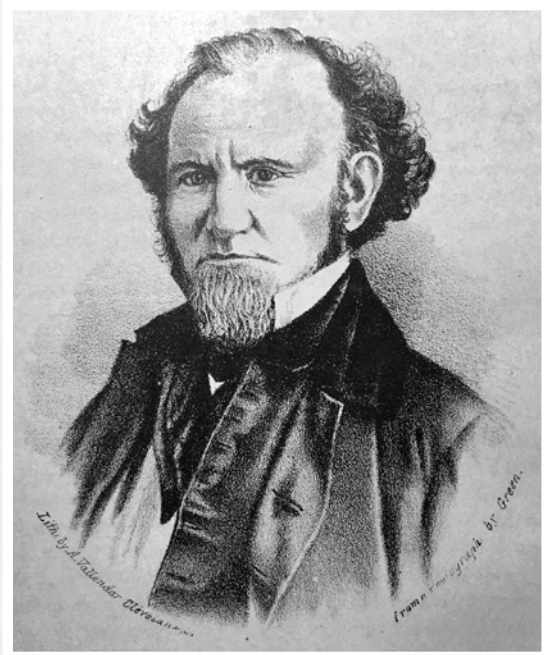
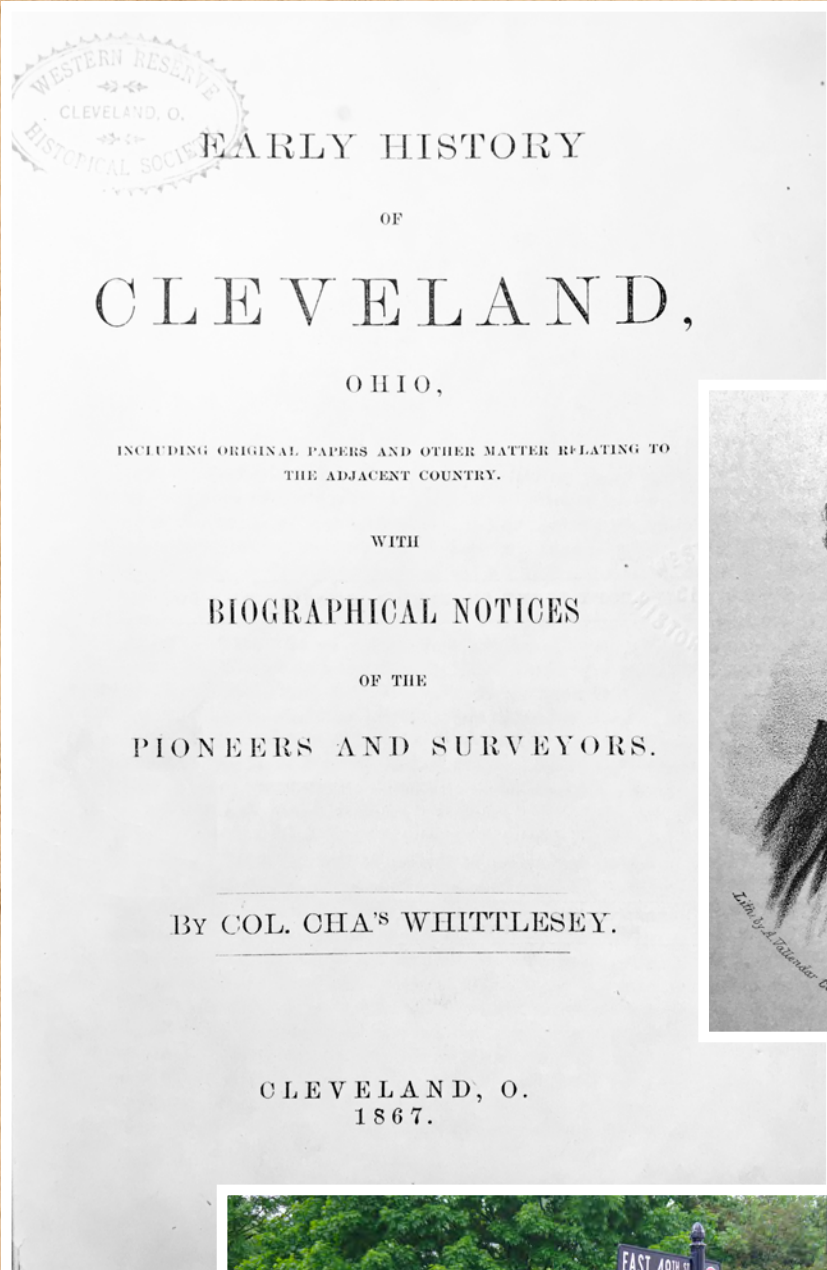


