



this is Beechwo  ld

1899 - 1975

Ellen Rose (Mrs. Stewart M. Rose) lives at 194 W. Royal Forest Boulevard, Columbus, Ohio. She has been a resident of Old Beechwold since 1937.

The cover is designed by Bill Hamilton who resides at 177 W. Jeffrey Pl., Columbus, Ohio

**BEECHWOLD
1800 - 1975**

John Hathorne was a young man living in Boston when he was 17 years old. He had just finished his studies at Harvard College and was about to begin his law studies at the Middle Temple in London. He was a very bright and ambitious young man, and he was determined to make a name for himself in the world of law. He was also a very religious man, and he was a member of the Congregational Church. He was a very active member of the church, and he was a very popular speaker at the meetings. He was a very good writer, and he was a very good orator. He was a very successful lawyer, and he was a very successful politician. He was a very successful man in every way.

In the year 1735, the County of Essex was divided into two parts, and the town of Beechwold was one of the parts. The town of Beechwold was a very small town at that time, and it was a very quiet town. It was a very peaceful town, and it was a very happy town. The people of Beechwold were very good people, and they were very kind people. They were very helpful people, and they were very generous people. They were very good people in every way.

John Hathorne moved to Beechwold in the year 1735. He was a very successful lawyer, and he was a very successful politician. He was a very successful man in every way. He was a very good man in every way. He was a very good man in every way.

SOURCES*

Abstraction of Title, Columbus Savings and Trust, Township of Clinton.

John Rathbone's estate. Probate Court, Franklin County, Ohio.

Probate Court Record. Franklin County, Ohio. Case #19106.

Columbus Vignettes, Bill Arter. Vol. IV, pp. 12 and 13.

Beechwold the Beautiful, Beechwold Realty Co. Columbus, Ohio.

*Special thanks to Mr. Charles H. Johnson and his daughter Mrs. Esther Dawes, and to all of the neighbors with whom I reminisced.

"When we first came to Beechwold there was an enormous bear pit in the ravine." These words are part of the folklore which has been passed down to Beechwold residents through the years. The bear pit has not been historically documented, but Beechwold was at one time, the Zoo, a real habitat for animals and not a description of the present residents.

Several other appellations have been given to Beechwold. Among them is "Old Beechwold" which distinguishes the area from Clintonville, and "Very Old Beechwold" which is supposed to distinguish it from everybody. This then is an account of the history of Beechwold and anecdotes about its early inhabitants.

On the first day of June, 1796 the Congress of the United States, by proclamation of President John Adams, passed an act "regulating the grants of land appropriated for military services and for the Society of the United Brethren for propagating the Gospel among the Heathens . . . and on the eleventh day of February and first day of March, 1800, there is granted unto John Rathbone a certain tract of land estimated to contain four thousand acres, being the second quarter of the first township in the eighteenth range of the tract appropriated for satisfying warrants for military service." Thus, you see, history confirms Beechwold residents as not only zoological, but heathen as well.

John Rathbone was a New Yorker living on Fulton Street at the time he acquired this 4000 acres in the territory which was soon to become Ohio. Why he wished this land, so far away in Indian territory, is open to conjecture. He never lived here, nor is there any record of his having even seen the land. Whether it was ever used to biblically enlighten the heathens or for "military service" is unknown as well. John Rathbone was an extremely wealthy man speculating in real estate and perhaps was eager to make a profit with the advent of Ohio's imminent statehood.

In April of 1803 Franklin County was carved out of the new state, and in the next fifty years John Rathbone sold all but 262 acres of his Ohio land. These remaining acres turned up in his will, dated July, 1853 and were bequeathed to his third daughter, Eliza. There is no record of what happened to the other 3738 acres. Perhaps when Ohio became a state, John Rathbone saw his chance and made a windfall from the new homesteaders. It is known that he was an extremely astute real estate broker. The contents of his will show him to have been a large landholder with a variety of prime property in New York City.

Eliza Rathbone married Dr. Charles Wetmore, evidently against her father's wishes, as they quickly fled New York, or were banished, to the 262 acres in Ohio. This land was willed solely to Eliza and her heirs, and though all of John Rathbone's other

sons-in-law received valuable property from his estate, Dr. Wetmore is never mentioned.

There is no record of Eliza Wetmore's will, but her daughter, Eliza Robinson's will was probated in the Franklin County courts in 1854. Eliza Robinson died childless and her brothers and sisters inherited her 262 acres.

Over the next 48 years these acres were tossed with regularity from one indifferent brother and sister to another, pawned off on to the unsuspecting nieces and nephews, and wheelbarrowed through the courts, in and out of quit-claim deeds and ante-nuptial contracts. No one wanted this lovely green land by the river.

By 1902, Prosper Wetmore, Eliza Robinson's brother, after years of litigation, ended up with 75.45 acres of land, all that was left of John Rathbone's original 4000 acre grant. On December 30 of that year, Prosper Wetmore deeded this acreage to the Columbus Zoological Society. The deed elegantly describes the boundaries of the 75.45 acres. "Being all of that part of the premise conveyed by Prosper Wetmore et al., to the Columbus Zoological Company by deed dated December 30, 1902 . . . beginning at a point in the center of the Columbus and Worthington Pike and where the north line of Rathbone Section intersects the same; thence with said north line N. 85½ degrees W. 2791 feet to the center of the Olentangy River, passing a stone on the west side of the Pike at 33 feet and passing another stone on the east bank of said River at 2713 feet, witnessed by a double sycamore tree . . . thence down the river with the meanders thereof S.; . . . thence with the north line of Weisheimer and Joseph Garrett land S. 85 degrees E. 2106 feet to an iron spike in the center of the Columbus and Worthington Pike, passing a stone and stump on the east bank of river at 75 feet;"

What a delightful description! Now these boundaries are a four lane Henderson Rd. on the South, and inner belt on the West, a proposed four lane highway to the North, and a widened High Street (Worthington Pike) to the East. A long way from the double sycamore, the rock and the meandering river.

