

West Side Elites: Shaping the Landscape

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Elites played an important part in the suburbanization process that emerged after the Civil War. However, these elites had diverse origins and interests. These differences produced distinctly different kinds of suburban landscapes. Focusing on the west-side suburb of Lakewood, three groups of well-to-do suburbanites, each of which created a distinct environment, can be identified. In the 1870s local farmers who successfully cultivated fruits used their wealth to transform the rough farmscape into a closely-knit, genteel agricultural community with carefully laid-out residential grounds and large homes along Detroit Road. Toward the end of the 19th century, aspiring industrial elites from Cleveland began to locate large estates along Lake Erie from Perkins Beach (Edgewater) in Cleveland into the new Hamlet of Lakewood. This "borderland" of large, formal, but eclectic estates and their broad, deep landscaped grounds reflected the individualistic inclinations of their owners. Finally, in the 1890s, a third elite landscape, one more communally oriented, emerged in Lakewood's northwest corner. A planned community of half acre "estates", Clifton Park emerged as a settlement of smaller homes located along tree-lined, curvilinear streets and focused socially on the Clifton Club.