The First Inhabitants



Following The Lake Trail along Lake Erie

Illustration by Frank N. Wilcox



The First Inhabitants

by Laura Nicklas Hine

The earliest survey of the Cuyahoga River Indian mounds and forts was conducted by Colonel Charles Whittlesey. Whittlesey was a West Point graduate, a Civil War Colonel, geologist and the first president of the Western Reserve Historical Society. During his work as a geologist, he was hired to do surveys for mining companies, and this is when he observed the remains of local Indian forts and mounds. Whittlesey wrote two books: *Early History of Cleveland* in 1867, and *Ancient Earth Forts of the Cuyahoga Valley* in 1871. Whittlesey found four earth mounds in Cleveland: one close to Public Square; the second at Euclid and East 9th Street; the third at 2762 East 53rd Street near Woodland Avenue; and the fourth located in Woodland Cemetery.

Moving into Newburgh Township, there was a mound at Wendell Avenue. There was a fort and mound which was originally thought to be in the Sykora Road/Mound Avenue area in Forest City Park. However, that location was disproven, as the earthwork was in Lot 313, which became the south end of Harvard Grove Cemetery, facing Harvard Road, on the banks of Burk Branch Stream. There was another Indian mound located in the Harvard Avenue, East 71st Street, Broadway Avenue area.

Next came Fort No. 2, which was in Cuyahoga Heights. It was located just northwest of the main entrance to the Ohio & Erie Canal Reservation at East 49th Street and Whittlesey Way. Whittlesey described it to be on a high isthmus surrounded by ravines on all but the south side. The location near the park entrance matches this description perfectly. Whittlesey stated that the enclosure was a single wall and trench on the land side. The wall did not have an opening, but the outer trench did. There was a second point of access which was a narrow passageway along the southern portion of the ravine. In 1850, five feet of the wall's height remained, as the site was recently cultivated.

This fort is talked about extensively in a section about the ancient forts in a publication called *Recollections – A Collection of Histories & Memories of Garfield Heights*, by the Garfield Heights Historical Society. The article was written by Dan F. Ostrowski. This puts Fort No. 2 right at the entrance to Whittlesey Way, to the west of East 49th Street. It says the following about our fort in Cuyahoga Heights (Whittlesey being quoted here by Dan Ostrowski): “The next fort up river in old Newburgh on Whittlesey’s general map is marked Fort No. 2. A more detailed map of this site taken from Whittlesey’s *Ancient Forts* book is shown on page 5 in this chapter. He has also written regarding Fort No. 2 in Newburgh Heights that it is a smaller size than any of those which stud the river bluffs. It is simply a projecting point, rendered more defensible by a bank of earth and a moat. The view from it is quite commanding and picturesque. Its position is about midway between Forts No. 1 and No. 3, about one and a half miles below Lock No. 8, on the right bank of the river. At the middle, the ditch was never excavated, but there is no opening in the wall at this point. There is a narrow passage around the south end of the embankment along the edge of the ravine by which the work may be entered.”

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Lock No. 8 refers to the 8-mile Ohio Erie Canal lock or actual Lock No. 40 located at East 71st Street and Canal Road under the I-77 bridge. One and a half miles below the lock means down river toward Lake Erie.

