

# **A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE VILLAGE OF KIRTLAND HILLS**

**Compiled - April 30, 1988**

**Updated by the Kirtland Hills Community Activities Committee - May, 1990**

**(Revised September, 1994)**

**(Revised February, 2011)**

In 1922 Harry Wheelock King apparently hired the renowned landscape artist Frederick Law Olmsted (who designed New York's Central Park) to develop a plan for his 400 acre Kingwood Farm. Possibly he did this for what would become Kirtland Hills Village. Leonard C. Hanna, Jr., at a meeting held at the Union Club in 1925, requested that a decision be made on a name for the Village. "Village of Kirtland Hills" was chosen in honor of Dr. Jared P. Kirtland, who lived from 1793-1877. Dr. Kirtland was discoverer of the "Kirtland Warbler", and was a friend of John J. Audubon, first president of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History. The Village was incorporated on October 8, 1926, and currently encompasses 13¼ square miles of the 261 square miles in all of Lake County. The first officers were elected in Elton Hoyt's stable at his estate on Chillicothe Road. Riverside School at 9045 Baldwin Road was used as the Village Hall until 1952. In that year, a village hall and garage was built at its present location on Chillicothe Road, and the Council then met in the front room of that building. The Village's Council and Long Range Planning Committee in 1994 considered the needs and shortcomings of the Village Hall. In 1995, an architectural and planning firm was hired, Dickson Associates, Inc., to design plans for proposed additions to the current facility. Mayor John F. Turben, in December of 1996, announced plans for a \$1,000,000 improvement and addition project to the existing Village Hall. The addition contemplated considerable remodeling and nearly 50 percent addition to the square footage. In August of 1997, work began to transform the plain, brick box that was Kirtland Hills Village Hall for 46 years. The \$1,000,000 makeover project recreated its administration and police operations from a simple, out-of-date building to a stately village center. The massive renovation was funded through private donations and capital improvement funds from the Village's share of estate tax settlements. No village operating funds or additional taxes were needed. In the early 1930's, village entrance signs were placed at the corner of Little Mountain and King Memorial, on Booth Road, and at the intersection of Little Mountain and Johnnycake Ridge. There was a fourth sign that stood somewhere near Kingwood Farm on Chillicothe until it was stolen. A rail fence and quail are depicted in silhouette above a rectangle of wood with the caption "Entering the Village of Kirtland Hills, Named for Dr. Jared Kirtland, First Ornithologist of this Region". Ora McFarland apparently made street signs for the Village at the Temple Forge on Route 306 across from the Temple. Council bought its first police car in 1933 for \$585-the average cost of which is now \$22,000! In 1969, Council established an Architectural Board to review and make recommendations for future construction within the Village, in order to "preserve it as a desirable place to reside". Urban Research and Planning, Inc. was hired by the Mayor in 1973 to prepare a comprehensive plan for zoning. In 1972, Mrs. John Butler and Mrs. Elton Hoyt, III took it upon themselves to decorate the Village street signs for Christmas, a tradition that is continued today by the Service Department.

Kirtland Hills Village had within its limits three churches, each of which has a unique history. St. Andrew Episcopal Church on Little Mountain Road is the most modern of the three. St. Andrew was admitted as an organized mission of the Diocese of Ohio in January, 1958, and was incorporated on May 5, 1959. The church building was completed and dedicated on October 23, 1960, after the congregation spent years meeting in living rooms, at the Mentor Christian Church, and at the Pythian Castle in Mentor.

The building of the former East Shore Unitarian Universalist Church on Center Street is one of the two estate mansions, identical in size, built by Colonel Frank A. Scott in the 1920's. Consistent with the prevailing architectural practice of the time, Colonel Scott chose to duplicate a particular style, in this case one similar to that common to the Cotswolds of England, for his home. As a result, Greystone Manor, as the building was originally called, is an authentic reproduction of a typical 16th century English Tudor Manor House. When, after the opening of the I-90 freeway in the late 1950's, the building became available, the small but growing congregation was able to purchase it with the help of Thomas and Ethel Peterson of the First Unitarian Church of Cleveland. The congregation, which had started with a handful of members meeting in private houses in 1956, and later met at the Knights of Pythian Hall and Brentmoor School in Mentor, moved into this building in 1961. The congregation sold the building and property to a private owner in 1996 and moved into a new church on Route 306 south of Euclid Chardon Road.

