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Kennedy Heights: A Fragmented Hilltop Suburb

by James E. Cebula

In 1970, for the first time, the United States Bureau of the Census reported that more people lived in the nation's suburbs than in its central cities. Increasingly, it seemed as though the cities existed as land locked islands surrounded by chains of individualistic local governments, and that the problem of planning for and providing basic services for the metropolitan complex was insurmountable. What many of the alarmists failed to bear in mind, however, was that this process of suburbanization stretched back to the eighteenth century in American cities, and solutions to the problems accruing from the process have, in the past, been worked out. Differences, to be sure, distinguished these early fringe areas from modern suburbs. While the earliest suburbs grew out of a natural need for space, the more recent suburban tracts have principally resulted from the interaction of transportation technology, real estate interests, and what one scholar nebulously termed "a moral imperative."¹

The Cincinnati neighborhood of Kennedy Heights developed in the late nineteenth century out of a combination of factors similar to those that produced the modern suburb. In the late 1880's and 1890's, several real estate speculators took advantage of transportation developments and the emerging arcadian aesthetics, with its vision of rustic single family houses well removed from the tensions of the city but close enough to preserve the amenities of the city, to create a suburban community. Ironically, the open space between the various realty developments and the shortcomings of the arcadian vision produced fragmentation, rather than community. Before long, residents in the area looked to Cincinnati to solve their problems.

Originally part of the 1787 land grant from Congress to John Cleves Symmes, the area that became Kennedy Heights was carved out of sections twenty, twenty-three, twenty-four, and twenty-eight of Columbia Township. In 1795, between what is now Woodford and Kennedy Heights parks, John McFarland built the last of the private outposts commissioned for the purpose of forestalling Indian attacks on settlers in the area. By the mid-nineteenth century as the immigration to the United States from Europe broadened, a number of English and German farmers gained control of the land to the northeast of Pleasant Ridge. The Kretchmers, Kuntz's, Kunters, Stegemoellers, Hagendorns, Browns, Starks, Woods, and Wrights all farmed the area. Serviced by the village

of Pleasant Ridge and connected to Cincinnati by way of the Montgomery Pike, the farmers prospered.²

In the post Civil War years, Cincinnatians increasingly looked beyond the city's hilltops for potential real estate investments. By the mid-1870's, Richard Nelson of the Nelson-Bolles realty company, a firm with large land holdings to the east of Cincinnati, wrote that high rents and heavy taxes forced businesses from the city. Observing that "crowding increases crime" and "morals become depraved" the Cincinnati realtor urged "emigration from the city to the suburbs, where the influences are favorable to pure morality, a higher manhood and . . . prosperity." In 1881, Henry and Kate Ford, who wrote numerous county histories throughout the country, described the higher ground in Columbia Township as "excellently adapted to the purposes of suburban residence as well as farming."³

Events in Cincinnati added to the suburban push. During the 1880's, the Queen City experienced great tensions growing out of population increases and the accompanying competition for jobs, housing, and services. The consistently tense situation became volatile in the summer of 1884 when rioting broke out, the courthouse burned, and forty-five people lost their lives. With railroad technology capable of moving people in and out of the city with relative ease, conditions became ripe for realty interests to develop the lands in outlying sections. The region to the northeast, with the Cincinnati Northern Railroad opened through it in 1882, seemed particularly attractive.⁴

Lewis Kennedy, descendant of a pioneer Cincinnati family, was one of the first developers in the northeast region. Kennedy's grandfather had run a ferry across the Ohio River and owned a farm in the Pleasant Ridge area. Heir to the family land, Kennedy married Delia McCullough and acquired control of the twenty acre J. M. McCullough estate which lay in the southeast corner of section twenty-nine of Columbia Township. A commission and seed merchant on Vine Street, Kennedy broadened his interests to real estate speculation. Since he owned considerable land in the area, he logically focused his attention on the northeast suburbs and purchased two additional tracts of undeveloped land between Pleasant Ridge and the post town of Silverton. One parcel stood along the Montgomery Pike, while the other was adjacent to the new Cincinnati Northern Railroad. The land seemed ideal for suburban development and on January 26, 1885, Kennedy filed plans at the Hamilton County Courthouse to develop the first subdivision between Pleasant Ridge and Silverton. The twenty-two acre tract lay south of the Montgomery Pike and abutted the newly proposed Kennedy Avenue on the west.⁵

Within the next two years, Kennedy organized the Kennedy Heights Loan and Building Association and purchased the eighty-three acre farm of H. W. Stegmoeller, an area south of Kennedy's railroad property. The Association under Kennedy's leadership planned to create an ideal suburban development. They laid out lots with street fronts ranging from one hundred to one hundred and

