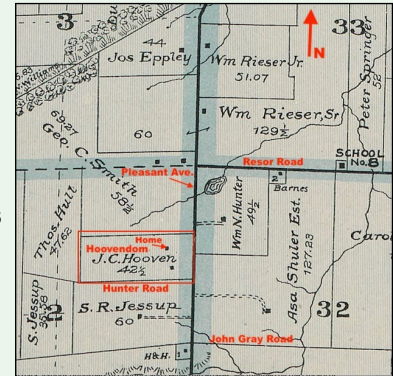
FRONT PAGE: HOOVENDON CONTINUED

Hooven also expanded the porch into a veranda around three sides of the house, added water and irrigation systems, commissioned murals, and built a porte-cochere.

On August 31, 1909, a gas jet ignited curtains in a bedroom, destroying Hoovendon. Hooven's daughter Helen alerted the family, and everyone escaped unharmed. Losses were estimated at \$50,000, though the property was insured for \$17,000. The fire badly damaged a 200-year-old oak, but firefighters saved the stables and greenhouse. Hooven told the *Republican News* that he would rebuild: a new Hoovendon "will rise upon the ashes of the old."

On December 10, 1909, another fire partially destroyed the observatory and most of the greenhouse.

Hoovendon was rebuilt by 1912. After Hooven died in 1916, his wife sold the estate in 1924 to George A. Rentschler Jr. and his wife, who renamed it Homehill Farm.



1895 map of the Hoover property



The "new" residence as it stands today in the Parliament Hills subdivision

A third fire destroyed two barns and their contents on April 7, 1925, causing \$10,000 in losses.

Despite ownership changes and the widening of Pleasant Avenue, the stone wall endures. Near the north entrance by Resor Road, part of a platform remains where passengers once boarded Cincinnati and Hamilton traction cars.

The rebuilt Hoovendon still stands in the Parliament Hills subdivision, developed in the 1970s.

In 2027, Fairfield will improve Pleasant Avenue from Wessel Drive to Hunter Road, adding a west-side bicycle and pedestrian path. The city plans to preserve the wall and install historical plaques, including plaques about the Hooven property. The Fairfield Historical Society will continue working with the city on the project.



PI

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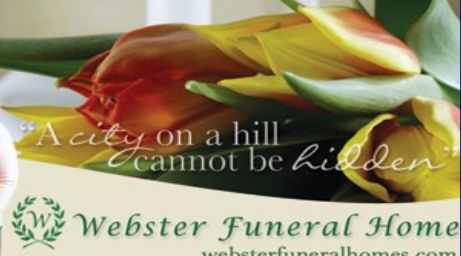
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Erce! Speaks

with former Journal-News Columnist Erce! Eaton



The Enchanting Pneumatic Tube and the Telephone Operator

"Journalism as we know it is dying," the person conducting the staff meeting said. Of course all the paper's employees present agreed. I didn't want to believe that, I loved my job too much.

Starting out, in that field, I had a lot to learn. So, for a time I wrote wedding stories, some obits, and little odds and ends. Didn't matter to me, I wanted to write. Old-style typewriters served reporters who traveled to news-gathering scenes then back to the sound of the key-click of those typewriters mingled with a background of a different metallic sound from the wires from an Associated Press machine spitting out a continual unrolling news of all kinds for us to chose.

Retired after 43 years of doing my best to earn the rules of the game, I still didn't want to put down my reporter's notebook and give up meeting the variety of human beings who discussed my path every day.

It was a bright day in May when the city editor said to me: "Erce!, could you do piece on Father's Day for us?" Well, I jumped on that request with, found out the deadline and started thinking about the story. As I remember, that story appeared on Page One of the front of a section.

We had two daughters by that time, and they learned about getting the news as soon as they began to grow up. I told the editor who was interviewing me for the job (I first spent some little time in the paper's classified department. I was writing tiny little pieces about selling things-still it was words.) During the interview with the editor I asked him if I could take time off if one of the children became ill. "You got it," he said.

Though I no longer see him daily, I still love him.

My telling the girls about the day's work mixed with their report on their school day, sparked their interest in going to work with me. So we did that. I thought they would be thrilled to see the big linotype machines where men fashioned our typed words into shape for the public pages. But I was wrong.

Bridget and Bekka were enchanted by the pneumatic that whisked our rolled-up newsprint stories out to the composing room; next, they had never seen a wall phone, where an operator chose long cords connecting outside callers with reporters and editors. The girls began to recognize happenings in our area as news and questioned me like crazy because I would know. Some things I couldn't tell them, but if I could I did, it was, for me anyway, a dream of a job.

Because I was unable to go on to higher education, I had to be content with my wonderful high school typing classes and mail order course in Newspaper Institute of America.



Erce!

Reflections...



On March 12, 1949, Mr. & Mrs. Earl Thompson donated 55 acres at 3944 Hamilton-Middletown Road between Riegert and Liberty Fairfield Road to be used as a Girl Scout camp. The formal opening was held in 1951 and named Camp Timber Hill. In 2005 the Girl Scouts sold the property to Butler County Metroparks and renamed Timberhill Metropark. This photo from featured a group of scouts that were not identified. See anyone you know? Send us a note at ffhistoricalsociety@gmail.com.
(Journal-News photo)

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