Ostrowski continued: “The Metroparks believes that the bluffs identified by Whittlesey on the maps no longer exist as seen by Whittlesey. The southern bluff appears to have been radically altered in 1907 during the construction of the Short Line Railroad bridge which spans the Cuyahoga River. Further destruction of the bluff occurred during construction of Big Creek Interceptor sewer and the Fowles-Harding 345 KV CR1 transmission line. Recent work by Conrail on the railroad bridge has further disturbed the site. The northern bluff was graded many times throughout the 1950s and 1960s by the Canfor Company, which was mining sand and gravel from the hillside on the west up to East 49th Street. After mining stopped, a solid waste landfill was created and massive grading again took place.”

By the late 1970s, Cleveland Electric Illuminating Company acquired the site from Canfor and had graded it again to create the Harding Substation and an adjacent parking area. Aerial photos and topographic maps of this area confirm, unfortunately, that little if any of the land forms seen by Whittlesey exist today. Despite the loss of historic and prehistoric context that has occurred, Cleveland Metroparks interprets these bluffs as remnants of the Whittlesey Fort No. 2, which explains how Cuyahoga Heights has Whittlesey Way heading down to the Leonard Krieger Canalway Center.

Sources:

Emerald Necklace, February 2011, Volume 60 #2

Historic Indian Earthworks in the City of Cleveland and Environs

<https://sites.google.com/site/deepcovercleveland/home/prehistoric-indian-earthworks-in-the-city-of-cleveland-and-environs>

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Ohio Indian Trails and Cuyahoga Heights

Cleveland artist, Frank N. Wilcox (1887 to 1964), was an instructor at the Cleveland Art Institute and was best known for his watercolors, particularly of the rural America of his boyhood. His love of the outdoors led him into explorations of Ohio's past and much of his work reflects that interest and research.

We have included some pages from Frank N. Wilcox's book *Ohio Indian Trails*, published in 1933. This book documents the many Indian trails that crisscrossed our state. Two of them, The Lake Trail and The Muskingum Trail, have direct connections to the areas around Cuyahoga Heights. Wilcox also researched and illustrated *The Ohio Canals*, which was published after his death in 1969.

