Chapter 13  People and Places

Isaac Betts\(^1\): The centerpiece of the Betts-Longworth Historic District, formed in 1982, is the Betts house - now restored and open to the public as the Betts House Research Center. The two-story Federal style house was built by the Revolutionary War veteran William Betts and his wife Phebe Stevens Betts. They moved in 1790 from Rahway, New Jersey to Brownsville, Pennsylvania and then by flatboat to Cincinnati in 1800 bringing their seven children and elderly parents. Settling first in Lebanon on land purchased from John Cleves Symmes, the deed proved faulty and their money was refunded, enabling Betts to return to Cincinnati in 1802. Betts here established a brick factory.

The oldest brick building on its original site in Cincinnati, the Betts homestead was built in 1804 at 416 Clark Street on land William Betts obtained as repayment of a debt owed to him by Joel Williams, a tavern keeper. Betts purchased 111 acres from Williams for $1,665. Joel Williams, who had come with Israel Ludlow from New Jersey to survey and plat what later became Cincinnati, obtained large tracts of land from the first land lottery.

The West End area was flat and grassy, thus the nickname of “little Texas.” Outside of the boundaries of Cincinnati, it was an early neighborhood to be developed beyond the central business district. Some of the adjoining land was owned by Nicholas Longworth.

Betts was a brick maker, using the easily obtainable local clay; he also operated part of his land as a farm since brick making was a seasonal business. The dirt lane that was once called Western Row, later Central Avenue, ended in Betts’ peach orchard.

He constructed a sturdy house. One wall was cracked and a kitchen was destroyed beyond repair by the New Madrid earthquake of 1811 but the rest of the house escaped damage. Over the years it was added to at least six times, doubling its original size.

William Betts died in 1815, leaving his wife and twelve children. He specified in his will that his children were to be maintained for and educated by the sale of produce from the farm and the dividends from his stock holdings in the Miami Exporting Company until the youngest child reached age 21. The farm was then to be sold and the proceeds divided equally among the surviving sons, along with the stock. The daughters were to receive cash from the settlement of the land sale, along with other bank stock. His wife received the house and furnishings.

A local tax census identified Phebe Betts as the head of the household of 16 people. This may have included some of her at home children (the older children having married and left home), her husband’s elderly parents and farm/brickyard workers. At least three sons, Smith, Oliver, and Isaac, continued to operate the brickyard. In 1819 Cincinnati had 25 brick yards and employed 200 men during brick making season. They collectively made more than 8 million bricks annually.

In 1833 the youngest Betts child turned legal age and the formal subdivision and auction of the Betts farm was made in April. Eleven acres were set aside for private development by the Betts family which included the Betts-Longworth area. The newly platted Clark Street was named for William Betts’ mother, Elizabeth Clark Betts, who died in 1832.

Compared to the nearby land subdivided earlier by Longworth, these lots were larger, encouraging stylish buildings by the more prosperous managers and business owners. Various family and friends had already built near Betts. One neighbor (422 Clark Street) was James Gamble, partner in Procter & Gamble. He lived there until his death in 1891.

South of the Betts subdivision were narrow lots, no more than thirty feet wide, whose houses were set close to the street. These inexpensive properties were purchased by working class immigrants who wanted to be near where they were employed. By 1855 the West End was completely built, having a population of 30,000 residents per square mile. The more affluent started to migrate up the hills surrounding the basin area.

About 1848 Isaac Betts and his wife, Mary Toy, built a three story townhouse east of the Betts

\(^1\) Source: Mrs. Martha (Benedict) Tuttle
From 1851-1861 the old Betts house was occupied by Isaac’s oldest daughter, Abigail Reeves Betts and her new husband, Dr. Alexander Johnston. In 1861 the house became the home of another newly wed daughter, Adaline Betts, and her husband, Charles T. McCrea. McCrea owned a meat packing company. They remodeled the house and lived there until 1878 when they moved to College Hill. They bought the house at the corner of Oakwood and Belmont Avenue from the Knight family.

Adaline’s parents had earlier moved to College Hill, purchasing in 1868 land on North Bend Road.

A description of the Belmont Avenue McCrae house can be found in the 29 July 1948 copy of the real estate section of the Cincinnati Enquirer. College Hill, 5930 Belmont Ave. “Here you inherit ancient spruce, hard maple and oak trees which tower even (over) the tower of this house. You inherit high ceilings, large rooms, substantial construction within the massive brick walls...situated on a lot 250’ X 350’, intensively developed with lawns, terraces, vegetable gardens, orchards, chicken house and stable. House contains center hall and 5 rooms on 1st floor, including maid’s room and modernized kitchen. 2d floor contains 5 bedrooms and 2 modern tile baths...$28,000.” The property was purchased and demolished to be the site of apartment buildings.

The great-great-granddaughter of Isaac Betts, Martha Benedict Tuttle, has led the renovation and establishment of the Betts House Research Center for over 10 years. The Betts-Longworth District is on the National Register of Historic Places and the house is open to the public.

Isaac Betts died in 1891. In his will he lists his children as Addison Betts, Abigail R. Johnston, Nina B. Pugh and Adaline B. McCrea. At that time the North Bend Road property contained 42 acres. His children received property lots and Adaline’s included ...an old grave yard thereon containing three .04/100 acres.

The house at 5946 Belmont Avenue was built in the early 1890’s by Theodore and Adaline Betts McCrea. The house was adjacent to the original McCrea mansion which stood where the Belmont Apartments are currently located. The house is a good example of Victorian architecture of the period with a wrap-around porch, high pitched roofs, and elegant detailing adorning the third floor exterior. The carriage house of the original McCrea home still stands at 5946 Belmont.

Freeman Grant Cary² was born in Cincinnati April 7, 1810 “...In this place (referring to College Hill) Freeman G. Cary, with his two brothers, William Woodward and Samuel Fenton, received his early education. He afterwards attended college at Miami University, and graduated with honor in the class of 1831. He devoted more than thirty years of his life to teaching. He established Cary’s Academy and originated Farmers’ College, into which the academy was merged; also originated for females what afterwards became the Ohio Female College...

Mr. Cary’s strong point was in government, and he was also a successful teacher. During his presidency he associated with him men of ability in the various departments of his institution...Mr. Cary’s character was marked by a combination of striking traits, having been possessed of a strong constitution, temperate habits, and good health, which gave him physical ability to accomplish successfully whatever he attempted.

He made his own place in society, and was known to be persistent and energetic in all he undertook...He was thoroughly conversant with all the branches of natural science, especially those pertaining to agriculture and horticulture, of which he acquired both a practical and theoretical knowledge...He established and edited an agricultural periodical, the Cincinnatus, which for five years had a wide circulation, and only ceased by reason of the Rebellion. He was one of the distinguished early leaders and supporters of the Cincinnati Horticultural Society, being several times its honored president. Mr. Cary was not only an adept in the natural sciences but was also a good classical and mathematical scholar, his education and ability eminently fitting him for marked prominence. He was selected as one of two to represent the great state of Ohio under Buchanan’s administration, in a congress of the states for the promotion of agriculture, with Marshall P. Wilder at

² Centennial History of Butler County, Ohio, Bert S. Bartlow, 1905.
its head. ...He was an elder in the Presbyterian church for over forty-five years...” He died August 26, 1888.

**Samuel Fenton Cary**3 “...General Samuel F. Cary...received his early education in the neighborhood school and at seventeen entered Miami University, where he was graduated in 1835. He was made Doctor of Laws by his Alma Mater. He graduated from the Cincinnati Law School in 1837 and formed a law partnership with the Honorable William E. Caldwell, afterward Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Ohio.

Samuel F. Cary was elected to the Supreme Court bench by the legislature of this state, when only a few weeks over the legal age, but owing to his large public practice he declined the honor.

His political career dates from the time he left college. At the age of twenty-two he stumped Ohio and Indiana for General William Henry Harrison, the Whig candidate for President. He was chief of staff for three governors of Ohio, was paymaster general of the Ohio troops during the Mexican War, appointed by Governor Bartley and re-appointed by Governor Bebb; he then received his title of General. He became a Republican at the onset of the Civil War and was a delegate to the National Republican Convention when Lincoln was nominated for his second term. During the Civil War he devoted his time and talents to the work of raising recruits for the Union Army, and Governor Morton of Indiana said he did more to stir up patriotism of the North and raised more troops through his fiery eloquence than any ten men in the country.

General Cary was assistant Provost Marshall of Cincinnati at the time an attack was expected from General Kirby Smith’s brigade. At the close of the war he was appointed Collector of Internal Revenue for the Cincinnati district, but afterwards resigned. He was elected as an independent candidate for Congress in the Second Congressional District of Ohio in 1867 and was the only Republican member of the House that voted against the impeachment of President Andrew Johnson. In 1876 General Cary was the Greenback candidate for Vice-President of the United States.4

Early in life General Cary consecrated himself to the advancement of the temperance cause5...In 1870 he went to England and for ten months lectured on temperance and the Rights of Labor. He edited several magazines devoted to the temperance cause and for years wrote articles for the daily press on the money question and other economic subjects. He was the author of the Cary Memorials, an extensive genealogy of the Cary family. He was a life member of the Ohio Society Sons of the Revolution.

He was one of the founders of and for fifty years a member of the College Hill Presbyterian church. He was twice married. His first wife was M. Louise Allen. His second wife, Lida Stillwell, survived him three years and left two children, S. F. Cary, Jr. of the Cincinnati Enquirer staff and Miss Jessie Cary.

General Cary died at his home on College Hill, September 29, 1900. His last public address was at the unveiling of the Harrison monument in this city in 1835. Alice and Phoebe Cary, the authors, were his cousins...He was an orator with few equals and no superior. The absolute honesty and irreproachable private character of General Cary was acknowledged by his most bitter political opponents, and that he did not achieve greater political honors was due to his firm adherence to

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3 Centennial History of Cincinnati and Representative Citizens, Charles Theodore Greve, 1904, p. 530

4 After the Civil War there was a movement by bankers and other lenders to stop the continued printing of paper money, called ‘easy money,’ or ‘greenbacks’ and to return to ‘hard money’ - gold. The Greenback Party was formed, mostly by farmers, to support the continued use of paper money. In Indianapolis in 1876 the Greenback convention adopted the position that the government should print more paper money and pay off the national debt. New Yorker Peter Cooper was elected their candidate for president and Samuel F. Cary as vice-president. They didn’t win the election. Samuel Tilden won the popular vote but by some maneuvering on the part of the electoral college, Rutherford B. Hayes was named as America’s President.

5 Cary traveled the country giving temperance lectures. One place he stopped was Page, North Carolina. In honor of Cary the town changed its name in 1871 to Cary and founded a Cary Academy.
principles rather than party and his strong advocacy of unpopular reforms.

On our first coming to Ohio, in 1846, the praises of a young Whig orator, then thirty-two years old, Gen. Samuel F. Cary, were in many mouths... In 1876 he was nominated by the Greenback party for Vice-President. He has been interested in the temperance and labor reform movements, and there are few men living who have made so many speeches. Hon. Job E. Stevenson, in his paper on Political Reminiscences of Cincinnati, truly describes him as ‘a man of national reputation as a temperance and political orator, endowed with wonderful gifts of eloquence, highly developed by long and varied practice in elocution, of the presence, and a voice of great power and compass.’ To this we may say, one may live a long life and not hear a public speaker so well adapted to please a multitude. In his case the enjoyment is heightened by seeing how strongly he enjoys it himself. In a speech which we heard him deliver at the dedication of the Pioneer Monument, at Columbia, July 4, 1889, we saw that at the age of seventy-five his power was not abated. We, however, missed the massive shock of black hair that in the days of yore he was wont to shake too and fro, as he strode up and down the platform, pouring forth, with tremendous volume of voice, torrents of indignation upon some great public wrong, real or imaginary, with a power that reminded one of some huge lion on a rampage, now and then relieving the tragic of his speech by sly bits of humor.”

John Crawford: When John T. Crawford died in October 1881, he left his estate “for the sole uses of an asylum and home for aged and worthy colored men, preference to be given to those who have suffered from the injustice of American slavery.”

Crawford was captured and held in Richmond Virginia’s notorious Libby Prison during the Civil War. He escaped and it took several years for him to walk back to College Hill. He was helped throughout his journey by slaves and African-American laborers who guided, hid and fed him and his gratitude was expressed in his will. Crawford expressed bitterness towards the government for forgetting those blacks that fought and died in the Civil War and for ignoring their plight after the war. His house was used as a stop on the Underground Railroad. Refugees were hidden under the floor via a trapdoor.

In addition to being a farmer and a moulding plasterer, he was also a real estate speculator. Crawford owned not only 18 acres in College Hill but also property on West 6th Street, George Street, Freeman Street, and lots in the Mill Creek bottom lands. To close his estate of indebtedness and litigation costs over the contested will, most of the property was sold. The family received about $20,000 from sale of the other properties but the court left intact Crawford’s wish concerning his College Hill farm.

In the beginning, the home was led by court appointed African American trustees. Later, some of the most prominent African American men sat on this board, such as Dr. Francis Johnson, William Page, Bill Copeland, Wendell P. Dabney, an editor, and Horace Sudduth, a businessman.

The Crawford Home was established in 1888 to house 12 men. There was an admission fee of $150. The Crawford Colored Old Men’s Home catalogue of 1889 contained the following paragraphs:

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6 Howe's Historical Collections of Ohio, Vol. 1, Henry Howe, 1888, pg. 838, 839

7 Libby prison was a four story building, containing eight large rooms. It had been a warehouse for William Libby & Son, Ship Chandlers. The prison operated from April 1861 to April 1865 and held mainly captured officers. In the four years it was open, approximately 125,000 men were held there. There was inadequate food, ventilation, heat, clothing and blankets. The men slept on the floor, and there was a single privy per floor.

