Canal Basin History
for
Cleveland's Canalway Center

Presentation created by
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National Park Service
Cuyahoga Valley National Park
- Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area 1974
- Ohio & Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor established in 1996
- Cuyahoga Valley National Park 2000
- Ohio & Erie National Heritage Canalway in 2003
- 110 Miles from Cleveland to Dover New Philadelphia
- Bounded by cultural, natural, and historic resources depicting themes of transportation, settlement, and industry.
Cleveland 1796 to 1827: From pioneer settlement to New England Village

- In 1796 Cleveland is founded by Moses Cleaveland and a party of surveyors from the Connecticut Land Company.
- The town was laid out in a ten-acre public square bisected by two streets: Superior and Ontario. A classic New England Village.
- In 1810, Cleveland’s population was 57.
- The construction of roads connecting Cleveland with other parts of the state stimulated the growth of the town.

1814 Map of Cleaveland Alfred Kelley

1817 & 1818 Lt. Henry W Bayfield's Sketch of the Mouth of the Cayanoga River.
Cleveland's Canal Era 1825-1874

- In 1825, construction began on the Ohio & Erie Canal, linking Cleveland with the Ohio River at Portsmouth. By 1827 the canal was completed to Akron, a distance of 38 miles. In 1832, the entire canal was completed.
- Cleveland was home to Locks 43 and 44 and a Weigh Lock at Seneca Street (W.3rd).
- Cleveland became the business center of the Ohio & Erie Canal and maintained the only Weigh Lock on the entire 308 mile system.

Canal Boat near Stone Road circa 1890s (CVNP).

Alfred Kelley "Father of the O&E Canal."

Canal Boats and steamers trading freight circa 1870 (OHS).
Construction of Locks 43 & 44

- Lock 44 was located directly under the Merwin Street Bridge between West and James Streets where it connected with the Cuyahoga River.
- Lock 43 was directly south of the canal basin, north of Columbus Road and the RTA Bridge.
- The Canal Basin was approximately 150 feet wide by 200 feet long.

August F. Biehle, Jr. (1885-1979) *Ohio Canal* (CPL).
Canal Basin as the Zone of Commerce

- With the canal came economic development of the Ox Bow Bend Peninsula.

- In 1833, Edmund Clark, James Clark, and Richard Hilliard laid out "Cleveland Centre," a development with radiating streets and a hub called Gravity Place.

- The main street (Columbus) began near the canal basin and a bridge was constructed over the Cuyahoga River nearly causing a war between Cleveland and Ohio City.

- Cleveland Centre was intended to be developed as a residential center, but the Panic of 1837 ended the plan. The lots were sold in a Sheriff's Sale and developed as commercial after economic prosperity returned.
Economic Impact of the Ohio & Erie Canal on Cleveland

- In 1851, over 2.5 million bushels of wheat, 600,000 barrels of flour, 1 million bushels of corn, and 3 million bushels of coal arrived in Cleveland via the canal.
- Nearly 11 million pounds of merchandise was shipped southward from Cleveland to the interior of the state.
- In 1850 Cleveland's population grew to 17,034.
- The "Flats" become the center of commerce and merchandise for the city.
This 1870 Cuyahoga County Tax Auditor's plat map indicates the area around the canal basin served as a dock, a point of exchange between Lake Erie and the Ohio & Erie Canal. Both Locks 44 & 43 were built larger than standard size to accommodate lake schooners and canal boats. From the date of this map, the Ohio & Erie Canal would only operate at this site for four more years until 1874.
Decline of the Ohio & Erie Canal in Cleveland

- The opening of the Cleveland, Columbus & Cincinnati (CCC) Railroad in 1851. In 1839, approximately 20,000 people arrived in Cleveland via the canal. By 1855, 4 years after the CCC Railroad opened in Cleveland, not a single passenger entered the city on a canal boat.
- Construction of the Superior Viaduct in 1875-1878.
- 1874 the Cleveland section of the canal was sold to the City of Cleveland who sold it to the Valley Railway Company for railroad development.

Valley Railway in Cleveland circa 1880s (OHS).
Superior Viaduct

- Construction began in March 1875 and was completed by 1878. Superior Viaduct extended from Superior Avenue and West 10th Street on the east to Detroit Avenue and West 25th Street on the west.

