Chapter 18  Rammelsberg & Mitchell
Furniture Built to Last for a Lifetime

For many years the house at the corner of Belmont and Glenview Avenues was owned by Alice E. Rammelsberg (1872-1957), who never married. She was the daughter of Charles Rammelsberg (1847-1895), and Rhoda T. Thomson (1848-1903). Rhoda was Peter G. Thomson’s sister. Alice, her mother and sisters, Rhoda (1874-1927) and Kathleen R. (1879-1963), lived in this Swiss Chalet style house built in 1891. Kathleen Rammelsberg married Army Lt. Col. Clarence LaMotte and moved to California. After his death in 1948 she came to live with Alice, who lived in the house until her death and was affectionately nicknamed “Reddums.” In 1964, the house was sold to Howard Mailley by auction to settle the estate. The house was designed by James Gamble Rogers who also designed Laurel Court and much of modern Yale and Brown Universities.

Charles was one of the sons of the fine furniture manufacturer, Frederick Rammelsberg. Charles Rammelsberg lived in College Hill with his family until they moved to New York, leaving Alice behind. This Rammelsberg wasn’t in the furniture business - ‘Charles Rammelsberg & Co. Agents, 40 Broadway, New York’ booked freight and passengers on ships. His brother-in-law, Charlie Schultz (husband of Catherine Rammelsberg), owned five ships. He was also the American Consul to the Kingdom of Prussia. Their home in Port of Stattin was furnished with furniture made by Frederick or in the factory of Mitchell & Rammelsberg.

Cincinnati was a major center for the furniture trade due to its location. In 1881, the Cincinnati Board of Trade and Transportation secretary, J. F. Blackburn said: “Cincinnati is situated with the cherry and walnut regions of the South on one side, and the populous consuming region of the North and Northwest on the other side. Cherry and other native woods are coming into favor, and the imported wood, mahogany, is also rapidly coming into use...The tendency of competition has been to cut off the ragged edges of the manufacture from Cincinnati, and leave her manufacturers masters of the field in the production of the finer, more tasteful and costly articles, as well as the better grades of a medium style of furniture.” The virgin forests of the Midwest provided the golden oak that was so popular in Victorian homes. The demand for oak furniture was great in England because of a disease that killed off the English oak trees. Another factor for the Cincinnati based furniture businesses was the Ohio River, for transportation and the power to run factories. Cincinnati had at one time 150 such furniture factories.

Frederick Rammelsberg (1814-1863) was born in Hanover, Germany. The family came to America in 1830 and both of his parents died in 1833 of cholera. His name first appeared in Cincinnati in 1836 and he entered into a furniture making partnership with Seneca Jones in 1838. While this partnership lasted until 1845, it is the firm of Mitchell & Rammelsberg begun in 1846 that still is remembered by furniture collectors today. Both men contributed $10,000 for their joint venture.

A fire in 1848 that destroyed their factory brought them to the verge of ruin since the loss was total and they weren’t insured. But they were able to borrow enough money to rebuild. By 1850, Mitchell & Rammelsberg reported in the U.S. census that their venture had a value of $145,000. This included 400,000 feet of oak, rosewood, ash, maple, poplar, pine, cherry and walnut worth $8,5000; 100,000 feet of veneers worth $4,000 and 14,000 feet of mahogany appraised at $2,500.

What made this furniture company so successful? Rammelsberg was the first local furniture manufacturer to use machinery on a large scale, turning out interchangeable parts. By using the steam driven machinery for the heavy work, huge quantities of furniture could be turned out. The hand work was used in the final finishing stages. Furniture, chairs, mirrors, cabinet ware and cornices were turned out en masse for not only the retail trade, but for furnishing of steamboats as well. To sell this much furniture, the company moved aggressively into retailing.

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1 Thanks to Mrs. George Rammelsberg, Mrs. Greta Klingman (granddaughter of Catherine Rammelsberg Schultz), and Mr. Chilton Thomson who provided family information.
The wholesale warehouses and factory\(^2\) were on both sides of Second and John Streets. Most of the furniture manufacturers were clustered around Second Street where they were close to lumberyards, railroads and river transportation. Mitchell & Rammelsberg had the largest furniture factory in the world. All the footage of showrooms and the factories amounted to five acres. By splitting the locations of various stages in the manufacturing process, the danger from a fire was minimized. There were 80 wood working, steam driven machines. In the 1870’s, 750 men were employed. The lumber yard alone covered two acres.

According the Charles Cist (1851): Mitchell & Rammelsberg are about to introduce a bedstead of novel construction, for which they have the exclusive manufacturing right in this market. The improvement made is by connecting the rail to the post by a dovetail, thus dispensing entirely with screws, and enabling the bedstead to be put up and taken down in less than five minutes; which of course, affords great facilities to the removal of this article from house to house, or room to room, and of readily taking them out in case of fire.

*Kenny’s Illustrated Cincinnati*, 1875, states: “The retail salesrooms are well worth visiting. The traveler will probably not see in any city in Europe or America such a rare collection of fine articles on the furniture line as may be seen on the second floor of the establishment on Forth Street. The firm imports costly works of art, which are distributed through their rooms. They manufacture furniture for ‘the million,’ from the commonest table and chair to the finest suites for parlor, drawing room, library, bedroom, or dining room that can be furnished. Robert Mitchell, President; A. H. Mitchell, Secretary and Treasurer.”

The retail showrooms were in the six story Mitchell Company building on West Fourth Street, designed in 1873 by James Keys Wilson in the popular Renaissance Revival style. Wilson was also the architect for the Plum Street Temple and the entrance gate for Spring Grove Cemetery. The Mitchell Company building is still standing as the central portion of the late McAlpin’s store on Fourth street. This section is marked by the stone carving of a woman’s head surmounting an arch. When the building was constructed, its next door neighbor was John Shillito’s dry goods store. When Mitchell first came into Cincinnati, he helped to dig the foundation for the Second Presbyterian Church, which was the site of his new furniture showroom.

The Fourth Street store had the latest innovations. An elevator carried shoppers from floor to floor and merchandise was displayed in sample room settings. A complete line of accessories was available so a customer could choose new curtains, mattresses and even fireplace mantels at the same time. Their largest consumers were other businesses, including hotels and banks.

In 1870 an industry census lists annual sales as $700,000. The 600 employees (550 men, 10 women, 40 children) made furniture from three million feet of lumber.

Rammelsberg died in 1863, at age 49, a wealthy man. Frederick had a brother, Ernest, who also manufactured chairs and another brother, William, who owned a farm. They also had a sister, Francis Jucksch. Frederick and Sarah Maria (nee Lape) had eight children: Catherine (married Charles Schultz), Charles married Rhoda Thomson), Sarah Maria (married Robert Johnson), Emma (married Harry Reimund), Oscar (married Kate Wheat), Henry who never married, Laura Elizabeth never lived to adulthood, and Clara Louise (married Albert D. Shockley). Catherine and Charles Schultz had three boys while they lived in Cincinnati and one son later while they were living in Germany.

Although Mitchell bought out the Rammelsberg shares, he kept the partnership name until 1881. The focus of the firm changed then to emphasize store interiors, architectural elements and office furniture. Mitchell died in 1899 and the business, then known as the Robert Mitchell Furniture Company, declined. The Mitchell’s Augusta and John street radio construction plant burned in a spectacular 1938 fire. The firm went out of business in 1940.

One of the finest collections of Mitchell & Rammelsberg furniture is the Abram Gaar house in

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\(^2\) This building, built ca 1849, was lately the Old Spaghetti Factory, 417 Pete Rose Way and was torn down for the new Paul Brown stadium.
Richmond, Indiana. The original receipt for the household furnishings purchased in 1877 was found and can be matched to the furniture on display. Gaar was one of the founders of Gaar-Scott & Company, producing steam engines and thrashing machines. The house stayed in the family and was restored in the 1970’s. The parlor furniture was part of 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition. At the Exposition, Mitchell and Rammelsberg were the only furniture company that exhibited furniture in the Eastlake style. The house has been restored to its original elegance. It is on the National Register of Historic Places and is open for tours.

Robert’s brother, William Mitchell, opened a furniture showroom in St. Louis. This site did not manufacture and was an outlet for the Cincinnati factory. In 1863 a Memphis, Tennessee store was opened under the name of Mitchell, Hoffman & Company and carried 63 furniture product lines that covered 483 different patterns. A New Orleans store was opened in 1866 named Mitchell, Craig & Company.

The furniture industry is known for its spectacular fires. The history of the Cincinnati Fire Department (1895) mentions: “One of the Mitchell buildings was leased by the Phoenix Manufacturing Company, who sub-leased part of the premises to the Folding Hat Rack Company, the Sargent Manufacturing Company and B. Klinker & Co. All the firms were engaged in the manufacture of special lines of furniture and the contents of the building were particularly inflammable. The building...had been gutted by fire twice before, the first time in 1853 and again ten years later. The fire was caused by the ignition of benzene from a watchman’s lantern. The watchman in making his rounds discovered a leak from a barrel on one of the floors, and setting down his lantern a few feet from the barrel, started to make a closer examination. As he did the benzene ignited and enveloped him in flame. Fortunately he escaped serious injury...the loss was about $23,201.00.”

While Robert Mitchell does not have any ties to College Hill, except as a manufacturer whose product still is in many area homes, his story is an interesting one.

Mitchell was a pioneer of doing business on an enormous scale. Mitchell came from Enniskillen, Ireland along with his family. They settled in the western wilderness of Franklin, Indiana in 1824. Mitchell arrived in Cincinnati in 1829 at the age of 18 with no money, a strong personal character and an indomitable will. Both he and Rammelsberg boarded at Mrs. B. Allen and were apprenticed to different cabinetmakers. Before that time, Mitchell had various employments: farm hand, country school teacher and odd jobs handyman. He earned $1/week from the cabinetmaker and Mitchell opened his own store in 1836. His first partner was with Cincinnati Mayor Robert Moore. Moore also was born in Ireland and was a chair maker by trade.

The three Mitchell brothers, Robert, William and John, were partners. John was a bedstead and wholesale chair manufacturer, sometimes in partnership with Robert. He stayed in the wholesale chair business from 1851 to 1877, when he retired. Rammelsberg bought up Moore’s shares to become Mitchell’s partner in 1846-47.