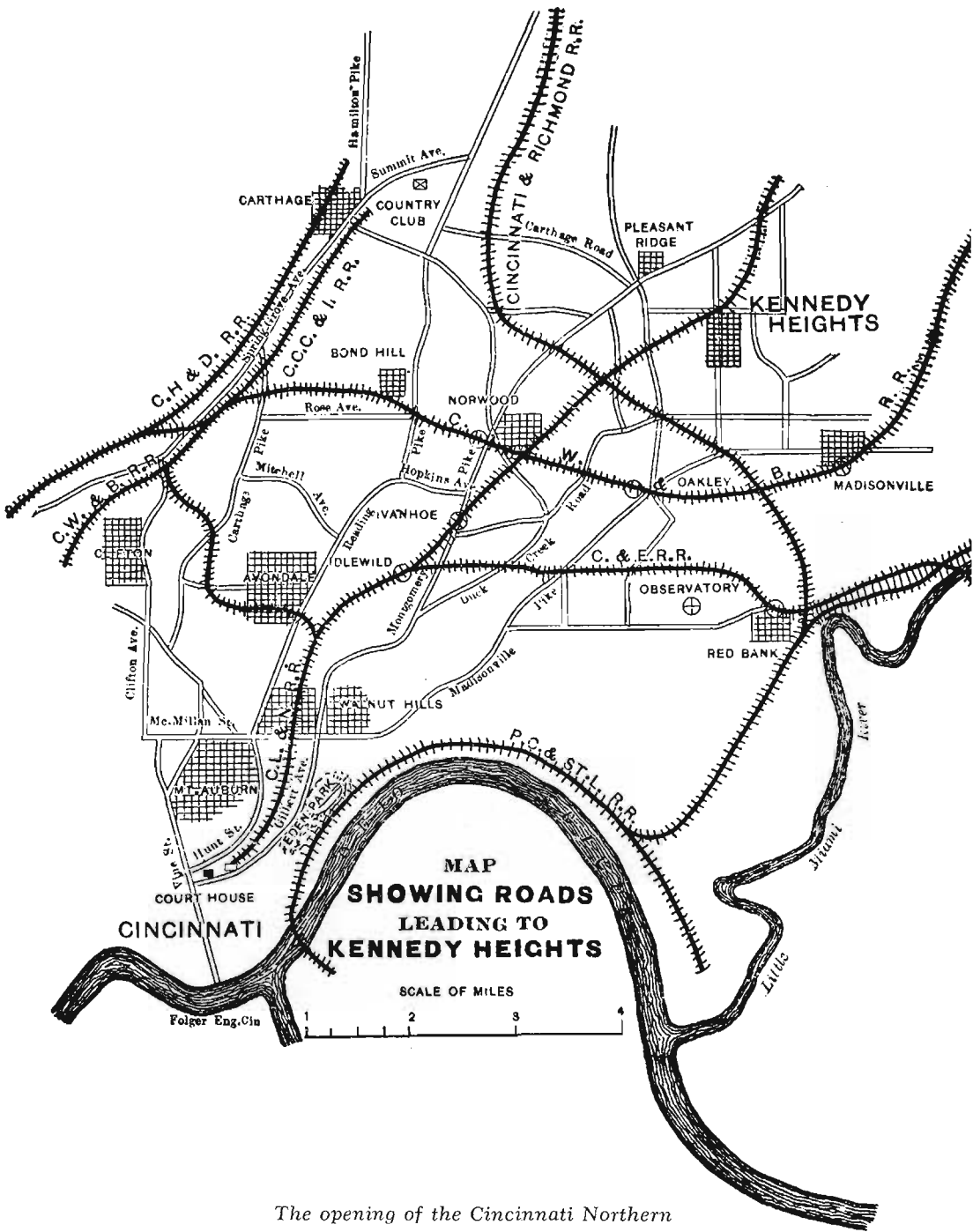
sixty feet. In addition to the spacious lots, trees were planted along the grid streets "to give a park like air to the whole place." To foster an illusion of the English countryside, they named the streets after such noted English writers as William Davenant, Charles Dickens, and Thomas Wyatt. Simultaneously, Kennedy built a branch of his commission and seed business on his eleven acre tract along the railroad, which by this time had become the Cincinnati, Lebanon and Northern. He also added a supply and building company to his firm. As President of the Building Association, Kennedy's realty company maintained control of land development in the subdivision.

Downtown businessmen and professionals made up most of the investors in the Kennedy's Heights Loan and Building Association, the most prominent among them being Anthony J. Bullock. Bullock had extensive holdings in the Cincinnati, Lebanon and Northern Railroad and among other things was the president of the City and Suburban Telegraph Association and Bell Telephone Exchange. Purchasing a large tract at the edge of the development, Bullock laid plans to build a suburban summer resort for "the exclusive use of shareholders and their properly introduced friends." The idea was a predecessor to the Country Club concept. Bullock organized the Kennedy Heights Hotel Company and A. O. Elzner, a noted Cincinnati architect, designed a sprawling fifty room Queen Anne style building for the site. Kennedy's construction firm built the hotel for \$65,000.

The developers sought to capitalize on an almost disappearing phase of Americana, the free American Indian, and named the place the Yononte Inn, after a legendary Miami Indian maiden who long ago, according to local legend, had been married on the site. Prominently located on the eastern rim of the hills above the Norwood trough, the view from the inn scanned the Little Miami Valley, the farm village of Madisonville, and the developing residential suburbs of Oakley, Hyde Park, and Norwood. Applauding the panoramic view, the management also acclaimed the "continuous breezes" and "health-giving and revivifying atmosphere" and exuberantly described the place as "an oasis in the caloric desert of Cincinnati." According to newspaper accounts, the Yononte prospered, attracting the Cincinnati elite with the novelty of a "four-in-hand Tally Ho" ride from the Kennedy Heights station to the spacious dining and drawing rooms of the inn.⁶

Making the most of the tensions in Cincinnati, the Kennedy realty company urged prospective land owners to get their families out of the city for the summer by building in the new development. The realtors emphasized the ease of the thirty minute, eight mile, commuter trip to and from downtown Cincinnati. Praising the area surrounding the inn as "one of the finest of Cincinnati's suburbs, with excellent streets, sidewalks and drives, and beautiful homes", Kennedy's promotion and sales techniques soon began attracting year round suburban residents into the development.

A small business sector emerged near the Kennedy Avenue and Woodford



The opening of the Cincinnati Northern Railroad gave an impetus to suburban development between Pleasant Ridge and Silverton.

