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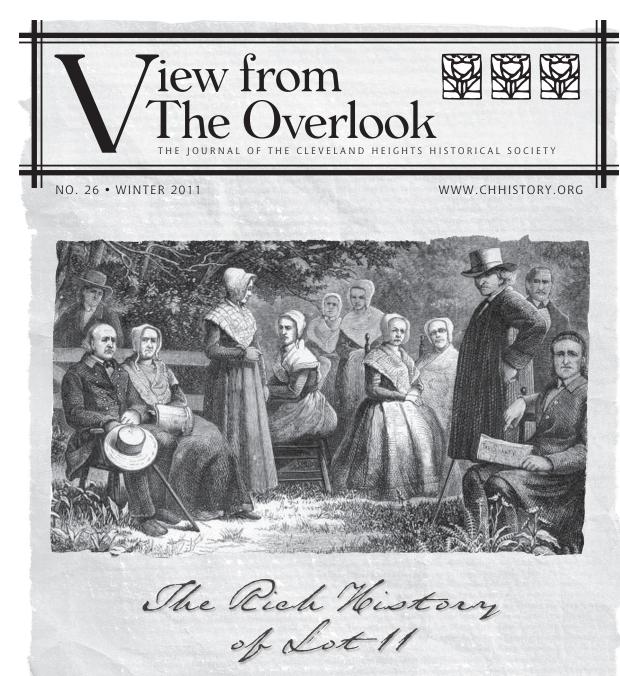
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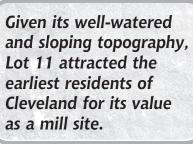
By Korbi Roberts

The Rich History of Lot 11

istory is often well hidden. However, if you proceed to the juncture of Coventry Road and North Park Boulevard, a tremendous amount of the past may well come alive. Shaker Family bridges, dams, entry posts, building foundations, and of course, the magnificent Lower Lake all remain for visitors' viewing pleasure. And if you squint and imagine, all four of the intersection's corners may once again be populated with Shaker sheds, barns, privies, smithies, orchards, corn cribs and chicken coops. For it is here that the North Union Shaker Colony built their "Mill Family" village.

At that time (the early 1820s), the area was legally known as Lot 11 of Warrensville Township of the Connecticut Western Reserve. And Coventry Road was a narrow, muddy, rut-filled thoroughfare soon to know as The Shaker Road. Lot 11 is a square 163-acre plot, one half mile in length along each side. It is bordered by the current Scarborough Road on the North. Larchmere Boulevard on the South. Marlboro and Arlington Roads on the East and roughly Demington Drive and Warwick Road on the West. At the lot's western end, the land begins a dramatic descent downwards towards Cleveland. Doan Brook runs through diagonally from Southeast to West, and the ravine deepens.

Given its well-watered and sloping topography, Lot 11 attracted the earliest residents of Cleveland for its value as a mill site. In fact, the early succession of purchasers for Lot 11 all had connections with millingfamilies with names such as Doane, Dodge, Rockwell, Smith and Russell. In the early 1800s, the daughter and son-in-law of Timothy Doane owned the lot and put up a sawmill with a small dam across Doan Brook. By 1823



the Russell family (founders of the area's Shaker community in 1822) took over the sawmill and

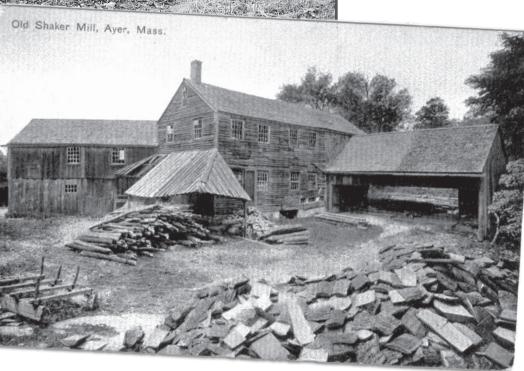
added a pair of grinding stones (called a "run of stone") with which to mill grain. By 1829 yet another mill (this time built by the Shakers) went up near the western border of the lot. The mill was reported to be 30 feet by 50 feet, with two run of stone. All these early mills were driven by overshot water wheels (vertical wheels turned by falling water hitting near their tops). (See page 14 for a photo of a typical overshot wheel from the 1800s.) The next mill on Lot 11 went up in 1836, just east of Coventry Road, and it is the foundation of this structure that is clearly visible though the bushes on the east side of Coventry about 75 yards south of the street's intersection with North Park (Figure 1). Figure 2 illustrates a Shaker sawmill at Ayer, MA, which likely resembles the mill erected by the Shakers in Lot 11. continued on page 6

Front cover: A Shaker drawing taken from "The Communistic Societies of the United States," by Charles Nordoff, © 1875 by Hilary House Publications, New York, NY.