Robert Mitchell was joined in his business by his two sons, Albert H. and Richard H. Robert Mitchell married Harriet Hannaford and had eight children. Mitchell Avenue is named for Robert Mitchell who built a mile long street that opened into new homes being built in Mitchell’s Rose Hill Park subdivision. Like many wealthy men, Mitchell invested in real estate. He planned this subdivision with winding streets and large front lawns. Some of the homes built belonged to Mitchell, Andrew Erkenbrecher and Samuel Pogue.

Mitchell’s “French Chateau” style mansion was built by the architect Samuel Hannaford in 1893. The workers and some of the materials were said to have come from Germany. The house was given to the Catholic Archdiocese in the 1920’s and served as St. Thomas School. In 1970 the property became the Montessori “New School.”
Samuel Hannaford as a Young Man
Chapter 19  They Built a City
The David Hummel Building Company

What does the Hollywood Theater have in common with Twin Towers, or Cincinnati’s City Hall? All were built by Hummel Industries, a company spanning nearly a century and a half of construction in Cincinnati.

Like many leaving their native Germany, David Hummel arrived in America in 1841 with optimism and a trade. At that time Cincinnati was on the crest of a building and expansion boom. St. Peter in Chains was being built, as were St. Philomena Church and the Mt. Adams Observatory. Skilled stone masons were in high demand. Rock from local quarries was used for foundations, basements, and trim.

By the early 1850’s David Hummel and Rupert Ritter opened their own stone yard on Plum Street, but after a few years the partnership was dissolved. In 1859 Hummel purchased property on Elder and Logan Streets, a location that was his for the next five decades.

Before the Civil War, as many as fourteen stone and marble companies were located near the Miami Canal. Location was important since the cost of stone could be increased 75% by transportation. The difficulties of transporting stone, the labor needed to cut, shape and set the stone made it an expensive building material. The wealthy may have been able to afford a stone house, but stone was included in more modest homes in the form of window and door sills, foundations, decorative trim, fence walls, flagging and steps.

Much of the rock used came from local Ohio quarries which supplied both limestone and sandstone. Hummel offered four types of Ohio stone: Berea limestone, Buena Vista sandstone, Dayton and Cincinnati limestones. Local limestone often contained an impurity of iron ore which, when cut and exposed to the weather, oxidized and streaked. Its use was confined to foundations, flagging and retaining walls.

Sandstone was a popular material because it was less expensive. Buena Vista was the sandstone most frequently chosen. But Berea sandstone increased its local popularity by improving its transportation to markets beyond the quarry’s immediate area. This sandstone was moved by oxen from the quarry and shipped by train from Cuyahoga county.

After the stone arrived to the Logan Street yard, the blocks were hand cut and shaped - a labor intensive process. A frame saw was used to cut the stone blocks, following a groove cut first by a chisel. After cutting the stone, it was shaped and dressed with chisels and hammers or smoothed by abrasives. The stone was then delivered by wagon to the building site where it was set by a mason.

A look in Hummel’s ledger from 1859 shows that a stone setter earned $2-$2.50/day, sawers were paid by the length of stone cut, stone cutters earned $1.25-$2.25 per day, brick layers made $1.10-$2 and general laborers received $1.25 a day. Those who chiseled letters received 3 cents per letter. Christian Moerlein was billed $22.65 for a grave stone, cutting 180 letters, hauling and setting the stone.

While residential orders were a constant source of income, one of the largest customers was the City of Cincinnati. In 1856 Cincinnati approved an ordinance for street repairs. Prior to that time streets were largely unpaved with only major intersections having a paving of local limestone. Sidewalks were wood. Between 1857-1859, thousands of feet of limestone were purchased from Hummel for flagging, curbing and paving. The limestone for streets came from Dayton - local limestone wore out too fast. The sidewalks were replaced by ones of brick, also purchased from Hummel.

Despite Hummel’s growing success, the Civil War curtailed the building industry. Some builders did not survive this period but Hummel did and saw the building industry rebound at War’s end. The decades following the War until the end of the century were ones of a flurry of building activity. Hummel expanded his work force for stone and brick with stone trim was the popular style.

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During the 1870’s the steam powered stone saw was introduced, making it easier to cut large ashlar slabs. Private homes were often built of broken stone (rubble), but public buildings frequently were made of large ashlar slabs. These slabs could be left rough, textured or rubbed smooth. Usually buildings had a stone veneer with broken stone or brick to back the ashlars, which weren’t larger than a foot high and 4-8 inches thick. Brick was less expensive and interior plaster was applied directly onto the brick (in dry climates) but if it were backed with stone, the interior surfaces needed to be lathed before plastering.

Cincinnati abounds with examples of rough rock walls trimmed with dressed stone. One only needs to think of “Scarlet Oaks” in Clifton as an example of this style. Many of the houses along Dayton Street have stone on the facades only, the sides and back are of brick. Curved doorways, window jambs, and cornices demonstrate the stone carver's work, which was precise, skilled, slow and expensive and often only three or four feet could be carved in a day.

Samuel Hannaford frequently specified Hummel for his buildings, along with the origin and type of stone to be used in his constructions. Eden Park contains Elsinore Tower and the water tower as Hannaford/Hummel edifices. Hummel also cut and set the stone for the reservoir, pumping station and double deck bridge.

During the 1880’s one of Cincinnati’s growth industries were breweries and Hummel was busy building and expanding many of these large stone and brick structures. Hauck, Gerke, Windisch, Moerlein, and Weidemann were all Hummel clients.

The greatest achievement of the Hummel/Hannaford relationship was City Hall - the marriage of an architect’s vision and a stone carver’s dream. Hannaford both was the architect and building supervisor of the project, for a 4% fee of the $1.4 million dollar building. Estimates for construction were bid and Hummel proposed $513,000 for excavation, foundation, brick, stone and granite work. Hummel set the foundation in May 1888. By August of that year the cornerstone laying ceremony was held. Before cementing the cornerstone in place a ‘time capsule’ was inserted. This copper box was retrieved and opened, the contents were examined, and more memorabilia added after the cornerstone was removed in 1988, when City Hall celebrated its century mark.

Rocks from many quarries are represented in City Hall: red Iron Mountain granite for the foundation, reddish brown Wisconsin stone, buff Ohio limestone, Vermont and Missouri granite, Indiana limestone, marble from Italy and Tennessee. The ashlars were squared and dressed at the site while interior-exterior stone was carved at the stone yard. After five years, the building was dedicated May 13, 1892. City Hall was a much admired building and Hummel Company received favorable publicity which was followed by an increase in building contracts. Hummel expanded its equipment and work force as a result.

The company continued to thrive. Demand for stone was high and quarries had a difficult time keeping up with the orders. Costs for stone rose and long delays were encountered from the quarries. In an attempt to find a dependable, nearby and less expensive quarry, Hummel expanded into quarrying their own stone in Hummel, Kentucky from 1895-1925. Located in Rockcastle County, it was the source of a fine grained sandstone, much in demand for both interior and exterior work. By the end of W. W. I, sandstone’s popularity declined in favor of Indiana limestone. Limestone could be purchased and transported from Indiana cheaper than operating their own quarries and the Kentucky quarries were gradually closed and the land sold off.

As time passed, so did the techniques and tools of the stone mason. Air hammers were now used to carve the Bell Telephone Company’s ornate frieze, the urns on the C. G. & E. Building on Fourth Street, and figures on the former Times-Star building.

The use of stone peaked in the late 1920’s and slowly declined due to increased labor and material costs. However, it was in the 1930’s that Hummel became involved in one of their most challenging projects-Union Terminal. No two stones were quite the same due to the concave curve of the facade so each stone had to be cut individually from a pattern.
The transition to brick buildings evolved during the Depression and continues today. One of Hummel’s keys to contained existence has been flexibility/versatility. Today, they are one of Cincinnati’s largest brick contractors.

Brick color depends on the clay composition. The metallic (iron oxide) content in the clay is responsible for bricks that vary from light yellow, orange, red, and bright red through to a bluish or purplish color. Cream or light colors result from iron and lime being in the clay. Magnesium creates brown bricks, while iron and magnesium yields yellow bricks. Color can also be altered by changing the temperature at which they are fired.

Brick surface texture also can be varied. Before bricks are fired, their surface can be changed by textured rollers, pattern wheels or by the addition of cinders, sand or other materials to adhere to the brick surface. Bricks can have baked-on glazes and enamels to produce a surface similar to that of ceramic tiles. Bricks also are made in various sizes and shapes and can be laid in many patterns.

While a complete list of Hummel buildings can not be compiled, in College Hill the following were built by them: Aiken High School (1966), Aiken Vocational Education Facility (1977), Grace Episcopal Church, parish house (1957), Hammond North Condominiums (1963), Hillrise Apts. (1968), Hollywood Theater (1924), Twin Towers (1915, 1938, addition 1961), Llanfair Retirement Community (1961), St. Clare Church, P.N.C. (Central Trust/Brighton) Bank (1923).

Other Companies

Information on bricks would not be complete without mention of the ‘Norwood Brick’ by the Cincinnati Pressed Brick Company. Started in 1891, this company produced bricks used in local construction. The yellowish Norwood clay produced bricks ranging from dark red to light pink. They also used blue Indiana clay-refuse from coal mining-to produce buff brick. A pink buff was made from central Ohio fire clay. CPBC had 75 acres of land in Norwood and using their estimate of 650,000 bricks/acre, digging clay down one foot, they had enough clay for a century.

Closer to College Hill was the Mt. Healthy Brick Company, started in 1887 by Frank Roettele. Their first products were drainage tiles but the company expanded to produce 8,000 bricks/hour. Examples of Mt. Healthy and Norwood bricks are easy to find and identity for they are boldly stamped with the company name.

College Hill also had local brick manufacture for a time-across the street from Groesbeck and Hamilton Avenue. In early days bricks were formed and fired on the site from the clay produced by foundation/basement excavations. Danforth Witherby also manufactured bricks. His son donated all the brick to build Farmers’ College.

On either side of Hamilton Avenue at Ashtree are the remains of the Howard stone quarry. This rock was used extensively in building foundations, steps and sidewalks in College Hill.

William R. Goodall and son lived on Cedar Avenue. He owned ‘Monuments & Dealers in Marble & Granite’ at 236 West Court Street.