8 Source: Mrs. Ruth J. Wells

9 Cincinnati’s Colored Citizens, Wendell P. Dabney, 1926

10 Rare Book Room of the Hamilton County Public Library.
“Any colored male citizen of the State of Ohio, 60 years old and over, may be received as an inmate of the Home on the recommendation of the Committee on Admission and by the payment of the sum of one hundred dollars.

All such inmates shall be entitled to support and care during the remainder of their natural lives, including food, clothing, and necessary attention when sick and at death shall receive decent burial.”

Older residents of College Hill remember the men working in the vegetable garden they had cultivated. The home became the Lincoln Avenue & Crawford’s Home for the Aged in Walnut Hills in the early 1960’s and the College Hill facility was sold to the Cincinnati Public Schools. The Northern Hills branch library was built on some of the grounds in 1966, as were Pleasant Hill School and the Crawford Recreation Field.

Deininger’s blacksmith shop stood on land that is now part of the College Hill Presbyterian church. Lorenz Deininger purchased 2/3 of an acre of land from S. F. Cary on April 4, 1867 for $625.00. He sold this property to his son Andrew T. Deininger in 1886 for $720.00. Lorenz operated a saloon and was a carpenter. He married Catherine Kiegner and they had: Lawrence, Andrew, Ed and Annie. Andrew was a blacksmith, ferrier, and wagon maker. Anne was the postmistress for Station K, College Hill for many years. Joseph is listed (1859) in the Ohio State Gazetteer as dealing in stoves, tin and sheet iron ware in College Hill. Lorenz’s brother, Henry, settled in Mt. Healthy and was a carpenter. He married Rachel Anna Case, another Mt. Healthy family. The Deiningers originally came from Wittenburg, Germany.

Robert Scott Duncanson (1821-1872) Born in upstate New York, Robert S. Duncanson, the son of a mulatto mother and a Scotch-Canadian father, became a leading Cincinnati portrait and landscape painter. He was self taught and demonstrated his talent at an early age. He spent his childhood in Canada because of their integrated school system, but he joined his mother in Mt. Healthy in 1841, living at 7358 Hamilton Avenue. Robert married a mulatto named Phoebe and had at least one child, Reuben. Duncanson developed ties with his neighbor from across the street, Mt. Healthy’s Gilbert Laboyteaux. Years later Laboyteaux took care of Duncanson’s son while his father was away in Europe.

Robert began his work in Cincinnati in 1843. One of his first portraits was that of William Cary, and later he painted one of Freeman Cary. The full length William Cary portrait once hung in the Ohio Military Institute, College Hill. He also painted life-size portraits of Nicholas Longworth and Miles Greenwood that once hung in the Ohio Mechanics’ Institute. In 1850 Nicholas Longworth commissioned Duncanson to paint murals in the hallway of his home “Belmont,” now the Taft Museum.

His best known painting Blue Hole, Flood Waters, Little Miami River hangs in the Cincinnati Art Museum. In Cincinnati his work was well respected. He had local patrons: Francis Carr Wright, Nicholas Longworth and the Anti-Slavery League who underwrote his studies in Scotland and several of his European tours. His associates here were other artists of international reputation - Farny, Uhl, Mosler and Jerome.

He achieved his greatest fame in Great Britain, Europe and Canada where his race posed no barriers to “good” society. One of his pictures, The Western Hunter’s Encampment, was given a commendation by Queen Victoria in 1851.

Returning to Cincinnati in 1853 he was a daguerreotype artist’s assistant to James P. Ball. Ball was an African American photographer whose interest in that technique stemmed from the 1840 introduction of daguerreotype to America. James and his brother-in-law, Alexander Thomas, opened in the 1850’s a gallery that was very successful.

Duncanson purchased land in Detroit and opened a studio there. His fame continued to grow and his portraits were very popular.

His acclaimed painting of the The Land of the Lotus Eater’s inspired by Tennyson’s poem was purchased by Queen Victoria and the painting now hangs in Windsor Castle. Duncanson traveled
extensively, both in America and abroad, painting his landscapes on site. During his later years, a medium sized canvas commanded a price of $500.

Shortly before his death in Detroit he traveled once again to Europe. In Italy he painted *Vesuvius and Pompeii* showing some of the recently excavated ruins. The painting is now in the collection of the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.

**William Slocum Groesbeck** was the namesake for Groesbeck Road. Groesbeck owned 88.6 acres along the curves of Gray Road and Clinton Kirby owned 91.6 acres across the road, what was once called *Frog Hollow* and where the landfill is located today. Groesbeck was a lawyer and served office in the City of Cincinnati, Ohio Senate and in Congress (1857-59). He married Elizabeth Burnet, daughter of Judge Jacob Burnet for whom Burnet Woods was named. A Democrat, Groesbeck was the key vote that acquitted President Andrew Johnson during his impeachment case. Groesbeck set up an endowment for a series of concerts to be given in Cincinnati parks. Groesbeck lived at “Elmhurst” in East Walnut Hills. In 1857 he owned part of the Moses Gray farm lands.

**A. B. Luse, M. D.** was born in Butler County, Ohio, in 1809. He went to Mt. Healthy in 1830 but practiced in Hamilton during the cholera epidemic of 1833-1835. He was a physician for and an active participant in the Underground Railroad.

**Stephen Joseph McGroarty** was born in Mt. Charles, Donegal county, Ireland. He immigrated to the United States three years later when his father, Cornelius, founded the settlement of Fayetteville in Brown County, Ohio. Stephen became a Cincinnati lawyer and at the beginning of the war was elected captain of a company in the 10th Ohio Volunteers, the Irish regiment from Cincinnati. During a campaign in western Virginia, he was shot through the right lung. Upon his recovery he was made lieutenant-colonel of the 61st Ohio Volunteers. McGroarty was wounded many times during the Civil War, perhaps as many as twenty-three times, according to one source. He was wounded so severely in the battle of Peachtree Creek in July 1864 that his left arm had to be amputated. Later he was appointed colonel of the 82nd Ohio and at the end of the war was named brevet brigadier general.

General McGroarty was one of the most respected men in Cincinnati because of his outstanding war service. It was then the custom to elect wounded war heroes to public office so they would have employment and income. Thus, in the August 1866 Hamilton County Republican caucus, General McGroarty sought the Republican nomination for county auditor, but was defeated by yet another wounded war hero, General August Willich. He then contended for the Democratic nomination for prosecuting attorney of Hamilton County and gained the nomination, but was defeated in the October election. Finally, in the fall elections of 1869, he was elected recorder of Hamilton County, Ohio, on the Democratic ticket, but he died two months (1870) before he was to take office at age thirty-nine. In later years his friends secured the job of postmistress of the College Hill station for his widow, Mary McGroarty, who held that position for many years. Their home was at 5685 Belmont Ave.

**Edward Sayre** drove the College Hill omnibus. He married Ella Cary and her father, General Samuel F. Cary, sold them the house at 5624 Belmont Avenue in 1873. The property was originally sold by William Cary to Josiah Grant for $3,000 (1852) and was known as the College Hill Hotel. The house started as two rooms built about 1855. Josiah Grant was an early omnibus owner and operator. The original omnibus station, living quarters and stables is still next to the Pasadena Avenue post office, remodeled as a residence. It made sense for the omnibus owner to be able to offer lodgings for his passengers, many of whom were visitors to the various colleges on the hill.

The wedding of the Sayres is described in detail in a letter written by College Hill resident, Ella Ferry. A complete surprise to the small company chosen as guests and unannounced until the strains

11 From an undated article of unknown source.
of the wedding march burst forth before the summons to the banquet table. She relates that she and others who had been present at the wedding were invited to celebrate the anniversary of that date for more than forty-five years. The exact same menu of the original occasion was served, a real Thanksgiving spread. Members of the Sayre family lived in this home until 1941, when it was sold to Dr. Keene.

This interesting old house has scratched on a wavy glass pane of glass in a second floor window, “April 26, 1857 John Price.”

**Dr. John W. Scott** was born Jan. 22, 1800 in Pennsylvania. He was Professor of Physics & Chemistry at Miami University, 1828-1845. Scott left Miami because of his anti-slavery stance. He taught at Farmers’ College until 1849 when he left to become president of the Oxford Female Institute, located in College Hill. He relocated the school to Oxford where he died in 1892. Dr. Scott’s home in Mt. Healthy was built in 1840 and had several tunnels and rooms as a station on the Underground Railroad. The brick building still stands at 7601-7603 Hamilton Avenue. Scott’s daughter, Carrie, married president to be, Benjamin Harrison, in the parlor of this house according to lore. Dr. Scott married Mary P. Neal and they had fifty years together before Mary died in 1876. The following year their unmarried son died as a result of the Civil War.

**Captain A. D. E. Tweed** was a director of the City Insurance Company, Fire & Marine, located at #8 Front Street. He came to College Hill in 1855 along with other businessmen seeking large suburban homes. He purchased two lots from the Farmers’ College, about five acres for $434.16. He later bought a strip of land from Charles Cist adjoining his property to straighten out Belmont Avenue. He built a large, nine room frame mansion on a hill that overlooked the Colerain valley. His house was described as having ...one of the finest sites on the hill. It is said to be exceeded in altitude by but one location in Hamilton Co...Capt. Tweed has 20 acres of land, and a spacious dwelling, erected in 1865. Tweed was an early trustee of the village of College Hill. The property was purchased by Arthur H. Poundsford in 1883 and sold in 1968. The house was bought and demolished in 1969 and is now the site of the new building for the First United Church of Christ. Tweed was also an architect in the firm of Tweed & Sibley.

The **Upson** house at 5640 Belmont Avenue was constructed in the 1830-40 era. The builder is unknown. The two and one-half story Federal vernacular house was purchased in 1869 from Mary and Henry Hickman by Ashbel Augustine and Maria Upson. A. A. Upson was a partner with George D. Winchell in an iron ware business located on the north-west corner of Walnut and Pearl Streets., downtown Cincinnati. Mr. Upson was a trustee on the council of municipal officers for College Hill, 1870-71.

The house stayed in the Upson family until 1923 when it was purchased by George Weller. He remodeled it, making a two family home. About that time, a large one story curved porch running the width of the house was torn down and the current entry way added.

**John Van Zandt**: The Dutch name of VanZandt has been spelled many ways - Vansant, Vanzandt, Van Zant, Van Sandt; almost as many ways as the states they originally came from - New York, New Jersey, Maryland and Pennsylvania. Locally, the Thomas Vanzants lived in Cheviot; John VanSandt in Sharonville/Glendale; Reuben, Isaac and Henry Van Zandt in Mt. Healthy and Finneytown.

These various Van Zandt lineages were probably related as cousins. Having many children, they

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12 The Suburb’s of Cincinnati, Sidney D. Maxwell, 1870.

married into the families of other prominent names found in the records of Colerain, Springfield, and Green townships.

John A. Van Zandt (1791-1847) was a farmer, having a plantation in Fleming County, Kentucky. He was the son of Aaron and Margaret Vansant (as spelled in Aaron’s will) of Fleming County. One night after a dream, John freed his slaves and moved to Ohio. He married Nancy Runyon in 1824, was ordained as a Methodist minister and was one of the first Trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church of Sharon (now Sharonville), organized in 1837 by Rev. Levi White. John also was one of the main ‘conductors’ in the Underground Railroad.

John and his family lived at “Mt. Pierpoint,” by Oak and Skillman Roads near Glendale. It was named for Rev. John Pierpoint, an abolitionist from Massachusetts. John built his two-story house that sat on a hill from bricks that had been made in Philadelphia and used to construct the first Presbyterian church in his community. The church had been razed to build a new one.

Van Zandt firmly believed that all men were created equal and that there was no such being as a slave. He followed his convictions and was shunned by many for them. According to tradition, his house was where Eliza Harris, the Eliza of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, was sheltered on her trip to Canada. Van Zandt served as the model for John Van Trompe in the same book. The house was dubbed the “Eliza House” for many years. A sympathetic neighbor, Dr. Ross, attended to the slaves’ medical needs. Often Van Zandt or his son drove the fugitives by night to Lebanon or Wilmington, Ohio.

On April 23, 1842 Van Zandt took a covered wagon of produce into Cincinnati to sell. On his way back, he stopped in Walnut Hills at the home of a friend, Mr. Moore, who lived by Lane Seminary. John stayed there late into the night. While hitching the horses to the wagon, he saw a group of eight former slaves hiding in the shadows of the trees. They were on their way to Canada so he concealed them in his wagon letting one of this small band, a lad named Andrew, drive the team.

As he drove through Van Zandt’s own community, some pro-slavery neighbors heard the wagon pass in the wee morning hours. Knowing there was a reward for recaptured slaves, Messrs. Hargrave and Hefferman dressed and pursued them by horseback, overtaking the wagon south of Lebanon. Andrew was able to escape but the rest, along with Van Zandt, were captured. They were returned to their Kentucky owner, Wharton Jones, and Van Zandt was arrested under provisions of the Federal 1793 Fugitive Slave Law, imprisoned and fined $1,200 which was the value of the escaped Andrew, a $1,000 fine for harboring slaves and the cost of recapturing. Van Zandt served as the model for John Van Trompe in the same book. The house was dubbed the “Eliza House” for many years. A sympathetic neighbor, Dr. Ross, attended to the slaves’ medical needs. Often Van Zandt or his son drove the fugitives by night to Lebanon or Wilmington, Ohio.