This deed was properly filed in the deed book of the Franklin County Recorder's Office and subsequently the northern part of the 75.45 acres was named Zooland.

Meanwhile, in 1813 during all of this wheeling and dealing, down south on the back thirty, which was still part of Rathbone's original grant, Stephen (or Samuel, no one can agree) Maynard was building a mill on the east bank of the Olentangy River.

In 1865 Jacob Weisheimer bought the mill and the thirty acres for \$3000. He removed the innards of the sawmill and concentrated on grinding grain which must have been a highly profitable venture because in 1897 he built the "mansion" which now stands at the

bend in Weisheimer Rd. In 1911 the mill was removed from its home by the river to a site across the road. It operated there, on a natural gas engine, and then electricity, until 1954.

Back at the Zoo, creditors were knocking on the cages and trustees were appointed to sell the property including "the Entrance Building, the Carousal Building, the Club House, the Band Stand, the Old Log Cabin, Baseball Grand Stand, Animal Building and two(2) unfinished buildings."

On June 22, 1906, the assignees for the trust of the Columbus Zoological Company sold the premises to R. Grovesnor Hutchins for the sum of \$20,748.75. Hard times must have struck a crushing blow to Mr. Hutchins and his wife, Minnie, for three months later on September 3, 1906 they sold their land to Joseph A. Jeffrey, President and founder of the Jeffrey Manufacturing Co. for the same amount of money as they had originally paid for the land. Mr. Jeffrey turned the land into his suburban estate, the boundaries of which were Jeffrey Pl., High St., Rustic Place, and Olentangy Blvd. The original house still stands at 150 W. Beechwold. The front of the house faces Rustic Bridge Rd., and before the lot was divided, a long gracefully sweeping driveway led up to the portice of the house. Mrs. Jeffrey named her gracious home "Beechwalde", meaning "the beech forest."

In 1914, Mr. Jeffrey sold his land to the Beechwalde Realty Co. which was run by Mr. Charles H. Johnson, a well-known Columbus land developer. Teased by his business associates that "he could never sell a house in the north end of town because it was too far away from everything and too difficult to travel to", Mr. Johnson set about proving them wrong. He felt that Beechwold would be a good place for public school teachers to live, and in a sense his dream became a reality as Beechwold has always been a desirable nesting place for members of the Ohio State University Faculty.

Changing the suffix from "walde" to "wold" because "it was easier to spell," Mr. Johnson began meticulously to lay out the plot of land on the west side of High St. known as Old Beechwold. Mr. Johnson insisted on winding streets as he had done years before in the Northmoor area, and originally intended to do the same with parcels of land he owned east of High St. Unfortunately, those had already been plotted out with someone's very straight edged ruler.

The original entrance gates to the Zoo were at the gatehouse on Riverview Park Drive. Additional gates were erected at Royal Forest and Jeffrey Place. There was never a gate at Rustic Place and Olentangy Blvd., but it was always known as the "south entrance." The roads were paved and a brochure printed which was entitled "Beechwold the Beautiful". In it Beechwold was described as a "restricted, suburban site for artistic homes. From the heart of the

city, the district is reached in thirty minutes by street car and interurban, and twenty minutes by automobile. North High St. forms a broad easy highway, direct to Beechwold."

Houses were to be built north of the wide ravine. The lots were laid out by a nationally known New York landscape architect, and the cost of each was quoted at \$1300. South of the ravine, on River-view Park Drive there was to be a tennis club, children's playground and other recreational facilities. This area also had a huge apple orchard along Olentangy Blvd. Some of the first young mothers in the neighborhood remember dragging small boys by the hand to roam among the apples and to return with perambulators and wagons full to the brim with little boys perched upon Red Delicious mountains.

There were restrictions devised by the Realty Co. for the property owners, but they were neither lengthy nor severe. They consisted of:

No double houses, apartments or commercial structures will be permitted.

The plans of all homes must first be approved by the Beechwold Architectural Committee.

No home can be erected in Beechwold which does not represent an outlay of at least \$5000 for the house.

All homes must be of an architectural type suited to the district.

It was not spelled out in writing, but those who bought lots at that time remember having stucco or brick strongly suggested as proper building material.

Such were the rules by which they built. In order to have neighborhood rules and regulations by which to live, a Beechwold Association was formed. Ostensibly organized to protect all Beechwold residents' interest, it soon became highly segregated. The meetings were for men only and were held monthly in private homes. After a short business session, the men retired to the dining room table for the real business of the evening. Poker. The Association continued to be gamely active for many decades and then quietly receded into the background to emerge only in times of trouble or attack, and Beechwold has been under seige; by Henry Ford and his proposed factory on Morse Rd.; by not so super highways, wood cutters, lamplighters, sidewalk entrepreneurs, zealous city maintenance crews and sewer devotees.

Because of its long history and its originality as a neighborhood, Beechwold has been able to fend off all these trespassers of privacy. Children and grandchildren have been allowed to quietly grow up in its ravines, its creek, its river, its woods. Beechwold is loved and is cared for, because for those who live there any length of time, it will always be special.