Road train station. The station served as both the post office and as an American Express office, and Kennedy operated a general store nearby. In 1893, an Episcopal church, the Christ Mission, was established on Kennedy Avenue opposite Aikenside Avenue, the traffic artery connecting the Kennedy Heights development with the business district. By the turn of the century, Kennedy had sold his builder's supply business to Henry and Conrad Rathkamp, and the Ewers Coal Company had become part of the district. As the land developed, the area lost its resort character. By 1907, the hotel had outlived its usefulness and, after serving for a time as an exclusive dance hall, closed its doors. Two years later the heirs to the Bullock estate tried to turn the building and grounds into a sanitarium, but the Village Council opposed the plan. Later that year, on December 10, the twenty-two year old hotel erupted in flames. The cause of the fire according to newspaper reports was a defective flue.⁷

The demise of the Yononte reflected the transformation of the development from its initial summer resort concept to a more modest bedroom suburb. Within four years after the platting of the Kennedy Heights subdivision, two other large scale developments were laid out. Nevertheless, the suburban boom caught on slowly in these less affluently conceived subdivisions in the area.

In 1888 and 1889, the Euclid Land Association, organized by Robert J. Cresap, a land developer in nearby Silverton, surveyed land on both sides of the C. L. & N. tracks as they traversed the area between the Kennedy station and Silverton. Principally financed by three downtown businessmen, John Wentzel, Isaac Winkler, and Walter Palm, the Cresap development with its fifty foot front lots initially failed to attract many settlers. Ten years after platting, the area had only eight homes, two of them being previously existing farmhouses.

The other major investor in the area, the Belmont Land Association, was organized by Lewis Kennedy. Laid out in 1891, the Belmont holding stood along the Montgomery Pike opposite Kennedy's first tract. The Belmont-Kennedy subdivisions represented a third developmental nucleus. Although Kennedy's first investment in this area managed to attract seventeen home builders by 1898, only three homes stood on the sixty foot front Belmont lots.⁸

The process of transforming the area into a village was difficult, because it consisted of three geographically isolated centers of population, often with different interests. In 1890, estimating the population of the developments at three hundred, thirty property owners led by Lewis Kennedy petitioned the county for incorporated status. Immediately, opposition mounted from diverse quarters. A group of farmers, the long standing residents of the region, filed suit against the move, arguing that their taxes would be raised and that incorporation was not essential for the operation of their farms. Ten recent arrivals to the Kennedy Heights development joined them with a parallel suit on the grounds that their streets were well lit and their sidewalks adequate. The trustees of the Bullock estate, the owners of the Yononte Inn, joined this suit hoping to maintain the arcadian nature of the area south of the C. L. & N.

Railroad. The developers of the faltering Euclid Land Association holding, joined nearby farmers to oppose incorporation. Reasoning that they were too far from the rest of the community and that incorporation would lead to increased taxes for unnecessary improvements, the trustees for the land company asked to be excluded from incorporation. In spite of the protests, the county commissioners granted incorporated status, but the farm interests continued the fight in the courts. Led by John Wright, the son of one of the first settlers in the area, the resistance to change held up incorporation until 1896. In that year, the Ohio Supreme Court finally ruled that the Clerk of Hamilton County had acted properly in granting incorporated status and ordered the village organized. With much less difficulty, Kennedy Heights' neighbors to the west and east—Pleasant Ridge and Silverton—had achieved village status in 1891 and 1894, respectively.⁹

With incorporation, came growth. During the first decade of the twentieth century, the village grew by one hundred and fifty per cent, from two hundred people, counted by the census takers in 1900, to six hundred and twenty-five in 1910. Operating with a mayor-council form of government, Kennedy Heights set about the task of establishing services to solve the problems accompanying growth. To provide efficient transportation for the residents and developers along Montgomery Pike, the Village Council negotiated a franchise in November of 1901 with the Interurban Railway and Terminal Company to extend its downtown service through the village. The company, then in the process of extending its interurban railroad to Lebanon, paid \$5,000 for the right of way. By the middle of 1902, the IRT connection with Cincinnati was in operation with an eight cent fare for the forty minute ride downtown. Fifteen months later, responding to general communication needs, the Council granted the City and Suburban Telegraph Association the right to lay lines in the village. In return for the marketing rights, the town received \$500 from the communications firm. The village treasury swelled, and in 1904, Kennedy Heights was able to finance a water delivery system. Pipes were laid, fire plugs installed, and a water tank erected near Kennedy Avenue and Montgomery Road. The Council contracted with the City of Cincinnati to supply the water. In March of 1905, Council negotiated with the Cincinnati Gas and Electric Company to lay gas and electric lines and to install at least fifty arc lights or one thousand incandescent lamps along its increasingly sprawling streets.¹⁰

