

The History of Fort Wright

When George Kreutzjans left Lorup, Germany in 1930, a couple of things were certain: He knew how to build a good, solid house and he wanted to make a living at it in the United States.

Along the way, he also constructed a reputation for himself as "the Father of Fort Wright" as the builder of most of the houses in what was originally Fort Wright, and over 20 years of service to it's citizens on the City Council.

This land off Dixie Highway had little identity in the past. It has been a fortification for soldiers in the Civil War and dairy cow pastures when Kreutzjans first saw it in the 1930s. Although development had been occurring north and south of it, not much had happened to these areas in the decades in between.

The area that is now the I-75 overpass had been the family farm of Robert Samuel Kyle. It had also been Kyles Battery, during the war. Kyle's Lane was little more than that - a lane.

Nearby had been the fort named for a commander for the Ohio area, Major General Horatio Gouverneur Wright. Wright, a Connecticut native who was an engineer by profession, later made his place in national history by being chosen to complete the construction of the Washington Monument. Also not far were Fort Henry, McRae Battery, Hooper Battery, Carlisle Battery and Burbank Battery.

But the soldiers were long gone and the farmers were few and far between when Kreutzjans, first with partner Theodore Drees, and then alone, started using the lane to put houses that families could make into homes. They went up "one street at a time", Kreutzjans once said.

The earliest streets were Kennedy Road, Rosa and Augusta Avenues and Barbara Circle. The names all had meaning, Barbara Circle, for example, was named for Kreutzjans' wife. Kentucky Avenue for the Commonwealth. Edna Lane honors an early property owner and Olivia Avenue pays homage to a woman who helped Kreutzjans get his feet on the ground when he came to the United States. And Lorup Avenue is named in honor of his hometown.

Several times Kreutzjans and his tradesmen stumbled onto remnants of the past. While working at Kyles Lane and Crittenden Avenue, they once found some cannon balls. On another occasion, some historically valuable newspapers were found in a log cabin.

By 1941, a group of residents felt it was time to formally and officially turn the streets of Kreutzjans homes into a city. The area was incorporated and named Fort Wright and the rock solid foundations of a great community and of civic involvement were laid. The first Mayor was Irwin Widmeyer. Others Mayors that followed were Fred Wolnitzek, Thomas

Litzler, John McCormack, Joseph Nienaber, Donald Martin, Cindy Pinto and the current office holder, Gene Weaver.

By this time, growth was occurring all around Fort Wright. Lookout Heights was incorporated in 1937; South Hills in 1949 and Lakeview in 1960. In time, Fort Wright's boundaries would expand by merging with each of these cities, hence the name "City of Cities". First was South Hills in 1960, then Lookout Heights in 1968 and finally Lakeview in 1978.

Things have changed a lot since those early days in 1941; we now have more than 7,000 residents and around 500 businesses. But many things have stayed the same; Fort Wright is still a quiet, friendly city that lives up to its motto "Neighbor's Helping Neighbors".