St. Hubert's Chapel on Baldwin Road was actually built in 1892. It originally stood on the top of Little Mountain and was an Episcopal chapel first known as "The Church of the Transfiguration". It was built with funds donated by the Right Reverend W. A. Leonard, who was at the time Bishop of Ohio. The Church stood on the grounds of

the Little Mountain Club on the top of Little Mountain. It was designed by Cleveland architect Wilbur M. Hall and built by William Reynolds. It was dedicated on July 9, 1893, and open for public worship in the spring of 1894. The beautiful stained glass windows were made in Munich, Germany, and were presented as gifts to the church by members of the Little Mountain Club. When the social activities of the Club ceased, the Church of the Transfiguration stood vacant. In 1916, Bishop Leonard decided to move the little church. It was transported seven miles to the grounds of the Holliday House of the Girls Friendly Society on Salida Beach off Lakeshore Boulevard. The Society was a summer recreational facility for Trinity Cathedral. It was disbanded around 1925, and services were then often held on the front porch of Hollycroft in Mentor, which was the home of Helen and James R. Garfield. Finally, the chapel was moved, again by horse and wagon, to its present location on the bank of the Chagrin River East Branch here in Kirtland Hills. The site was selected by Fayette Brown and given by Mrs. Henry W. King. The move was made possible by Bishop Leonard and the generosity of several women of the congregation. The paneling on the walls of the Chapel, the steeple, the entrance porch, sacristy, robing room, altar rail, and sanctuary rail were all designed by architect Edward G. Reed. "St. Hubert" was chosen because he is the Patron Saint of the hunt, the horse, and the hound. Services originally were held at an hour when the congregation might ride to the church and then continue their ride until they returned home for a customary large Sunday dinner. St. Hubert's was dedicated by Bishop Leonard on June 2, 1929. Reverend James S. Johnston, who also assisted with the formation of St. Andrew's Church, came to St. Hubert's from Grace Church in Willoughby in 1955. Originally, services were held only in the summer; but in 1972 year round services were begun, and continue today.

At one time, the Village owned four houses. One of these was the "Cole House" on Chillicothe Road, which was built by Alfred Morley around 1870. It was renovated by Council in 1947 and was razed in 2000. The Village's huge field (Chillicothe and Baldwin Roads) separated the Cole House from the "Hazeltine House" on Baldwin Road, which was built by John G. Hazeltine in the 1860's. The Hazeltine House was sold to Mr. Jerome T. Osborne. The "Boyer House", which was on Hart Road, was possibly built by D. B. Hart and was intentionally burned down as a practice for the Mentor Fire Department in 1986. The "Perkins House" used to stand near the Village Hall on Chillicothe Road.

The Kingwood Dairy once stood on Chillicothe Road just west of the Route 615 intersection. Apparently, Sealtest produced cream there at one time. Lockie-Lee then used it as a bottling plant, and the old farmhouse is now owned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

The entire region of Lake County is rich in Native American history, and many artifacts have been found in this vicinity. This was an especially good area for habitation because rivers and streams provided food and water, fertile land supported agriculture, and abundant game in the forests meant good hunting. Pre-historical tribes common to this area included the Paleo Tribe and that Archaic People, both of whom were transient hunting tribes, and the Adenas and Hopewells, who were Mound Builders. The Whiteley Tribe were the last prehistoric people to inhabit this area. They built villages on bluffs above the river banks. These tribes were all wiped out by the Seneca and Iroquois Tribes when they expanded their territories into this region as they hunted for furs to trade with European settlers.

One of the earliest settlers in what was to become Kirtland Hills was Levi Smith. Born in Derby, Connecticut, in 1774, Levi was a great-grandson of Ebenezer Smith, who was an early settler of Jamaica, Long Island. He married Ruth Holbrook in 1800 and moved to this area, which was at the time a part of Geauga County. The Smiths started a farm on Hart Road. Ruth died in 1818, leaving at least four children (Daniel, George, Catherine, and Sarah). Levi then went back to Derby, where he married Rebecca Hotchkiss. They returned to the Smith Farm in the spring of 1819. On September 3, 1819, a meeting was held at the home of Rebecca and Levi, which resulted in the organization of the First Congregational Society of Kirtland, which became the Old South Church in Kirtland. Ancestors of the Smiths reside in Painesville today. A gravestone was erected in honor of our early residents on Hart Road (near the Baldwin Road intersection), and was renovated in 1987.