Because of Spring Grove Cemetery and the canal for transportation, Northside had several well known monument companies. Today the Fisk Brothers Monument Company still operates on Spring Grove Avenue. The Fisk family descends from a line of stone cutters and sculptors for many generations. Fisk Brothers were known for their large funerary sculptures and they had commissions from throughout America. At one time their plant covered four acres.

The other Northside company was Douglas Granite. Their monuments were placed on some of Cincinnati’s oldest and wealthiest graves. George A. Douglas established his company in 1870.

While his Phoenix Stone Yard was in Northside, descendants of Louis C. Buente lived in College Hill. According to the Souvenir History of Cumminsville, 1911 “fully 90 percent of the stone work of all the buildings in Cumminsville has been done by him (L. C. Buente).”

His great-great-granddaughter, Marti Buente⁴, has written about her family.

⁴ 108 Years of the Buente Stone Contracting Business, Martha Buente, 24 July, 1999
“Detailed documentation of the Buente stone yard no longer exists. Papers and documents perished in the 1937 flood when waters reached the second floor of the stone yard building located at the corner of Spring Grove Avenue and the Mill Creek. Several stories remain, shifting down through five generations of Buentes. These stories have helped to unravel and inspire the research used to piece together this sketchy history.

Christian Ludwig Buente, known in America as Louis Christian, was born 30 May, 1830 to Christoph Buente and Louise Erfmeyer. He grew up in the town of Haverstadt, Germany which is located south of Minden along the edge of the Wiehengebirge (mountains). Questions about the family surname came about after searching the marriage and christening records of St. Martini’s church in Minden. The information found leads to the probability of Louis’ father, Christoph Fenneman, adopting the Buente surname in 1815 after marrying the widow Marie Koeh Buente. This was a common practice when marrying into family property. After his first wife’s death Christoph Buente nee Fenneman married Louise Erfmeyer in 1819. Records show that the Buente family house and property date back as far as 1782 to Tobias Buente. In this part of Germany property was handed down to the first born son. Haverstadt #70 was taken over by Friedrich, Louis Buente’s eldest brother, leaving the younger brothers to find their own path in life.

Gary Gainer, great-great grandson of William Buente, shared a story told in their family about William and his younger brother Louis attending the University of Leipzig, both studying engineering. It is thought that the brothers emigrated to the States sometime around the late 1840’s. Proof of the year of arrival has not yet been found. William Buente settled in Pittsburgh and founded the Buente Stone Contractor and Building business. It is unknown why Louis decided to start a new life in Cincinnati, Ohio.

In 1858 Louis C. Buente established his stone yard business at 550 Main Street with his residence on Milton Street. It is assumed that most of the Buente business during the next five years came from the area once known as ‘Prospect Hill’ south of Mt. Auburn, Mt. Auburn itself and from downtown.

Louis married Sybilla Springer in November of 1858. Seven children were born to the couple: C. (only the initial C. appears on the grave); Louise; Louis; Matilda, Gustave, Herman and Lillie with only Louise, Louis and Herman surviving into adulthood.

In an article written in the Times Star in 1865 appeared the name of Louis C. Buente, located in the First District and having paid taxes on money over $20,000. This article was a list of Cincinnatians paying taxes after the Civil War.

The Buente stone yard is shown in the 1868 City Directory as having been relocated to the corner of Plum and Madison. A partnership was formed with Henry Phillips sometime around the year 1865 or possibly earlier. The Buente and Phillips Stone Yard grew larger as they acquired the stone yard property of John Mueller on the corner of Fourteenth and Plum in 1870. Louis Buente then purchased Phillip’s half of the property in 1874. The deed states that the stone saw mill with out-houses, the steam crane for hoisting stone, all the machinery, and stone in the building are exempt from the sale and shall remain partnership property under the firm of Buente and Phillips. The Buente Stone Yard continued on at this address until 1876 when the location changes to that of 51 Spring Grove Avenue.

Grandson, Nelson Hoffman, has in his possession a card showing Louis Buente’s membership into the Friendly Society of Journeyman’s Stone Cutters of the City of Cincinnati which seems to have been a union. A booklet called the Bill of Prices and Mode of Measurement of the Association of Master Stone-Cutters of Cincinnati, 1864, shows prices for Free Stone and Dayton Stone. The book lists Free Stone window sills 8 inches wide by 5 inches thick as being .40 per foot and Dayton Stone prices of door sills and steps as being 1.00 per foot.

5 Times Star, List of Cincinnati’s Income Taxpayers for 1865 Shows City as Prosperous, 1865.
6 Located in the Cincinnati Historical Society library.
Great-granddaughter, Mary Buente McMahan, remembers hearing the story of Louis Buente ‘losing his shirt’ in some kind of dealings with the builder and speculator, Truman B. Handy. Supposedly, Louis was never paid for the stone work done on the elaborate front entrance of the Handy Opera House in 1866. Pike’s Opera House burnt to the ground earlier that year. The fire, being one of Cincinnati’s largest conflagrations, could be seen 42 miles away in Lebanon. The public tried to talk Pike into rebuilding. Handy decided to take on the task. Newspaper articles tell of Samuel Pike secretly rebuilding what the public thought to be another Opera House at the same time as Handy. Pike’s new building surprised all. It was built to look like the old Opera House but the inside was intended for use as a Merchant’s Exchange. By then the public had withdrawn its support for ‘Handy’s Folly’ thinking that there would be no need for two Opera Houses. The Handy building was not completed due to lack of sponsorship and funds. In 1868 the Handy Opera House was purchased by the Cincinnati Public Library at a foreclosure sale for $83,000. The building served as the main library for 85 years. It will probably never be known what actually happened with any of the business deals between Buente and Handy. Handy was also a speculator ‘locking up almost all the ribs and lard in the country in 1880 and then again tying up all the wheat in Chicago in 1881.’ Handy’s obituary states that he was brilliant enough to be 2 to 3 times over a millionaire and 2 to 3 times over an ex-millionaire, being the latter when he died. Handy seems to have been continually running out of funds. Did he ever pay his sub-contractors? Due to this experience the Buente’s only took on smaller jobs staying away from all large, possibly fatal, business deals.

Another family story tells of Louis Buente supplying the cut stone for the Eden Park ‘Masonry Bridge’ built in 1873. The materials used for building the bridge are described by the architect James McLaughlin. In his specifications it states that ‘All the stone work...to be dressed smooth with the chisel but not rubbed. The stones to be of the largest size and the work to be of the massive and substantial character...’ A street car double decker structure made of ornamental iron was later added to the top deck of the bridge in 1877. A drawing of the ‘Design for the Bridge in Eden Park’ dated 1877 was found in the files of Louis Buente III in 1970 which gives substance to this story. Truman B. Handy was listed as serving as Park Commissioner for several years and being one of three park commissioners in the year 1870.

Sybilla, wife of Louis, died after giving birth in 1873. Etched in stone on the Buente family monument in the Vine Street Cemetery are Sybilla’s words to her husband - ‘Dear Husband, Take care of my little children, do as I would and they will respect you.’ With three children being under the age of ten, Louis Buente married Theresa Mueller, a young woman having recently arrived in the United States from Germany. Louis and Theresa had four children - John, Edward, Nellie and Matilda. The cemetery records list John Buente as deceased due to an accident at the age of three years, nine months.

When Louis Buente died in 1884, his son Louis II, then twenty years of age, took charge of the Spring Grove Avenue business. No documentation of the handing over of the business is to be found.

Louis married Catherine Ann Nofer on 25 September 1890. They had four children, two sons - William and Louis, and two daughters - Sybil and Myrtle.

Louis moved the stone yard, family residence, his step-mother, half-brother and half-sisters to Cumminssville in 1893, the year that Louis III was born. The stone yard deed states that he bought land between Spring Grove and Colerain Avenues, with the property bordering the Mill Creek. The business name was then changed to that of the Phoenix Buente Stone Yard. The reason for this name change is not known. One idea is that the Phoenix rising from the ashes might have symbolized that the stone yard was once again on the road to financial stability. Several photos of the floods of 1933 and 1937 show the stone yard underwater. The name Phoenix is displayed on the building during the flood of 1932 but has disappeared by the 1937 flood. The Cincinnati City Directory listed the stone yard as that of Louis C. Buente and Son in 1927.

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7 Specification and Description of Work and Material Required for the Entrance Archway to Eden Park, James McLaughlin, Cincinnati Historical Society library.
Herman Buente, brother of Louis also shared in the stone work until his death in 1922. Herman married Anna Nofer, sister of Louis’ wife, Catherine. A son, Robert, was born in 1899. Rob joined his father working for several years in the stone business.

Stories are told of Louis III, as a child, wanting to be with his father at the stone yard but having his mother find one chore after another to keep him busy at home. His older brother Will showed no interest in stone work. Louis began working at the stone yard around 1910 while also studying accounting. He is listed as bookkeeper of the stone yard in the 1915 city directory.

Both Buente brothers served in the Army during World War I. A letter written on stone yard stationary the 25th of September 1918 from father to son reads: ‘We are getting along slow at church, will have to set the vent stack coping now in a few days, have all the stone set on the tower except the coping. I expect to get all done next week except the cleaning. We have had a good deal of rain and cold weather, that is the reason things are moving slow. There is nothing else doing, we are not getting any small orders at all.’ There was no mention of the name of the church that they were working on but it is assumed that the church was located in Cummins ville.

The Buentes provided stone for many of the buildings in Northside and College Hill. A family story tells of Louis II checking his son’s work. The last job he ever supervised was the beautiful stone arch over the entry way to the home at 1570 Hollywood Avenue in 1927. Louis III, in his father’s eyes, had mastered the art of stone.

Louis C. Buente II passed away in 1932. His obituary in the Community Leader lists Mr. Buente as the proprietor of a contracting business and art stone carving company.

Louis III took charge of the business after his father’s death but was absent from the business in 1944-45 while working as supervisor of the 2nd US Army-Air Force storage depot on Lincoln Avenue. He returned to the family business after the war to follow in the footsteps of his ancestors. The stone yard moved for the last time in 1946 to Bailey Avenue in Bridgetown. The Spring Grove Avenue property was eventually bought by the City of Cincinnati for the Mill Creek Expressway, as it was then called, now crossing above the old stone yard.

