

Appendix C

At a casual glance, the Doan Brook watershed seems a model of modern suburbia, filled with houses, streets, and shops. Some of the houses are “old” — built in the late 19th or early 20th century — but there seem to be few traces of life here before the city arrived. If you take a little time to look carefully, though, you can find signs of the early settlement of the watershed and of the parks that were built at the end of the 19th century. This appendix gives a tour of some of the signs of the past that you can find in the watershed.

C.1 The Lower Watershed

Early settlement in the lower watershed centered first around the village at Doan’s Corners and the associated farms and later around the parks that were developed along the brook. There are only a few signs of the first settlement left, but much that was built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries is still part of the life of the lower watershed. This tour points out a few of the historic sites that are most closely tied to Doan Brook.

C.1.1 The Rockefeller Park Greenhouse and the Old Mill Stones

The City of Cleveland’s Rockefeller Park Greenhouse, built in 1905, was made possible by a donation from John D. Rockefeller. The original brick buildings form the core of today’s greenhouse. Two mill stones in the outdoor gardens (one in the Japanese Garden and one in the Betty Ott Talking Garden) suggest the previous life of the lower watershed.

Although no one seems to know exactly where the mill stones came from, it is likely that they were once part of the Crawford sawmill that was located on Doan Brook near Superior Avenue in the mid-nineteenth century.

To reach the Rockefeller Park Greenhouse, take Martin Luther King, Jr., Boulevard (MLK)

north almost to Lake Erie. Turn east (right) from MLK just before you get to the Conrail tracks (the last of the historic stone bridges over MLK). The greenhouse will be at the top of the hill directly in front of you. Follow the road around to the right. The parking lot is on your right past the main buildings.

C.1.2 Cultural Gardens

Cleveland’s Cultural Gardens line the Doan Brook valley between Superior and St. Clair Avenues. The first garden, built in 1916, was the Shakespeare Garden. In 1926, Leo Weidenthal led the establishment of the Cultural Garden League, an organization founded with the purpose of establishing a series of gardens to honor each of the city’s national communities. The Hebrew Garden, the first garden completed with this purpose in mind, was installed next to the Shakespeare (or British) Garden in 1926. The city set aside land for a series of gardens in 1927, and many more communities built gardens between 1927 and 1939, when the Cultural Gardens were formally dedicated. Additional gardens honoring newer Cleveland communities have been built since.

The gardens lie both on the Doan Brook flood plain and on the upper part of the east side of the brook valley between Superior and St. Clair. Some are most easily accessible from East

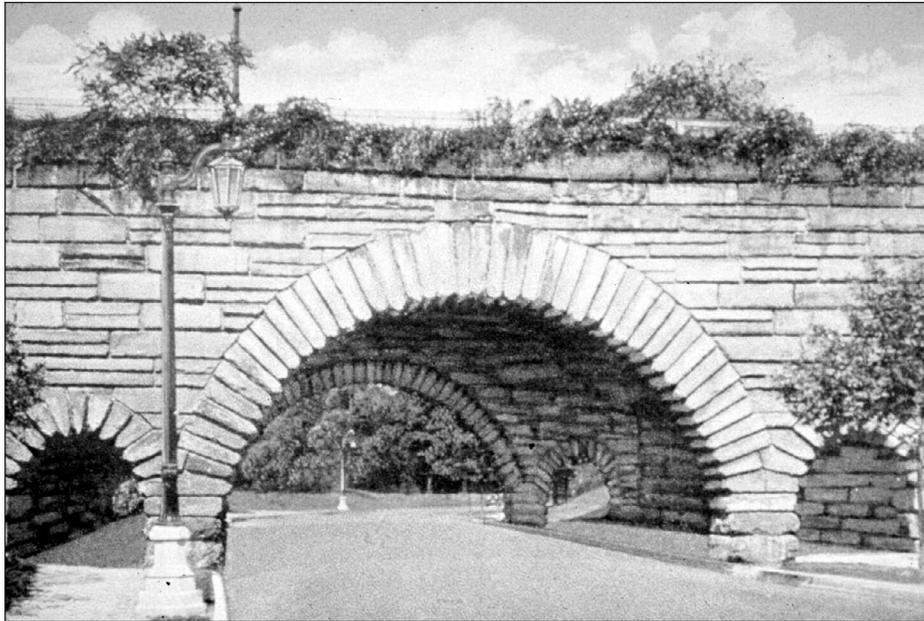


Figure C-1 Superior Road bridge over Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard. Designed by Charles Schweinfurth. From the Nature Center at Shaker Lakes collection.