The one-room schoolhouse at the corner of Booth and Baldwin Roads was built in 1894. It was called Riverside School, and classes were held there until 1920. The building stood vacant for several years, until Leonard C. Hanna, Jr., the owner of the building, allowed the Village Council to meet there. Thus, the schoolhouse served as the Village Hall until the current facility was built on Chillicothe Road in 1952. Minutes of a 1940 Council meeting show that members discussed installing electric lights and a telephone in the schoolhouse for the use of the police department during the winter months. After 1952, the schoolhouse once again stood vacant until it was purchased and remodeled into a home for the Anthony Ocepek family. Mr. Ocepek donated the house and property in 1988 to Lake Metroparks.

Hula Road, two-tenths of a mile east of Booth Road, once connected Baldwin and Sperry Roads. Nicknamed the "Hula Loop", it was named for James Hula and was abandoned in 1929.

With a total of 3,162 acres of land, the Holden Arboretum is the largest in the country. It was founded from a trust left by Albert Fairchild Holden in honor of his daughter, Elizabeth Davis. At the time of his death at age 46 in 1913, Mr. Holden was President of the Island Creek Coal Company. He left an outstanding collection of minerals to the Mineralogical and Geological Museums at Harvard University. He originally planned to leave his estate to benefit the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University, but his sister, Roberta Holden Bole, fortunately convinced him that Cleveland needed an arboretum, too. Sites in both Bratenahl and at Lake View Cemetery were originally considered, but neither worked out. In 1931 Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin P. Bole contributed 100 acres of land in Kirtland Township that became the nucleus of the Holden Arboretum. It was administered by the Cleveland Museum of Natural History through a special Board of Control until the two institutions formally split in 1952. Mr. Holden's daughters, Mrs. R. Henry Norweb and Mrs. Katherine Holden Thayer, continued an active interest in the new Arboretum and were, along with many others, among its most generous contributors. Eventually, the Holden Trust will serve as permanent endowment for the Arboretum. Its mission has become to promote the knowledge and appreciation of plants for personal enjoyment, inspiration and recreation, for scientific research, and for educational and aesthetic purposes.

Shadybrook Farm was the site of the Lake County History Center. Arthur D. Baldwin, the son of Hawaiian missionaries, and Reba Williams Baldwin, a daughter of a founder of Sherwin-Williams Paint Company, established Shadybrook as a summertime residence for their family early in the 1900's. In 1926, the present house was built on the foundation of an earlier frame house which had burned. It was designed by Abram Garfield, son of President Garfield. Formal gardens, a polo field, and extensive grape arbors all represented the interests of the Baldwins. Shadybrook was a working farm, consisting of 543 acres and three on-site farm families. In 1955, the Baldwin children sold Shadybrook Farm to the Holden Arboretum. The land is used as an important part of the Arboretum's planting and management programs. The Arboretum rented the house to a Laymen's Retreat Association for about twenty-five years, until the Lake County History Center acquired a long-term lease for the house and fourteen surrounding acres in 1983. The Center contained a museum and research library. It was the site of many instructive and educational programs and entertaining special events. The Center also served as the headquarters for the Lake County Historical Society, "Lawnfield", which was the Mentor home of President James A. Garfield. Its second major function is the preservation, collection, and interpretation of the history of Lake County and the surrounding region. The National Parks Service acquired the Garfield home around 1984. Consequently, the first function of the Historical Society was no longer necessary. It then moved to new quarters in Shadybrook House. The Lake County Historical Society moved from the Shadybrook House to its new building in Painesville in 2008.

There are still many other interesting facts about the Village. For instance, did you know that the top of Little Mountain, at an elevation of 1266 feet, is the highest point above sea level in Ohio? The plateau at the summit includes more than 50 acres (about a square mile) of relatively flat land. It is shaped like a saddle that can be seen from a boat on Lake Erie. On Little Mountain are deep caverns and interesting rock formations that earlier generations nicknamed "Devil's Kitchen", "Devil's Bedroom", and "Table Rock". There are also many springs of cold, clear water that were used for "water cures" many years ago. Girdled Road once crossed its summit from east to west, and was the dividing line between Lake and Geauga Counties. Before the white man came, Native

Americans felt the magic of the area. They believed it was the abode of the Great Spirit, and held solemn ceremonies there. For more than a century, rich and influential families from all over the country spent their summers in residence at the various hotels that sprung up on the mountain. They reached the summit via stagecoach from Mentor. The attractions included marvelous wildflowers, such as Lady Slippers, Solomon Seal, Wintergreen, and the last forest of virgin Eastern White Pines existing west of the Allegheny Mountains.

