

The Spauldings & McDonald Commons Park

by Carol (Klenk) Heck



What does a barber shop have to do with the McDonald Commons Park? First let me tell you about Samuel Spaulding, an African American owner and operator of a Madeira barber shop on the northwest corner of Camargo and Miami Avenues. Samuel left his home in Kentucky at the early age of fourteen to learn the barbering trade. By 1910, Samuel lived in Madeira and it's documented that he had his barber shop business at least by 1917. He was successful and made a good living cutting hair. His clientele was mostly white men and boys, but somehow, that didn't raise any issues. Sam was also a dog trainer, and later in the 1920's-1930's, was a private investigator. His wife, Lena Brown Spaulding was an artist, a seamstress, and an accomplished teacher. She got certified in 1916. She also designed the expansion of their home when it changed from a two-room home into a six-room home.



Samuel Spaulding

Sam and Lena lived on 22 acres of land at 7460 Camargo Road. Their six children and grandchildren attended Madeira schools and most played sports. Many attended colleges. Daughter, Fannie Marjorie Spaulding, was the first African American girl to graduate from Madeira High school in 1930.



Walter Spaulding



Their first son, Walter, was the first Madeira citizen to die in WWI. He joined the army at 17 years of age and died a year later. Madeira has honored his grave at the United American Cemetery on Duck Creek with a special marker. This cemetery might be the oldest African American cemetery in Ohio.

The youngest son, Procter, married Estella Jones Spaulding and went into the trash collection business at their residence at 7421 Dawson Road. He serviced Madeira and many surrounding towns with three or four trucks. Dumping was done on the Dawson Road property. You probably think that Rumpke cornered the market for trash removal. But back in early 1940's, Procter Spaulding's business was larger and more successful than Rumpke at that time. Trash collection is such a non-glamorous and thankless job, but isn't it a wonderful thing to have pick-up and haul-away of your weekly garbage taken right from your

curb? “Procter Spaulding was very well liked and respected by Madeira’s mayor, police chief, and other white dignitaries, plus his friends and everyone at his church.” * Procter’s business and home were eventually sold to Eddie Bronson, who continued the business.

Their second daughter, Berneice, remembers the cellar of their house on the farm. “There were many jars of dried fruit, jams, and beans; the potatoes and onions were on the floor. It was like being in a supermarket. Mama would make loaf after loaf of bread. We made butter out on the back porch, everybody taking a turn at the paddle, then storing the butter in crocks. Mama would make buttermilk and cottage cheese. Ham and bacon came from the back house where it hung. We had plenty. (We kids didn’t know the value of homemade, then, but we do now.) We used to wash clothes right in the creek if there were not too many snakes, or go down to the spring for water when the cistern ran dry.” *



Berneice Spaulding

Later, Lena had many of her grandchildren living with her on her expansive property. From the memoirs of one granddaughter, she was quoted as saying; “the property was so spacious and like a picnic grove with a pavilion and an outdoor grill. There was also a barn where cows, pigs, and sometimes horses were kept. The other barn, closer to the house, had chickens, geese, and a hayloft. Some of the boys slept in the loft. And there was a creek that ran right down through the middle of it all.” *

Other extended Spaulding families that lived in Madeira included the Pleasants, Taylors, cousin Selmo Glen, and the Browns.

And that brings us to the park. The city of Madeira bought these land parcels in the mid 1970’s. The park opened in 1978 and was called the McDonald Commons Park. It was the combination of Lena Spaulding’s property on Camargo Road and the late Eddie Bronson family’s property on Dawson Road, the home of the Letcher’s plus the former home of Daniel Maxfield on Camargo Road. It is still, in my opinion, a spacious and beautiful place. I am glad people can come here again for family gatherings, experience the outdoors, have some fun, and think about history.



*From the self-published “Spaulding Family History”

Photos courtesy of Kamia Jackson and Carol (Klenk) Heck.

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Also see, “Veterans’ Day, A National Holiday Since 1926”, and “Waiting for the Eagle to Land”, both under Madeira’s Veterans’ Memorials.