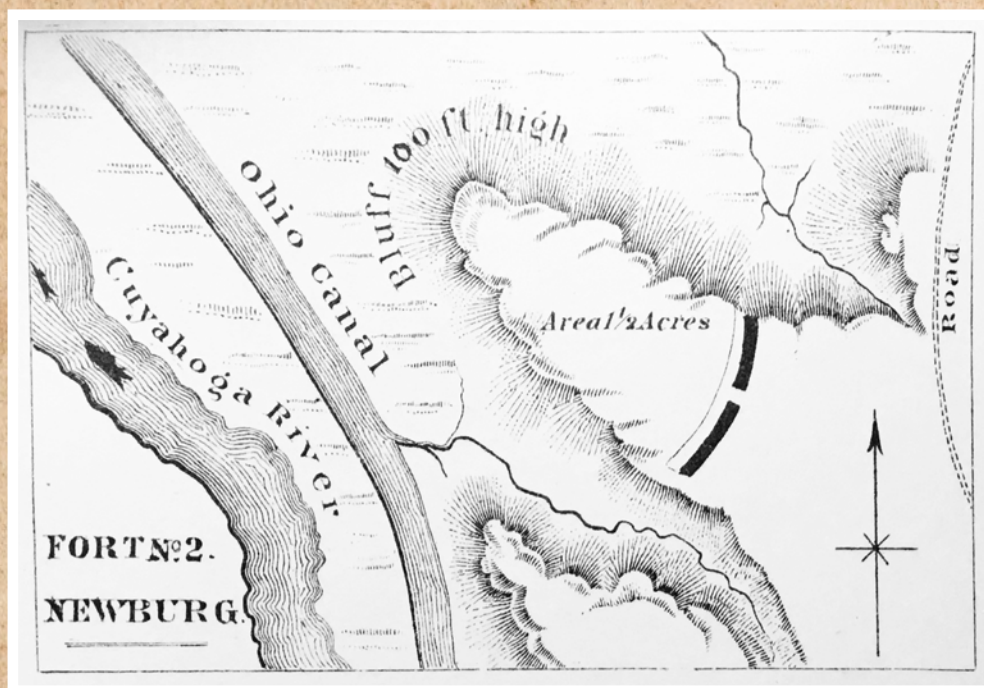
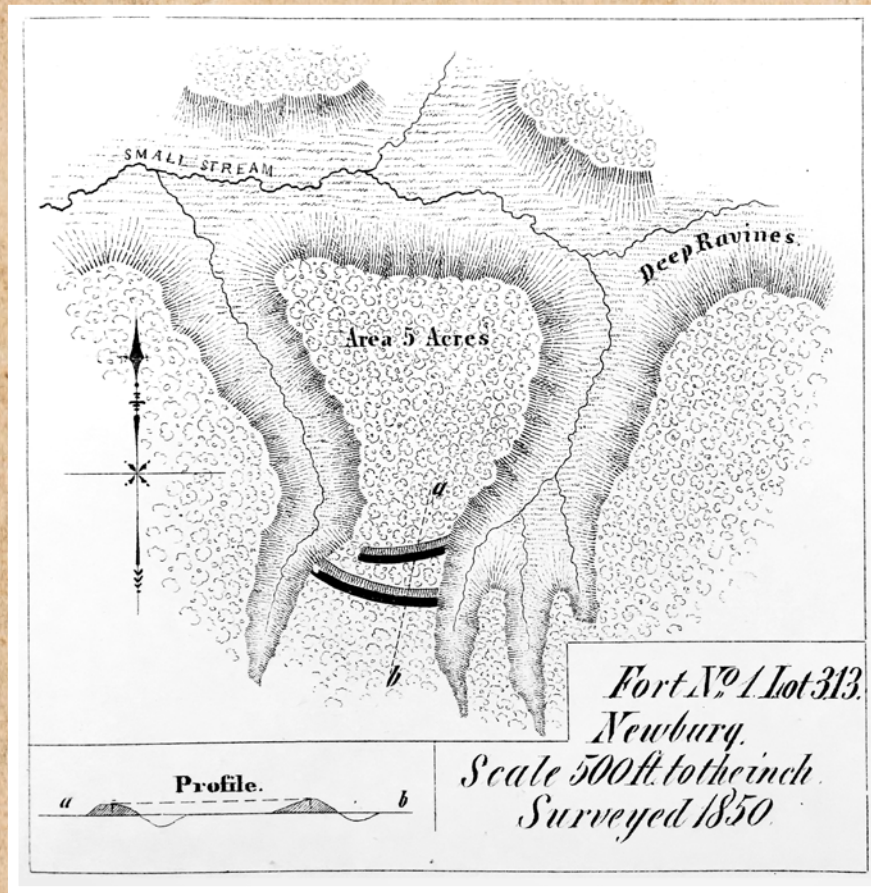
Source:

Ohio Indian Trails, Copyright 1933 by author and illustrator Frank N. Wilcox

Printed and bound by Gates Legal Publishing Company Book Manufactures, Cleveland, Ohio