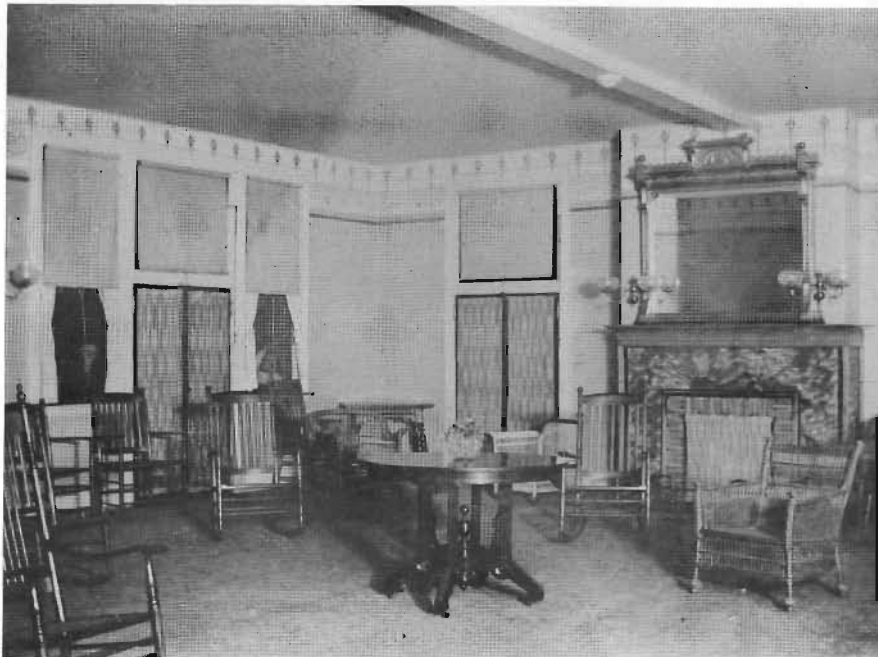
The growth during these years also pointed to the need for Council to deal with public safety matters. For fire protection, volunteerism proved an inadequate solution. While reports of the shortcomings of the bucket brigades during the initial days of development are lacking, by 1910, pressures mounted for a more efficient system. After fire destroyed the Yononte Inn in December, 1909, Council authorized the purchase of three portable horse drawn fire fighting units at the cost of \$200 each. The units were distributed in the three population centers of the village—the Kennedy Avenue-Woodford Road section, the Red



Anthony J. Bullock secured the services of the noted Cincinnati architect, A.O. Elzner, to design a fifty room Queen Anne style hotel on the eastern ridge of Kennedy Heights overlooking the Little Miami Valley and Norwood trough.



Cozy drawing rooms, a spacious dining room, and convenience to railroad transportation were proclaimed in the Yononté's advertisements which also extolled its panoramic view and "health-giving and revivifying atmosphere," a real "oasis in the caloric desert of Cincinnati."





Summer vacationers gathered on the arched porches of "The Nestle" which was built next to the Yononte Inn as a summer cottage for J.M. Foster. "The Nestle" is presently owned by James Cebula, the author of this article.



Bank Road-Zinsle Avenue section (then called Yononte and Euclid) and the Montgomery Road-Kennedy Avenue area. For police protection, the village had a part-time marshall. In 1910, the marshall became the street commissioner, as well. The duties of this office consisted of watering down dusty streets, filling pot holes, and leveling ruts when the needs arose. The threat of health problems also became apparent and Council created a health office. Dr. Charles E. Murray, a physician with a downtown practice, but a resident of Kennedy Heights, was appointed village health officer. Growth also brought the need to extend existing public utilities as well as the necessity to create a public sewer system. To this end, Council appointed James Stewart the village engineer.¹¹

The development of the sewer system proved a particularly sticky and expensive problem, and the solution reflected a tension between the older residents and the newcomers. Homeowners in the Kennedy Heights subdivision, the generally more affluent area, had private sanitary cesspools installed. The Euclid and Belmont subdivision residents, generally less affluent, by and large looked to the village government for a solution to the sewer problem. In September, 1912, Council passed legislation regulating plumbing and sewerage. They divided the village into two districts—a sanitary sewer district for the Heights area and a proposed community sewer system for the rest of the village. To pay for the sewers, Council approved a \$25,000 bond issue and began leveling sewer assessments. A number of residents refused to pay, and in 1913, several disgruntled citizens brought court suits against the village. Lack of adequate facilities to dispose of waste in the Kennedy-Montgomery section necessitated the raw sewage to flow into the low lying area of the present day Rogers Park Place. Joseph Kolb, the absentee owner of the land, filed suit against the village to end the disposal of waste on his property. Quickly, the embarrassed Council negotiated an agreement with Cincinnati to connect the village sewer lines with the city system. By 1914, sewers were needed on parts of four streets in the Belmont development and six streets in the Euclid section.¹²

Providing for basic public services, essential as it was, hardly represented the key to building community. Probably, more important to community spirit was the establishment of institutions which fostered social intercourse.¹³ In the Village of Kennedy Heights, with three distinct nodes of development, and a population whose economic ties were either with the central city or nearby industrial suburbs on the one hand, and the older agricultural residents who opposed urbanization on the other, the process proved frustrating, and essentially a failure. Since the three centers of activity competed with each other, business district dominance shifted several times, primarily because of transportation developments. The village never attracted enough Catholics to establish a church and residents of that persuasion traveled to Pleasant Ridge for religious services. Of the churches built in the area, only one would endure as a lasting institution, principally serving residents of Kennedy Heights. Local

government failed to bring the diverse groups together and eventually had to bow to annexation.

The oldest settlers in the region initially interacted with Pleasant Ridge and from there omnibuses regularly ran to and from Cincinnati. The completion of rail connections through the area east of Montgomery Pike brought more efficient ties with the Queen City in 1885, and laid the basis for a shift in community activity. The development of the Kennedy Heights subdivision to the southeast of the railroad and the residents' reliance on the C. L. & N., soon turned the Kennedy-Woodford area into the center of activity. Here guests for the Yononte Inn were picked up; year round residents commuted downtown to work; their wives shopped at the neighborhood store; farmers sold their goods to the commission merchant; and prospective suburbanites were shown lots or homes in the region by Kennedy or his salesmen. In spite of this activity, the suburb fragmented.