Boulevard, others from the bike paths along MLK. The gardens fell into disrepair and suffered from vandalism in the 1960s and 1970s. Fountains were turned off and some statuary was removed for safety. However, an effort has been made to maintain and restore the area in recent years, and the community has taken more interest in the gardens again. Restoration and maintenance efforts are led by the Cultural Gardens Association, the Holden Parks Trust, and the City of Cleveland. Although they have not yet regained their past stature, the gardens are nonetheless a pleasant place to stroll and marvel at what area communities built to honor their diverse cultures in the heart of the Great Depression.

C.1.3 Schweinfurth Bridges

When the Doan Brook park lands were first set aside in the late 1800s, park planners designed a boulevard along the brook (now Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard) and one along the top of the valley on the east side (East Boulevard). Streetcar lines were extended so that city dwellers could get from downtown Cleveland to the new parks. To insure that the bridges that carried the streetcars across the Doan Brook valley would enhance the new park rather than detract from it, the park planners commissioned bridge designs from well-known Cleveland architect Charles Schweinfurth. Schweinfurth — designer of many houses on Euclid Avenue’s “Millionaire’s

Row,” Trinity Cathedral, the Union Club, and Harkness Chapel, among others — designed the stone bridges that carry the CSX railroad and Superior, St. Clair, and Wade Park Avenues across the brook valley. Note the ornamental stone and tile work, the brick arches overhead as you pass under the bridges, and the curving stairways that provide pedestrian access between the park and the roadways.

C.1.4 Wade Park: Mills, Springs, and Bear Dens

Wade Park has been the home of some of Cleveland’s key cultural institutions since the Cleveland Museum of Art was established there in 1916. There is still a little bit of evidence of the uses of this land before the museum came.

The current location of the Wade Park Lagoon must have been a natural place for a reservoir, since Samuel Cozad built a dam and grist mill there in the early nineteenth century. The mill pond reverted to a marsh overrun by cattle after the mill was no longer in use, only to be later converted into a landscaped pond to provide a vista for the art museum.

Both Charles Asa Post and Earl Gurney Mead report that a spring in the ravine behind the Cleveland Botanical Garden was an important source of high quality drinking water for early settlers. This same ravine, now part of the Botanical Garden’s Japanese Garden, was used as a bear den when the Cleveland Zoological Society housed its animal collection in Wade Park (from 1889 to 1914).

C.1.5 Western Reserve Historical Society

The Western Reserve Historical Society (at 10825 East Boulevard, adjacent to Wade Park) houses extensive collections about the history of the Cleveland area, an exceptional collection of cars and aircraft, and an outstanding research library. It is well worth a visit if you are curious about the history of any part of the Connecticut Western Reserve.

C.1.6 Doan's 100 Acres

Nathaniel Doan's original 100 acres extended from East 105th Street to Severance Hall and from Carnegie Avenue to the south side of the Cleveland Museum of Art (see Figure 2-1 in Chapter 2). None of the original buildings is left, but the Ronald McDonald House, which sits on the corner of East 105th and Euclid where Doan's tavern once stood, sometimes has exhibits about the history of Doan's Corners.

C.1.7 Ambler Park

Ambler Park, which lies on the edge of the Escarpment between MLK and Fairhill (between the point where MLK crosses the brook and the rapid transit and railroad tracks), was part of the original park system that extended along Doan Brook from Lake Erie to Horseshoe Lake. Although the park has fallen into disrepair, you can still see evidence of the paths and stairways that were built in the park as part of the depression era public works projects. Explore the area between the inlet to the University Circle culvert and the MLK detention basin.

C.2 The Upper Watershed

Most of the upper watershed is as developed as the lower watershed, and signs of its early history are few. However, much of the Shaker settlement of the area was inside the band of parks along the brook. Although the Shaker buildings were demolished by the Van Sweringens, their remains have been somewhat protected because they are inside the parks, and careful exploration can reveal a number of remnants of the Shaker communities.

C.2.1 The Shaker Stone Grist Mill and Dam

The Shakers' five-story stone grist mill, built in 1843, was surely one of the most spectacular structures in the early upper watershed (see Figure 2-7), and the colorful story of its destruction (see Chapter 2) adds to curiosity about what may remain. As you walk along the north edge of the Doan Brook gorge today, it is surprising to see how few traces of the once-impressive mill and dam can be found.