Louis and Martha Louise Bare were married in February 1920. They had a son, Louis, and one daughter, Mary Catherine. It seems as if Louis IV interests were not that of stone cutting although he had artistic and mathematical ability. Louis pursued his own calling in the field of medicine; becoming a cardiovascular/thoracic surgeon and practicing his art of healing in the Cincinnati area hospitals. Dr. Louis Buente married Je anne Swartsel in 1947, moving to College Hill in 1955. They raised four children: William Louis, Gregory, Jeanne, and Martha. The Buente residence is still maintained at 1499 Hollywood Avenue. Mary Catherine Buente, daughter of Louis and Martha, taught first grade at College Hill School for thirty years starting in the year 1949. She married Randolph McMahan, April 1985. Mary has been extremely helpful in supplying family stories and photographs which have added life to this research project.

Because of Louis III’s building knowledge, he was asked to serve as director/appraiser/president of the Provident Savings and Loan Company in Cumminsville. He was also a member and commander of the Daniel Bart ley Jr. Legion, and Cum minsville Veterans of W. W. II.

Louis Buente and Al Pie lage merged businesses in the early 50’s. They continued on as partners until Al’s death in 1963. Mr. Steilhoff, also the owner of a small stone yard, helped out when needed.

The work load grew after the war. The Buente and Pie lage stone yard employed up to 6 men at this time. It is noteworthy to mention the Lewis family and their association with the business. Bill Lewis began working with Louis II around 1900 or earlier and continued until the end of his life. Bill’s son, Arthur, was a constant employee of the stone yard until the closing of the business. Gordon Lewis also helped out during the busy years.

Most of the work listed in the Order Book dated 1962 to 1966 deals with orders for window sills, door sills, fireplaces, mantles, and stone trim for houses. Stone was furnished for buildings and homes in College Hill, Colerain, Delhi, Mt. Airy, Mt. Healthy, Northside, Western Hills, White Oak and Springfield Township. The last entry in the job book dated 9 November 1966 is for the St. William’s Church in Price Hill.
In 1962 Louis was asked by the builder Herman Huseman to supervise the setting and placement of the shrine and large stature which can be viewed in the side yard of St. Monica’s Church in Clifton. Louis Buente III carried on the business of his grandfather and great-grandfather although adopting the modern equipment of the day but with the same quality and standards of his ancestors until retiring in 1966. Louis died 18 April 1969 ending 108 years of the Buente Stone business. The stone yard property was sold in February 1969.”

Phoenix Stoneyard of U. C. Buente during 1937 flood
Courtesy of Marti Buenti
Chapter 20  Town Hall

On July 24, 1875, The Council of the Village of College Hill purchased from Samuel Freeman and Lida S. Cary, for $6,000, about 5 acres of land in the central part of the village on which to build Town Hall where “... young people can assemble for amusement, without as now, trespassing.” Samuel Hannaford was contracted in 1884 as architect. He designed a brick and stone Gothic Revival and eclectic Renaissance structure with an asymmetrical facade and a four storied open arched tower. The building’s north and south facade has large arched windows which permit maximum illumination to the inside auditorium. Attached to the tower is an open porch on ground level, while a small portico with Romanesque lintel distinguishes the main entrance. Gibbons and Smith were retained as builders and Town Hall was completed in 1886. The cost was between $15,000 and $18,000.

Officially dedicated on Jan. 20, 1887, its 17 rooms were opened for inspection. The trussed ceiling in the auditorium, stage and stage scenery, frescoed walls and elaborate chandeliers made Town Hall the focal point of the community.

For twenty-four years, Town Hall was the seat of government functions of the village. It was the hub of cultural, social, and athletic activities. The ground level was occupied by the fire department, village police and local jail. For outdoor gatherings, a wooden shelter house was built in 1910-1911 in the park.

The village agreed to annexation by the City of Cincinnati in 1911 and the building ceased its function for governmental and municipal purposes. The future of the park and Town Hall for use by College Hill residents was assured through a provision in the deed of transfer.

For years after annexation Town Hall and the park were still used for community activities - tennis courts were built, ball fields were filled with spectators for the ‘Big Five’ team, and later a swimming pool was added, built by community volunteers. Lavish 4th of July fireworks and parade were annual events. The College Hill Boosters, a dedicated club of some of the businessmen and residents of the area, were responsible for financing and promoting many of the activities enjoyed by the community.

Town Hall continued to house the College Hill Building & Loan, and later the public library (1914-1918), which was open three days a week. St. Clare’s parish held their first services in the auditorium. Many other organizations held regular meetings there, including the Y.M.C.A. In 1941, the ground floor still contained the caretaker’s apartment, and the floor was still of dirt. By 1943 the area around Town Hall was known as Court House Park, or College Hill Park and Athletic Field. The building was used by the Property Maintenance Division of the Department of Public Works. The Free & Accepted Masons, Lodge 641, became the building’s longest and primary tenant, using it for their lodge meetings for fifty-seven years, until 1974.

Town Hall stood vacant and boarded up for several years. The fate of the building was uncertain and prospective demolition by the City was feared. The College Hill Forum, founded in 1967, became concerned over the building’s condition and saw the potential for renovation and renewed use by the community. A committee of the Forum investigated rehabilitation, funding, and rental possibilities, and convinced the City that the building still had a useful life. It took a year to secure tenants and to obtain

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8 Ohio Historic Inventory, Miami Purchase Association, prepared by Fred Mitchell, Nov. 1978.


10 Annexation Agreement, April 27, 1911, Cincinnati City Hall.

11 The College Hill Boosters Club sought a slogan for the community. After reading hundreds of entries ‘Where the World Looks Bright’ was chosen.

money from the Community Development Act to proceed with rehabilitation. The building was substandard in plumbing and wiring and did not meet current building codes. Structural defects needed correction. There was extensive plaster damage from a leaking roof and vandalism.

The Forum took possession of Town Hall on Sept. 19, 1977, with Mayor Jim Luken signing the lease agreement. The building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in March 1978.

Since then, the building has housed Tri-County Players, community offices, ping-pong teams, church services, dances, a senior center and Meals on Wheels programs and many community functions. It is no longer leased by the Forum.

The swimming pool at Town Hall was built by local citizens in 1921. The following sketch, signed Rosenberg, Cincinnati Post, 1921, memorializes those hard working volunteers. The original is owned by Mrs. William S. Hammelrath. Her father was George W. Smith, a plumbing and heating contractor.
Chapter 21  Samuel Hannaford

Town Hall was designed by Samuel Hannaford, one of the leading architects of the mid to late 1800’s in Cincinnati. Many of the buildings that were admired and gave Cincinnati a reputation of architectural beauty at the turn of the century were designed by Samuel Hannaford, and later, Hannaford & Sons. While some of these solid masses of brick, stone and mortar have been torn down over the years, a surprising number still stand, attesting to their durability and the original number built. Today, many of his buildings are on the National Register. Some of the best known landmarks in our city, such as Music Hall and City Hall, were of his design. A few of his buildings, after being ignored for years, are now being renovated and returned to their original splendor. His reputation as a man who carefully and promptly carried out his commissions, and as a capable architect earned the trust and fame that his firm had until its close around 1960.

But what of the man? Beyond his buildings, only the sketchy details of his life are known. He was born on April 10, 1835, in the parish of Widdecombe in the Moor, Devonshire, England. His family owned Southcombe Farm for over three hundred years and held their land freehold since Norman times.13 His parents, Roger and Mary (Northcott) Hannaford, immigrated to America in 1844, probably due to the economic decline of Devon as a result of industrialization in England.

He was nine when he arrived in this country, traveling on the sailing packet Mrs. Siddons of the Collins Line from Liverpool to New York. An account of this trip, written at a later date by Samuel, relates that the “... bowsprit was ornamented with a life size figure of the actress with the right arm outstretched and pointing onward. On the preceding voyage the arm had been broken off in a storm. We were five weeks and three days on the ocean...” After staying at New York for two weeks, they traveled to Philadelphia. From there they went on to Baltimore in a small coasting vessel that went down Delaware Bay. They then traveled by railroad to Cumberland, Maryland, arriving in time for breakfast. He remembered this breakfast years later “...we had ham and eggs and also country sausages in abundance. We were awfully hungry and hollow and I was pretty nearly filled, when I noticed the waiters began to serve piping hot delicious looking, nicely browned pancakes - as I thought. We immediately requisitioned our share and we were served - but one mouthful satisfied us and we gagged, but managed to maintain the proprieties of the table. It was our first experience with Buckwheat cakes and the taste to us was strange and vile.”14

In Maryland they took a stagecoach across the Cumberland mountains going to Wheeling, West Virginia. From Wheeling they traveled to Cincinnati on the steamboat Revenue. According to his memoirs the entire trip took seven months, and the family with their eight children arrived in November 1844. Traveling with them was John Payne, his wife and two children. He earned their passage by attending to Mr. Hannaford’s children as a tutor. Landing in Cincinnati, they ...lodged in a house situated on the S. E. corner of Walnut and 9th Streets. At that time there were not many houses beyond that. I think that Smith and Nixon kept a grocery store on that corner. The proprietor of the boarding house or hotel was named ‘Hook.’ They next lived in a house on Catherine Street before purchasing a 38 acre farm in Cheviot, Green Township, in June 1845. The family remained on this farm until 1857.

Shortly after arriving in Cheviot, the family tutor left and, since he had helped with the farming as well, the Hannaford children had to assist with the farm. The children attended the Cheviot public school for a short period and were withdrawn when another tutor was hired. The eldest son, John, was apprenticed to a druggist and later served as the tutor for his siblings.

In 1853, Samuel was enrolled at Farmers’ College, College Hill. There is some disagreement as to whether or not he graduated from there, but he stayed for only a short time. He left his mark as one of

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13 Preliminary Documentation of the Career of Samuel Hannaford (1835-1911), Michael F. Crowe, thesis, used with permission.

14 Personal reminiscences of Samuel Hannaford, unpublished, courtesy of Mrs. Virginia Cummins. Mrs. Sue Hannaford Scheld and Mrs. Andrea Wellendorf have been a great resource in my quest of Samuel Hannaford information.
several editors of the student’s secretly published **The Thunderbolt**, a one issue school paper dated April 1854. Which course of study be took, farming or general curriculum, is not known. Hannaford began studying with the architect William Hamilton in 1854 and remained with him until 1857, when he left to start his own business.