Figure 1: Foundation stones from the Shaker sawmill near Coventry Road and North Park Boulevard. The earthen dam separating the mill from the lake is visible on the left behind the stones. The bench-like structure was not part of the mill, but erected in conjunction with a wildflower garden by the Shaker Lakes Garden Club of Shaker Heights in the 1920s. In all likelihood, stones from the mill were used to create the benches (a second bench exists outside the picture to the right). A portion of the mill area including one third of its foundation area and an access road to the mill is now buried under present-day Coventry Road.

Figure 2: Postcard showing a Shaker sawmill at Ayer, MA.



The Cleveland Heights Historical Society

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The Cleveland Heights Historical Society, founded in 1983, is a state-chartered, 501 (c)(3), not-for-profit organization.

Our Mission

The Cleveland Heights Historical Society is dedicated to preserving and promoting the diverse character and traditions of Cleveland Heights.

As a community-based historic organization, the Society encourages and facilitates greater knowledge, understanding and awareness of the heritage of Cleveland Heights.

A Brief Look at the Shakers

The Shakers—the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing ("Believers" for short) were the last owners of Lot 11 before suburbs began appearing in the 1890s. Thus the North Union Village (also referred to The "Valley of God's Pleasure") existed in this area for about three quarters of a century—from 1822 to 1889. The Shakers were gentle, charitable, moral, and well-respected people who lived in a communal manner and followed the teachings of Christ in their own unique way, basing their practices on Bible passages. They were followers of the sect's founder Ann Lee (1736-1784), a "Shaking Quaker" who fled persecution in Manchester, England, to come to America.

According to Shaker beliefs, God is dual in nature, being both male and female. Thus they believed that the appearance of Christ was to be in both male and female form. As the male form of Christ had appeared already as Jesus, Ann Lee was thought by her followers to be the female form of the Christ.

All Shakers committed themselves to a life of celibacy, confession of sin and "consecrated work" as a way to grow ever closer to God. They believed in "Millennialism," a conviction that the Kingdom of God can be created here on Earth. They strove to live rightly, and avoid worldly influences and the committing of sin. They achieved this by orderly, simple living and becoming like "little children" under the guidance of the Shaker ministry. Considered the first and longest lasting utopian Society in the U.S., a Shaker settlement is still surviving today in Sabbathday Lake, Maine with three remaining members. From poor, humble beginnings in America where they initially endured beating, torture and ridicule for their odd ways, the Shakers eventually gained enough respect and converts to start more than 20 colonies. Shakers signed a "covenant," giving up their property to the sect and severing all natural family ties. When whole families joined, they were separated and put under the charge of the larger "family." The family was a Shaker economic and governing unit, led by both male and female elders and the Shaker ministry. Males and females were kept to separate sides of communal dwelling houses and to separate tables in the dining hall. They were always "watched" lest they yield to temptation.

Shakers wore neat, plain clothing (colonial-like garb with kerchiefs/shawls for the women and long coats and Quaker-like wide-brim hats for the men) and worshipped

by dancing, shuffling, and making expressive hand motions, but always with men and women in separate lines and not touching. They sang simple hymns (mostly in unison) about



Mother Ann Lee's headstone

the wisdom of "bearing the cross" of celibacy, fighting sin and following the good advice of Mother Ann. A day in the life of a Shaker was very regimented and contained lots of worshipping, and almost no privacy. Anyone wanting to leave the sect could do so of their own free will, but they were not spoken of again. They took in and patiently raised many orphans, most of whom grew up and moved away instead of becoming members as was hoped.

Shakers believed that "gifted" members had the power of spiritualism (ability to speak to departed spirits directly) and could receive guidance from Mother Ann and even Jesus from above. The Shakers believed in the equality of the

Anyone wanting to leave the sect could do so of their own free will, but they were not spoken of again.

sexes and the races. Women often were put in positions of power equal to men. The Shakers also welcomed members of all colors and

nationalities. In the 1840 federal census for Warrensville Township, four members of color are listed for North Union village.

