

Workers' Neighborhoods and Housing in Ohio's Industrial Northeast

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From the end of the Civil War until the Great Depression, Ohio experienced a phenomenal boom in industrial activity and a related surge in population, urbanization, and immigration. Location, natural resources, diverse transportation and a plentiful labor supply made Ohio a major factor in America's industrial growth. At the turn-of-the-century there was scarcely a growing industry in which Ohio did not have a major interest. By 1930 Ohio was the fourth most populous state in the country and one of the most powerful and diverse economic centers in the United States.

The Cuyahoga Valley and the counties of the Mahoning Valley reflect the spirit of this tremendous growth during this period as the region developed into a major industrial and manufacturing center in the state and witnessed the emergence of thriving industrial urban centers. In 1900 Youngstown boasted the second largest steel making capacity in the United States. Akron, a leader in the rubber industry and its related products, was the fastest growing city in the United States between 1910 - 1920. Dominating the oil refining and the iron and steel industries, Cleveland was the fifth largest city in the United States by 1930.

The impact of this industrial growth as it relates to housing and neighborhoods associated with workers can be seen in examples such as the ethnic enclaves of the Bird's Nest in Lakewood and Cleveland's Tremont neighborhood, the innovative concrete housing developed by the Youngstown Sheet & Tube Company, and the planned communities like McDonald, and neighborhoods for workers such as Goodyear Heights and Firestone Park in Akron. Aside from these distinctive examples exists the more commonplace, vast, densely built neighborhoods filled with simple, vernacular, single-family, owner-occupied houses that characterize midwest industrial cities more so than industrial centers elsewhere in the nation.