On January 8, 1857, Samuel married Phoebe Statham, daughter of one of Cheviot’s pioneers, David Eldridge Statham. They lived with her parents until 1865, when the house designed by Samuel for his growing family of three children was completed on the N. E. corner of Derby and Winton Road in Winton Place15. This house still stands, although much altered from the description of a rambling, two story gray frame building with green shutters and gabled roof on an acre and a half of land. The house had 10 rooms, cherry woodwork, a wood mantel by the locally famous wood carver, William Fry, and a crystal chandelier with 370 pendants in the parlor. This house was Samuel’s home until his death on January 7, 1911.

Hannaford married several times after the death of Phoebe in 1871 of typhoid. In June 1873 he married Anna Belle Hand, daughter of Sylvester Hand, who originally platted the community of Winton Place. They had five children before she died in 1883. A year later, he married Ada Louise Moore and had three children. Mrs. Ada Hannaford outlived Samuel and died in 1941.16

Professionally, he formed several partnerships in the early years until his sons, Harvey Eldrige and Charles Edward, joined him as Hannaford & Sons in 1887. Of his partnerships with Edward Anderson, and later Edwin R. Procter, little is known. Along with Anderson he designed the Cincinnati Workhouse. His work was in demand throughout Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, West Virginia and Tennessee. Over 300 buildings have been attributed to him as architect. Public buildings, churches, schools, police/fire stations and residences in styles as diverse as Queen Anne, Renaissance Revival and Richardson Romanesque have been identified. After his death Hannaford & Sons continued to be a prominent architectural firm, designing among scores of others, Cincinnati General Hospital, Deaconess Hospital, Ohio Mechanical Institute, the Annex to the State Capital building in Columbus and the original buildings for Ohio State University.

Samuel Hannaford had strong civic commitments. He served as the first, and only, mayor of Winton Place before it was annexed in 1903 into the City of Cincinnati. He was a member of the school board for many years, president and treasurer of the Winton Place Building Association, a founder of the Cincinnati Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, editor of *The Western Architect and Builder*, officer and teacher in the Ohio Mechanic’s Institute, and member and trustee in the Winton Place Methodist Episcopal Church, which he designed. He believed in vocational education and took a keen interest in housing and the education of the poor. He helped to develop the first building codes for Cincinnati. He worked for years on the problem of smoke abatement from smoke stacks and urged its control. One of his favorite projects was championing the building of the Mill Creek Valley sewer.

In a tribute written about him after his death, it was stated: “If the building of gentle, sympathetic, just, strong and steadfast character be the aim of human life, then Samuel Hannaford was the most successful man that we have known.”17 He is buried in an unmarked grave, per his wishes, in Spring Grove Cemetery.

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16 Times Star, Obituary notice, Mrs. Ada Louise Hannaford,, Friday, June 13, 1941.

17 The Western Architect and Builder, Vol. 28, No. 2, Jan. 12, 1911.
Chapter 22 College Hill at the Turn of the Century

One of the most interesting of all articles about College Hill was written by E. N. Wild and published in *Chic*, March 17, 1900. Here are a few excerpts.

“College Hill was a village when Cincinnati was but a town, nearly a hundred years ago. Its first houses were log cabins - the families composing it mostly gaining their subsistence from the soil... Its location was seven miles north from Cincinnati, and is claimed to be the highest point in Hamilton County. It has long been noted for the beauty of its scenery and surroundings, the grandeur of the views from its points of vantage, and its pure, health-giving, almost mountain air. Its site was originally heavily wooded with valuable timber of all kinds, such as oak, poplar, walnut, maple ash, hickory, etc. This forest gradually fell before the ax of the sturdy pioneer, a few of the trees still remaining scattered about the village, and highly prized by their owners. The only large wooded tract remaining lies west of old ‘Farmers’ College’ and south of the handsome residences of Mr. John C. Daller and Geo. H. DeGolyer...

That College Hill preserved for so many years almost a mountain seclusion was owing to its inaccessibility, and that it has not even yet advanced beyond the legal definition of a village, to the fact that the old omnibus was not a prime favorite as means of rapid transit up three miles of tedious hill, while the ‘commuter’ could have railroad facilities in the valley. And when at last the steam and electric cars superseded the omnibus, the nearer suburbs, such as Mt. Auburn, Avondale and Walnut Hills, had received the first overflow from the city. It is only four years since our turn really came through the construction of the ‘College Hill and Main Street’ electric line. Since that time all vacant houses, then about forty in number, have been filled, and several new ones built. No ‘boom’ has struck the town, but the years here have been a steady increase and growth. We are looking for the boom. The village has good macadamized streets and cement walks, lined with miles of shade trees. It has a good graded public school, the *Ohio Military Institute*, a Presbyterian and an Episcopal Church, a town hall, a perfect system of water-works, lately built, and a free mail delivery. It is made up of pleasant homes and agreeable people - not many of the very rich and few of the very poor.

Another thing that the ‘hill’ has always been noted for is its stalch temperance sentiment. Either moral persuasions or force of law has always brought them (bars) to a speedy demise. It is only fair to say that the inception of this sentiment was largely due to the efforts and influence of General S. F. Cary, the distinguished temperance lecturer, whose father was one of the earliest settlers of the hill, which has always been the home of the General. He lately received the congratulations of his friends and neighbors upon the occasion of his eighty-sixth anniversary...

**OLD LANDMARKS**

As authority for statements under this heading, I am indebted to General Cary’s interesting sketch of early College Hill. The first log cabin and the first frame house have already been referred to. In 1820 William Cary built an ox power sawmill in the ravine east of Hamilton Avenue, on what is now ‘Wild & Ferris’ subdivision;’ an old well, still there, marks its location. A grist mill was subsequently attached. After many years of operation this mill was replaced by a large steam sawmill, which was destroyed by fire and not rebuilt.

John Strong, in 1819, built his cabin on what is now the handsome lawn of Mrs. James Larmon, lately the Holenshade property (ed. note: later owned by F. G. Cary). The old well, without which no cabin was complete, can still be found near her front line. The frame house subsequently built by Strong is still standing, and almost from time immemorial has been occupied by the village physician. Five, viz., Drs. Brooks, Heighway, McChesney, Vance and Johnson, have occupied it before its present owner, Dr. P. T. Kilgour.

David Thomas, in 1820, built a log shop for a chair and furniture factory on the lot now occupied by the residence of Mrs. John M. Wilson. A Mr. Powell, in 1819, built a cabin where the Presbyterian Church stands, and started a factory on the valley between the turnpike and Mr. Davey’s residence, occupied by Mr. Utz for the manufacture of black salts and pearl ash. Mr. Albert G. Arnold, in 1828, established a tannery on the low ground immediately north of General Cist’s residence.
This house was removed to the west side of the pike by D. B. Thomas, and used by him for a carpenter shop for years, and was afterwards converted back into a dwelling, now belonging to the estate of Samuel Hammitt...

North Bend Road was the first regularly laid out road in the country. It was a territorial highway between Carthage and Cleves. A ‘hill road’ from Knowlton’s Corner, in Cumminsville, going through College Hill, Mt. Healthy and further on, was early established, called the ‘Huston Road,’ from the well known family of that name. In 1834-6 it was converted into the ‘Hamilton Turnpike.’

INcorporation

College Hill was incorporated June 9, 1866, including at that time the eastern half of Section 36 and the western half of section 30, T. 3, F. R. 2, Millcreek Township, with the exception of the southeast corner of the tract, which was left out because of the sturdy opposition of Captain Zebulon Strong. In 1896 the south parts of Sections 25 and 31, taking part of the Harbeson, Gray and Betts property, were added, and later the corner above referred to, and a strip 30 feet wide on both sides of Hamilton Turnpike, south to the corporation line of Cincinnati The first officers of the corporation were: Mayor, Edward De Serisy; trustees, Captain A. D.E. Tweed, S. F. Cary, Amos Worthington, E. T. Strong and Joel Strong; Recorder, E. N. Wild.

No very aggressive work was done by the Council until the succeeding year, when George C. Knight was elected Mayor, E. N. Wild, Recorder, J. C. C. Holenshade, Norris S. Knight, D. B. Pierson, Robert Simpson and A. D. E. Tweed, Trustees. Then the agitation began, as any one acquainted with these Trustees (all of them and the Mayor now deceased), might know it would.

Mud roads gave way to graded, macadamized streets and injunction suits; old, rickety board walks were replaced by good gravel walks, which, in their turn, have since given way to cement. The cows were forbidden the free run of the streets where before they had, in truly rural style, roamed at liberty; new names were given to old streets, and new streets were laid out. The citizens, incited by such goings on, began to brush up their own front yards and clean the weeds out of their walks. Old front fences were taken down and shade trees planted, giving a park-like appearance to the whole village. College Hill became a new place. The present efficient officers are: Mayor, John E. Bruce, Councilmen, Peter G. Thomson, J. L. Pierson, H. G. Pounsford, William Goodall, D. W. Smith and John Wilson; Treasurer, George E. Henshaw; clerk, F. R. Strong.

SCHOOLS FOR GIRLS, AND THE OHIO FEMALE COLLEGE

In 1843, a girls’ school was opened by Miss Laura B. Hayes, in the house of Rev. A. Benton, which stood near the site of John R. Davey’s residence, now occupied by Mr. Utz. She was succeeded by Rev. John W. Scott, a former professor in Miami University. He was the father of President Harrison’s first wife. It was on College Hill that the future President became acquainted with his future wife and mistress of the White House. After Dr. Scott, Mrs. S. B. Brooks, beginning about 1856, for a number of years conducted a successful school for girls in the house on Linden Avenue, now owned by Mr. Walter Gray...

(Another Chic article about College Hill adds: The latest educational enterprise of the hill is Willard Hall, a school devoted to girls, which was opened this week under the most favorable auspices and with an attendance for forty pupils. At the head of the institute is Miss Birdsell, late of Agents, and for ten years employed at a leading institute of Waterbury, Ct. No doubt her labors in this new field will be rewarded with success, as the people on the hill place the greatest confidence in her ability.)