- Superior Viaduct permanently changed the circulation pattern of Superior Avenue away from the Flats, which assisted in the transformation of the Oxbox Bend area of the Flats from a commercial to an industrial center.
Valley Railway

- Valley Railway leased the canal from the city in 1874. They filled-in the canal basin and built a freight depot on the site. Both Locks 43 & 44 were removed.
- The Valley's passenger depot was located at the base of Seneca Street (W.3rd) where the former Ohio & Erie Canal Weigh Lock was located.
- The Valley Railway line was completed in 1880 and stretched from Cleveland to Canton.
- Same track now used by Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad

Valley Railway Freight House in Cleveland circa 1880s (OHS).
1877 Birdseye of Cleveland
1878 Birdseye of Cleveland

- Notice the density of warehouses, manufacturing plants, and railroad facilities covering the banks of the river and "Cleveland Centre."
The Ohio & Erie Canal basin was still represented in this 1878 birdseye view.
1880 Cuyahoga County Auditor's Map
1886 Sanborn Insurance Map

- First Sanborn Insurance Map for the canal basin area was produced in 1886.
- The map indicates that the site served as the freight depot for the Valley Railway.
- Machine shops, Hughes Brewery and malt house, and several lumber yards surrounded the former basin.
1910 Cuyahoga County Auditor's Map

Detroit-Superior Bridge Abutments (Proposed)

Former Canal Basin Area
1912 Sanborn Map

- The Valley Railway's (now the B&O Railroad) freight depot has been removed.
- The right-of-way for the Detroit Superior Bridge is a drawn through the northeast section of the former canal basin.
- Heavy industry, such as International Harvester and Cleveland Machine Knife Company, now populates the area around the basin.
Detroit-Superior Bridge

- Completed in 1918, the Detroit-Superior Bridge destroyed any remaining canal landscape.
- The B&O Railroad maintained a freight track through the area that crossed the Cuyahoga River extending out to Sycamore Slip.
B&O Railroad Passenger Depot

- B&O (CT&V) Railroad constructed a passenger depot at the corner of Canal Road and Carter Street in 1896.
- The station maintained a large train shed along its south elevation for boarding passengers.
- The passenger depot served as the main boarding station for the B&O until 1934 when the Cleveland Union Terminal was opened. After 1934, the building served as an office for the B&O.

Illustration of the newly built B&O Station (Book of Royal Blue)

B&O Station 2001

1912 Sanborn of the station KSU Map Library
Canal Basin 1920-1970s

- Several B&O Railroad tracks ran through the basin out to the Sycamore Dock and Whiskey Island.
- B&O Freight Depot was relocated to Columbus Road in the Flats.
- By 1970, B&O Railroad is consolidated with several other lines and the connection near Merwin Street is eventually abandoned.
Heritage Park I Time Line

- 1972. Cleveland Woman's City Club secured the parcel of land and sought funding to establish a riverfront park.
- 1976. A replica of Lorenzo Carter's Cabin was built at the site.
- 1981. River's Bend Park Corporation was organized to oversee the riverfront parks. Cleveland Parks Department manages the site.
- 1992. Lock 44 Park is dedicated celebrating the history of the Ohio & Erie Canal in Cleveland.
Settler’s Landing

- 1796. Place where Moses Cleaveland lands to survey City of Cleveland.
- Settler’s Landing Park improved.
- Reshaped former park, added linear riverwalk, benches, fountain, Unity Walk.

Unity Walk installed to celebrate Bicentennial.

Fountain on river’s edge installed.

Interpretive panels outline transportation history.
Cleveland Waterfront Line

- 1996. New RTA light-rail system connects Cleveland’s riverfront to lakefront.
- Sets major public transportation feeder for future investments.
- Connects Cleveland Downtown Center (Public Square) to North Coast Harbor attractions.

Waterfront Line through Settler’s Landing.

A crowded beginning.

Waterfront Line connects Canal Basin to North Coast Harbor.
Summary of Land Functions

- Settlers' Landing/ Waterfront Line
- Cleveland's Port—Ohio & Erie Canal Basin
- Valley Railway Freight and industry
- Detroit-Superior Bridge
- Railroad thruway to Whiskey Island and the Huletts

- Parks, Plaques, and Parking Spaces

Donald Duer Bayard (1904-1970), *Early Transportation (Cleveland's Waterfront About 1835)*. 1934. PWAP (Cleveland Public Library (Main)).
Ohio & Erie Canalway

- Three transportation systems dictate location for Canal Basin Park and other destinations along Ohio & Erie Canalway.
Ohio & Erie Canalway

- Towpath Trail begins/ terminates at Canal Basin Park.
- Ohio & Erie Canalway America’s Byway begins or ends at Canal Basin Park.
- Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad extends north to location along Cuyahoga River below Tower City complex.

Towpath Trail is scheduled to reach Canal Basin Park by 2017.

Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad plans to extend north to Tower City site.

Canalway Byway signs replaced with new in 2007.
Canal Basin Park

Early Priority for Canal Basin Park – property acquisition/ site control.
Canal Basin Park

2003 Charettes produce alternate ideas/visions for Canal Basin Park.