Salmon Portland Chase, along with Thomas Morris and William H. Seward, defended Van Zandt against these charges and two lawsuits. This was a case that showed the abilities of Chase, who defended his client to the Supreme Court - aiding his career and reputation, even though Van Zandt lost. Chase’s argument was that “...the very moment a slave passes beyond the jurisdiction of the State in which he is held as such, he ceases to be a slave.” This meant, he argued, that slavery was confined to the laws of an individual state while freedom was national. Chase later became an Ohio Governor, Senator from Ohio, the War Secretary of the Treasury under President Lincoln, and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Chase defended so many fugitives that the African Americans of Cincinnati presented him a silver pitcher for “...zealous and disinterested advocacy of the rights and privileges of all classes of your fellow citizens, irrespective of clime, color or condition.” Kentucky residents saw it differently, naming him ‘Attorney General for Negroes.’

Friends contributed to help pay Van Zandt’s fines and court bills, although the lawyers worked

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14 The Fugitive Slave Law can be summarized as any runaway in any state could be apprehended and returned back to the state from which he fled.

15 Chase’s opinion of women was not as expansive. He believed that women should be seen and not heard nor should express personal or political opinions. Mary Todd Lincoln, A Biography, Jean H. Baker, 1987.

16 Cincinnati’s Colored Citizens, Wendell P. Dabney, 1926.
pro bono. He had to sell his farm and lands to pay his bills and fines. He was excommunicated by his church from their membership. Both Van Zandt and Jones died in 1847, never having seen the end to the case. Van Zandt was buried at the foot of the hill near the barn which had hidden so many. He was later exhumed and reburied in Wesleyan Cemetery where his wife and a daughter are also buried.

On his tombstone erected in 1891, the centennial of his birth, his friends had carved: “In him Christianity had a living witness. He saw God as his Father and received every man as a brother. The cause of the poor, the Widow, the orphan and the oppressed was his cause. He fed, clothed, sheltered and guarded them. He was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. He was a tender father, a devoted husband and a friend to all. He is what is here described because he was a Christian philanthropist who practiced what he believed and he thus lived practicing his faith.”

Mt. Pierpoint was later purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Mortimer Matthews who used it to house employees for their estate across the road. In an article appearing in the Cincinnati Times-Star, May 31, 1930, a “...huge tunnel in the basement of the house which is now cemented over” is mentioned. The Matthews also called the farm Opekasit an Indian name meaning “looking toward the dawn.” Since then, the house is on the grounds of Landmark Baptist church.

For many years Galbraith Road east of Hamilton Avenue was called Van Zandt Road. In earlier times the street ended at Winton Road where Henry, and later his son Reuben, Van Zandt had a farm. At this intersection today is a strip mall.

Henry Van Zandt was born in 1772 in New Jersey and died in 1810. He fought as a general under George Washington. Henry’s wife, Marcy, and his father, Isaac, came to Hamilton County with Henry about 1805. Marcy outlived Henry and married Stephen Jessup as her second husband. She is buried with the Van Zandt family in Spring Grove Cemetery. The Van Zandt home was on the north side of the Daly and Galbraith Road intersection on what was the old Trotner farm17. The relationship between Henry and John is not known, possibly brothers.

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Chapter 14  The Abolition Movement

Ohio and other states carved from the 1787 Northwest Territory were the refuge of fleeing slaves for many years before the Civil War. Thomas Jefferson, who was a slave owner himself, wrote in the ordinances of the Northwest territory that owning slaves was forbidden in those lands. Congress then passed the ordinances. The term abolitionist was later used to describe those who supported the abolishment of slavery. But even in slave free states it was against the law to aid those fleeing their owners.

Lane Theological Seminary was opened in Walnut Hills in 1829. It was Presbyterian in faith and no tuition was charged. The abolitionist, Theodore Weld, lectured there in 1833. As a result of Weld’s visit, the students split into two factions; abolitionists vs. those favoring the colonizing of African Americans by sending them to Liberia, Africa. The colonization movement was supported by those that held slavery as being morally wrong yet they were concerned by the number of free African Americans in the society around them.

Liberia was founded in 1821 by the American Colonization Society with the intention that freed slaves would be relocated to the country of their origin. This plan was supported by the then President James Monroe, for whom Liberia’s capital, Monrovia, was named. In Cincinnati, Charles McMicken purchased 10,000 acres (1830) in Liberia. McMicken envisioned his land to be solely for African Americans from Cincinnati on which a school would be built. Why a school so far away? This was McMicken’s answer18 “...those who are not willing to go to Liberia to acquire knowledge of the duties of freedom, are not worthy of it.”

According to Wendell P. Dabney,19 “Peter H. Clark was then selected to go as explorer to this ‘Ohio in Africa.’ But when he reached New Orleans he refused to embark in the dirty lumber schooner that had been chartered to carry him and one hundred and nineteen other persons. The others started.

Before getting out of the Gulf of Mexico the unfortunate emigrants were attacked by smallpox. The captain finally put into Charleston, S. C., for medical help. Here all the well ones were put in jail for coming into the state in contravention of law. After lingering there three months they were freed and set out again on their journey. In less than six months ninety per cent of them were dead.”

McMicken in 1848 again contributed money towards the colonization effort. According to Dabney20 “…Mr. McMicken inserted a clause in his will prohibiting colored youth from sharing in the benefits of any education facilities he might provide for the youth of the Queen City.” McMicken was the founder of the University of Cincinnati.

For eighteen nights these ‘Lane Debates’ ran with the majority of students favoring emancipation of the slaves. A black student at Lane Seminary, James Bradley, told of his years of slavery in Arkansas.

Cincinnati newspapers covered the ‘Lane Debates’ with disparaging editorials and the population at large was against abolition, trying to force those teaching in the African American schools to leave the city. There was a real possibility that the Seminary would be burned, as well as the houses of the professors.

Following their consciences, the students of Lane established an African American school, teaching 225 people twice a week. This action was not sanctioned by the faculty and the seminary was almost internally destroyed over the divided opinion of the slave question. The students participating in this work were expelled, the abolition society disbanded and some of the students and

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18 The Cincinnati Herald, Sept. 20, 1975

19 Cincinnati’s Colored Citizens, Wendell P. Dabney, pg. 101, 1926. This incident is also in: History of Schools in Cincinnati, Isaac Martin, Chapter XXVI, pages 181-183.

20 Op cit.
faculty moved their studies and work to Oberlin College where a more liberal philosophy was held. Other students continued to teach local African Americans by moving their school to the Hall of Free Discussion in Cumminsville, outside of the Cincinnati city limits.

The Hall of Free Discussion was built in 1832 by Israel Ludlow’s son, James. It was a place where many of the ministers, students and those interested in politics met to listen and discuss issues of their time. Among the speakers were Joshua L. Wilson, Lyman Beecher and various Carys.

Dr. Lyman Beecher, President of Lane Seminary in 1832, and his family lived in Walnut Hills. Dr. Beecher was educated at Yale and was the father of a family that would have a remarkable impact on the abolition movement. Dr. Beecher, having a reputation as a reformer and revivalist, fully supported the abolition movement. The trustees of Lane Seminary had waited until Dr. Beecher and another one of his supporting professors, Dr. Calvin Ellis Stowe, were out of town before censoring the students and voting to suppress the discussion of slavery because the controversy was splitting apart the seminary.

The house built for Lyman Beecher still stands on Gilbert Avenue. Harriet lived there until her marriage to Dr. Calvin E. Stowe, a professor of biblical literature, when she was 25. She remained a frequent visitor to her father’s house until she and her husband moved to Maine in 1850. Nearby her father’s house was the home of Levi Coffin.

Dr. Beecher was married three times, having thirteen children, two of whom died young. Seven of his sons became Congregational ministers and his four daughters were among some of the most famous writers of their time. It was his daughter, Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896) who wrote the famous Uncle Tom’s Cabin. Her brother, Henry Ward Beecher, spearheaded the women’s suffrage movement as well as freeing slaves. Her sister, Catherine, wrote books about home-life and headed Cincinnati’s Western Female Seminary.

Wendall Dabney’s Cincinnati’s Colored Citizens includes an anecdote about the Beecher family: “In Cleveland there lives a charming old colored lady, Mrs. Anna Bodie, nearly ninety years of age, who as a girl played and studied with Harriet Beecher Stowe. Her mother was the Beecher’s cook...Many a slave did the Beechers hide in her mother’s apartment. On one occasion Mr. Beecher, while cutting wood in the yard on a cold, frosty morning, took off his coat and gave it to a poor, almost naked slave, who had just run away from the South.”

The Stowe’s had seven children. Her income as a writer helped to support her large family in conjunction with her husband’s modest salary. The Stowes concealed and moved along fugitives for 18 years from their Walnut Hills home. Uncle Tom’s Cabin was written when she was age 40 after they had moved to Maine. She had only a brief opportunity to see slavery in Kentucky but had heard many stories. She heard of Eliza’s river crossing at the home of her friends, the Rankins in Ripley, Ohio. Her book was serialized in 1851-1852 in a abolitionist newspaper and appeared in book form in 1852, selling a million copies before the Civil War. When President Lincoln met her in 1863, he reportedly said: “So you’re the little woman who wrote the book that made this great war!” While she continued to write a book a year until her death in 1896, only Uncle Tom’s Cabin was heralded as the most influential novel ever published.

Levi Coffin (1798-1877), a Quaker, a farmer and an educator began aiding escaping slaves as a teenager. The seeds of the anti-slavery movement were sown in the Quaker assemblies. Levi settled in Indiana, opened a grocery store, manufactured linseed oil and cured pork. Coffin and his family moved to Cincinnati in 1847 as our city became a major center in the abolitionist movement. Still very active in the Underground Railroad, also named the Freedom Train or Gospel Train, he aided in the escape of Eliza Harris who served as the model for Eliza in Uncle Tom’s Cabin, just as he and Catherine, his wife, were portrayed as the characters Simeon and Rachael Haliday. Originally Coffin purchased a store at 6th and Elm Streets. The attic connected to adjacent buildings, as did tunnels in the cellar. His next house was a 30 room house at the corner of Broadway and Franklin. Coffin contributed $50,000 of his own money to the cause and raised $100,000 from donors. Called the “President of the underground,” he aided escaping slaves for more than 30 years, dying in 1877. The legend of his exploits stands tall and most were true.
The tide of those escaping continued to increase. Going into asylum, destitute without provisions and only with the clothes they were wearing, Coffin would see that they were fed, clothed, and shod. In good weather they sometimes traveled on foot with a guide or with verbal directions, or maps with crosses marking the safe houses, or stations, and hands pointing to locations to be avoided. The distances between these stations were five to twenty-five miles. The stations were arrayed not in a straight line but in a zig-zag pattern in an effort to elude pursuit. Quilts hanging outside over the back porch railing or hung in a window concealed directions and messages by their designs. Some trips were made in covered wagons apparently loaded with sacks of grain or produce. Coffin would rent wagons from a particular livery stable. The drivers were often African American men who were trustworthy and who had no property, so that if caught, they had nothing to lose. Wagon trips were usually made at night going only a score of miles, the conductors needing to be home by daylight so their absences wouldn’t be noticed. Sympathetic women formed the Anti-Slavery Sewing Society to clothe the fugitives.

John Hatfield, an African American who was a Deacon in the Zion Baptist Church, was a local conductor. Levi Coffin in his book about the Underground Railroad, told of an incident about Hatfield. “I suggested that someone should go immediately to a certain German livery stable in the city and hire two coaches and that several colored men should go out in buggies and take the women and children from their hiding places, then, that the coaches and buggies should form a procession as if going to a funeral. In the western part of Cumminsville was the Methodist Episcopal burying ground where a certain lot of ground had been set apart for the use of the colored people. They should pass this and continue on the Colerain Pike until they reached a right-hand road leading to College Hill. At the latter place they would find a few colored families living in the outskirts of the village and they could take refuge among them. Jonathan Cable (ed. note: a Presbyterian minister) on the west side of the village, was a prominent abolitionist, and I knew that he would give prompt assistance to the fugitives.

While the carriages and buggies were being procured, John Hatfield’s wife and daughter and other colored women of the neighborhood busied themselves in preparing provisions to be sent to the fugitives.

All the arrangements were carried out, and the party reached College Hill in safety and were kindly received and cared for. But, sad to relate, it was a funeral procession not only in appearance but in reality, for when they arrived at College Hill and the mother unwrapped her sick child, she found to her surprise and grief that its stillness, which she supposed to be that of sleep, was that of death. All necessary preparations were made by the kind people of the village, and the child was decently and quietly interred the next day in the burying ground on the Hill.

Cable kept the fugitives as secluded as possible until a way was provided for safety forwarding them on their way to Canada.”

Stations were kept by free African Americans, Quakers, Covenanters, Free Masons, Wesleyan Methodists and other abolitionists. The stations and connecting routes formed a far flung and intricate network from the Ohio River to Lake Erie. Where did the fugitives go? The nearest depot was the Stubb farm in West Elkton. Milford, Lebanon, Batavia, Xenia, Hamilton,, Sharonville, Colerain township, Cumminsville, Walnut Hills, Cheviot, Mt. Healthy, Glendale, and Mt. Auburn all provided shelter to

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21 The Beginnings of the Underground Railroad in Ohio, Wilbur Siebert, 1898.


23 Wesleyan Cemetery

24 This would have been either the Cary or Gard cemetery.
those that ultimately went to Canada, from where they could not be returned. Some settled in northern states if they could obtain freedom papers. Sympathetic canal boat captains and railroad conductors did their part too in being part of the underground.

Another former slave was Mrs. Amy Clark who came to Cincinnati by steamboat in 1832. She worked in College Hill and married Joseph Barber who concealed and transported fugitives in his wagon that he drove northeast to Lebanon. Amy and her husband migrated in 1837 to Windsor, Canada.25

David Morrison Wilson, and his brother Joseph Gardner, also were active in moving the runaways. They worked with William Beard who picked up ex-slaves at Lane Seminary and took them to Billingsville, Indiana. Joseph, according to Wilbur H. Siebert,26 “...procured female apparel from Quaker families, whose sons were in his classes and cooperated in obtaining the disguises for his wayfarers. Some of his students ventured to ship fugitives in barrels and sacks.”