THE COLLEGE HILL RAILROAD

The question of ‘rapid transit’ for College Hill was always a live but very difficult one. The hill was long and steep. The omnibus was slow and uncomfortable, but was the only available conveyance. At first it was patronized all the way into the city. Then it became the custom for the omnibus to run in connection with the C. H. & D. Railroad, at Cumminsville, especially for the “commuters.” Messrs. George C. and Norris Knight, father and son, who owned the Emerson, Thomson and McCrea places, in about 1867 formed an organization and made a preliminary survey for a railroad up the large ravine which heads on the property of H. G. Pounsford, running back of E. N. Wild’s residence. But they were a little premature, and the scheme was never consummated.
In 1873 Mr. Robert Simpson, who was the very successful State agent of the Mutual Benefit Life Insurance Company and John R. Davey, who was equally successful as the publisher of the wealthy book house of ‘Wilson & Hinkle’ now the ‘American Book Company,’ took up the matter in earnest, organized a company, and, after several preliminary surveys, chose the route now occupied by the road.

Subscriptions to the amount of $22,000 were obtained for the citizens, and a narrow gauge road built from the C. H. & D. Railroad, above Cumminsville, to College Hill, and later to Mt. Healthy. The road was hailed with enthusiasm by the citizens, and for years, being in the meantime widened to a standard gauge, it carried many passengers, considerable freight, and a burdensome mortgage. It was sold and bought in by Messrs. Simpson and Davey. Mr. Davey becoming ‘tired’ sold his interest to his partner in exchange for certain properties of which Mr. Simpson had grown weary. The road continued to run with varying success until the passenger traffic was destroyed by the advent of the electric road, and passenger trains have been abandoned. Its owners, the sons of Robert Simpson, deceased, are making commendable efforts to extend the road through the rich agricultural Miami valley by way of Venice, which is without railroad facilities, to Connersville, Ind. All would be pleased to see them succeed, if for nothing else than that the owners may once more make profitable the road that did so much for College Hill.

**ELECTRIC ROADS**

An electric line between the city and College Hill was agitated soon after the advent of this means of locomotion. Mr. C. T. McCrea was most active in the first effort. But the Consolidated was not then quite ready to take hold of it, not having decided that it would be profitable. Later, in 1893, they made a proposition, through Mr. Lowe Emerson, to build the road on conditions that the right of way should be obtained from the terminus of the Clifton line, near Ludlow Avenue, to the Hill, and a subscription fund of $25,000 be raised. A number of the citizens determined to make the effort, and formed themselves into a working committee for the purpose. The committee consisted of Messrs. Lowe Emerson, Peter G. Thomson, Adam Gray, E. N. Wild, S. W. Ramp and N. L. Pierson. Messrs. Thomson and Wild volunteered to do the soliciting. After several months of steady work on the part of all of the committee, the rights of way and a subscription list of nearly $30,000 were obtained. This sum, however, was not all paid in, largely owing to the fact that various delays and hitches occurred, so that the road was not built until 1895. It began running on Thanksgiving Day of that year. The road makes a circuit in the village, so that as many as possible may be accommodated.

Since that time the Hamilton electric line has entered the village from the north, and a union depot has been established at the northwest corner of Hamilton Avenue and North Bend Road, so that the ‘College Hill and Main Street’ line does a large business. Many passengers from Cincinnati to Hamilton, Middletown, and Dayton take the electric line in preference to the steam road.18

**WATER-WORKS**

How to make water run up hill from the Cincinnati mains is the latest project undertaken by the Council. Suffice it to say it has been accomplished by means of a pumping station at the south end of the village, and a reservoir set on top of an Eiffel Tower, 132 feet from the ground, located on the west side of Belmont Avenue, between Laurel and Maple Avenues. The height to the top of the reservoir is 176 feet. At 132 feet a balcony surrounds the reservoir, reached by a winding stairway. From this aerial perch, which is the highest point that can be reached in Hamilton County, except by a balloon or an airship, the whole township spreads out like a map, and it would only require a good telescope to view the whole county.

**THE PUBLIC SCHOOL**

The College Hill Public School ranks among the progressive schools of the county. Its course of study is practically the same as that of the Cincinnati schools. The corps of teachers consists of A. J. Willey, principal, Misses Carrie E. Moores, Marie Blanchard, Mary Bryant, and Mabelle Brown, assistants. Miss Brown, in addition to her duties as teacher of the first-year grade, has charge of the music.

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18 Cincinnati Weekly Times Star, 6-12-1893, Fare-single cash fare 5 cents. Commutation tickets in package of 20, each ticket good for 1 adult fare, to be sold for $1.00; children under 10 years of age to be carried each for 3 cents or 2 for either 5 cents cash or one commutation ticket. College Hill Electric Railway Co., Lowe Emerson, pres., N. L. Pierson
It has been the policy of the present management to make the school conform to the needs of the times, and while avoiding ‘fads,’ to introduce new methods as fast as they proved worthy. In this connection it may be stated that for several years the language work of the lower grades has been based upon the study of nature and history. The school is ideally situated for the ‘nature study’ work. Vertical writing was tried with such success seven years ago that it has been taught continuously ever since.

Last year was inaugurated the pupils’ ‘self-government’ plan. Under this plan the pupils have their own courts and officers. Such things as profanity and rowdyism on the playground, cheating in the school room, and other abuses, are punished without the necessity of running to the teacher with a ‘tale’; and besides, they are taught responsibility, and as the name implies, ‘self-government.’ The equipment of the school is first class in all particulars. It is well supplied with apparatus and supplementary reading. The building is large and commodious, well heated and ventilated, and in all respects adapted to the needs of a modern school. The grounds are large, containing nearly four acres, and covered with many large trees of the original forest. Besides the natural forest trees, others have been set out, until there are about fifteen different kinds of trees in the yard.

The Board of Education is small in numbers, but large in ability. It consists of Theo. W. Pyle, President, N. L. Pierson, clerk, and E. W. Coy, treasurer. To their able and careful management is largely due the present high standing of one of College Hill’s most prized institutions.

WILD AND FERRIS SUBDIVISION

...With all its advantages, there has never been much systematic effort to place them (Wild & Ferris) before others. Very little advertising of lots for sale has been done. Messrs. E. N. Wild and Dr. Jacob Ferris have recently purchased thirteen acres of ground on Hamilton Avenue, the principal street in the village, in convenient proximity to churches, school, etc., and on the line of the ‘College Hill and Main Street’ electric road. This tract they have subdivided, and now offer lots for sale on easy terms. They only require a cash payment of $25.00 on a lot, the balance to be paid in monthly installments.

They are also prepared to build houses for purchasers on a cash payment of one-fifth of the cost, balance in monthly installments.

This tract is in the line of improvement, and no one can go amiss in taking advantage of their liberal offers. The lots all lie well, and drainage is perfect, naturally and by sewer. There is here presented an opportunity of obtaining a pleasant home and letting its rent pay for it.

Mr. Wild, at College Hill, or at the office of the Cincinnati Equitable Life Insurance Company, No. 38 E. Third Street, or Dr. J. Ferris, at Mt. Healthy, will be pleased to furnish any further information desired.

... In conclusion, I wish to refer with disfavor to the movement on foot to destroy the individuality of our village, with others in Hamilton County, by their being absorbed in the municipality of Cincinnati, without the consent of the villages. It may be technically constitutional, but it is morally and politically piratical. We prefer good, clean, effective and beneficial self government to being the outlying ward of a large city, and our preference ought in justice to be respected; but as the statute is framed every vote in the village might be against annexation and have no effect whatever on the result.”

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Daniel Smith, of Given & Smith, did all the work on the pumping station, and had general supervision. He also has the supervision of the building of the line between Aurora and this city. Mr. Smith is also a member of the home Council.

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The water tank is one of three erected in the State that were made by the Chicago Bridge and Iron Company, and is superior to the old style of tanks, being round at the bottom. The tank is so strong that it can not be injured by the forming and melting of ice, like those with a flat bottom, which are always in danger of bursting. It is made of the very best iron, and the Superintendent of the company, Mr. F. C. Ames, has had complete charge of the erection.

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The location and the construction of the College Hill water-works system has been under the supervision of Col. E. F. Layman, the civil engineer, who for many years has been the leading expert in
this line in this city. Mr. Layman has been at the head of all of the leading water-works systems in the surrounding country, and is now in charge of the building of the Aurora and Cincinnati Electric road.

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H. LaBoiteaux has always on hand fresh and staple groceries, fruits, and garden truck in season, while a branch of the Public Library has been established at his store where books will be loaned on good recommendations.

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IT'S MERITORIOUSLY POPULAR

It was quite enterprising for Ferd Linden to locate such a splendid hotel as he has near Hamilton Pike, in College Hill. It is true that he selected one of the most commanding points in that beautiful country and it was a decided novelty in its way. All other attempts in this line had been dismal failures. Mr. Linden erected, however, a model, modern hotel, flush with comfortable accommodations, and has conducted it in a manner that has made his name famous in Cincinnati as a boniface. The Linden is associated with those who like good eating and all that it means in this line. The hundreds who enjoy a ride on the beautiful route of the street railway company to College Hill, and then a well-cooked and well-served repast at the Linden Hotel, have been warm in their praise of the undertaking, and have been so liberal in advertising in that Mr. Linden has enjoyed a rare success. There is no doubt about its future.

The place is conducted in the very finest style and it is a credit to any locality, as the very best class of people patronize it. Nothing but the best, including Hauck’s beer, is served in his dining room and on its porches.

*************************

Among the societies on the hill the College Hill Field Club is deserving of special mention for its enterprise. Under the auspices of the club there will be held at College Hill to-day a bicycle tournament, which will be attended by many expert riders, and the program offers many interesting features, which no doubt will contribute to make the festival a most enjoyable one to the spectators and participants. The College Hill Field Club has extensive grounds, which include tennis courts, bicycle track, bowling alley, and club rooms.

THE CINCINNATI SANITARIUM

A noted institution on College Hill is the Cincinnati Sanitarium, which has few equals, and no superior in the country. From its incipiency the institution has been on a constant rapid increase, so that recently an annex in the shape of a beautiful building had to be supplied to supply the demands. At the Sanitarium all mental and nervous diseases are treated by skillful physicians on the modern humane plan, and with the most astonishing results. The grounds are beautifully cultivated in flower beds and shrubbery, and the patients are furnished with abundance of fresh air, and every convenience to make their stay at the establishment agreeable. Dr. O. Everetts is superintendent; Dr. B. A. Williams, assistant physician, and J. C. Sheets, steward.”