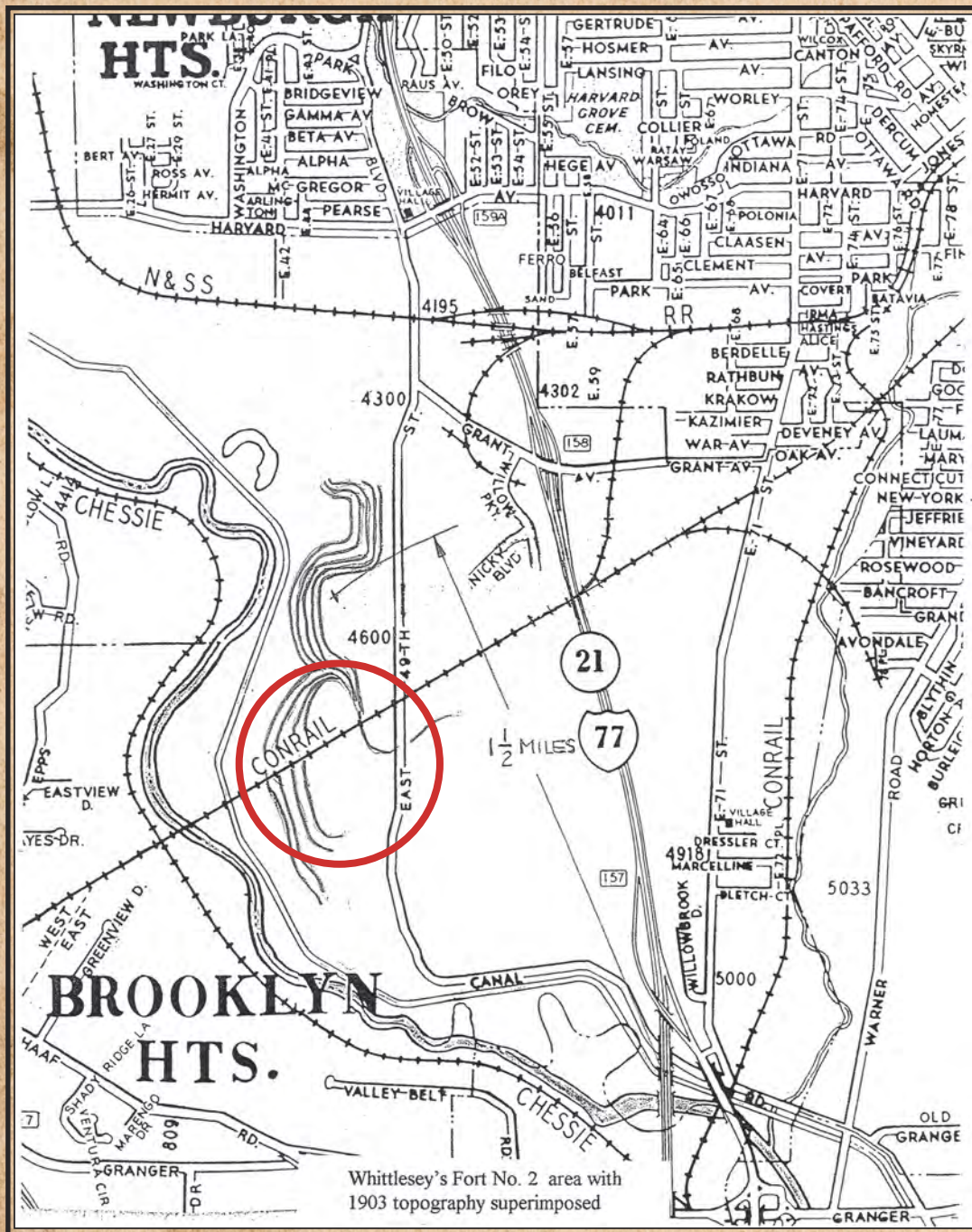
Ohio Indian Trails, Copyright 1970 by The Kent State University Press

