



SINCE 1841

WOODLAND

HISTORIC CEMETERY & ARBORETUM



Above: The Kettering family at Ridgeleigh Terrace in 1950. Clockwise from top left: Charles Kettering, Virginia Kettering & her daughter Susan, Jane Kettering, Charles Kettering II & Eugene Kettering. Photo published by *the Dayton Daily News*, 2/19/2003

Philanthropist, Influencer, Model Train Enthusiast

Born July 14, 1907 in Bellevue, Kentucky, Virginia Weiffenbach was the only child of architect Norman Weiffenbach and his wife Clara. When she was a child, Virginia's family moved to Dayton, where her father established a marble and tile business, and Virginia was enrolled in the experimental Moraine Park School on Southern Boulevard.

At school she befriended a solemn, thoughtful boy named Eugene Kettering—the only son of famous inventor Charles F. Kettering. Virginia's warm and outgoing personality helped to draw Eugene out of his shell, and they shared a fascination with airplanes and model trains. As their friendship grew, Virginia became like a member of the Kettering family household. In 1930, they married (to their respective families' presumably unanimous "finally!").



During the 40s and 50s, the family lived in Hinsdale, Illinois, where Eugene worked for General Motors, and he and Virginia raised their three children; Charles, Susan and Jane. When Charles F. Kettering died in 1958, he held over 300 patents, and his inventions had made him extremely wealthy. After the loss of his wife, Olive, to cancer in 1946, Charles gave his wealth generously to support developments in medical technology and healthcare.

Charles also supported the development of a research institute to study heart disease, and laid the framework for what would become the Kettering Health Network. Because his namesake Foundation was so active, and the size of Kettering's fortune was so massive, Eugene and Virginia felt it best to move back to Dayton in order to manage the family estate and affairs.

Soon after their arrival, in honor of the elder Kettering, Eugene and Virginia proposed the construction of a research center and hospital on the family's estate. If the Dayton community could raise 1/3rd of the money, the Ketterings would underwrite the remaining 2/3rds of the cost. The project was a success, and Charles F. Kettering Memorial Hospital opened its doors in 1964.



Above headline published by *the Cincinnati Enquirer*, 4/6/1930

Above photo: Virginia & Eugene Kettering on their wedding day. Published by *the Dayton Daily News*, 4/6/1930

Virginia (and Eugene, until his death in 1969) utilized the Kettering fortune to support charitable and community projects for the remainder of her life; so in tune with her father-in-law's philanthropic interests, in fact, that she was sometimes incorrectly described as Charles' daughter.

Some of Virginia's many notable gifts and donations include the creation of the Air Force Museum with Eugene, paying for the Dayton Art Institute's four million dollar roof, and saving the Victoria Theatre from becoming a parking lot.



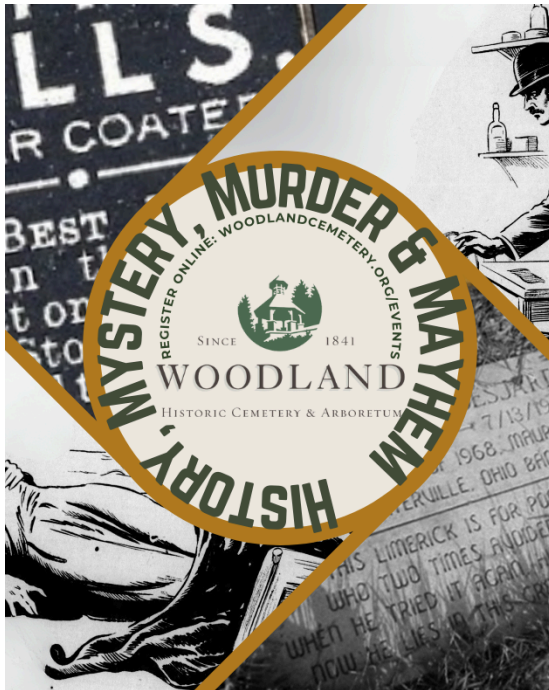
Some of Mrs. Kettering's fondest childhood memories were celebrating the holiday season with her family. So in 1972, she decided to plan a Christmas festival that every family in Dayton could enjoy and participate in, regardless of their economic means. It was a huge success, and the Dayton Holiday Festival was born.

In 1996, in honor of Virginia and Eugene's shared love of model trains, Virginia commissioned a train-and-village diorama featuring Dayton landmarks with three rings of tracks. She told the *Dayton Daily News* that she and Eugene had a basement full of model trains and replicas, and liked to set one up around their dining room table during the Christmas season.

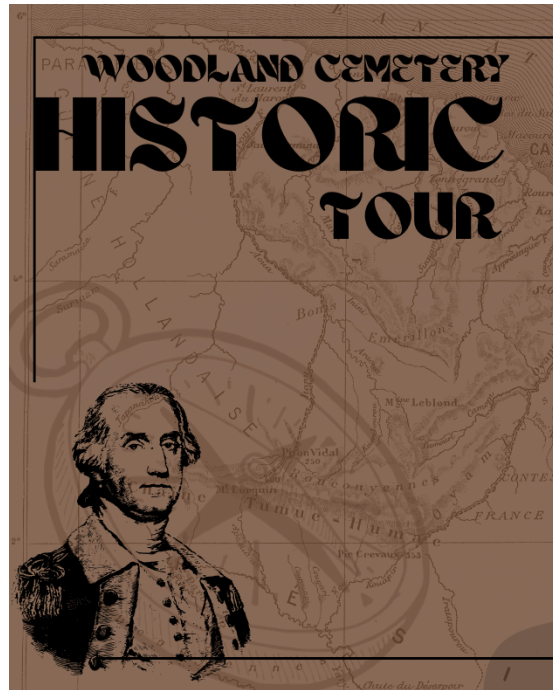
Amazingly, the majority of the model is still original; one missing piece had to be replaced, and the display was given a sprucing up in 2009, but kids of all ages can still see Mrs. Kettering's train display--during Dayton's annual Holiday Festival every year.



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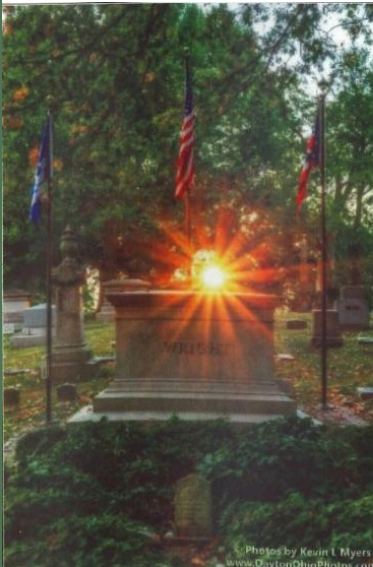
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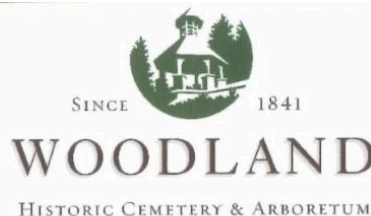
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