All sorts of hiding places were constructed. Houses had secret chambers, sometimes behind chimneys or in cellars. Tunnels were dug making escape possible if hidden rooms were detected. Under floors, in empty brick kilns, hillside caves and even false backed fireplaces were used. In College Hill the fugitives were hidden under the belfry at Farmers’ College as well as the root cellar of the college president’s house. The Cary homes, the Crawford home, the Wilson house, a smoke house at “The Oaks,” a tunnel under a home at Belmont and Glenview, a false basement in the frame house at the corner of Belmont and Cedar, a secret chamber at the house at Meryton and Glenview are just a few places in College Hill. The Zebulon Strong house on Hamilton Avenue and the Cary house that once stood opposite it, are at the head of a pair of twin ravines that sheltered fugitives during the day. Children playing would drop bags of food into the brush. At night, the fugitives would hide under the straw of Strong’s wagon and he would drive them to the next station at Colerain and Springdale Roads27.

Mrs. Katherine (Forbes) Schevene Neuzel recounted in 1988 in a letter: “My grandparents took part in the underground railroad. One of the slaves worked for them until they passed away. She had a little house on Piqua near Cedar. I always got sick on street cars so my Mother would take me down to be babysat by her when she went out. My grandparents owned the home that was torn down for Hodapps. This was the William Cary homestead.”

The abolitionist movement was a group of individuals, often at odds with the society around them, who followed their conscience and did what they believed correct, without having state or federal dollars involved. The power of a committed person is great. In the words of the British statesman Edmund Burke, “Nobody makes a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could only do a little.”

Cincinnati was the site for an early abolition riot on August 2, 1836. It is an example of how differing opinions split Cincinnati’s population. Clarissa Gest wrote to her brother, Erasmus, about it: “Our city is disgraced and a long time ere she will be recovered from the stain. Lately a meeting of the citizens was called to effect measures relative to the abolitionists. A committee was appointed to wait upon Mr. Birney. They did so, but Mr. Birney refused their terms and said he would risk his life before he would give up...On Saturday evening (July 30) confused clamoring and rude songs with occasional shouts was heard...A considerable number collected and tore out the abolition printing press; and after destroying every part they could, they left it in the street & went to Mr. Donaldson’s, a violent abolitionist...To his house they went and asked for him. Some ladies came to the door and declared he was not a home...He escaped as they came to the house...They then went to Birney’s, it is

25 The Underground Railroad, Wilbur Siebert, 1898.
26 The Beginning of the Underground Railroad in Ohio, op. cit.
27 Inventory of the Erasmus Gest Papers, 1834-1885, Ohio Historical Society library.
said they had tar and feathers along...He was not at home...he had taken stage for Hillsborough 2 hours before. They then came back to the press and some wished to make a bonfire & burn it, but Joseph Graham mounted some rubbish & proposed throwing it in the river. Previous to this...they attacked that dreadful house on Church Ally where whites & blacks had been living together, and, driving out the folks, tore all the insides out, broke the furniture to pieces and all the windows...Part of the mob took the press to the river & drowned it, and the rest marched past us to Elm and demolished five or six houses in the swamp...”

Black history month or Negro history week as it was called, was started in 1926 by Dr. Carter G. Woodson who was disturbed by the lack of the African American presence in social science, history and culture. Although he was an avid researcher and a prolific writer of African American history, Dr. Woodson was aware that the publication of books alone would not accomplish the task. Therefore, he initiated Negro History Week as one of several ways to instill a sense of pride and accomplishment within blacks and to inform the general public.

William Cary House on Hamilton Ave., 1901
Courtesy of Karen Forbes-Nutting

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28 General references: Salmon P. Chase, Frederick J. Blue, 1987
Hamilton Avenue: A Road of Heritage

1. Wesleyan Cemetery-this was the first “integrated” cemetery, having one section for African American burials.
2. Site of the “Hall of Free Discussion” where Lane Seminary students taught classes for African Americans. The Hall was so named by James Ludlow who built it for the purpose of free discussion of controversial subjects. William Cary was one of the leading speakers as was Lyman Beecher and Josiah L. Wilson.
3. Twin Towers - the ravine ending at the stone wall of Twin Towers was used in hiding escaping slaves during the day and moving them through College Hill during the night. A tunnel under the original retaining wall led to the F. G. Cary home, the site of which is on Hamilton Avenue north of Twin Towers. The tunnel and retaining wall collapsed shortly after Twin Towers was built, causing a new retaining wall to be constructed.
4. Skillman’s grocery store - in the ravine that ran behind the store, area children would leave food while they were playing. This fed those who passed through the ravine by darkness. Neighbor Zebulon Strong also transported fugitives in his wagon to the next station at Springdale and Colerain Avenues. Next to the store is the house of Zebulon Strong, which is still standing as a white painted brick home.
5. Site of Freeman Grant Cary Home - son of William Cary. Both were abolitionists and hid those that were escaping.
6. Hamilton Avenue - ‘dug hill’ was the main thoroughfare that many traveled on their way north.
7. Farmers’ College - some of the Quaker youths, along with the faculty, hid slaves in the bell tower. Dr. Bishop, president of Farmers’ College, was an ardent abolitionist.
8. Corner Belmont & Cedar Avenues - this frame two story house was a station with a concealed half floor for hiding space.
9. “The Oaks” is the mansion at the corner of Belmont and Glenview Avenues which had a hiding place in the outside smoke house. In back of the working fireplace was a false door which led to a small space that was just large enough to stand upright in.
10. 5831 Glenview Avenue was connected by an underground tunnel to The Oaks.
11. Wilson/O’Neil house, 1502 Aster Place - the Wilsons were very involved with the abolitionist movement. Samuel Wilson’s daughter, Harriet, wrote her memories of the time.
12. Site of William Cary’s house which was a hiding place.
13. Site of the “colored” school shown on the 1869 College Hill map.
14. Jesse Locker, 1210 Cedar Avenue, site of the home of the noted politician.
15. These tidy small cottages along east Cedar Avenue were built as housing for the servants of the wealthy College Hill homes.
16. William Banks House, 1310 Cedar Avenue, was built in the 1880’s and was bought by the Houston, one of the early black families of College Hill. John Houston sold it to William and Elizabeth Banks in 1917 when they moved to this area because of the high quality of the schools. William Banks commuted by bicycle down Gray Road to the B. & O. Roundhouse in St. Bernard where he worked.
17. Christian Church site, west of 1310 Cedar Avenue, where the Rev. Laban S. Locker was pastor.
18. Steele Subdivision - now known as West College Hill, this Springfield township community was developed in 1891 by Mr. Charles M. Steele, a land speculator and once mayor of Hartwell. Steele developed this land solely for African American occupancy. The first buyer was Charles & Melvina Middleton. Mr. Middleton worked as a farm hand in College Hill and Mt. Healthy.
19. Mulberry Grove Silk Growing & Manufacturing Company - Charles Cheny aided slaves and his son wrote his memories of riding in the wagon with those escaping while his father drove the team.
20. Dr. Alexander Luse, 3206 Compton Road, gave medical care as well as food, clothing and shelter to many.
21 Site of the Louis Aiken house, 7200 Hamilton Avenue, was another concealing place where slave
artifacts were found.
22. Benjamin Hunt home, 1575 St. Clair Avenue was another station.
23. Another site for hiding was the Hastings home, western end of McMakin Avenue.
24. Dr. Scott, 7601 Hamilton Avenue - Dr. Scott was a professor at College Hill’s Farmers’ College. His daughter, Caroline, married Benjamin Harrison, the 23rd president of the U.S. Scott built this brick house, still standing and being rented, where traces of basement tunnels and rooms were once visible. A historical plaque on the side of this building identifies it as a station.
25. Mt. Pleasant Cemetery - Jesse Locker is buried here along with many African Americans from College Hill, North College Hill and Mt. Healthy.
26. Winton Place - this house at 4752 Gray Road has been said to have a niche hidden behind a fireplace wall.
27. Six Acres- 5350 Hamilton Ave, College Hill, now a bed and breakfast was once a home belonging to Zebulon Strong. It had hidden rooms and an escape tunnel.

Hall of Free Discussion, Northside by Caroline Williams
5-9-1942
Harriet Wilson’s Letter

The typed original of this letter is in the Ohio Historical Society’s library along with the other papers acquired by Mr. Wilbur H. Seibert regarding experiences with the Underground Railroad. Note that in 1892, Harriet still refers to College Hill participants by their last initial only. H. N. Wilson was assumed by Mr. Seibert to be a man, and thus he wrongly credited the sex of one of his sources in his book.

College Hill 4/14/1892
Mr. W. H. Seibert,
Dear Sir: -

Your letter received several weeks since should have been answered at an earlier date, had not a press of other duties prevented me from doing so. The subject of your inquiry is one in which our family in the antebellum days were deeply interested and some of them took an active part in the work, but their life work is ended and they have received their reward. Were they here to tell what they saw and participated in during all these years, it would be far more satisfactory and interesting that ought I can write as I was in the city school, coming home only at the close of each week. My brother, Rev. D. M. Wilson, was a student several years during the ‘40’s at what was then Cary’s Academy, the first educational institution established on College Hill. He was of the stuff of which martyrs are made casting his first vote, in the township where he lived, as a ‘hated abolitionist’ with only one other brave enough to cast a similar ballot and that other was Mr. Van Sant, whose famous trial in the Cincinnati Courts for ‘harboring and secreting runaway slaves’ was one of the sensations of the time and for which he was imprisoned and heavily fined, which sent him forth a comparatively poor man from his once pleasant home near the present site of Glendale. During my brother’s student life on College Hill and his three years course at Lane Seminary, 29 Walnut Hills, also a prominent station of the Underground R.R., he had many opportunities for giving aid and succor to the fleeing fugitives. Were his journal of those days now available it would give much interesting and important information in regard to the ways and means then used to carry on the work. Though laboring as a missionary in Syria for fourteen years, his longest and hardest work was done in Tennessee, where he helped to have equal civil and religious privileges granted to all citizens irrespective of color of previous condition, but he died a few years since without seeing his great desire accomplished. His only son is now a professor in Maryville College, where higher educational privileges are granted to all. My sister, Mrs. M. J. Pyle, was for many years a teacher in the Ohio Female College, and if were living could give you vivid pictures of the workings of the Underground R.R., for but a few who traveled by it to College Hill, but who were encouraged by her words of cheer and aided by her helping hand, but she died in 1887, being almost the last one who actively participated in those stirring scenes. A younger brother, J. G. Wilson, after his graduation at Marietta College, spent several years as a professor at Farmers’ College, and were he living could tell of many exciting episodes, from the singular devices and disguises used to get the fugitives secretly housed while here, and safely away - no easy task as many of the students of those days were from the southern states and members of slave holding families, while others were from the rural districts where pro-slavery and democratic principles made them more bitter in their prejudices than those born and bred south of Mason and Dixon’s line, and always accustomed (to) the peculiar institution.

The position of College Hill only six miles from the city on a high eminence making it a point of

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29 From Uncle Tom’s Cabin by Harriet Beecher Stowe, Introduction: Professor Stowe’s house was more than once a refuge for frightened fugitives on whom the very terrors of death had fallen, and the inmates slept with arms in the house and a large bell ready to call the young men of the adjoining Institution, in case the mob should come up to search the house. Nor was this a vain or improbable suggestion, for the mob in their fury had more than once threatened to go up and set fire to Lane Seminary, where a large body of the students were known to be abolitionists. Only the fact that the Institution was two miles from the city, with a rough and muddy road up a long hill, proved its salvation. Cincinnati mud, far known for its depth and tenacity, had sometimes its advantages.
observation from the surrounding country, the only direct road leading to it being a narrow, dusty
turnpike up the steep hill: the only conveyance being an omnibus, which, with all other vehicles,
could be seen for a long distance. The two educational institutions located on the hill drew students
from far and near, while nearly all the families residing on the hill were connected in some way with
the two colleges, all helping to make it a very suitable place for anything requiring secrecy and
prompt action but in some way never fully explained or understood, fugitives had begun coming,
through whom or by whose influence was never known having come, they were cared for and sent on
their way rejoicing, others followed and thus the work continued to grow and increase until it became
quite a heavy financial burden on the few who so long carried on the work. Though the fugitives were
not really led by a cloud by day or a pillar of fire at night, yet a protecting power, certainly led them
by strange and devious ways to the long wished for haven. They seemed gifted with a kind of
magnetic power, which, with their grips and pass words, drew those of different localities together,
making them choose the least traveled ways and the deep shadowed ravines and valleys lying on each
side of our beautiful hill, soon seemed to be the popular route chosen by the wayfarers.

A few colored families, living in small cabins in the sequestered places, were stopping places
until the benevolent people of the Hill could be secretly notified, ‘that more people had come, and
that help was needed.’ Stealthily creeping along to the well known house of Mr. G., a tap on the
window would arouse him. After a whispered conversation they would proceed to Mr. C’s.30 and Mr.
W’s. And the sturdy gray haired men who knew no such words as fear and were equal to every
emergency would leave their beds and go out into the darkness and have all of the new comers
provided with temporary quarters before the morning dawn. Many times did the tired but kind hearted
women, though weary with the toils and cares of the previous day, leave their couches to help arrange
safe hiding places, prepare food for the hungry and clothes for the almost naked, for in that plight
were many who came through the briers and bushes which necessarily bordered the Underground R.
R. There are names of true hearted, unselfish men and women on the unwritten records of that road,
but their reward is sure from him that said ‘Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these
&c.’ Some of these kind hearted women did it without the hearty co-operation of their husbands. Two
such bearing names well known have long since gone to their reward.

