

Michael Stallo, an avid collector of Oak Ridge history (Former paperboy recalls where people lived)

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column the week of May 7, 2018)

Michael Stallo is the new President of the Oak Ridge Heritage & Preservation Association, our local historical society. He has a life-long interest in the history of Oak Ridge, especially the houses and who has lived in them. I am amazed at the details he has captured in his research. You will enjoy learning from Mike where various scientists and other notable people have lived in houses in Oak Ridge over the years.

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I have always been a collector of data. I think it began when I was about seven years old and I wanted to be able to identify and know all about reptiles and other animals. I studied the field guides for them religiously.

By the time I was 11 years old I could identify all of the native species of reptiles and amphibians. Similarly, I have also always been curious about historically significant people. What did they do for a living? Who were their relatives? What were their lives like?

I suppose, in a way, this background set the stage for me to begin my quest of collecting information on the scientists, military personnel and the other notable citizens that lived in Oak Ridge during the war. Finding out what they did and where they lived became important to me. It seemed like my mission and I began researching constantly.

At times, I didn't have much faith that anyone else would ever be interested in my findings. One of the things that kept me encouraged to invest so much time and energy in this mission was the support of my coworker, R. P. Prince. I was also very excited to find that local historian Ray Smith was interested. [Yes, I was delighted to learn of Mike's research. I use him as a resource now! – Ray]

Like many kids that grew up in Oak Ridge during the 1970's, I had a paper route. I had mine around 1976-77. Back in those days nearly everyone "took the paper", *The Oak Ridger*. My route consisted of about 50 houses on the east end, around Euclid Circle. If I were to drive you through my old route, I could still tell you the names of the people that lived in the houses. I might miss one or two, but I bet I could name 95% of them.

I only had the route for a little over a year, but I still have many fond memories of it. Some of the people on my route were real characters - like Robert H. Lafferty of 437 East Drive. He was an older gentleman with long white hair and a beard and he gave out money instead of candy at Halloween.

Lafferty was a chemist and an expert on gaseous diffusion technology. He did an important study that helped to clarify who the early contributors to the development of gaseous diffusion technology really were. His findings ran counter to his original opinion, but he readily accepted the newfound facts and then enthusiastically shared his results with his peers. I admire that about him.

Another of my route favorites was Ken Warren who lived at 105 Evans Lane. He was a very nice man that often rode his bicycle around the neighborhood. I thought it was so cool to see this older guy riding around the street. I remember hoping that I could do that when I was his age. He always had a smile and was likeable enough for me to still remember him fondly over 40 years later. I later learned that he had a doctorate in Chemistry from Purdue University.

Fast forward to 2004 - I was hired to work in the historical records department at K-25. I worked with engineering records, technical reports and archival personnel records.

During the course of my work, I was a little surprised to see the names of some of my former paper route customers in the technical reports. I had known that a few of my neighbors were physicists and chemists.

However, until I began working with these reports, I hadn't fully understood the significance of what they had done.

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For example, Frank Bruce lived at the top of the street on Euclid circle. Mr. Bruce and his wife were always very nice to me and I remember that they had a Beagle named Topsy. Our German shepherd, Baron, really liked Topsy and would visit with her when my dad took him for a walk. I remember that one day when Baron got loose we found him at the top of the hill visiting with Topsy.

I found out later that Frank Bruce had come to Oak Ridge in 1943 to work for Clinton Laboratory with the DuPont Company as an analytical chemist. He developed a key process for the separation of plutonium from uranium.

Later, he managed the Radiation Safety Division at Oak Ridge National Laboratory and in 1957, he represented the United States at the International Conference for Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy in Geneva, Switzerland. Before he retired in 1978, he held the position of assistant director of administration at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

The 100 block of Outer Drive was home to a particularly notable trio of scientists. Martin Whitaker Ph.D. Physics, the first director of the Clinton Laboratories at X-10 Laboratory, lived at 163 Outer Drive in a "D" house.

Eugene Wigner, world renowned scientist and later a Nobel Prize winner, took over for Whitaker as laboratory director in 1945-46 and also took over Whitakers House at 163 Outer. So, it served as the Laboratory Director's house for the first few years of the Manhattan Project.

Arthur Snell lived at 162 Outer Drive, just across the street from the Wigner/Whitaker house. Snell had worked with Ernest Lawrence at Berkeley, CA in The Radiation Laboratory on the Calutrons before coming to Oak Ridge. He worked at X-10 ORNL for many years after the war, and later lived at 104 Orchard.

Many people who currently live in town are probably not aware of the "genealogy" of their house.

Because of the transient nature of many of the early citizens, it is not always easy to track who lived where. The houses were not owned by the occupants until about 13-14 years after the town was built.

Often there could have been as many as five or six temporary occupants before the houses were finally offered for sale in 1956. Roane/Anderson was the company that managed the housing in the beginning, and the archival records for housing assignments have not yet been found.

For anyone who is interested, the Oak Ridge Public Library has a nice collection of phone books and city directories that are very useful. Plant bulletins from the work sites (Y-12, X-10 and K-25) and church guides are also good resources.

Although there have been hundreds of notable scientists, engineers and military personnel that have lived in Oak Ridge, I will close with one notable citizen who was not any of those things.

He is a man named William Rucker Wells. Wells flipped the switch that powered the first unit in the K-25 building. I have yet to find anyone that has ever heard of him, but the management at K-25 thought that his contribution was significant enough to make note of his name in a history of the initial operations. Wells lived at 616 Pennsylvania Ave.

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See what I mean, Mike Stallo has an extensive collection of details about who lived where in Oak Ridge. I have asked him to continue to bring *Historically Speaking* readers more interesting details about who lived where in our historic Oak Ridge communities.

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Whitaker and Compton.jpg: The first Director of Clinton Labs (X-10) Martin Whitaker chats with Nobel Laureate Arthur Compton in a newly constructed Cemesto house

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Eugene Wigner quietly maintained an apartment here for many years after the war although his main residence was in Princeton, New Jersey. He shows up as late as 1985 at 228 North Purdue in apartment 318.