The many Shaker brothers and sisters, elders and elderesses kept to themselves, yet still interacted regularly with the broader community. They provided goods and services to the people of the Heights, and were well liked and appreciated. Their many products and services included fresh and canned produce, seeds, medicines, milk, livestock, tools, household items (brooms, pails, churns, etc.), woolen socks, mittens and yarn and, most importantly, the milling assistance nearby farmers needed to grind grain into flour and animal feed. Due to an aging population and declining membership, North Union was closed in 1889, and the remaining members sent to live at Union Village, and other settlements.

The Rich History of Lot 11

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The 1836 sawmill in Lot 11 was framed in heavy oak timbers and measured 21 feet by 48 feet. It had a 15-foot overshot wheel covered by a shed to keep it from freezing in winter. In addition to functioning as a sawmill, the building housed a cooper shop on its upper floor to manufacture pails, churns and tubs using power supplied by the same main waterwheel. The main wheel was hooked up to a series of complicated gears, leather belts, and shafts running through the floors. These in turn connected with various machines, including the saws and woodworking lathes. Next to the mill, of course, was the largest dam on the lot—the western bank of the Lower Shaker Lake.

The dam was a major engineering feat. After clearing trees from the Doan Creek ravine, the Shakers hauled piles of the timber and cartloads of clay, rocks and mud to create a 500-foot long, 25-foot-high wall that, to this day, is strong enough to hold back tons of water from the lake. Stone reinforcements

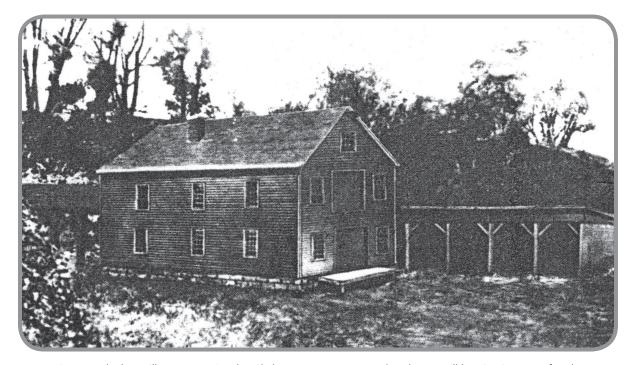


Figure 3: The last mill on Lot 11. Another Shaker structure was moved to the sawmill location in 1886 after the 1836 sawmill burned down. This new structure was used as a flour mill (grist mill). Note the dam at the rear left, behind which is the Lower Shaker Lake. Although the "headrace" for bringing the water to the mill is visible at far left, the water wheel itself is not visible. The flour mill was later converted to steam power.

for the dam (and the mill foundations) were quarried from exposed rock in the ravine sides further downstream. (Some of these stone reinforcements are visible near the sawmill foundation.) As with other Shaker dams, willow trees were planted along the top of the dam so the roots would grow and strengthen the dam.