The runaways of those days were generally of the brighter and better sort of slaves, possessing
tact and energy which made them dare to risk everything to gain their freedom. Some who lived in the
free states had been freed by their masters and then sent North, and had made homes and friends
among the whites, yet often either the husband or wife would lack the necessary papers from their
former master. The hated Fugitive Slave Law’ was a new terror to them. We had one such case on
College Hill, that of quite an intelligent colored man, with a kind hearted wife. He was for some years
janitor at the College and his uniform politeness, fidelity, and industry, commanded the esteem, not
only of the students, but of the residents of the Hill. They were well posted in the workings of the
road, which brought so many of the race from the land of bondage and were very ready and willing to
lend a helping hand to all such and frequently there would be several concealed in his humble house,
which was indeed a veritable ‘cave of Adullum’ to them, they did everything so wisely and so well
that no ‘outsiders’ suspected them of being engaged in such a work. Originally from South Carolina,
the wife had been given her freedom, but without her ‘Free Paper.’ After the enactment of the fugitive
slave law, which sent alarm and consternation into hundreds of such families, they lived in a constant
state of fear and dread of what might come to them. The kind old master was dead and the spendthrift
sons needed money and would not be conscientious as to how it was obtained, so they felt they were
no longer safe to remain where the grasping and unscrupulous heirs could seize her, so to the regret of
all on the Hill they reluctantly went to Canada, where after a few years both succumbed to the

William Cary, founder of College Hill, was an intense abolitionist. His house on Hamilton Avenue near North Bend Road was a station for
the Underground Railroad.
severity of the climate and died of consumption. In the published ‘Reminiscences of Levi Coffin,’ Pp. 304 to 309, he speaks of ‘John Fairfield the Virginian,’ who did efficient work as conductor of numerous trains over the Underground R. R. He was on the Hill several times, making this a sort of ‘function’ but was very careful not to be seen or known by any outsiders, so, of course, his calls were very brief. To despoil the slave horlers (sic) seemed to be his impelling motive, but it was said that he never lost a single passenger of the many that he brought from all parts of the South, but engineered all the trains ‘safe across the line into Canada.’ My sister, Mrs. Pyle, saw the large (28) company mentioned in these pages when they were hurriedly gathered, scared and trembling, into the janitor’s house, waiting for wagons to come to take them across the Ohio boundary into the safer Quaker settlements in Indiana. Some daring students from those peaceful homes had with others, made all the necessary arrangements and with youthful ardor and courage were on the alert to ‘see them off,’ yet careful not to be seen or known by any of their fellow students. The dangers to be avoided added yet to their interest and excitement. Cautiously and singly the inmates had been gathered and with darkened windows and watched doors, there was no signs of what was transpiring within. The venerable Doctor Bishop, the Scotch Divine and scholar, so long president of Miami University, but in his last years connected with Farmers’ College, was in the crowded room, his towering, patriarchal figure reminding one of the prophet Elijah, in his own peculiar impressive manner he read an appropriate psalm and then kneeling in the midst of that motley group, in a most fervent prayer, he implored the protection and the blessing of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who led the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage through the waters of the Red Sea and the dangers of the wilderness, into the Promised Land, that He would likewise give the helpless ones then assembled, keep them safe from the dangers and the detention by the way and bring them to the land where they would be free. Smothered expressions of ‘Bres de Lord’ ‘Dats so’ were heard on all sides and with the excitable peculiarities of their race several sprang to their feet exclaiming, ‘Dat prayer will keep us safe. De Lord bless Him’ ‘We will get through all right.’

On another occasion when a similar company was gathered together, Mrs. Pyle saw John Fairfield for the first time. He came into the room and held up a small lancet of a peculiar make and asked if any one present had ever seen it before. A woman sprang to her feet claiming ‘That was my husband’s, where is he?’ The man had found his way to Canada and meeting John Fairfield and knowing of his work of ‘running the slaves’ gave him the lancet, asking him to show it to every party of refugees being sure that his wife in time would make her way north and would thus learn where he was. Many such incidents could be given...It is a mystery never fully solved, how slaves from so many different localities could surmount so many perils and difficulties, through swamps, and forests, especially through thickly settled districts. The Polar Star was their guide during the night and natural instinct when traveling during the day, yet they would meet at certain named points and be taken on together. Some self reliant, cool-headed students trained in ‘plain living and right doing’ by Quaker parents were in College and were faithful and efficient helpers in the ‘secret service’ which was carried on without the help of ‘Telephone or Telegraph.’ A word, ‘look,’ or gesture was often the only signal that ‘Prompt help was needed’ and it required much executive ability and tact, as well as self-denial and labor to carry the ‘human freight’ on through so many impending dangers.

All sorts of expedients were resorted to - men were sometimes dressed as women or women as men. Some were carried in barrels, others were hidden in bags of hay or grain, etc. The dangers most feared when leaving here were the toll gates and covered bridges over the Great Miami River at Hamilton as the ‘Southern Sentiment’ was very strong there and all through Butler County. Many of the toll-keepers were known to be pro-slavery men who might not be adverse to receiving a moneymed reward for helping masters get back their own property as all slaves were then considered, but never was one fugitive of the many who passed by our Hill retaken. When they once reached the non-combatant settlements of the Indiana Friends they were comparatively safe. It is somewhat remarkable that during those years of disturbance and excitement, none of the houses on College Hill were ever searched by the ‘Minions of the law’ though frequently there were well grounded fears that such would be the case. One ‘hot Sunday evening word came to College Hill that ‘officers properly
armed and equipped were coming to search for a number of runaways supposed to be in hiding here.’ They were scattered among several families and the unknown news was soon known to all. There were hurried consultations and planning. The wife of the College President opened a trapdoor leading from her kitchen into a secret receptacle made for storing winter fruit, etc., and found that her guests could be safely stowed away there, and concealed by the carpeted floor. The women being ‘entertained’ by our family were terribly frightened declaring ‘that they would die rather than be taken and carried back.’ Though quite large in size they were ready and willing to crawl through a small aperture into a dark cellar where they would be safe. Some were stowed away under the hay, and it was said that a ‘valuable buy’ was secreted in a dark place in the belfry of the College where all possible precautions had been taken and all felt that an ordinary search would not reveal them, they settled down to patiently await the result, but it was a great relief to hear that the expected searching party had turned back to the city. They came to the toll-gate, a mile below College Hill and told the toll man their business and asked for information as to suspected parties, etc. He was a clever man but a Democrat, and in sympathy with the South, yet was ignorant of his close proximity to the hated route. He told them that he really believed that there was no place on the Hill where a runaway could be concealed. The men believed the assertion and turned back and thus were we relieved of the indignity and danger of an ‘official search.’ Yet at that time there were some thousands of dollars worth of ‘human chattels’ on and around the Hill. Children belonging to the protecting families were early taught to be reticent, and to be ‘know nothings’ regarding such matters, never by word or look to hint of such arrival of ‘guests’ and even those sometimes brought along with fugitives seemed to be burdened with an unnatural sense of responsible silence seldom whimpering or crying aloud. The large rewards offered for valuable runaway slaves seldom caused them to be arrested and returned to slavery. Only very unprincipled, brutish men would stoop to such work. All others seemed to feel that such ‘gain’ would indeed be ‘blood money.’

A young and bright mulatto, so trusted by his master to be hired out on a river steamer earning large wages for him, learned that owing to financial embarrassment of his owner, there was a possibility of him being sold, ran off while the boat was at the wharf and found his way to College Hill, reaching the house where we lived in the wee small hours of the night. A young man who knew of his coming went to the city in the morning and saw large handbills giving a minute description and offering $500 reward for information that would lead to his capture. They did not get the desired information, and he was happy not to get money in that way. To show the peculiar difficulties attending the coming and going of the colored people from College Hill, frequently those in hiding were slaves of those having sons in College. An old colored woman while working in our kitchen saw the nephew of her Kentucky master at our table in the dining room, but he did not see her. She was a good cook and hired out at a country hotel, so prepared everything as usual Saturday night even to dressing the chickens for breakfast, then tied up a few things and joined a company making their way to freedom. Being unable to keep up with them she lay down and rolled down to the river where skiffs were waiting. She reached the Ohio side in a sadly dilapidated condition. When she came to us she was wearing a dress given by the mother-in-law of one of Ohio’s most noted Democratic politicians. All had to be very careful to efface every mark by which the donators could be identified were the slaves retaken.

Frequently when at home on Saturday and asking for some articles of clothing, I would receive the reply. ‘Gone to Canada.’ The ruling principle which seemed to actuate the majority of the fugitives causing them to run away was the fear of being sold south. Some of them seemed to regard their Massa and Missis with affection and they seemed to hate to leave them, but the fear of what might be impelled them to get away.

One of the residents of our hill was made an anti-slavery man by seeing a strong black man roughly dragged from the cars at Cumminsville by a U. S. Marshall and carried back to slavery. One of the last fugitives who came to College Hill, was a smart active young fellow who had made his way to one of the small stations on the Hamilton and Dayton R. R. Opening the car door he confronted his master with an officer. Springing back he tightly held the closed door until the train
was under full headway, then jumped and ran for liberty. The pursuers dared not follow him, and endeavored to have the train stopped, but the train men refused and they were carried on to the next station several miles distant. Meanwhile the fugitive was making his unknown way over the Hill. Coming to some men at work cutting wood, he threw himself upon their mercy and told his story. They directed him the best way to College Hill, telling him that he would find kind people there who would help him.

Sometime after the pursuing party came to the same men, asking if they had seen a black fellow, &c. The men professed to have not seen anyone answering the description and skillfully evaded all their questions. Finally the master said ‘We may as well go home, Jim is too smart for us to catch him’ so they reluctantly retraced their way, minus the $100 worth of flesh and blood which they hoped to take with them. He was forwarded on, but the work had become too well known and the peculiarly difficult circumstances attending it on College Hill, it was deemed wiser to have it carried on by other less exposed routes so in the years immediately preceding the civil war, there were comparatively none coming to the Hill yet those interested in the cause of human rights did their part financially to help on the work and when the great conflict came, when our country was made to suffer so fearfully for the sins of the parents and the framers of the government our hill did not escape the terrible ‘baptism of blood’ which marked our bravest and best as martyrs laying down their lives in southern battlefields. My noble brother was one of the first to lay down his life, the victim to that spirit which would gladly have perpetuated the fearful curse of slavery for ages to come.

An incident which came under my personal notice was that of a bright colored girl, belonging formerly to a member of Congress from Missouri and who had spent several seasons in Washington with her master and mistress. The former was quite intemperate and finally became fearfully so, when unable to go out the slave was made to get him liquor and wait upon him. This her mistress forbade her doing, so between the two she had a fearful time. Her mistress told her husband that the girl would not wait on him, that she would have her sold when they reached home. The girl heard the threat so while the boat lay at Cincinnati wharf, she stole secretly away, starting up the street not knowing where she was going. She met a kind looking woman, and told her what she had done. She took her to a nice colored family, for a few days until the search would be over and finally secured her a good place a few miles from the city. She had been there several years when I knew her and was industrious, faithful and quite happy, until a lady from near the girl’s old home in Missouri came out there with some company from the city, and recognized her as the slave of her neighbor, who had mourned her loss and had made diligent search for her but all in vain. The lady assured her that she would not let them know of her present home, but the poor girl was so fearful and anxious that she was miserable and unhappy all the time, fearing lest some one for an expected reward would stealthily kidnap her and carry her back into slavery. She dared not step out of the door after dark or be left alone in the house at any time. The continual strain and anxiety was too much for her, and her health failed, so to save her life means was provided by her friends and she was sent to Canada to swell the colored population in the Queen’s dominion.

H. N. Wilson
College Hill April 14, 1892
Chapter 15  Six Acres, A Hidden History Discovered

For many years this house that sits back from easy view, was owned by the Schaeffer family. When they left, the property sat abandoned. By the time Kristin Kitchens, the current owner, took notice the building’s interior has been stripped of woodwork, including a collapsed main staircase, and it was slated for demolition. Kristin would see this house every Sunday as she drove to church. Her curiosity led her to one Sunday go up the long driveway and look around. Even in this sad condition she could envision the house renovated, so she purchased the house in April 2001. The restoration was complete in 2004 as a bed and breakfast. The property is six acres in size and was originally built and owned by Zebulon Strong between 1850 and 1860. It was deeded to his son, Elon, in 1875 at Zebulon’s death. Kristin uncovered this information herself to document the house. The College Hill Historical Society had nothing about this site in its files. She has visited the house years before when it was the home of a high school friend and never forgot the story of its history that she was told.

While it was being restored a room was found under the patio. Keran Seagraves Smith, who once played in the house that was in her family, remembers a tunnel that was later behind the coal pile. Kristin found a small, bare room under the eaves of the third floor that looks to never have been touched since it was built. In the floor, to the left of the window a deeply inscribed circle has been made in the dark wooden floor. Kristin has been told that this was a healing circle that dated to the time that this house was used in the Underground Railway. She has left the room untouched as a memorial to those that passed through her house on their way to freedom.

And what is an old house without a ghost? A tall, thin fair-skinned African American woman dressed in a long shirt with an apron has been seen in the dining room and bedroom. She is simply seen with no other manifestations.

The house has 6,500 sq. feet, five bedrooms and five bathrooms, nineteen rooms total, all beautifully furnished. It has been rented for wedding receptions, seminars and cooking classes, in addition to staying there as a guest. Each of the five bedrooms has the name of a grandmother of one of the staff members. Its elegance yet with a comfortable feel, has been named “The Best of Cincinnati” by Cincinnati CityBeat magazine.

A true preservationist, Kristin wants to purchase the one acre property next door that had belonged to Charles Aiken. She plans to call it the “7th Acre.”