At this time Dr. Charles Howard, a descendant of Solomon Howard, had a medical office in a frame house on Hamilton Avenue just south of Ambrose. His home was at the corner of Hillcrest and Hamilton.
Life as a Cincinnati Suburb

At the time of annexation several streets in College Hill were renamed; a few streets disappeared entirely, a few had name changes over time. This is the complete list:

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Chapter 23  Powel Crosley, Jr., a Man for All Seasons

Powel Crosley, Sr. was born in Warren County, Ohio, December 25, 1849. A sharp and curious child, he reached the pinnacle of the education available in Springboro. The Crosley name can be traced to England in the thirteenth century. The first Crosley in Ohio was Moses (1764-1843), a Revolutionary War veteran from Maryland, who settled in Warren County. His wife was Rachel Powel. Their son, William (born 1785), had a farm on the Warren/Montgomery County border. He was a successful manufacturer of gunpowder. One of his descendants, Bertha, married Indiana resident Edmund Burle Ball of the fruit jar fortune.

One of his older brothers, William J. and Luken S. Crosley, served in the war. William was captured at the Battle of Fisher's Creek and was in Libby Prison."

Finances denied the senior Powel a college education so he started his own systematic self education while teaching in local Warren County schools. He taught for about four years and left to go to St. Louis to accept a job as a bookkeeper in a department store chain. He flourished in his new career but in 1874 he left to attend law school at Michigan State University. After graduation in 1876 he settled in Cincinnati, working as a lawyer and land speculator. He was in charge of Pike’s Opera House for many years, obtaining a perpetual lease from the Pike estate. This lease was taken over when the opera house burnt, was torn down and on this site the Sinton Hotel was built. Crosley, Sr. was one of the developers of Norwood and a street there is named after him. He also had an interest in radio, owning stock in Marconi’s company.

Powel Crosley, Jr. was born in Walnut Hills, September 18, 1886. The family moved to College Hill where Powel, Jr., when he was seven, attended the O.M.I. and was captivated by racing cars. In 1898, at age 12, Crosley, Jr. built a four-wheeled wagon that ran on an electric motor.

A profile of the Crosley, Sr. household can be glimpsed in the 1910 Census. Powel Sr. was a lawyer and owned the house without a mortgage. In addition to his wife Charlotte, there were Powel Jr. who was a sales manager in the automotive industry, and his siblings Edith (1897-1989) and Louis were attending school. There were no servants. Edith later married Albert B. C. Chatfield. She worked as one of her brother’s first secretaries. The Chatfield name is part of Cincinnati’s past. It is associated with both paper and the manufacture of coal tar and asphalt products. For a time during their marriage Edythe and Albert lived in the Davey mansion.

Louis Crosley married Lucy Johnson, a relative of the Henshaw’s, and their daughter, Charlotte, married Bud Runck. Their son, Reno Runck, has lived in and restored the Upson and Witherby houses. The Crosley’s other child, Ellen, married William McClure.

Powel Crosley, Jr. married Gwendolyn Aiken, daughter of Walter Aiken and Lucy Avery. He lived on Davey Avenue in the house next to the Cummings family. This was the house built by Newbold Pierson that he later sold after going bankrupt. Here is where Crosley Jr.’s first children were born, Powel Crosley III and Page. Gwendolyn played the piano and organ and was an accomplished musician.

Powel’s enthusiasm for auto racing was quenched by an automobile accident but he wasn’t turned away from cars. He started to build his first car in 1908, the Marathon Six, in Connersville, Indiana but he couldn’t raise the capital to go into production. In 1916 he started his second try at car production. The venture failed. He marketed a gasoline additive called Gasatronic. He borrowed $500 from his father and purchased the American Automobile Accessory Company. Their products included a tire liner manufactured from old tires, a car starter and an attachment to the radiator cap hood ornament of the Ford Model T’s that would hold a small flag. His timing was good for patriotism surged during W.W. I and his flag holders made him his first million.

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19 Cincinnati’s Powel Crosley, Jr., Joseph M. Rice, 1976, privately published.
It was on Davey Avenue that Powel Jr.’s son, in 1921, came to him and asked for a radio receiving set. At nine, he had read and heard about this invention and really wanted one! An average weekly salary at that time was $12, while the cost of a radio was about $130. Crosley thought the price was too much and decided to build one himself for his son. He bought The ABC’s of Radio for a quarter and started tinkering with $35 worth of tubes, coils and assorted parts. The first station he received was Pittsburgh. He purchased a $200 radio for himself.

He hired engineers to work with him, resulting in the “Harko” which retailed for $9. This inexpensive crystal radio was an instant success. He started manufacturing radio components in his automobile accessory factory and renamed the plant The Crosley Radio Corporation in 1922. He was producing 500 sets a day, earning the moniker “The Henry Ford of Radio.” Years later Crosley was said to joke that he had 50 jobs in 50 years.

A key to these radios was the use of a new Cincinnati product, Formica’. Paper was treated with resin to produce a thin board that was a substitute for mica, used as a heat resistant circuit board in radios. The 1928 Gembox radio cost $19.95. In 1934, The Fiver, a five tube radio came out. The cabinet to house radios was also inventive. One unit looked like a corner table, another like a freestanding bookshelf.

In 1921 Crosley decided to start a radio station so people could have something to listen to. He built a radio studio in his second floor bedroom. For an antenna, he ran a wire to the tower of Town Hall which was across the street. His first broadcast was in 1922, the Song of India, using a 20 watt transmitter.

He founded WLW-AM in 1922, broadcasting from his home with 50 watts of power. The “Nation’s Station” featured live orchestra music. The 500,000 watt tower was built in Mason twelve years after the station was founded and was so powerful that it affected the electric lights. Farmers could hear the station emanating from their wire fencing and drain pipes. The power needed to run the transmitters was so great that it could have lit a community of 100,000 people. Initially, Crosley could not find a transmitter tower large enough, so he purchased two of the biggest he could find and turned one upside down during installation.

The station was inaugurated at 9:30 P. M., May 2, 1934, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt pressed a gold key on his White House desk and spoke into the microphone saying; “I have just pressed the key to formally open station WLW. It has been a pleasure to do this…” Unfortunately, the only people to hear these words were in the White House room as the transmitter was still warming up and the key was a prop.

Running at 500,000 watts, WLW drowned out all other broadcasting stations. It was heard throughout the states, Australia and Europe. At night, the station increased its power to 750,000 watts. They kept those levels of power until 1939 when Congress limited radio stations to 50,000 watts.

The radio played an important part in helping the nation through the Depression. It was the main source of news and entertainment for rich and poor alike. Familiar stars from the past became a part of everyone’s home: Rosemary and Betty Clooney, Bob Hope, Doris Day, Rod Serling, Roy Rogers, Lena Horne, Duke Ellington and Red Skelton are only a few. One of the most popular programs was Moon River, a nightly poetry and organ music program. Hearing the broadcast in Georgia, songwriter Johnny Mercer later remembered the program as he wrote lyrics to an untitled melody by Henry Mancini - which became the popular song, Moon River. WLW was also responsible for adding a new melodramatic genre calling them “soap operas.”

In Mason, Crosley purchased a 385 acre dairy and poultry farm named “Everybody’s Farm”. He had a radio program developed around life on this farm and built a studio there for live broadcasts. He also experimented with FM wavelengths, beamed from Mason to Cincinnati (1946).

The Roamio was the first radio built and installed in a car, by Crosley, of course. He experimented with television, broadcasting the first TV picture in 1939. In the early 1940’s he sent news by an early fax machine, the Reado. He developed a 35mm camera that was never manufactured. He produced the Icyball gas refrigerator, water coolers, irons, clocks, fans, waffle irons, percolators, record players, lighters, canoes and ice crushers.

The strangest device he manufactured was the Xervac head machine which used bursts of suction to stimulate blood circulation and Crosley claimed it would retard baldness. When introduced in 1936, he...
felt certain that this would be a hit with the public. He was forced by the government to cease production over a conflict about its health claims, but Crosley used his throughout his life.

An avid sportsman, he had an animal preserve in Indiana. He also liked canoe trips. In *Playmates of the Tow Path*, Powel recounted a canal trip: ‘Ah, those happy canal days!’ he exclaimed as he recalled his canal experiences. ‘Years ago four of us boys made a memorable canoe trip. We put our two canoes in the canal above the locks at Lockland and paddled and pulled them up to Dayton, then journeyed on the Mad River and shot down the Big Miami River in our canoes on a freshet and completed our month’s vacation at Venice - the total expenses for each of us being $1.85!

My brother Lewis and I and our chief engineer, Charles Kilgour, and his brother composed our party of adventuring playmates. We found that it was easier to pull the canoe up the canal with ropes than to paddle against the stream. I shall never forget how a great burst of steam came out of a huge pipe in the canal and sent a wave of water into Kilgour’s canoe that nearly swamped it. One of our treasures was an acetylene lamp that fell into the canal. We searched the canal bed for it and finally I clutched it between my feet and brought it thud to the surface while my friends lifted me out of the water and onto a bridge. We had to be acrobats to climb with our canoe out of some of the steep walled canal lock approaches. I shall never forget the night we camped out on the canal bank and slept on the towpath, under a bridge - for there was no other place for us to go, as railroad, trolleys and highways lined both sides of the canal!’

Crosley built an eight story plant at 1329 Arlington Street in Camp Washington in 1922. The radio station moved to this building. With the new factory output increased to 2,000 radios a day. His offices were on the top floor and he had an ‘open door’ policy towards other inventors and tinkerers. One man brought him an idea which became the Shelvador refrigerator, the first refrigerator with shelves inside the door. A story is told about that encounter. Crosley wanted the inventor to accept a quarter a unit as royalties. The inventor wanted $10,000 as a lump sum for an investment he was planning to make. He got his large check but if he would have accepted the royalty at the unit price, he would have been a millionaire!