About 0.44 mile downstream from the Lower Shaker Lake dam, between the point where the bridge piers for the former Kemper Road bridge cross the brook and the intersection of Roxboro Road and North Park Boulevard, there is a notch in the top of the cliff on the north side that allows you to step down a few feet below the lip of the gorge. This is the narrowest spot in the gorge. Just downstream, the brook begins to descend rapidly over a series of sandstone ledges. Peering across the gorge from the notch, you can see signs of workmanship in the rock on the far side. Similar traces are faintly visible in the bank where you are standing.

Turning back to face North Park, you will notice that you crossed over a stone slab with a hollow under it as you stepped down into the notch. This was once the inlet to the stone flume that carried water from the dam to the grist mill. The flume was a rectangular channel, deeper than it was wide, that was carved into the rock along the edge of the gorge and then covered with flat stone slabs like the one in front of you. The flume took water from the top of the reservoir behind the dam and carried it to the grist mill, where it was dropped down a penstock to power the mill.

When you climb back out of the notch to the top of the cliff, you can follow the line suggested by the stone slab through the underbrush, and see the partially buried remains of the stone flume running west along the edge of the gorge. Surprisingly, the flume ends abruptly at the cliff edge about thirty feet west (downstream) from the notch. You can see the end of the flume by walking about fifty feet downstream and looking back to where the cliff curves toward the brook. Descriptions of the grist mill say that it was located one-twelfth of a mile downstream from the dam, much farther than the current end of the flume. If you continue downstream along the edge of the gorge to a point about one-twelfth of a mile (about 440 feet) from the dam, you will note a semicircular notch in the lip of the gorge with definite signs of workmanship. This is the point where the grist mill is reported to have been, although exploration of the top of the gorge at this point reveals few, if any, signs of the building that once stood here. The stone that held the rest of the flume, between the current flume end and the grist mill site, was removed by the quarry that replaced the grist mill in 1886.

If you continue downstream for a short distance, you can descend to the stream and make your way back up toward the grist mill site. Great caution and some scrambling are required to reach the site. Be careful of the overhanging cliff and the slick rocks under foot. At the base of the cliff below the semicircular notch where the grist mill stood, you can see numerous chisel marks in the stone. These continue up the cliff below the notch. Some distance away from the base of the cliff, there is a straight row of large stones that looks as if it may have been laid as part of the foundation for the grist mill. A considerable distance upstream, the rectangular cut of the flume sits mysteriously near the top of the cliff.

Aside from some puzzling triangular notches in the stone of the stream bed opposite the end of the flume, and some stones and threaded metal rods downstream from the mill site on the lip of the gorge, few other traces of the mill remain.

C.2.2 The Lower Shaker Lake and the Sawmill

The Shakers' original sawmill lay just downstream from the Lower Shaker Lake near the north end of the current dam. The sawmill sat in what is now a depression between the road along the dam and Coventry Road. Water that flowed across the mill wheel continued downstream from the mill in a channel (the mill race) that is now blocked by Coventry Road. You can find the remnant of the channel (almost dry now that it is cut off from the lake) by crossing Coventry and exploring the area between Fairmount and North Park. The abandoned mill race channel rejoins the channel



Figure C-2 Shaker sawmill ruin and site of later wildflower garden. Just downstream from the Lower Shaker Lake dam – May 1966. Photograph by M. E. Croxton? From the Nature Center at Shaker Lakes collection.

from the Lower Shaker Lake spillway a bit downstream (between the intersections of Demington and Woodmere with North Park).

There is still considerable stone work amongst the brush in the depression where the sawmill stood, but it is difficult to separate what may have been part of the Shaker mill from what was built as part of a wildflower garden established there by the Garden Club of Cleveland and the Shaker Lakes Garden Club in April 1923. The foundations of the Shaker mill reportedly remain. The foundation of an ice house that once lay south of the mill was buried when fill was placed to strengthen the dam.

The Shaker sawmill site is the focus of much interest from local historians, from those who would like to restore the former wildflower gardens, from area archeologists who would like to explore what remains in more detail, and from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, which is concerned with the safety of the Lower Shaker Lake dam and sees the depression behind the dam as a threat to the integrity of the dam embankment.

C.2.3 Jacob Russell's Grave

When Revolutionary War veteran Jacob Russell died in 1821, his family buried him on the Ohio land he had purchased for them. Russell bought the land ten years before and brought his family there the following year to become the second group of settlers in the upper watershed. His son, Ralph, established the North Union Shakers' Center Family on that land a year after Jacob's death, and the Shakers' Center Family Village grew up near the grave. Because it was protected by the establishment of the Doan Brook parks, Jacob Russell's grave has never been moved. The fenced grave and large stone marker lie just northeast of the intersection of Lee Road and South Park Boulevard.