If you would like to stay there or see the property for yourself, please contact: Kristin Kitchens, 541-0873.

Old Photo of Six Acres
Chapter 16  Morgan’s Raiders

Even though Kentucky remained in the Union during the Civil War, some of the war’s most famous personages holding with the Southern cause arose there. John Hunt Morgan, although portrayed as suddenly charging across the Ohio River to an unfamiliar state, actually had ties to Cincinnati and could have known this general area quite well.

The Hunt family came to Lexington, Kentucky in July 1795. For three generations the family had been merchants in New Jersey. John Wesley Hunt, John H. Morgan’s grandfather, was the first millionaire west of the Alleghenies, making a fortune in the manufacture of cordage. In 1795, John Wesley’s cousin, Abijah Hunt, was a Cincinnati merchant. The goods were bought in Pennsylvania and other eastern towns, transported by covered wagon to Pittsburgh and then floated on flatboat down the Ohio River. Farmers relied on store merchants to sell or trade them for supplies and to extend credit when times were lean.

From the early years of Cincinnati, Abijah and his brothers Jesse and Jeremiah Hunt provisioned some supplies for Ft. Washington. Through Abijah’s partnership with John Wesley in Lexington, cattle and nails were brought up to Cincinnati from Kentucky for sale, and Cincinnati sent liquor and bacon south. In 1799, Abijah wrote that he couldn’t obtain enough liquor as “...the Consumption is Monstrous in the Army.” In 1795, John sold 98 gallons of sherry, a barrel of brandy, and 433 lbs. of bacon to Cincinnati. John Wesley’s daughter, Henrietta Hunt, married Col. Calvin C. Morgan who was the son of a wealthy merchant of Huntsville, Alabama.

John H. Morgan31 attended Transylvania University (Lexington, Ky.) but did not graduate. Instead he, his brother Calvin and his uncle, Alexander, enlisted in the Mexican War. John and Calvin returned from the war and entered into the civilian life. John became a manufacturer of cotton products. When war was declared, Morgan and his many relations joined the Confederacy cause.

Morgan was a natural leader and had a famous sense of humor. His men were devoted to him and he was as loyal to them. Many sons of Kentucky’s most prominent men rode with him. The best of the Calvary transferred to his unit, as did his brothers. The regiment was named the Second Kentucky Cavalry, C. S. A. with Morgan as Colonel. Almost as famous was his mount, Black Bess, reputed to be one of the finest horses in Kentucky. The horse saved his life many times but he had to abandon her to save his own life later on.

Morgan’s assignment was to disrupt, raid and destroy Union supply trains traveling south to equip troops fighting in Tennessee. He destroyed bridges, depots, railroad beds and obstructed tunnels along the way. With the seized supplies he equipped his men and other C.S.A. units. Plundered bolts of cloth, a rare commodity during the war, were seized from raids into Indiana and Ohio. These were exchanged for lodging, food and supplies for his troops from the farms they stayed at. If his hosts were not congenial, he would leave Confederate money for his stay. His troops were young men in their teenage years and early twenties to whom this was a glorious adventure, led by a dashing gentleman. Their causalities were few. Morgan was known for his quick strikes, the source of his nickname “Thunderbolt of the Confederacy.”

He captured more than 25,000 men and let them go free if they promised not to fight against the Confederacy. If one of those pardoned were recaptured by Morgan later, he was executed.

The lack of timely communication helped his unit to assume mythical proportions. Their size, while actually 4,000 men at the most, was reported to be up to 40,000 troops. Calvary skirmishes were attributed to his Raiders, even when they were hundreds of miles away. Taking advantage of the situation, Morgan did his best to plant rumors about different destinations. When he rode into Indiana in June 1863, he was rumored to be riding to Indianapolis to empty that state’s treasury.

During the following month, July 13-14, Morgan was rumored to be ready to attack Cincinnati.

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31 General sources for Morgan’s Raiders: The Longest Raid of the Civil War, Lester V. Horwitz, 1999
The city was armed with soldiers waiting as this had been anticipated. Some people buried, hid or lowered down a well their silver, money, jewelry and other valuables. Later some forgot where things were hidden. Men readied their rifles in anticipation. Martial law had been proclaimed in Cincinnati on July 12, and in Columbus Governor Tod called out the militia.

Morgan appeared in Harrison, Ohio on July 13, while another rumor had Union troops preparing for him to enter Hamilton, Ohio. He passed through New Haven, New Baltimore, Montgomery, Maineville, Goshen, Sharonville, and Glendale, spending the night within sight of Camp Dennison. He burned a supply train near Lockland and emptied the stable of fine horses owned by Thomas Spooner, an Internal Revenue collector. The Raiders passed through Batavia and Williamsburg before leaving the area. Morgan was closely pursued by General Edward H. Hobson. As Morgan passed through Ohio, trees were felled by the pursuing troops so that Morgan couldn’t return the way he came. Morgan was captured on July 26 in Columbiana County. He and his remaining troops were taken to Columbus by a special train. A welcoming party assembled at the Columbus depot. Governor Tod was waiting to shake Morgan’s hand. At the time of his capture, Morgan was 37 years old. Four months after his capture, he and six of his officers - including one who was a nephew of President Zachery Taylor, suspiciously escaped by digging a tunnel and made their way back into Kentucky. Morgan was killed after he was captured during a skirmish on Sept. 4, 1864 at Greenville, Tennessee.

His famous raid into Ohio captured an estimated 2,500 horses and covered 29 Ohio counties. His troops averaged 21 hours a day in the saddle and could cover 90 miles in 35 hours.

The late Warren Steiner wrote some of his memories of Monfort Heights. He related this from his conversation with Mrs. Anna (Biddle) Wikely: “Mrs. Wikely said that she was about ten years old when Morgan’s Raiders...came to this area. West Fork Road was one of the main roads from the west into Cincinnati at that time. It was felt that he might attack the city from this direction. About two hundred men, mostly older men and boys of about teen age gathered here from as far away as Warren and Montgomery counties to the north. They were commonly called the ‘squirrel hunters’ and they came here at the request of the military authorities in Cincinnati. They stayed here about five days, and most of them slept in the church building and on the ground around the church. It was in the summer of 1863 and the weather was warm. She said the ladies of the church prepared food for these men and brought it daily to them while they were here. She said that most of the younger men of military age were in the Union Army in the east.

She also told me of an incident that happened to some friends of the family who lived on a country road in northern Colerain Township. Some of Morgan’s Raiders passed through that area. It seems that this family had, as one of its members, a young girl about six or eight years old. The raiders were always hunting fresh horses to replace their worn out mounts, and when they approached this farm the father of the girl, a farmer with two fine horses, was pressed to know how to hide them. In desperation, he finally decided to put the horses in the parlor of the farmhouse and draw down the shades. He told his daughter to stay with them, hold their heads down, and keep talking to them in a low voice to keep them from making a noise when they heard the other horses outside.

The raiders came, searched the barn and near-by pasture. They watered their horses and filled their canteens at a well in the yard, and after a little while moved on. The two fine horses were saved and the girl always said that it was the most frightening experience of her life.

Another story, in connection with Morgan’s Raiders, was told to me by Mrs. Eliza Bacon, a member of an early Green Township family, who lived on North Bend Road, just east of Cheviot Road...She said that she and her father, who was a farmer, were returning home from taking some vegetables down to the city market. They always came out West Fork Road from Colerain Pike, which was the main road into the city from the northwest. She said that on this particular morning, they arrived at West Fork and Colerain and found a Union soldier stationed there. He told them not to continue out West Fork Road because the latest information was that Morgan’s Raiders were coming into the city from that direction. He told them that they would no doubt lose their horse and wagon if they ran into them. She said that they then proceeded to go out Colerain Pike to Mt. Airy and then got home by that route.”
Rose Budd (Lingo) Cummins, a resident of Mt. Airy, was born on Fox Road. The woods around their cabin were cleared in anticipation of Morgan’s troops. Their chestnut wood log cabin was moved to Vogel Road in fearful anticipation of Morgan’s coming.

The community of Glendale was rumored to have many tunnels beneath the streets due to the Underground Railroad. It was in these tunnels that the town’s supply of horses were said to have been hidden.

Ruth J. Wells has a article that originally ran in the Venice Graphic of September 9, 1887 by Times-Star reporter Robert Mulford: “It was on the glorious Fourth of July, in 1860, that the fountain was dedicated. (Richard’s watering trough on Old Colerain Road). Several years later Morgan’s raiders approached within half a dozen miles of this spot, and it fell to the lot of Giles Richards’ son George - at whose farm I spent my vacation - to turn them from their purpose. George Richards was a mere youth then - not much over sixteen. His cousin Giles, a member of the Sixth Ohio Volunteer Infantry, was at home on sick leave at that time. The country road about was much excited just then over the story that Morgan’s band of marauders was nearing town. In the field of battle near where the Confederate Gen. Zollicoffer was killed, Will Gano captured a horse and sent him North after christening him after the dead rebel. These young fellows took it into their heads one day that they would go upon a scouting expedition and see if they could find some trace of the wily Morgan. So they hitched ‘Zollicoffer’ to a buggy and started out. Away up the pike they drove past Colerain, through Venice and some distance beyond that place. On they were going when they discovered three men in gray in the barnyard. They carried muskets, and in a moment their weapons were cocked.

‘Halt’ cried one of them
The boys halted.
‘Where are you going?’ demanded one of the Johnny rebs.
‘Oh, we are driving to see if we can find any of Morgan’s raiders,’ responded George Richards, with all the candor of youth.
‘Keep right on,’ ordered the fellow grimly, ‘you’ll find ‘em’.
The three Rebs fell in behind and the boys drove on. Giles knew they were in a scrape but George didn’t realize the danger. Sure enough, they had not ridden very far before they ran into a body of at least a hundred of the Johnnies.
‘Nice horse that!’ remarked a big rawboned Kentuckian, as he thumped little ‘Zollicoffer’ in the ribs. ‘Git out here and help unhitch’.

George got out and the Kentuckian rode away on Zollicoffer’s back. Even then he did not appreciate that they were in a bad scrape, but he hunted up the officer in command and said: ‘Captain, we’re in a pretty tough fix. We’re pretty far from home to be without any horse. Haven’t you got an old cripple you don’t want that you can let us have?’

The audacity of the request startled the Reb, and for a moment he stared at his questioner closely. He saw nothing but innocence there, and with a queer sort of smile he said to one of his men:
‘Get this boy a horse!’

Then turning to George he hold him: ‘Now you turn right around and go back for if you meet the rest of the army they’ll take this away from you. By the way any home guards up your way?’
‘Yes, indeed!’ responded young Richards, ‘two companies at Venice.’

It was a fib, for there wasn’t a home guard in the town but the lie served its purpose. Morgan’s raiders gave Venice a wide berth. They turned down toward New Baltimore, burnt the bridge there that night and then passed back to the Colerain Pike, crossing at Franklin Wells a couple miles south of his place. As for young Richards, it was a cripple the Rebs gave him. It took three hours prodding with a hickory hoop-pole to get him home again. On the way they met several drunken Johnnies, and George, filled with the enthusiasm of youth, wanted to take a few prisoners, but his cousin told him to ‘say nothing and saw wood.’ He didn’t want his head blown off. They finally ran across one raider.
who had succumbed to water or something else. He was asleep on the road with two hams by his side. The boys ‘sneaked’ the hams, and later on they were devoured with éclat at the Union Sanitary Commission picnic at Colerain. Every farmer they met declared they had heard the yarn often enough. The majority, however, gathered their horses together and drove them into the weeds that grew as high as a house in the Miami bottom.

Venice owes George Richards a debt of gratitude to this day.”

Another Morgan story from The Daily, "Morgan crossed the Ohio below Louisville and headed north, then west, direct for Cincinnati...On toward Mt. Healthy he came, and Branch Witherby and his sons joined the ranks of the other ‘minute men’ hurrying in the direction of his possible path. But he had passed, cutting across to Glendale and then on up the river.

One amusing incident that occurred that late summer day in ’63 is well remembered. A storekeeper of Mt. Airy named Memmel had a fine white horse and Morgan’s men heard of it. Memmel had the start on them, leaped on the animal and rode it into a barn down the road. He went outside, shut the big door and folded his arms. When Morgan’s men came along and asked him if he had seen a white horse being ridden along the way, he replied: ‘Well, I didn’t see any. Fact is, I’ve just woke up a bit ago,’ and they passed on.”

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32 The Daily, Old College Hill Well Still Serving Thirsty, September 5, 1927
Chapter 17 College Hill as a Village


The colleges of the community played a part in being the setting for an unusual con man. Louis Adolphus lived and worked in College Hill, posing as an educator of young men. With false letters of introduction, purporting him to have been a tutor from Lord Russell’s family, he came to Cincinnati in 1861. Setting up a school for boys in College Hill, his wife and daughter also played the role. According to a newspaper article:33 “Their home at College Hill became one of considerable luxury, with a fine table and stylish carriage and horses.

He presented $8,000 of false bills of foreign exchange drawn on London which weren’t payable. He persuaded the financiers here to extend him the funds. In one instance he borrowed $2,000 from a widow of College Hill upon property covered with chattel mortgages. His servants and numerous neighbors became his victims and he made many purchases without payment. Fifty persons in all suffered from his actions.

His last and heaviest transaction involved a forgery of the name of Henry Black & Bros. on notes amounting to $4,000, a few as high as $600 - all of which he disposed of late in 1863. When these forgeries were discovered, early in 1864, the doctor prepared to escape with his family. But up to the last moment merchants of Cincinnati credited him with furs, silverware and other valuable, which he took with him, by night express to New York, and thence by steamer to Liverpool.”