The life style Kennedy Heights fostered had its drawbacks. Commenting on suburban life at the turn of the century, the editor of *Harper's Bazaar* noted that the suburban father, who left for work early and returned late, had become "a Sunday institution." To reap the advantages of city schools the children had to "be away from home the greater part of the day" and while en route home the "little street arabs (*sic.*)" stood "at the mercy of moral and physical dangers." Having to travel long distances for the most basic household items, or having them delivered at increased cost, the suburban housewife "doubled her work and cares." The suburb had changed the pace of life. Instead of producing the arcadian ideal of rustic leisure, it seemed to have distracted the suburbanites from the most basic home duties and neighborhood amenities.¹⁴

Symptomatic of the fragmentation in the bedroom suburb was the difficulty residents had in establishing a church. Turned down by the Presbytery of Cincinnati in 1891 for permission to establish a Presbyterian church, a group of residents decided to build an Episcopal church. On a tract of land provided by Lewis Kennedy, they laid the foundation for a large church and parish house. Bishop Boyd Vincent of the Southern Diocese of Ohio opposed a large scale investment but permitted the creation of the Christ mission in 1893. Designed to serve summer residents as well as suburbanites, the "attractive chapel" (as Bishop Vincent described it) failed to develop into a parish. By the beginning of the twentieth century, when the Yononte Inn began to decline as a resort, the mission also fell upon hard times. In 1909, after the Presbyterian Church finally organized in the area and fire destroyed the inn, the Episcopal Diocese closed the mission, sold the building to the Kennedy Realty Company and used the proceeds to help "build the chapel and parish house at Hyde Park," a more prosperous suburb, closer to the city. Kennedy converted the building into a civic center and the Village Council leased it as a town hall and public meeting place.¹⁵

With activity centering around the Kennedy-Woodford district, the other two

Stanley High purchased the Berschorman estate, which had been built about 1875 by a prominent Cincinnati stock broker, and moved his Norwood funeral home to the Montgomery Road location.



The growth of the community was aided in the early twentieth century when the village was able to finance a water delivery system negotiated with Cincinnati Gas and Electric Company to lay gas and electric lines, and later secured an agreement with Cincinnati to connect the village and city sewer systems.



Less affluent housing was built in the Cresap subdivision on the low-lying eastern edge of Kennedy Heights and near the railroad tracks. Built between 1900 and 1915 this area was the site of the neighborhood's Black community.



A popular suburban house was the shingle style home designed by A.O. Elzner. This shingle design was replicated in houses close to the Yononte Inn and in other areas of Kennedy Heights.

principal realty developments in the village floundered until the IRT opened on Montgomery Road. The cheap transportation downtown and into the growing industrial suburb of Norwood, made the sixty foot front lots of the Belmont subdivision attractive to the lower middle class. Three quarters of a mile from the Kennedy-Woodford Road district, the project finally seemed to have gotten off the ground, by 1909. The town-boosting *Norwood Enterprise* complained that “immigrants from Norwood” were “arriving rapidly in the Belmont subdivision.” In addition to the single family units built, several duplex “St. Louis flats” were constructed on Bantry and Iris Avenues. This growth, combined with Lewis Kennedy’s earlier success along Kennedy Avenue near Montgomery, represented the beginning of a shift in the center of village activity. By 1910, the Belmont-Kennedy district housed the village school, the water tower and jail, the Belmont realty office, and two IRT stops to serve commuters.¹⁶ During the next two decades, the area developed into the principal business district. A grocery store was located on the north side of Montgomery opposite Kennedy Avenue and next to it, the Belmont Land Association, in 1923, built an austere multi-unit building of wire cut brick to house several shops and numerous apartments. On the other side of Montgomery, Stanley High, an undertaker, followed population movement and relocated his Norwood funeral home in the former Berschorman residence. The change of residential property to a business status, demonstrated the strong roots that the business district had planted. In 1928, the Kalomeres brothers developed a branch of their downtown confectionery, east of the funeral home. In addition, the Piggly Wiggly Stores, an early chain, ran a fast service grocery, and the Kroger Company operated a bakery on the corner of Montgomery and Kennedy.¹⁷

As new residents came into the village, pressure for another church mounted. In 1906, Sunday school classes for the children of the young married families began in the home of Henry Appleton on Kennedy Avenue, not far from the school. The group grew, and within two years, it met regularly at the school. By this time, the religious classes were followed by interdenominational religious services held on a rotating basis among several Protestant sects. A canvass of the participants revealed forty signatories who favored the establishment of a Presbyterian church. Residents, this time in larger numbers, again petitioned the Presbytery, and on July 6, 1909, the Kennedy Heights Presbyterian Church was organized. In 1912, they built a white frame style church on Kennedy Avenue, a block and a half south of the school. The church prospered, and in 1930 completed a new brick colonial building to serve the two hundred and seventy-nine member families.¹⁸

The Euclid Land Association project showed similar signs of vitality with the opening of the IRT. To recoup its losses, the company did two things. In 1906, they cleared lots and intensified sales away from the railroad and closer to the Kennedy-Montgomery district and began selling the low lying lots near the C. L. & N. R.R. on Red Bank Road to black families. By the time Kennedy Heights joined the city in 1914, some twenty homes were built along Coleridge,

Odin, and Zinsle avenues, with an additional eight new homes along Red Bank Road, in the emerging black community. With lots generally smaller in this subdivision than in the other tracts—usually fifty foot fronts—the area attracted people from a lower socio-economic strata.¹⁹

By the second decade of the twentieth century, growth in the Euclid holding had become a third population node in the village. At the corner of Red Bank and Zinsle stood another C. L. & N. R.R. station, which also housed the Euclid Land Association field office. Across the street on Zinsle, stood a grocery store. To the right of the station along Red Bank, George McCray operated a smaller grocery, and on the other side of the street housed a team of mules which he rented for hauling and clearing purposes. Further down on Red Bank, George Streitlemeyer, a German immigrant who left Mt. Adams because of the polluted air from the factory district, operated a shoemaker shop on present day Iberius. It was in this district along Red Bank, contained by the railroad tracks on one side and a hill on the other, that the black community planted its roots. In 1914, they organized the Kennedy Heights First Baptist Church.²⁰