C.2.4 The Woolen Mill and Its Flume

The corner of the Shakers' 1852 woolen mill lay at the edge of the Center Family Village, a few feet north of Jacob Russell's grave. The mill was built to facilitate the production of wool, brooms, and iron goods, all of which were important parts of Shaker industry in the early 1850s. James Prescott (1880) described the woolen mill this way:

In 1852 a building was erected for a woolen factory, twenty four, by fifty feet, three stories high, on the south side, and on the north, four stories, including the basement. The upper story is occupied by a spinning jack of one hundred and sixty spindles, two power looms, for weaving cloth, a twister — the next story below is occupied with the carding machines, etc. they manufacture the most of their wool into stocking yarn, as there is a great demand for it just now, 1870.



Figure C-3 Remains of the earth channel that once carried a wooden flume along the south side of Doan Brook between Horseshoe Lake and the Shaker woolen mill near South Park Boulevard and Lee Road. Photograph by L. C. Gooch.

The next story below is an iron lathe for turning iron, and another lathe for turning broom handles, etc. And in the basement story is hung a large grind-stone, and a buz-saw [sic], for sawing stove wood, for fuel, to keep forty or fifty fires going through the winter. The whole machinery is carried by water power by an Overshot wheel — with water drawn from the upper pond.

Few if any remains of the mill are visible, but the flume that carried water along the south side of the Doan Brook valley between Horseshoe Lake (called the “upper pond” by Prescott) and the woolen mill is still clearly visible. You can reach it by scrambling through the bushes directly north of Russell’s grave, but it is easier to find and get to if you walk back upstream, following the edge of the grass lawn. As you go upstream, you will come to a point where you can see an open, dry ditch on the side of the hill that leads toward the brook, just inside of the trees and bushes that fringe the mowed grass. The ditch, five or six feet deep and perhaps ten or fifteen feet wide, is separated from the brook valley proper by another embankment. If you scramble down into the

ditch, you will find a trail that follows the line of the ditch in some places and runs along the top of the north embankment in others. This ditch held the wooden flume that conveyed water from Horseshoe Lake to the woolen mill. You can follow the ditch upstream almost to the Horseshoe Lake dam, but the brook has eroded away a section about 100 yards downstream from the dam, and changes to the dam itself have obscured the outlet that originally fed water to the flume.

C.2.5 Horseshoe Lake Dam

The Horseshoe Lake dam that was built to power the woolen mill was an impressive structure in its day. A visitor who viewed the dam under construction in 1852 wrote the following:

The dam is built of dirt. It is twenty rods [330 feet] or more in length and upwards of twenty feet high, a stone drain at the bottom to carry off the waste water, a stone penstock which connects at the upper end of the drain. This penstock is built around about ten feet in diameter of black stone. The water pours over the top all around, the bottom is flat stone laid in water cement. This is the best and most durable floor I ever saw of the kind. It is not finished for they calculate to raise the dam four feet higher and have a cast iron curb around the top of the floom [sic] to prevent the frost getting hold of the top stone (quoted from Klyver, 1992).

The design and core of the Shakers’ original dam are still in place, although the dam has been strengthened and modified a number of times. The spillway (referred to as a penstock in the quote above) retains its original shape, and there is still reportedly a Shaker-built

stone face on the upstream side of the dam, although it is normally below the water level and therefore not visible. Some of the original stonework can be seen immediately around the downstream end of the outlet, though. You can see the original stonework by walking down the grass “peninsula” on the south side of the brook downstream from the dam. Looking back at the outlet, you see a rectangular opening beneath the dam. The stonework immediately around the opening does not match the rest of the stone, and appears to be original Shaker work — precisely cut stone with very tight joints between the individual blocks. The surrounding work and much of the other stone work now visible on the dam was done as part of Depression-era works projects in the 1940s. The large stone riprap that sits on the downstream face of the dam was placed in 1995 to prevent the dam from failing in the event that water flows over the crest.

C.2.6 The Shaker Historical Society and Museum

The Shaker Historical Society and Museum, located adjacent to the south side of Horseshoe Lake at 16740 South Park Boulevard, houses a permanent collection of items relating to the North Union Shakers and to Shaker life in general and hosts changing exhibits about both Shaker history and other local history. The Society’s Elizabeth B. Nord Library houses a good collection of books and archival materials about the Shakers, early Warrensville history, and the development of Shaker Heights.