College Hill, once forest, then farm land, now a home of educational institutions, was a growing community. As more people came to College Hill to work and study, news of its beauty, and available land, created a steady influx of new residents. Described as “…cool nights, pure air, and splendid landscape”34 it enjoyed the reputation for many years as the highest elevation in Hamilton County. It wasn’t until the next century that Mt. Airy was found to be marginally higher. The more affluent Cincinnatians now had summer homes on the hills when pollution filled, heavy air blanketed the crowded industrial basin. Large homes, bordered by sweeping lawns, graveled streets and tree lined sidewalks, became the place to live.

One of the most popular amusements was the Farmers’ Lyceum which met monthly going from house to house. It was a day long affair with speakers and attendees coming from around the country. There was also a yearly Harvest Home festival which rotated from College Hill to other communities. Transportation became the key to opening up the suburbs. Until to early 1850’s, Alason ‘Lansing’ Grant’s omnibus was the main way to make the 5 mile trip to downtown Cincinnati. He ran two lines, one went directly to downtown, for 35 cents, the other went to Cumminsville where passengers transferred to a train to go to downtown. The line extended into Mt. Pleasant (Mt. Healthy) as well. Later Asa Robbins owned this line and made two round trips a day, except on

34 Chic, 1900, R. N. Wild
Sunday, when the omnibus didn’t run. Once a month, the omnibus ran at night to Cincinnati to attend entertainment.

In cold weather, lap robes, ceramic hot water bottles or straw wrapped hot bricks were used to keep the passengers warm. Slow, expensive in its day, limited in passenger capacity and uncomfortable being jostled over gravel or rutted, mud roads, the coming of the trains was much anticipated. In 1851 the Cincinnati, Hamilton & Dayton railroad was built, linking a faster way to the outlying communities but it would be several decades before College Hill was linked directly to this line. In the 1860’s tracks were laid from Cincinnati to Cumminsville along Spring Grove Avenue for horse or mule drawn cars. But in the Meantime, Edward W. Sayre operated his four horse omnibus on its once daily trip to Cumminsville where passengers could catch a mule-car into town. Edward Sayre ran the omnibus from 1861 until October of 1876. Sayre also carried the mail. When Sayre died in 1926, he certainly had seen a revolution in transportation!

The 1850 census listed Dr. Mathias Williams in College Hill as a physician. F. G. Cary’s home became the home and office of many physicians: Dr. A. G. McChesney (1869), Dr. Johnson (1886) and years later, Dr. Kilgour, a homeopathic doctor from Canada.

About 1855 the emigration to the hill included many familiar names: Charles Cist, George C. and Norris S. Knight, Rev. Clement Babb, J. C. C. Holenshade, A. D. E. Tweed, G. Y. Roots. Home development started on Glenview Avenue in 1855. The first homes built were for George Henshaw, M. L. Knight and A. Henshaw.

It wasn’t until July 21, 1866 that College Hill was incorporated as a village. Edward DeSerisy was Mayor (1866-67); E. N. Wilde, clerk; Samuel F. Cary, Eber P. Strong, Joel Strong and Amos Worthington as Trustees. Armand DeSerisy was postmaster. Later mayors were Norris S. Knight, 1868; Henry M. Cist, 1869; Cyrus S. Bates, 1870-71; L. T. Worthington, 1880-81. When Cyrus Bates was mayor, W. S. Rogers was recorder, E. B. Stout, Marshall; I. N. Skillman, treasurer; long term council, D. B. Pierson, W. C. Huntington, E. DeSerisy; short term, Eber Strong, A. A. Upson, R. Simpson. For the sake of completeness these were the Mayors of College Hill: Edward DeSeresy 1857-1867; Norris S. Knight 1868; Henry M. Cist 1869; Cyrus W. Bates 1870-1879; L. T. Worthington 1880-1881; J. C. C. Holenshade 1882; E. Henshaw 1883-84; Joseph Barker 1885; John Bruce 1886-1911.

Once it became a village, streets were laid out and macadamized, eight foot wide sidewalks were added, and land set aside for a new school. The town hall was in rented quarters but a new one was built 1880 on the southeast corner of Larch and Belmont Avenues. The name was changed from Pleasant Hill to College Hill when a post office was established there.

In 1869 the population was 800 and Henry M. Cist was mayor; Edward DeSerisy, postmaster; J. Rieck, J. and M. Denman and Rogers & Company, were general stores (ed. Note: An advertisement of Asa Roger’s stated: Dealers in dry goods, groceries, notions and everything usually kept in a country store, excepting whisky and tobacco. Good meals prepared when notified before hand); D. O’Neill, grocery and saloon; C. Wulfe, butcher shop; A. McGrew, blacksmith shop; J. W. Brown, wagon shop; J. B. Myers, sawmill; J. & W. Towlman, sawmill. William Flamm opened his grocery in 1870 at the corner of Llanfair and Belmont Ave. Years later it was Bolam’s grocery and finally was converted into apartments.

The roads were described in 1870 as: “The principal streets are the old Hamilton road, now called Hamilton avenue, and Colerain avenue, which leaves the Hamilton road at the site of old Cary’s Academy. The former is sixty feet wide, well macadamized, and has graveled sidewalks, ten feet in width, finished as far north as Linden avenue...Running across from Hamilton to Colerain avenue, immediately opposite Farmers’ College is Locust avenue...On the north side of this is the

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35 The seventeen room Huntington house, 5801 Glenview Avenue was a stage stop for travelers en route to Hamilton, Ohio.

36 His granddaughter is Mrs. Jane Early, the wife of Dr. Daniel Earley, who lives in College Hill.
post-office and two or three dwellings, while on the south is a beautiful locust grove of perhaps two acres.”

The residences of College Hill during this time were some of the loveliest in Cincinnati. From a College Hill profile of 1870 came the following descriptions: “J. C. C. Holenshade lived in the house that was the former residence of Freeman G. Cary. It was purchased in 1861 by Mr. Holenshade, who at once began improvements...a wide stone pavement, skirted by shade trees, extends along the entire front on Hamilton avenue, while from his residence the lawn, with its green carpet, rolls away to the east and south in graceful undulations. South of the dwelling, near the avenue, is an artificial lake. The house is a large two-story brick building, with a basement of cut free-stone, which, being principally above ground, gives the edifice substantially three stories. The entire front is embraced by a porch supported by Corinthian pillars. From the observatory one looks upon the village spread out at his feet...” This house originally cost $70,000 to build. It was sold years later to Mrs. James Larmon. Eventually the house was torn down in the 1930’s and the houses on Larmon Court built. Where the Hollenshade lawn was planted was the site of the 1819 cabin of John Strong.

“South-east of Mr. Holenshade’s, on the opposite side of Hamilton avenue, is the residence of D. B. Pierson, erected three years ago, “...and surrounded by beautiful grounds. Mr. Pierson has about ten acres of land and a fine lawn, through which a well kept drive winds to his house.” Pierson’s first home burnt and this is the second of his houses on this property, 142 Hillcrest Avenue. Its entry once faced Hamilton Avenue but after much of its broad lawn was subdivided into lots, a new entrance built facing Hillcrest Avenue. At one time, the Ohio River could be seen from this doorway.

“North of Mr. Pierson’s are the residences of the Rev. Robert Crosette, Mrs. Sarah Wilson and G. F. Sadd, all of them comfortable homes, on lots of from four to five acres, with beautiful surroundings. (ed. note: these homes faced Hamilton avenue as Aster Place was not in existence at this time.) Immediately north of the Female College, on Hamilton avenue, is the residence of Mr. Hayden, pleasantly situated on a lot of about two acres. Opposite this, on the west side of the avenue, is the dwelling of Dr. A.G. McChesney...North of the public school building, on the east side of the avenue, are the residences of Lawrence Deininger, Amos Worthington and John W. Hammitt...on the west side of the avenue, near the northern boundary of the village, is the old residence of William Cary, by whose widow it is yet occupied.”

The Wilson house, once called the ‘Ministers Home,’ still stands at 1502 Aster. When it was built, a large tree stood at each of its four corners. They were incorporated into the structure. Repair work years later revealed these trees with the bark still on them. The Wilsons came to Cincinnati from New Hampshire by flatboat. Samuel Wilson was a Presbyterian minister. Among the items brought was an organ, a Seth Thomas clock with wooden works, and wood working tools some dating from 1719. Indians carried their goods to the College Hill property. The Wilsons were as influential as the Carys, and helped shape the way College Hill residents were regarded. Miss Harriet was the teacher and principal of the “pig eye” school. Hardy and spry, when she was 96 she was seen on the roof of her house, cleaning out the gutters.

“On the north-west corner of Hamilton and Laurel avenues John R. Davey has about seven acres of the Farmers’ College tract, upon which, in 1868, he erected a fine residence. It is a handsome structure, of the Italian style, uniting elegance and convenience in all its appointments. From the tower a magnificent prospect is obtained. Mr. Davey has a beautiful site for his dwelling, having procured that part of the farm upon which a large amount of money and labor was expended in creating a botanical garden in connection with the college.” Named “Oakwood,” the house was

37 The Suburbs of Cincinnati, Sidney D. Maxwell, 1870.
38 The Suburbs of Cincinnati, Sidney D. Maxwell, 1870.
39 5651 Hamilton Avenue. This was the original Cary’s Pleasant Hill Academy. Over the years it served as home to many village physicians: Drs. Brooks, Heighway, McChesney, Vane, Johnston, and Kilgour.
designed by Samuel Hannaford. The house stood on Linden Drive where the street curved to avoid a huge oak tree that once stood there. The house was torn down in December 1969 and an apartment building built on the site. The original grounds extended over to Larch Avenue where Davey’s lake would have been in the backyards of the north side of Larch Avenue. In front of 1622 Larch the cypress trees that stand so tall were once on the edge of the lake. The current house was built around the existing trees. Oakwood in its later years served as a residence for the unmarried teachers of the College Hill school. At one time Oakwood had a 250 foot long grape arbor and a greenhouse. Built on part of the botanical gardens and experimental farm of Farmers’ College, at one time there was more than a mile of gravel paths that wound around Oakwood and the grounds. John R. Davey was a publisher belonging to the firm of Wilson, Hinkle and Company.

“Among the notable places of College Hill is the well-known one of the Hon. Samuel F. Cary. Occupying a good position upon the hill, which begins to descend southwardly near this point, he enjoys a fine landscape to the southeast...He has about twenty seven acres of land.” Demolished in the 1920’s, this house became the site for the Glenwood Apartments, which were torn down and is now part of the land of the Twin Towers Retirement Community.

“Immediately upon the south is the property of the Davis heirs, now occupied by O. J. Wilson. The grounds, consisting of five acres, are covered with shrubbery and shade trees.”

Behind the Wilson house was the stone home of the lawyer Samuel Caldwell. Constructed of stones that were hauled up from the ravine beneath the ridge that the house sat upon, its isolation off of Hamilton Avenue made it a place that was seldom seen. Originally dubbed “Caldwell’s Folly” it later was known as the “Dower House” or “Bleak House” when it was owned by the Prather family. The last owner was Edward Greeno. The house was demolished a few years ago and its land became part of the Twin Towers Retirement Community.

“On Colerain (Belmont) avenue are some pleasant homes. That of the late Chas. Cist, on the east, is a neat dwelling, surrounded by well-shade, ample grounds.

On this avenue, too, is the former residence of the late General S. J. McGroarty, a snug cottage, with a veranda in front, well covered with vines and flowers.

On the north side of Laurel avenue, near Colerain, Mrs. Wild and Professor J. H. Wilson have pleasant homes.

Here, too, Robert Simpson is now finishing a two story frame residence, with a tower and ample verandas. It had an external elevator for lifting barrels of apples, etc. into the attic for storage. This house was known for its fine marble and glass windows that were imported from France wrapped in white flannel. Robert Simpson came to Cincinnati in 1863 as General Agent for the Mutual Benefit Insurance Company.” A larch tree from the original botanical garden stood in front of the house, giving the street its name. Because of the cholera epidemics in the city, his wife insisted on moving to College Hill. This 1870 house was probably designed by Samuel Hannaford.

“On Cedar avenue, where it makes the angle, E. P. Strong, in 1869, erected a neat two-story frame cottage.

Captain A. D. E. Tweed, on Colerain avenue, has one of the finest sites on the hill. From the observatory of his dwelling a panorama of rare beauty and extent is unfolded. The Kentucky hills are in open view for miles; the lower part of Cincinnati can easily be seen; while the fine suburbs of the city complete a picture which certainly has no superior in Cincinnati’s surroundings. Captain Tweed has twenty acres of land, and a spacious dwelling, erected in 1865.

Among the handsome new places of the hill is that recently sold by George C. Knight to Mrs. Sarah J. Kennedy, on the corner of Colerain and Knight avenues, situated upon a beautiful elevation,
from which are enjoyed extensive views.\textsuperscript{42}

Immediately east, fronting Cedar avenue, is the residence of James Skillman erected in 1867, occupying a very eligible position, on five acres of land that decline gracefully to the south.

On the south-west corner of Colerain avenue and Badgley road is the neat cottage of Captain Kates... On the west side of the latter road is the comfortable home of George Henshaw\textsuperscript{43}, while immediately adjoining it on the south is a new dwelling erected by Mr. Knight, who has also re-erected at the head of this road, on Colerain avenue, a tasteful residence... Farther south, on a site of rare beauty is the residence of Wm. C. Huntington. Mr. Huntington looks down in the direction of the Ohio river, upon a landscape of unusual beauty, enjoying, upon the one hand, the prospect of his own farm of sixty acres, and, upon the other, the handsomely-rolling lands of Mrs. Jane J. Kennedy, the estate of E. C. Morris, and Charles E. Cist, that lie off to the south and east.