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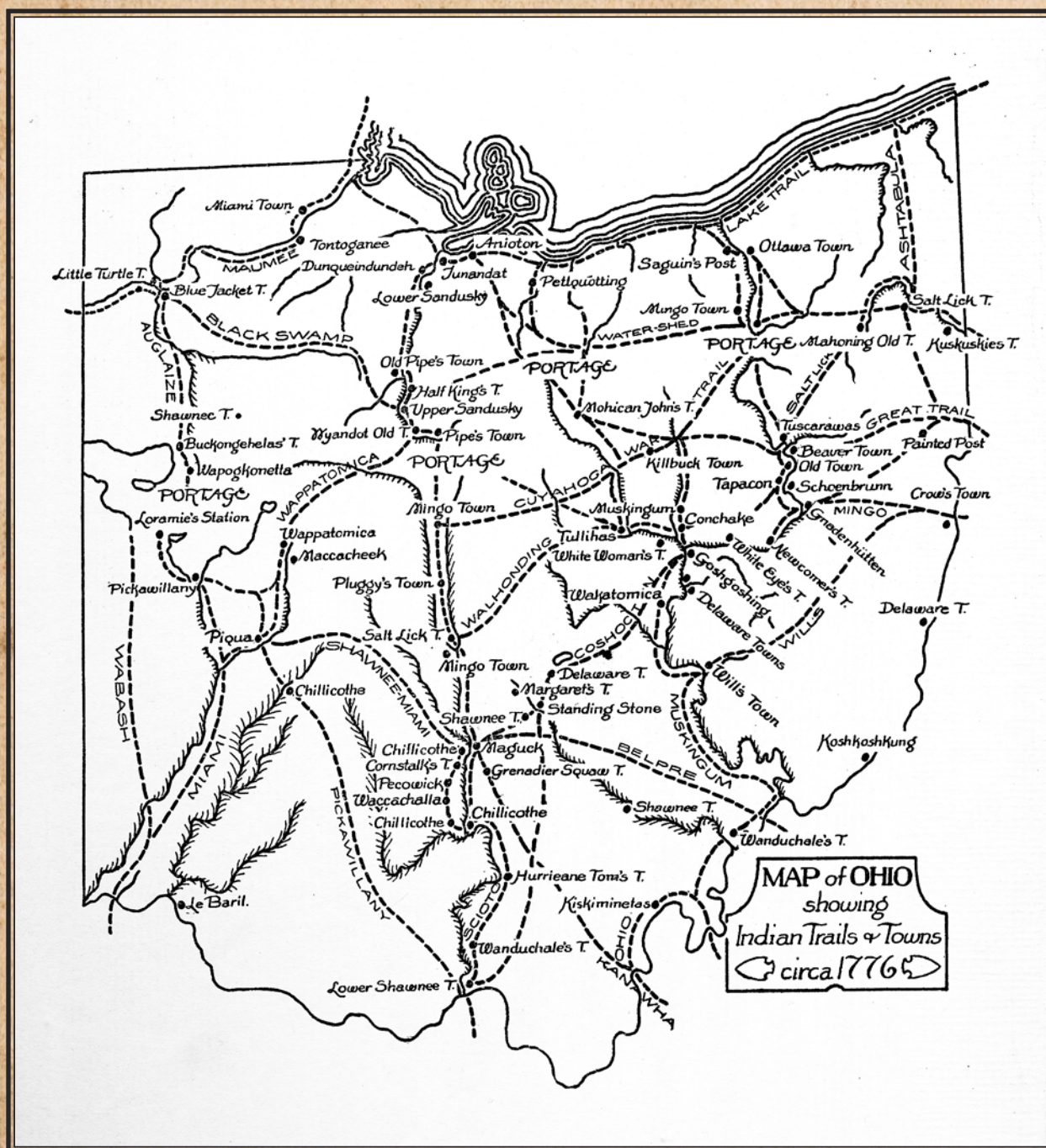


Early maps of Fort No. 1 and Fort No. 2

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Approximate location of Fort No. 2



Ohio Indian Trails and Towns

THE LAKE TRAIL

THIS aboriginal highway was destined to become the principal thoroughfare of the State of Ohio. Running parallel as it does to the chief rail link between New York and Chicago, it follows the easiest grade across the northern part of the State, the edge of an old bench of an earlier Lake Erie, as far as Rocky River west of Cleveland. (U. S. 20.)