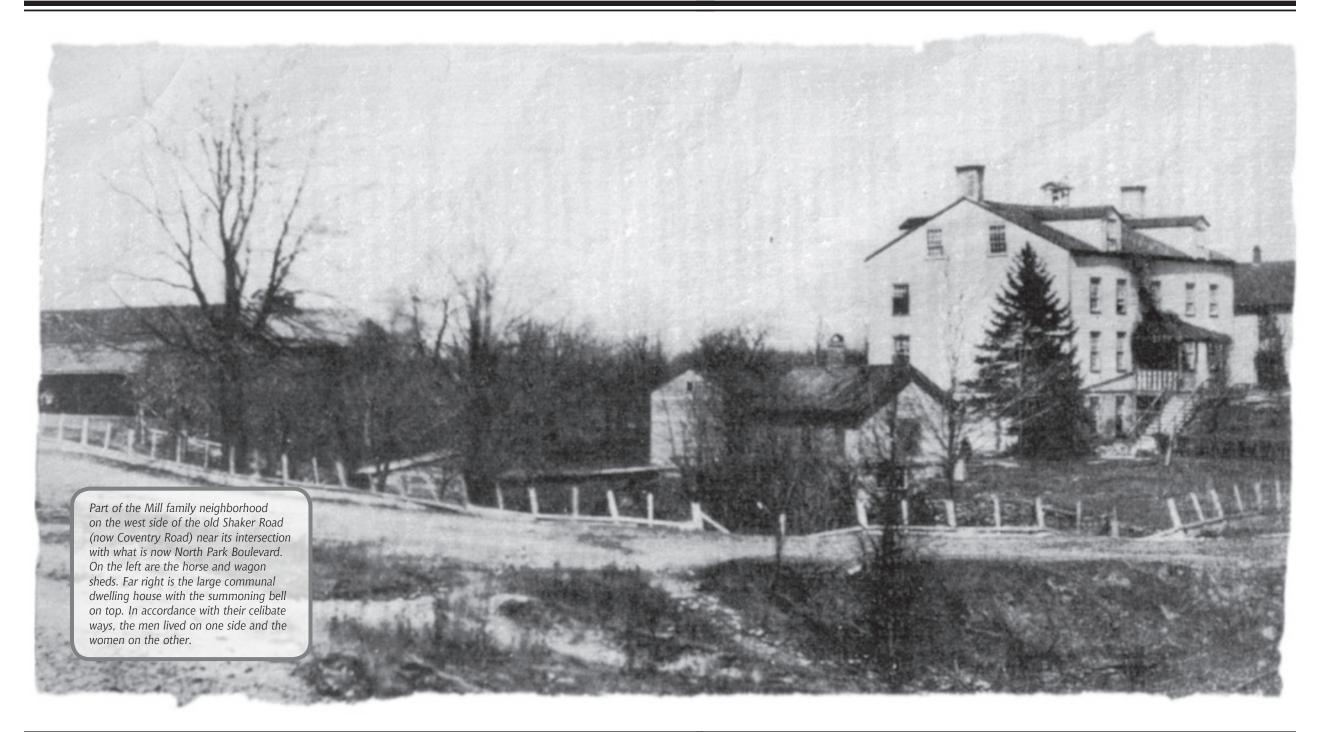
The sawmill was kept busy hewing logs into boards for all the nearby Shaker structures going up at that time. As readers may know, there actually were three Shaker villages in the North Union community-the East, Center and Mill families-and the sawmill supplied the lumber for buildings in all three locations. It also supplied lumber to the surrounding non-Shaker farming community. The mill burned down in 1885 and soon after, another building from nearby was moved onto the same foundation. This new mill was rented out and used as a flour mill (Figure 3, below left). It later was converted to steam power. This last mill would be short-lived. When the Shaker colony closed in 1889, the building was dismantled, and the pieces sold off for reuse. Other Shaker mills on nearby lots met similar fates The huge stone gristmill in Lot 422 (on the north side of the Doan Brook ravine near the intersection of North Park Blvd, and Roxboro Road) was ceremoniously blasted to bits with dynamite in 1886. A woolen factory on Lot 23 near Lee Road was torn down to make way for a new road—South Park Boulevard. And so ended Lot 11's life as a "mill lot." However. there is still a great deal of Lot 11's history that pre- and post-dates the Shakers.

The Birth of Lot 11

Every segment of the Western Reserve has its own fascinating story. Lot 11 is no exception. Its boundary lines were established around 1797 by Moses Cleaveland's surveying party. At the very end of the 18th century, the Western Reserve was obtained from Native American inhabitants by an unwelcomed treaty and paltry payment. The surveyors (who had signed on for a year's service) hacked through virgin forest to mark out large squares of five miles on each side (designated by a township and range number) and then carved these townships into smaller sellable lots. The surveyors got to the Warrensville, Newburgh and Cleveland Township lines and pounded wooden posts into the packed-clay ground (Demington Drive and Cedar Road run exactly along these old township lines today.) Throughout their trek, the men waded through swamps and were harassed by clouds of gnats and bloodthirsty mosquitoes. So voracious were the bugs' appetites that it was feared the horses would drop dead in their tracks from a loss of blood.

It is probable that, as the surveyors sloshed through the rocky-bottomed Doan Brook by Coventry Road (neither brook nor road were known by these names yet), they had to keep watch for the rattlesnakes, wildcats and bears known to inhabit the area. For a while, the surveyors followed a fresh Indian trail along the ravine bottom. A surveyor remarked about how clear and fresh the water flowed in the creek; however he also noted that the water flow did not seem strong enough to power a mill. Subsequent development would prove him very wrong.