The home of the Rev. E. L. Davies, on the corner of Locust and Colerain avenues is a pleasant one...Daniel Flamm, on the east side of Colerain avenue, between Maple and Cedar avenues, has a neat frame residence and five acres of eligible land.

At the intersecting of Colerain and Hamilton avenues, N. Skillman, last year erected a large frame storeroom, to the north and rear of which he has also a neat two-story dwelling.

On Linden avenue there are... Mrs. Dr. Litzenberg, Mrs. S. B. Brooks (now occupied by O. F. Gordon), Prof. Jacob Tuckerman (occupied by Mrs. Locke), Josiah Wilder, Frank Howard (the present by C. S. Bates), and Mrs. Williams. On the south-east corner of this and Hamilton avenue is the residence of Mrs. Judge Miller.

... The post office, on Locust avenue (now 1624 Pasadena), presided over by Edward DeSerisy; the tasteful home of W. E. Watson, on the same avenue; and the pleasant dwelling of Mrs. Wheelock. On the east side of Colerain avenue are the residences occupied by Mrs. Snowden and A. A. Upson. Near the junction of this and Hamilton avenue is the dwelling of Rev. W. H. Rogers.”

The post office building, 1624 Pasadena Avenue built circa 1837, was used as the post office until 1892. The building was originally named the Pleasant Hill office and was run by Alason Grant. Between 1845-1849 the post office was moved to Zebulon Strong’s general store on Hamilton Avenue. After 1849 there were frequent changes in postmasters: Isaiah Grant (1850), James S. Cook (1852), and Edward DeSerisy, Jr. (1853).

In 1860 this building had a second floor added so the post master could live there and it made it easier to drop mail sacks on top of Mr. Sayre’s omnibus. In 1976 it was added to the National Register of Historic Places.

The first postmistress was Mrs. Mary McGroarty, appointed in 1876. In December 1878 the post office was both discontinued and then reopened, with Mrs. McGroarty being reappointed in 1878. She was in charge, except for a short time in 1886 when Mrs. Sarah Molony held the position, until 1892 when the post office station was discontinued and made a part of the Cincinnati postal service.

A postman fondly remembered of the more recent times was William ‘Bill’ Scharbach. When he was a carrier the College Hill post office was in a building on Hamilton Avenue built by Willis H. Forbes, Sr., Karen Forbes-Nutting’s grandfather. The building was built for Charles Deters, father of the plumbing contractor, Charley Deters. The building at 5837 Hamilton Avenue had been a bakery in later years as well as ‘Little Mike’s Lounge.’ It was torn down for the College Hill Plaza. Karen Forbes-Nutting mentioned that when the building was first constructed, a ‘secret room’ was in the back where postal inspectors could come in and observe the unsuspecting workers.

Bill Scharbach started as a substitute carrier on February 10, 1913 and was appointed as a regular carrier on October 1, 1918, on his birthday. For 36 years he walked the same route. He retired

\textsuperscript{42} The Oaks

\textsuperscript{43} The George Henshaw house that sits third from the corner of Belmont on the west side of Glenview Ave. He hired an architect to build this house from the barn that was part of their property.
in 1954 at age 70. A reception was held for him at the (then) Cincinnati Sanitarium chapel, and all his customers were invited. Bill figured that he walked 75,000 miles over his career. He lived until 1978, when he was 94 years old.

Virginia Geyler wrote that: “you could set your clock by his deliveries, 8:30 AM and 1 PM on Aster Place. I only remember him being off once for sickness.” His route was the south part of College Hill - Davey, Aster, Larch, etc. all the way down Hamilton Avenue to Springlawn. He then would take a street car back up to the College Hill station. His daughter mentioned that he wouldn’t wear the same pair of shoes two consecutive days.

An interesting bit of postal history from Mt. Airy also connects with College Hill. Mahlon Brown, buried in Gard Cemetery, founded Brown’s Grove. There he was the postmaster from 1842-1847. In 1852 Brown’s Grove was renamed Mt. Airy. John C. Ebersole, who owned property in College Hill, was postmaster from 1865-1868 and 1869-1875.

“On the North Bend road, near the north-eastern corporate limits, E. P. Strong has a place of twelve acres...J. C. Morrison, on Knight avenue has a nice two story frame cottage and an eligible lot of six acres...Still father west, but on Colerain avenue, William Donnelly is preparing to build...though the venerable Zebulon Strong is outside the corporate limits, his place of thirty acres is contiguous on the south. The old farm house is simple and plain, but nature offers what palatial splendor can not supply, distant landscapes of the rarest beauty.”

Along Groesbeck Road was the 1865 house of J. Tuckerman and across the street that of Daniel Thomas. A carpenter, Thomas had his store on Belmont Avenue. A student at Cary’s Academy by the last name of Mullett was allowed by Thomas to use some of his tools. Years later Mullet became the United States Supervising Architect in Washington, D. C. He sent for Thomas and gave him the job of inspector of the government buildings in the nation’s capital. The Phillips/Chatfield house was built in 1821 and sold by Daniel Thomas to William Phillips in 1854. When Williams died it became the property of his daughter, Ann, who owned the house until her death in 1892. It was a landmark for its central chimney. The Chatfields were the final owners until it was sold for $1 to the College Hill Presbyterian Church who demolished it for the educational wing.

Several times, railroads to the hill were proposed but after studies and drawings, nothing was built. The gossip of the day was that the investors were more interested in land speculation than in railroad construction.

In 1873 the College Hill Railroad Company was incorporated with principal officers of John Davey and Robert Simpson. Davey was president from 1876-1884 and Robert Simpson served as vice-president. Then in 1884, they exchanged positions within the company. It was anticipated that the railroad would not make a profit, and their involvement and investment was from a sense of civic obligation. Construction started in 1875, using a narrow gauge 36” rail. It was planned that it would connect the Cumminsville station near the southern border of Spring Grove Cemetery with the Cincinnati, Hamilton & Dayton railroad, travel up the long hill with bridges to span the ravines. The line went behind O.F.C./Cincinnati Sanitarium and terminated on Hamilton Avenue, opposite Llanfair. This brick terminal building was later incorporated into the Porshe/Audi dealership that sat on Hamilton Avenue and was demolished to be part of the College Hill Presbyterian Church’s parking lot.

The first trip made on this line was March 11, 1876. Because of the steep grade, the small engine with two passenger cars had problems ascending the hill and a stronger engine was ordered. Three additional cars could be added for baggage. Regular service started March 13, 1876. The cost of construction was $5,000 a mile. It was operated by a three man crew, an engineer, fireman and conductor. Surprisingly, the train had air brakes. Four trains operated each day, the passengers being discharged on a street near their home or at the wooden platform built in the community’s center.

The line was expanded in 1877 to end at Mt. Healthy. The terminal point was on Compton Road, about one mile west of the Johnson farm, on whose grounds Arlington Gardens Cemetery now sits. When the line extension was completed Oct. 13, 1877, a big picnic was held in Johnson’s Grove. Five hundred people attended, including Ohio’s Governor Bishop. The fare was 35 cents one way, 60 cents
round trip.\textsuperscript{44} In 1883 a new railroad was incorporated, the Cincinnati Northwestern Railway, which included the College Hill Railroad. Simpson and Davey were still leaders in this new venture, and plans were made to extend the line to Liberty, Indiana. The narrow gauge size was abandoned and a third rail added to increase the width of the tracks.

To haul ever-increasing loads and to be able to connect to other railways, a wider, standard gauge was already in use. Cars needed to be interchangeable for efficiency and to eliminate some passenger transfers.

The CNR remained a passenger service and was never extended to Indiana. The demise of the railroad was the coming of the electric streetcar in 1892. The first electric streetcar came to College Hill in 1895, being a major force in bringing people to the hill. The streetcar was not as fast, but fare was only a nickel. Some of the same right-of-ways were used, and the tracks converted for the streetcar lines.

Because of the traction lines bisecting the roads, the streets were in such poor condition that people refused to pay a toll fee. One of the worst stretches was Hamilton Avenue from College Hill to Mt. Healthy, according to a 1902 article in the \textit{Cincinnati Post}. Toll gates were becoming a thing of the past wherever streetcars were used.

Carrying passengers via the railroad was discontinued in 1899 as revenues fell. Robert Simpson died in 1899 and his family divested itself of the almost worthless railroad stock in 1901. The railroad was purchased to become part of the Southern Ohio Traction Company. Wages paid in 1901 varied from 19 cents/hr. for those motormen with less than three years experience, to 21 cents/hr. for those with six or more years of service. The Southern Ohio Traction Company was merged in 1926 into the Cincinnati, Hamilton & Dayton Electric Streetcar line. In 1930 it became a part of the Cincinnati & Lake Erie Line. By 1938 all of these interurban were disappearing as the more familiar street cars filled the roads.

By looking through the property title of the late Willis H. Forbes, the land contained in College Hill’s first subdivision arising from the sale of Farmers’ College lands, can be traced. In 1798, - the thirtieth section containing 640 acres was sold from John Cleves Symmes to Nehemiah Tunis for $1280. Then it was sold from Nehemiah to his son, Jabez C. Tunis, in 1812 for $800 in the New Jersey court. Jabez and his wife, Phebe, sold it to William Cary for $3440.48, Sept. 8, 1813. The description of the land mention’s ‘Gray’s fifty-two acres’ so Gray must have purchased his land earlier. Cary’s parcel contained about 491.5 acres. The land was left in William Cary’s 1862 will to Rebecca, his wife, and S. F. Cary, their son. The property next appears in the will of F. G. Cary’s son, William Cary, 1894. The land was purchased in public sale in 1894 by Charles Phares for $1376.67. The property is now two lots, 100 feet fronting Cary Ave. by 193 feet deep. By 1901 the lots are in court through the will of Elizabeth Sayre, with Caroline Caldwell executor. Liens against the property are held by the Second National Bank, Village of College Hill for street and paving assessments, and Eugene Lewis claims delinquent taxes. The land was foreclosed and appraised prior to sale for $2400 but there were no bidders. In 1903 Willis H. Forbes buys the land for $800.

The Forbes family were carpenters and builders. Thomas A. Forbes built the neat house at 5807 Glenview Avenue in the mid-1880’s. It has been modernized over time but keeps its Victorian charm. The rear of the property adjoins the old College Hill railroad. The decorated fascia board adds a unique look to the gutters and is enhanced by the contrasting paint scheme. The vertical board treatment on the front elevation, the two large chimneys on the side, plus the small dormers all add to the charm of this old home. A carpenter, Mr. Forbes also built the house at 5805 Glenview.

In 1869 the Hopkins subdivision was platted, three lots on the northeast corner of Hamilton Avenue and North Bend Road. That year the Knight subdivision was for sale - North Bend Road

\textsuperscript{44} The College Hill Narrow Gauge, John H. White, originally published in the Bulletin of the Cincinnati Historical Society, October, 1960.
south to Colerain Road and from Hamilton Avenue west to Witherby Road. “In 1886 the W.C. Huntington subdivision from Huntington Ave. southward 400 feet, and from Highland Avenue westward to Ridgelawn Avenue. Henry Deininger was corporation clerk and F. Hertenstein, notary public at this time.

In 1890 the Dr. J. Ferris subdivision, north and south of Cedar Avenue eastward to St. Elmo Avenue was opened. F. T. Strong was clerk, and Jos. Bruce notary public, this year. In 1891 the S. F. Cary subdivision opened from Cedar Avenue 373 feet southward and from Hamilton Avenue 324 feet west of Saranac Avenue. Names “...connected with this transfer were: Lilly G. Frazier, Elia W. Boyer, John Davey, S. F. and Jessie F. Cary, S. F. Cary, Jr. and John Bromwell. 

In 1892 (came) the second Dr. J. Ferris subdivision; 1894 the recording of the first S. F. Cary subdivision, the old Cary homestead, from Hamilton Avenue westward across Cary Avenue, and from North Bend Road south to upper Marlowe. The original Cary subdivision had come in 1855, embracing seven acres...

Other more recent subdivisions were: E. N. Wild subdivision in 1903, between upper Marlowe and Linden, west of Hamilton Avenue, attested by F. R. Strong, village clerk; 1907 the Newbold L. Pierson subdivision, Llanfair Avenue south to Laurel, and Hamilton Avenue east across Davey Avenue to 200 feet...the same year the Wild and Ferris subdivision, and the Charles M. Steele from 100 feet north of Garfield Avenue southward to 100 feet past Salvia Avenue, and from Simpson 600 feet westward; the Knopf subdivision on 1909 from Linden Avenue 600 feet northward, and from Lantana Avenue 202 feet eastward, in the transfer of which the names Caroline Knopf, Julia Plump, H. W. Plump, Otto L. Knopf, Alma N. Knopf, Walter R. Knopf, William Knopf, Hellen McKinney, and Charles G. McKinney, Jr., appear.”

In 1910 came the Charles F. Farwell subdivision, which contained the Hammitt homestead and extended from Cedar Avenue south past S. F. Cary’s second subdivision, and from Hamilton Avenue east to Ferris Place; the College Place subdivision, running north off North Bend Road, then Aspen Avenue was the called Inez Place, Strathmoor Avenue - Iola Avenue, and Heitzler Avenue - Irene Avenue, named after the three Flannigan daughters.

The water tower was built after 1889 when College Hill was able to purchase water from Cincinnati. The main in Northside was tapped, a pumping station built across from Windermere and the reservoir - the tower - was built. At the top it stood 176 feet high. Surrounding the top was a balcony from which the view was exceptional.

College Hill residents bought and held land in nearby communities. In 1870 a few of the major landowners in Northside were: L. Laboyteaux 34,200 acres; Solomon Eversull 9,550 acres; John S. Crawford 4,300 acres.

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45 The Suburbs of Cincinnati, op. cit.


47 Wild was a professor of mathematics at Farmers’ College and a board member of the Equitable Life Insurance Company.