Excluded from the village Presbyterian Church, and weary of leaving the community for religious services, a small black congregation began worshiping in each other's home in 1914. Under the leadership of Reverend Charles Coleman, a visiting preacher from the black settlement of Hazelwood, seven miles to the north, they quickly turned their energy to building a church. After purchasing a lot for \$100, the parishioners excavated the basement, built the foundation and laid the floor. With materials being acquired and construction underway, the basement sufficed for both the church services and Sunday school until the building was completed. The Deerfield Creek ran along the railroad bed, and behind the church it cut under the tracks. Here a deep pool developed and conveniently provided a natural baptismal font. Initially, eight families started the Kennedy Heights First Baptist Church. The congregation remained small even though members often traveled from as far away as the black urban fringe settlements of Madisonville and Rossmoyne. The church only served thirty families in 1930.²¹

In the pre-World War I era, black community activity centered around the church and survival. Poor, and with limited opportunities, "everybody helped each other—building homes, loaning money and caring for the sick", as Ella Turner Smith put it. The place "looked like it was beginning to make up a neighborhood." Times were hard and the men took whatever jobs they could get—as C. L. & N. crewmen, hodcarriers, or just day laborers. The women did domestic work in the more affluent parts of Kennedy Heights, in Pleasant Ridge, or elsewhere. While the adults felt the economic repression of the larger community, the children felt other pressures in the school. Just as the black territory in the village was constrained by the railroad tracks, so too territories were assigned in the school. The black children usually sat in the back of the class and experienced the brunt of frequent racial snubs. One lifetime Kennedy



The Kunter farmhouse, built by John Cox, a principal farmer and landowner in the mid 1800's, was one of the first houses in the region.



Built as a summer church in the early 1890's the Christ Episcopal Mission failed to develop into a parish and closed after fire had destroyed the inn.

Heights resident recalled “there were no problems until you got to school—there the color line emerged.”²²

Probably no other public institution in a suburban area loomed larger than the school. Often consisting of a broader geographic base than the political entity, its principal function in modern times has been to prepare its students for entrance and success in the society. As such, the school brought diverse people together in common cause. When the ability of the school to function stood threatened, a genuine community crisis developed. In Kennedy Heights, it was a school crisis on top of the already existing pressures for better services which unified sentiments in the village for annexation to the City of Cincinnati.

Long before political incorporation, the Kennedy Heights area had a school. In 1842, according to one account, John Cox, an extensive land owner in the region, donated a tract of land along the Montgomery Pike for a log cabin school. In 1886 after organizing as Kennedy-Silverton School District, the one room structure was replaced by a two room brick building. A few years later, in 1891, two more rooms were added to handle the increasing school population which by 1910 numbered one hundred and twenty-seven. In the following years, voters in the school district approved a bond issue to build a large modern school. Completed in 1912, the school contained eight classrooms, a manual training and home economics room, a gymnasium, and an auditorium. Contemporaries described the school as “beautiful, modern and well equipped.” The plant was to be paid for by the property tax.²³

The village had become increasingly dependent on the property base to pay for services once the initial transportation and communication franchises were sold. Although a steady stream of homeowners came into the town, the increases on the tax duplicate were offset by the costs of needed services, by the de-annexation of several farms from the village in 1903, and by the closing of the Yononte Inn. While the hilltop village took on a purely residential caste, below the hill, to the south in Oakley and to the west in Norwood, industrial suburbs with broader industrial tax bases prospered.²⁴ By the spring of 1909, village leaders in the northeast suburbs began considering the possibilities of consolidation to reduce the costs of services.

In April, 1909, representatives from Pleasant Ridge, Silverton, and Kennedy Heights met to discuss consolidation, but decided against it, although Kennedy Heights Mayor Pat McHugh asserted that he would welcome annexation by Cincinnati. Three weeks later, at the request of Norwood officials, McHugh journeyed down Montgomery Road to consider the possibilities of annexation to that city. Rejecting this idea, the Mayor explained that Cincinnati would probably claim a tract of farm land between Bond Hill and Pleasant Ridge and then annex Pleasant Ridge, Kennedy Heights, and Silverton in one sweep.²⁵

The scenario described by McHugh was possible in 1909. The Ohio municipal code permitted annexation of villages with less than five thousand people by a simple majority of the combined city-village vote if the village lay con-

tiguous to the city. In 1910, this changed when the General Assembly, responding to opposition to annexation throughout the state, approved the Phare Annexation Law. The new legislation required a majority vote in each political entity before annexation could take place. With geographic expansion of the cities made more difficult, sentiment for annexation in the outlying areas had to be strong. In Kennedy Heights a general desire for improved community services and the impact of the annexation of neighboring Pleasant Ridge to Cincinnati combined to turn community attitudes in favor of joining the Queen City.²⁶

A part of Pleasant Ridge belonged to the Kennedy Heights School District, but according to the revised Ohio Municipal Code, this territory automatically became part of the Cincinnati School District when Pleasant Ridge joined the City. The area amounted to twenty per cent of the tax valuation of the Kennedy school system. With the voters having recently approved a long term bond issue for a new school, the financial burden created by the loss of one-fifth of the tax base appeared unbearable. On July 1, 1912, the Kennedy Heights Board of Education and the Kennedy Heights Businessmen's Club petitioned the Cincinnati School Board to annex the Kennedy Heights School District. Rather than make a decision, the Cincinnati board took the matter under advisement. In Kennedy Heights, anxiety persisted.²⁷

The Kennedy Heights Businessmen's Club continued to press for a solution to the problem. Generally not residents with local business interests, the group consisted of politically active elite and middle class property owners in the village. The majority resided in the Heights section and were professionals or proprietors. Although a few members were skilled craftsmen, the occupations of the remainder fell into the white collar categories. The club members functioned as community boosters and often set political standards in the village. In September of 1912, when representatives from the organization appeared before one of the club members, Mayor John Zinsle, and the Village Council to call for an election on the question of annexation to Cincinnati, there was little doubt about the action Council would take. After negotiating with Cincinnati to place the issue on the city ballot, notices were prominently posted throughout the village. In the November general elections voters in the city and Kennedy Heights approved the jointure by a vote of 56,947 to 12,252 in Cincinnati and 172 to 17 in the village.²⁸



Cincinnatians such as the Doepke family, owners of the Alms and Doepke Department Store on Central Parkway, built summer homes in the Heights. The store continued to use the Doepke house as a summer retreat for its employees until the 1930's.