Euclid Avenue lies nearly upon this old trail within the limits of Cuyahoga County. From Painesville as far east as Buffalo we may imagine Euclid Avenue as continued along what is known as the South Ridge, the third bench of the old lake just below the plateau that is visible a short distance to the south.¹

In imagination we can see the Iroquois wending westward against the Eries, following this gentle slope of

¹ To be exact, Euclid Avenue does in many places conform to the Lake Trail. In all probability a path lay close to the lake in favorable weather, but the prevalence of numerous small brooks rising from springs and washes from the heights, now controlled, suggests that the level of Euclid Avenue was the nearest practical ground for a permanent trail. It doubtless followed Terrace Road and Forest Hill Avenue in East Cleveland for the same reason, and a reputed beaver dam in Lake View Cemetery would have afforded a crossing to the brook there, which only recently gave trouble after heavy showers.

Euclid Avenue as extended eastward through Lake and Ashtabula Counties is not, strictly speaking, a preservation of the Lake Trail. In many places, as in Wickliffe and Willoughby, it appears to lie much to the north. The best guide is the bench level that begins at Euclid Village immediately below the bluff. At that place it lies closest to the old route and is there identical with Euclid Avenue.

Detroit Avenue, across the Cuyahoga, bears a resemblance to Euclid Avenue in regard to the low land north of it.

The Lake Trail

land that overlooks on the north a wide area of marshes, bogs and tangled woodland varying in width, but with the distant blue lake frequently visible through scattered gaps in the forest.

On the left rises a continuous slope of dense timber, broken at intervals by the sharply cut ravines of the Chagrin River or Euclid Creek, where the yellow shale banks appear as scars on the hillsides and the bottom lands are filled with sycamores and willows.

Passing what is now the Lakeview district, numerous small brooks cut the trail; a beaver dam is visible where now stands the Wade Memorial Chapel in the cemetery. Doan Brook formed a wide and depressed flat across which cut the stream on the site of the Circle and the Wade Park Lake, and at the intersection of Euclid Avenue and East 55th Street was a tree-shaded bog.¹

The heights have now become invisible on the left, and all is a level solid forest where uprooted trees reveal a thin yellow sandy soil, for this is the delta of the ancient Cuyahoga River.

It was not long since that the remains of a mastodon were found but a few feet below the surface, just to the north of the old trail on present East 40th Street. Millionaires' Row was once a narrow track worn deep in the sand and leaf mould of the ancient forest.

Cleveland Public Square, as we now know it, is seen to slope gently to the north from the old lake bench

¹ An interesting work casting much light on the physical aspects of early Euclid Avenue is "Doan's Corners and the City Four Miles West" by Mr. Chas. A. Post, a life-long resident of that district, whose recollections of the early day are invaluable.

The Lake Trail

61

just before it is cut down by the younger river to form the bluff where now stands the Union Terminal. At this point the valley of the Cuyahoga was discernible ahead, and the trail fell diagonally across the slope to approach the mouth of the river. Following the line of Superior Street it diverged again, and by way of Union Lane,¹ crossed the river, probably on a sand bar to the opposite shore and the south side of the old river bed, which existed then as now, except that its eastern end was silted up and it was shallow and marshy. Just north of its eastern mouth stood an isolated, sandy dune-like hill, long since graded away.²

The trail then led westward up Main Street to modern Detroit Avenue, which, situated upon the lake bench, led west to Rocky River. The heights are now miles to the south, and the trail, gradually rising, passes through heavy oak forest firmly rooted in a heavy blue clay, and in the gaps to the north the steep shale cliffs of the shore are seen to reach out, one behind the other, to the far west.

Soon the track approaches a gap of light in the dark woods, and there is an abrupt zigzag descent into a narrow, shaly gorge overhung with trees and vines; across the river is a dark bluff crowned by tall trees to the very

¹ On Union Lane, about half way between Superior Avenue hill and the river, a tablet marks the site of the cabin of Lorenzo Carter, Cleveland's first permanent resident. It stood above the Indian ferry. The land across the river was used as an Indian camp.

² The Moravian Indians who returned from Detroit with a view to settling on the Cuyahoga found the mouth of the river too shallow for boats and blocked with sand bars. They were warned of the danger of passing the cliffs west of Cleveland in canoes.