The first hotel on the summit was built and operated by Captain Simeon Reynolds in 1831. It was first called the Little Mountain House, and later the Lakeview House. The hotel was spacious and contained the latest improvements for the time, among them an indoor bowling alley and an observation platform where guests were able to watch for boats on Lake Erie. Captain Reynolds was reportedly a huge Falstaff type man who weighed three hundred pounds and played the fiddle for dances at his tavern.

A second hotel was built by D. W. Stocking of Chardon in 1850. It was called the Stocking House and could accommodate two hundred guests. In 1872, the Little Mountain Club (comprised mainly of Cleveland businessmen) purchased the Stocking House and used it as their clubhouse for over sixty years. The building was torn down in 1941 and was the last of the four hotels to be demolished.

The third hotel, the Little Mountain Eagle, was built about 1857 by William S. Gardner. The main section of the building was thirty-four by forty-four and was three stories high. There was a twenty-five by thirty foot two story wing on each side. An observatory was located on the top. People taking the "water cure" boarded here. The Eagle (also known as the Gardner House) did not flourish long. After it was closed down, it became known as the "Haunted House".

The fourth and last hotel built on the summit of Little Mountain in the late 1880's was the Pinecrest Hotel. Built by a company headed by C. A. Avery, the Pinecrest was the most elegant and pretentious hotel built on the "mountain". This three-story, T-shaped building was surrounded by a fourteen foot veranda. A 1890 summer season brochure stated: "The guests' chambers are of good size and perfectly ventilated. They are single and en suite, with baths attached, private balconies, open fireplaces, etc. All principal rooms have ample clothes closets. Lavatories and hot and cold baths are on each floor. All rooms are connected with the office by an electronic call bell system. All rooms are lighted with gas. A baggage elevator as well as servant's staircase runs from basement to attic. Large open fireplaces are in the rotunda and drawing room. A standpipe runs through all floors, and has frequent fire plugs with hose attachments to carry water to any room, as well as other devices for extinguishing fire before it has a chance to get any headway. A Western Union Telegraph Office, Post and Express Offices are located in the rotunda. A steam laundry is also connected. Cottages situated in picturesque rows convenient to the Hotel are of various sizes, and are fully furnished and cared for as are the rooms in the Hotel. Every amusement possible is provided for guests. Frequent hops, with music from an excellent orchestra, billiards, bowling alleys, concerts, and various entertainments are available. An excellent livery is maintained, and drives about the countryside are very popular."

Cleveland's elite came to Little Mountain. They included Jephtha Homer Wade, owner of Western Union Telegraph Company; Amasa Stone and State Senator Henry B. Payne, the railroad executives; John D. Rockefeller of Standard Oil; and Congressman (later President) James A. Garfield.

This gay summer resort became a principal source of income to the farm families that lived around Little Mountain. Farm produce and services were in demand by the summer people. A small village gradually developed at what became known as Joice's Corners (the corner of Little Mountain and Morley Roads). The first schoolhouse (log) at Little Mountain was constructed in 1822 and Joseph Reynolds was the first school teacher. The last schoolhouse (red brick) was constructed in 1885 at the corner of Little Mountain and King Memorial. It was last occupied in the school year 1925-26. On the south side of Little Mountain east of King Memorial a white frame Methodist Church was built in 1885. The church flourished for many years. Once the large landowners began purchasing the farms, the congregation dwindled and the church property was eventually sold. In 1933 the church was torn down. Mrs. Babcock and Mrs. Carver erected a building at Joice's Corners in the fall of 1880 and

started a grocery store of sorts. Around 1887, Henry Babcock took over the business, which was successful into the early 1900's. For many years the Little Mountain Post Office was operated from this building until it was discontinued in 1907. Mail was actually addressed to the town of Little Mountain, Ohio, at that time. On the south side of Little Mountain and a quarter of a mile east of Joice's Corners, a saw mill and basket factory was built in the 1870's by William Reynolds. The factory was still in operation in 1908.

On the east side of King Memorial Road about half way between Little Mountain and the freeway was a good sized cemetery that held the remains of, among many others, the Honorable John Reynolds. Reynolds lived from 1761 to 1840 and was born in Norwich, Connecticut. He was a Judge in New York State. Simeon Reynolds, who as you may remember built the Little Mountain House, was his son. Peppermint oil, an important and lucrative crop at the time, was produced on the Reynolds Farm. Reynolds Road (Route 306) was named for members of the family as some of them had farms in that area. A great-grandson of John Reynolds, the late Honorable Arlington G. Reynolds, was Mayor of Painesville in 1896, Probate Judge of Lake County from 1891 to 1909, and Common Pleas Judge from 1909 until his death.