By 1910 the Belmont district housed the village school, water tower, and two IRT stops. During the next two decades it developed into the principal business district with a multi-unit building to house several shops and numerous apartments.

TABLE 1
VILLAGE OF KENNEDY HEIGHTS OCCUPATIONAL DATA

Kennedy Heights Businessmen's Club Occupational Breakdown, 1912 In Real Numbers		Kennedy Heights Occupational Structure Circa 1912 In %	
Professional	12	Professional	16.6
Proprietary	9	Proprietary	33.3
Managerial	9	Managerial	16.6
Skilled	3	Skilled	16.6
Sales/Clerks	9	Sales/Clerks	8.3
Undetermined	7	Undetermined	8.3

Sources: The data on the Businessmen's Club, derived from a 1908 membership list, traced in the 1912 *Cincinnati City Directory*. The Kennedy Heights occupational structure is based on a 1 in 20 sample from the same directory.

While the annexation commissioners worked out the details to consummate the union, parallel negotiations took place between the respective boards of education. The consolidation of the school districts was completed first. The Kennedy Heights board sought to smooth the transition and asked the Cincinnati board to levy school taxes for the 1913-1914 year, to reappoint the Kennedy Heights school personnel, and to establish a kindergarten. The request was met. In October of 1913, the Kennedy Heights board adopted a resolution placing the entire district under the jurisdiction of the city system, stipulating that manual training and domestic science courses be maintained. On December 1, 1913, the Cincinnati Board of Education concurred and annexed the Kennedy Heights Village School District.²⁹

Eight months later, on July 24, 1914, Cincinnati formally made Kennedy Heights part of the city. Through a process of informal negotiations, numerous problems had to be worked out and in the end the city allayed the concerns of the villagers. Cincinnati agreed to maintain the town hall as a civic center until the lease ran out, to provide police and fire protection, to collect the garbage, and to care for the streets and continue gas, electric, and water services. In addition, the city pledged to complete the village sewer program and resurface those streets torn up by the sewer installation. The village annexation commissioners pressed for a five cent fare on the IRT to coincide with the city agreement, but the city commissioner could only promise "if possible, (to) get Kennedy Heights a lower fare . . ." The city commissioner also pledged the city to work for safer and better ventilated traction cars in future franchise agreements. To solve the long standing problem of health care services in the

village, the commissioner urged the Board of Health to "secure a resident district physician" to serve the area.³⁰

With annexation complete, Kennedy Heights entered a new phase of its history. It had gone through three stages of development in thirty years. Carved out of an agricultural district, it failed as a summer resort region and could not afford the luxury of being an independent suburb. Now, in 1914, it faced the problems of maintaining the quality of life desirable in a residential suburb which had become part of a large metropolitan political entity. A new tension designed to improve the quality of life in the neighborhood and the city at large had been created. Residents in Kennedy Heights began the task with determination and the day after they became part of the city, a delegation of property owners visited city hall to find out how and when Cincinnati would carry out its part of the bargain.³¹

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(1) A good general statement on the history of suburbanization is Gregory H. Singleton, "The Genesis of Suburbia: A Complex of Historical Trends" in Louis H. Masotti and Jeffrey K. Hadden, eds., *The Urbanization of the Suburbs*, Urban Affairs Annual Reviews, Vol. 7 (Beverly Hills, Calif., 1973), pp. 29-50. On the relationship between technology and spatial change see Leo F. Schnore, "Metropolitan Growth and Decentralization," *The American Journal of Sociology*, LXIII (September, 1957), 171-180; Joel A. Tarr, "From City to Suburb: The 'Moral' Influence of Transportation Technology," in Alexander B. Callow, Jr., ed., *American Urban History* (2nd ed.; New York, 1973), pp. 202-212. For a statement on the differences between a farm village and a suburban development see William M. Dobriner, "The Natural History of a Reluctant Suburb," *Yale Review*, XLIX (Spring, 1960), 399-412.

(2) Henry A. Ford and Kate B. Ford, *History of Hamilton County, Ohio* (Cleveland, 1881), pp. 263-274; Fred Stark, "Kennedy Heights Memoir" (unpublished manuscript in possession of the author), p. 1.

(3) Richard Nelson, *Suburban Homes for Business Men on the Line of the Marietta*

Railroad: A Description of the Northeastern Suburbs (Cincinnati, 1874), pp. 8-9; Ford, *History*, p. 263.

(4) Zane L. Miller, "Boss Cox and the Municipal Reformers: Cincinnati Progressives, 1880-1914" (3 vols., unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1966), pp. 186-261 describes the volatile situation in Cincinnati during the 1880's. *Poors Manual of Railroads* (New York, 1887), p. 418.

(5) Ford, *History*, pp. 279-280; George Moessinger and Frank Bertsche, *Atlas of Hamilton County, Ohio, 1844*, p. 2; Hamilton County, Ohio, Lands Records Division, *Platbook 6*, p. 122.