The Lake Trail

edge, and on the right a long bar of white sand extends out into the lake.¹

The river crossed, the path divides near the edge of the bluff. One dark path follows the line of precipitous and undermined cliffs westward (U. S. 6); the other, rising slightly, finds a moderately elevated bench to the southwest from which a distant view of the lake is seen over a dense floor of treetops. (U. S. 20.)²

Following this bench, the second path led west through present Amherst, Brownhelm and Rugby, where it crossed the Vermilion River at Rugby and so on to Ogontz, where in the distant northwest are visible the Lake Islands. Here may have stood an Indian town of that name.³

The other Trail (U. S. 6) has followed the lake and may have converged upon this point through Brownhelm Station, for here numerous creeks cut the lowlands from the heights, and below the present Berlin Heights the cranberry bogs extended to the foot of the hills.

¹ Bradstreet's Expedition was wrecked upon the sand bar at the mouth of Rocky River. Amherst's Expedition met its fate a few miles westward where a small stream cuts down the steep cliff.

² The steep cliffs of the lake throughout Rocky River and Lakewood figure in many a tale of pioneer days. The treacherous and shallow waters were a dangerous, but the only practical, route past those cliffs at one time. The lack of beaches made the passage risky at any season. Wreckage from the Bradstreet and Amherst Expeditions was picked up from time to time for many years. Few visitors of the present day know or can visualize these historic events, but relics of these expeditions are to be seen in the Western Reserve Historical Museum at Cleveland.

³ Ogontz was educated as a priest at Quebec. He shepherded a mixed flock at the site of modern Sandusky and was known to early settlers of the Firelands Tract, but moved to Canada rather than take up the American cause in 1812.

The Lake Trail

the east side of Furnace Run to the Brecksville Road. (U. S. 21.)

Adjacent to this district are Bath, Ghent and Richfield, all reported as former Indian villages. After meeting the present Brecksville Road on the Brush estate, the trail evidently followed the present national highway (U. S. 21) through Brecksville and Independence, where it crossed the Mahoning Trail at the Willow Promontory, and, taking the most direct course for the mouth of the Cuyahoga, led up East 71st Street hill (U. S. 21) across the river; taking the bluff to the left at the top, it passed east of the lake in Forest City Park, touching the river at the mouth of Morgan Run; at the Jefferson Street bridge site it passed over the land now occupied by the steel furnaces, and ran below the bluffs of Ontario Street, once known as Vinegar Hill, to the crossing at Union Lane, where it finally reached the Lake Trail and the river mouth.

The old Ohio and Erie Canal lies parallel to this trail all the way. It is interesting to imagine the appearance of this trail as it entered what is now Cleveland. The flats of that day were probably densely filled with marsh willows, and the bare, shaly bluffs crowned with the present skyline of buildings were then draped with green, and presented no dingy and dim outlines through a reek of smoke. The Muskingum Trail passes by an almost continuous river landscape. For this reason it is uniquely beautiful among the scenic routes of the State.

So many Indian villages lay upon this trail that it may be well to review them. Below Zanesville at Dun-

The Muskingum Trail

(Note the mention of East 71st Street)

The Muskingum Trail

97

can's Falls lay Will's Town. Below Coshocton were two Delaware towns, one of them known as Lichtenau, while up the Wakatomika lay the town of that name. White Woman's Town lay not far up the Walhonding. Not far north of Coshocton were Muskingum and Con-cha-ke. Eastward lay White Eyes' and Newcomer's Towns, while below New Philadelphia lay Gnadenhutten, the two Schoenbrunns, Tuscarawas and Three Legs Town. To the north were Old Town and Tapacon Town. At Bolivar were another Tuscarawas and a Beaver Town. At the Akron Lakes were Pipe's Town and others. North and east of Akron were the several Cuyahoga Towns.

Around Bath, Ghent and Richfield were Mingo towns, and around the Willow district were Saguin's Post and Ottawa towns. The trail was evidently a Delaware highway south of the portage, and northward a roving, mixed population followed the Cuyahoga.



The Muskingum Trail

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