The final point of interest in the history of Kirtland Hills is the estate of the late Leonard C. Hanna, Jr. In 1923, the John Wanamaker store in Philadelphia arranged to send a buyer to England to purchase, disassemble, and import, three stone houses. One of these houses ended up as the guest house on the estate of Edmund S. Burke on County Line Road. Burke was a wealthy Cleveland industrialist who later became the Chairman of the Fourth Federal Reserve District. It was moved from Philadelphia and reconstructed in 1925 at that location by renowned stonemason George Brown. The house, which dates to 1472, ended up in its present location when Hanna purchased it around 1945 and re-erected it on his property in Kirtland Hills. Hanna had his three hundred acre farm landscaped in the style of an English feudal village. On the grounds are a huge pool and pool house, covered bridge, guest houses, kennels, caretaker's house, sheep barns, and gate house, all of which were constructed here. Most of these face Little Mountain Road. The Hanna family was one of Cleveland's wealthiest. Its fortune was based on coal, iron ore, and Great Lakes shipping interest of Marcus A. Hanna and Co., today known as the Hanna Mining Company. Leonard C. Hanna, Jr. was a philanthropist who gave nearly 100,000,000 dollars to Cleveland's cultural and charitable institutions. Hanna maintained an apartment in New York and was friends with many sports figures, actors, and writers. One of his closest friends was Cole Porter (they had been classmates at Yale). Visitors to the Hanna Estate included Cole Porter, Gene Tunney, Gloria Swanson, and Joan Crawford. There is a story that one of Hanna's Weimaraner dogs accidentally swallowed a large diamond earring that belonged to Miss Crawford. Needless to say, she was extremely upset until it was recovered from the dog pen the next morning! Many families in the Village can probably remember swimming in the Hanna pool, as he often allowed neighbors to use it on Sunday afternoons. Following Hanna's death in 1957, the estate was subdivided by Gerald Wearsch and modern homes were built on it. The original house, circa 1472, is still privately owned.

## References and Sources of Information

- Ahlstrom, Janice Mather. "The Little Mountain Story", The Historical Society Quarterly, Lake County, Ohio, Vol. 3, No.4, October, 1961.
- Andrews, Alice B. "Visiting a Realm of Cleveland Aristocracy" (photocopy of newspaper article-origin unknown).
- "Antiques" June, 1934 issue. A current version of rural early English-the country home of Leonard C. Hanna, Jr., near Cleveland, Ohio. (other information unknown).
- "Burial Plot of Pioneers One of Smallest in State" (photocopy of newspaper article--origin unknown).
- Cleveland and Its Environs, Leonard C. Hanna, Jr. information (other information unknown).
- copies of old ads for Little Mountain Hotels (origins unknown).
- Corrigan, Mary Lou. "Little Mountain--Vacation Magnet" from the "Lake County News Herald" Tuesday, June 26, 1977 page 18.
- East Shore Unitarian Universalist Church brochures (available from the Church).
- Goulder, Grace. "Little Mountain, Once Famed for Hotels and Hygenic Air, Now Taken Over By Big Estates" from "Ohio Scenes and Citizens", Cleveland Plain Dealer Pictorial Magazine, May 22, 1949.
- History of Geauga County, The 1953 Leonard C. Hanna, Jr. information, page 720 (other information unknown).
- Hitchcock, Elizabeth G. "Kirtland Hills Village, 1926-1976 from Council Minutes.
- Hitchcock, Elizabeth G. "Little Mountain" April, 1988 (other information unknown).
- Hitchcock, Elizabeth G. "St. Andrew's From the Very Beginning".
- Hitchcock, Elizabeth G. "The Travels of St. Hubert's Chapel" from the "Lake County Historical Society Quarterly", Vol. 15, No.4, November, 1973.
- Holden Arboretum 1987 Annual Report, page 3 and 5.
- "Homes"-Jacobethan Section. Leonard C. Hanna, Jr. information (other information unknown).
- Lake County Historical Society printouts--available from Lake County History Center.
- "Cemetery at King Memorial Inscriptions--copied August, 1927" (photocopy from Lake County Historical Society).
- National Cyclopedia Leonard C. Hanna, Jr. information, page 74 (other information unknown).
- "Old Stocking House, Once Exclusive Resort, Yields to March of Progress", 1941. Photocopy of newspaper article (other information unknown).
- Podolak, Janet, "...While One Grave Has Historical Significance", "Lake County News Herald" June 29, 1982.
- Steed, Mildred, "John Reynolds was New York Judge". April 19, 1975 (other information unknown).
- Village of Kirtland Hills Newsletters.