(6) Hamilton County, Ohio, Land Records Division, *Platbook 7*, p. 74; *Report of the Geological Survey of Ohio*, Vol. 1. (Columbus, 1873), p. 422; Advertising Broadside for the Kennedy Heights Subdivision, 1887, Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, Pleasant Ridge Branch, Local History Collection; *The Inn on the Hill, "Yononte"* (Cincinnati: n.p., 1892), pp. 1-10; *Suburban Directory*, 1888 (Cincinnati: The Williams Directory Co.), *Norwood Enterprise* December 16, 1901, p. 1.

(7) *The Inn on the Hill*, pp. 1, 10; *Norwood*

Enterprise, February 11, 1909, p. 6; December 16, 1909, p. 1; Boyd Vincent, *Recollections of the Diocese of Southern Ohio* (Milwaukee, 1934), pp. 175-176.

(8) Cresap laid out numerous subdivisions in Silverton and Madisonville. Along with Kennedy he represents the other key developer in the northeast suburbs during the 1880's and 1890's. For Cresap's activities see *Platbooks* 6, 12, 17, 18 and 24. Hamilton County, Ohio Land Records Division, *Platbook* 8, pp. 1, 41-42; *Platbook* 11, p. 33. U.S. Geological Survey: *Ohio-Kentucky, East Cincinnati Quadrangle Topographic Sheet*, 1898.

(9) City of Cincinnati, City Council Chambers, *Kennedy Heights Annexation Proceedings*, 1912-1914, pp. 27-57.

(10) *Annexation Proceedings*, pp. 116-120; 125-128; 272. While incorporation probably contributed to the growth by demonstrating a commitment to improve the residential character of the area, metropolitan sprawl at this time was greatly accelerated by industrial development in nearby Norwood. See Graham R. Taylor, *Satellite Cities: A Study of Industrial Suburbs* (New York, 1915), pp. 91-126.

(11) *Norwood Enterprise*, February 10, 1910, p. 7; June 16, 1910, p. 6.

(12) *Annexation Proceedings*, pp. 9-10; 91-99; 191; 272; *Cincinnati Commercial Tribune*, July 25, 1914, p. 10.

(13) On community see Peter H. Mann, "The Neighborhood" in Robert Gutman and David Popenoe, eds., *Neighborhood, City and Metropolis* (New York, 1970), pp. 569-582.

(14) Ford, *History*, p. 264; *Poors Manual*, p. 418; *Harper's Bazaar*, XXXIII (December, 1910), pp. 2000-2001; *The Inn on the Hill*, p. 10.

(15) Vincent, *Recollections*, pp. 175-176; *Norwood Enterprise*, April 15, 1901, p. 4; *One Hundred and Fifty Years of Presbyterianism in the Ohio Valley, 1790-1940* (Cincinnati Presbytery, 1941), p. 286.

(16) *Norwood Enterprise*, June 17, 1909, p. 6.

(17) *Cincinnati City Directory* (Cincinnati: The Williams Directory Co.), for the years 1920-1930.

(18) *One Hundred and Fifty Years*, pp. 175-176. In 1959 membership in the church

had swelled to 1541 families. During the 1960's as a large scale migration of black people into the neighborhood occurred, many of the parishioners moved out of the neighborhood while continuing to maintain their church affiliation. One estimate is that 80 per cent lived elsewhere in 1972.

(19) Hamilton County, Ohio, Land Records Division, *Platbook* 8, pp. 1, 41-42; *Annexation Proceedings*, p. 213; Interview with Ella Turner Smith, August 2, 3, 1973.

(20) Stark, "Kennedy Heights," p. 8; Interview with Ella Turner Smith; Interview Cecil Wesley August 9, 1973; Interview George Streitmeyer August 5, 1973.

(21) "Fifty-Sixth Anniversary Souvenir Program" (Cincinnati: Kennedy Heights First Baptist Church, 1970), p. 1; Interview with Mack Young, July 30, 1973; Ella Turner Smith Interview.

(22) Interviews with Cecil Wesley; Ella T. Smith; Florence Holmesly, August 8, 1973.

(23) The Writers' Program of the Works Progress Administration in the State of Ohio, *Cincinnati: A Guide to the Queen City and Its Neighbors* (Cincinnati, 1943), p. 325; Stark, "Kennedy Heights," p. 4; *Annexation Proceedings*, p. 10.

(24) *Annexation Proceedings*, pp. 73-89; *Norwood Enterprise* December 16, 1909, p. 1; "Norwood and Oakley," *The Survey*, XXIX (December 7, 1912), pp. 287-391.

(25) *Norwood Enterprise*, April 28, 1909, p. 1; May 20, 1909, p. 4.

(26) *Norwood Enterprise*, February 24, 1910, p. 1; April 28, 1910, p. 1.

(27) Stewart Berry, "Factors and Problems of School Annexation—A Historical Study of Experience in Cincinnati, 1859-1949" (unpublished D.Ed. dissertation, University of Cincinnati, 1954), pp. 80-81; 174-175.

(28) This description of the Kennedy Heights Businessmen's Club is based on data gathered from a 1908 membership list traced in the Williams directory; *Annexation Proceedings*, pp. 14-17. Hamilton County, Ohio, Land Records Division, *Annexation Platbook*, pp. 1-2.

(29) Berry, "Factors and Problems," pp. 175-176.

(30) *Annexation Proceedings*, pp. 2-9.

(31) *Cincinnati Times Star*, July 25, 1914, p. 8; *Cincinnati Commercial Tribune*, July 25, 1914, p. 10.



The residents of the Heights often called the Traction Company the "Sunshine Line" as they swore the trolleys ran only in sunny weather.