Soon the radio station outgrew its space so Crosley converted an empty Elks Lodge building at Ninth and Elm Streets to a radio broadcasting studio, and later to a television studio, and named this building on a corner, Crosley Square (1942). The six story building had at its center two, two-story ballrooms that were perfect for studio spaces. There was even a bowling alley in the sub-basement. After 1948, the Square became the center for what has been named the Golden Age of Television. Developing new, live, daily broadcasts rather than relying on syndicated programming created a following for entertainers Ruth Lyons and the 50-50 Club, Bob Braun, and the Midwestern Hayride. And of course, live Cincinnati Reds ball games. Channel 5 was not called WLW-T by Cincinnatians as much as it was simply referred to as Crosley. Many broadcasts were made in color, years before color TV was the norm.

Always a leader in new technology, the 1929 Crosley Moonbeam was an experimental airplane piloted by Edward Niemeyer. Crosley built the Crosley Airport in Sharonville where the Ford Motor Company plant now stands.

He enjoyed baseball in College Hill while growing up. He would occasionally be the announcer for the Opening Day game, which was broadcast from the grandstand’s roof. The first Opening Day on the radio was April 15, 1924. In 1929 regular Reds games started to be broadcast on WSAI, a station Crosley acquired.

Reds owner Sidney Weil put the team up for sale in 1933. The Depression had hurt ticket sales and the team was the worst in the National League. It had been mentioned that the team would be purchased by interests outside of Cincinnati and moved away from the city and that more salary money was needed to attract better players. Crosley purchased the Reds in 1934 (1934-1961) with his radio fortune. Back

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20 *Playmates of the Tow Path*, Charles Ludwig, 1929.

21 To see Crosley early radios, visit the Gray History of the Wireless Museum, Crosley Telecommunications Center (Ch. 48 & WGUC-FM building) 1223 Central Parkway. WCET has produced the video Powel Crosley, Jr. and the 20th Century
then he spent $175,000 in preferred stock and later he bought 51% of the common stock. He changed
the name from Redland Field to Crosley Field, adding a radio and refrigerator replica atop the scoreboard.
The Field could hold slightly less than 30,000 fans. In 1934 WLW hired Walter ‘Red’ Barber as
announcer. On May 24, 1935, Roosevelt from his White House office once again pushed the button, this
time to light the first major league night game. The president touched a telegraph key and the signal was
relayed by Western Union to Crosley Field. That game was carried by the national radio network, Mutual
Broadcasting System. Unfortunately, the game was rained out and was played the next day.

In 1956 the Field was landlocked and parking was very tight. Crosley approached the city to supply
more parking, which it did in several lots that opened in 1959.

When Crosley died suddenly March 28, 1961 of a heart attack, his daughter, Page (Crosley) Kess
became the next owner. Prior to his death, Crosley had sold off all of his other interests. During his
twenty seven years of ownership twice the Reds played in the World Series. Kess’s interest was sold to
Bill DeWitt, the Reds General Manager. DeWitt sold the club in 1966 to Francis Dale, the publisher of the
Cincinnati Enquirer. Negotiations that had started when Crosley was the owner about building a
new stadium continued under DeWitt and Dale. Riverfront Stadium was opened June 30, 1970. Peanut
Jim Sheldon, a familiar sight at Crosley Field, dressed in a top hat and tails, continued to sell his bags of
warm peanuts to the crowds at the Stadium until his death. Parts of old Crosley Field were saved and
reinstalled at the Blue Ash Sports Center.

Mrs. Page Kess became head of the charitable Crosley Foundation until her death in 1994. The Fund
was a benefactor to many causes including the University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati Nature Center,
WCET, and the Museum Center.

Gwendolyn Aiken, his wife of 29 years, died unexpectedly in Sarasota, Florida, at age 48 (Feb. 26,
1939). Crosley married three more times, the last being Eva Brokaw in 1955.

He built the country’s first small car in 1939. It had two cylinders and got 50 miles to the gallon,
weighed 1,800 pounds and held 4 gallons of gas. They sold for around $300. A light sheet metal engine
was produced in Cincinnati while the cars were built in Marion, Indiana. This engine was referred to as a
COBRA (copper brazed) engine. It developed leak problems because the natural chlorine in the water
ruined the welds. For a time Crosley’s developed a poor reputation because of the problem. The car
company needed a continual influx of cash from Crosley every few months to keep production running.

Production ceased during the war years. His car didn’t boom until after the war, with best sales
occurring in 1948. The Crosley was offered in a variety of body styles: sedan, wagon, convertible, pick-
up. His cars now had a four cylinder engine and he offered four wheel disc brakes. In 1949 he switched to
a cast iron engine but the reputation of his automobile had been sullied by the problems of the earlier
engine. Production costs increased. Production ceased in 1952 after 72,000 were built. By 1957 Crosley
had lost over a million dollars on his car production from correcting engine claims. Americans just
weren’t interested in small cars at that time, gasoline was inexpensive (20 cents a gallon) and an oil
embargo wasn’t in anyone’s nightmares. When Crosley died in 1961, the Volkswagen Beetle was
scurrying across the highways. Today the Crosley Automobile Club represents more the 3,000 restored
and happily running Crosleys. William Angert, Sr. displayed his Crosley cars in the annual College Hill
Days car show.

Crosley moved from College Hill in the late 1920’s, building “Pinecroft” on seventy-three acres off
of Kipling Road. He had been purchasing land there for several years while living on Davey Avenue.
Built in a Tudor style, his mansion contained a 1929 Skinner organ that Gwendolyn would play. The
organ was later moved to the Cincinnati Museum Center. Kipling was a country road back then and
subdivisions now stand where the deer grazed. The Franciscan Sisters of the Poor purchased 43 acres of
his estate and built Providence Hospital, opened in 1971. It is now owned by Mercy Hospital Mount Airy

22 Crosley Field, Greg Rhodes & John Erardi, 1995
23 AntiqueWeek, 1-12-1991
and has been opened for tours in conjunction with special events. The 13,300 sq. foot English Tudor mansion is being restored and plans to be nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.

Across the street, 2341 Kipling is the house that Powel Crosley Jr. built for his son, Powel Crosley III. At the time of Powel Crosley Jr.’s death in 1961, the residence on a seven acre site was inherited by his daughter, Martha Page Crosley Kess. The following year it was owned by her son, Lewis Crosley and was his home until 1968. Like Pinecroft this house is a modified Norman Tudor style.

The description of life at the Crosley estate was written by Greta H. Kappes, daughter of Walter A. Harry, superintendent of the estate for seventeen years.24 “There was a courtyard on the Crosley estate that was bordered by a five-car garage and three greenhouses with their adjoining work shed. There was a small building across the courtyard from the main garage that also housed cars--usually two small Crosley cars...

My Dad grew gardenias, orchids, and an assortment of other plants and flowers in the greenhouses. For summer show, he skillfully planted formal gardens on the grounds. Most of the large trees visible on the estate today were planted by my father or members of his crew. The hundreds of daffodils which are so prominent in the spring were also planted during his tenure...

There were other employees who also lived on the estate. The chauffeur was not only a good driver, but also an excellent mechanic, for it was his task to keep all the cars cleaned and in good running order so that they would be ready upon call. When a call came, a car was driven around to the front door ready for Mr. Crosley to step into. The little Crosley car was prominent on the estate; Mr. Crosley was usually the person who drove one, and he did so frequently.

In the foyer of the home was a large pipe organ, the pipes were located in the attic...On the lower level of the mansion was a Baldwin concert grand piano. It was situated in the room adjoining the rathskeller. The walls of most of the rooms on the first floor were wood paneling.

In the house there was an upstairs maid, a cook, and a downstairs maid... Each had one day a week off, her own living quarters, and worked a multitude of hours. On their day off, the chauffeur would drive them to the bus stop. He would also pick them up if a call came before his day ended.

The swimming pool on the estate was lined with pale blue ceramic tile. It was located just off the rear entrance to the foyer of the house. The mansion was fashioned from a traditional English Tudor home. The stones on the outside were shipped from England to give the building its authentic appearance. The ‘guard houses’ at the entrance to the estate off Kipling Road were built to emphasize the copy of a typical lord’s estate in England, but they were never meant to be functional.

Many prominent Cincinnatians were guests at Mr. Crosley’s elegant parties. But most notable in my mind were the annual opening day celebrations he would hold in which the entire Cincinnati Reds team was invited to the mansion.

The acreage of the Crosley Estate did extend down to Banning Road. A tenant farmer and his family occupied a farm house near Banning. It was very rare for Mr. Crosley to drive down through that portion of the property."

During W.W. II Crosley accepted the contract to build the Voice of America radio station in Mason. VOA sent news and music around the world in the time of the Cold War. A site one mile square and covered with 300 foot high radio towers, it started transmission in 1944 and ceased in 1994. The six transmitters put out 250,000 watts of power apiece. The government chose the site due to its high elevation. The towers are no longer standing, taken down in 1997, and a ten area is now the Voice of America Park. The small switching station building still remains and has become a museum.

The Crosley Corporation did top secret work in developing a vacuum tube fuse for the Navy.25 It was so secret that the laboratory was across the street from the main Crosley plant and Powel Crosley Jr. himself didn’t have access. Radio equipment for use in the field was also manufactured. That the

24 Previously printed in the Heritage News.

company assembled ‘radar-sensitive proximity fuses, was revealed in a recent article\textsuperscript{26}. The fuses were disguised en route to Lunken Airport by being packed in milk crates loaded in a milk truck.

The Crosley Corporation was resurrected in North Carolina by a small, private label company. Once again Crosley radios are available, along with Shelvadors, cars, freezers, ranges, dishwashers, and microwaves. The Crosley name was bought from AVCO, which had purchased the Crosley product name and line in 1946. Crosley products are still sold by small, independent distributors rather than to large store chains. An extensive line of reproduction radios are available, from the 1930’s mirrored, round Bluebird to the 1946 Truetone.

A bit of Crosley history is at Sarasota Bay, Florida. Overlooking the Bay, Powel and his first wife, Gwendolyn, built “Seagate,” a 21 room winter house. The estate and Mediterranean Revival style mansion was built by Crosley in 1929, costing $350,000. It was used by the family until 1939 when Mrs. Crosley died there. A preservation effort is being made to restore the mansion and save the surrounding ecologically sensitive wetland.

\textsuperscript{26} Cincinnati Enquirer, This is Crosley Square...Signing Off, June 6, 1999.