

## **The City Beautiful Movement: Weeks/Gates Mills and the Rural Response**

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Gates Mills, a village located in the Chagrin Valley, can trace its roots as a rural mill settlement dating from 1826 that evolved around the turn of the century into a country retreat for wealthy Clevelanders. It has further developed into one of the Cleveland region's most prestigious communities. The development was made possible by the opening of an interurban line through the community in 1899. The principles established by the Gates Mills Improvement Society, founded in 1905 to guide the transformation of this sleepy rural town into a country retreat, emphasized the natural character of the land. Rules were established governing improvements to the community, such as fencing, landscaping, siting of buildings, in a cooperative venture that proved to be highly successful. The early buildings of the community were often adapted into comfortable summer residences rather than replaced with new structures. The buildings erected around the turn of the century were usually carefully integrated into their fine natural settings, sited to take advantage of vistas of the broad Chagrin Valley and natural ravines, which were often enhanced with carefully designed dams and waterfalls. Some of the buildings from the turn of the century period are rare examples of the Adirondack Rustic Style, a form of resort architecture praised for its respect for natural materials. Frank Walker, one of Cleveland's preeminent early twentieth century architects, was active in the community, serving as its first mayor.

The automobile furthered the development of Gates Mills, enabling it to become a community of year-round residents. Large estates were created on sizable tracts of land that were carefully landscaped. In more recent years, the community has continued to experience growth pressures. For example, this summer water lines are being extended through most parts of the village. In response to development pressures, Gates Mills has worked the town on the National Register of Historic Places and has developed design standards aimed at maintaining the tranquil environment and neighborly character of its buildings.