When the survey was completed, the 163acre square of wilderness forest around what is today the intersection of Coventry Road and North Park Boulevard was officially recorded continued on page 10



The Rich History of Lot 11

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as "Lot 11 in Township 7, in the 11th Range of the Connecticut Western Reserve" (Figure 4). The larger surrounding area, the whole of Township 7, would later be named "Warrensville" after the Daniel and Margaret (Prentiss) Warren family, the township's first settlers. Early on, however, the Connecticut Land Company was unable to find buyers for many of the area lots. The Western Reserve at this time lacked the infrastructure and services (roads, bridges, mills, commerce) that prospective buyers wanted and needed. The lots thus were sold piecemeal to Eastern

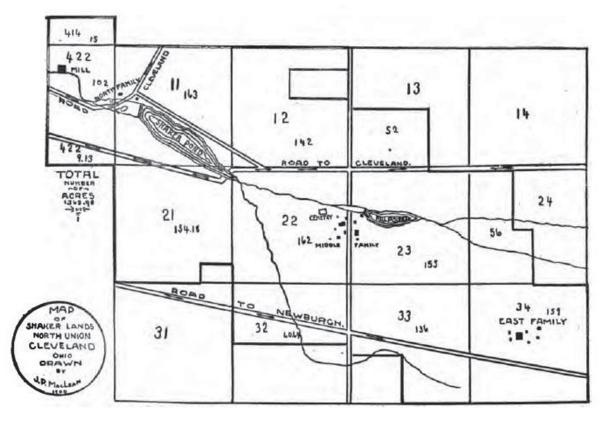


Figure 4: Lot 11 shown in relationship to land owned by the North Union Shakers (represented by the inner dark line on MacLean's map). The Shaker land boundaries changed slightly over time and included land in other lots. Lots 414 and 422 are in Township 7 in the 12th range (Newburgh Twp., later part of East Cleveland Twp.). All other lots shown are part of Warrensville Twp. or Township 7, in the 11th Range of the Connecticut Western Reserve. Today, these Shaker lands are part of the cities of Cleveland, Cleveland Heights, and Shaker Heights, Ohio.

investors who had no intention of leaving their comfortable seaboard estates. Later the lot was divided further and sold to potential settlers.

It may help to visualize Lot 11 as having two parts: an upper one-fourth and a lower three-fourths (Figure 5). The upper one-fourth (the north-most segment) became two parcels of land. One of these upper parcels was four acres, and the other was 41 acres. This upper fourth encompassed the current intersection of Coventry Road and Fairmount Boulevard. The lower (southern) three fourths of the lot consisted of 118 acres and included Doan Brook, the Lower Shaker Lake and the mills previously mentioned.

In the early 1800s, pioneers Samuel and Nancy (Doane) Dodge (1783-1863) of Euclid, OH, owned the lower three-fourths of Lot 11. Nancy Dodge was the daughter of Timothy Doane (1759-1828), a former sea captain, and Mary "Polly" Carey (1763-1848). Nancy was also the niece of Nathaniel Doan, the wellknown early settler and the person after whom Doan Brook is named.¹ Nathaniel Doan was a member of Moses Cleaveland's surveying party and brought his own family here to live in 1798. His brother Timothy and his family arrived in the Western Reserve about 1801.² Nancy Doane married Samuel Dodge (1776-1854) in 1803.³

Samuel Dodge has the distinction of being the fourth permanent resident of Cleveland, having arrived in 1797 from New Hampshire. He was one of the founders of the Early Settlers Association.⁴ A ship carpenter by trade, he used his skills to build barns and houses. Through this hard work and his business savvy, he amassed considerable land and wealth. Samuel and Nancy's oldest daughter was married to Ezra Smith who

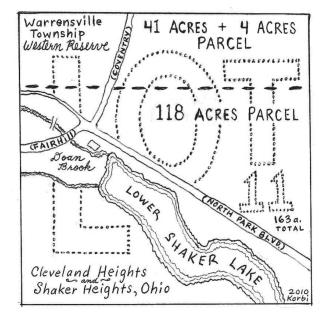


Figure 5: The early division of Lot 11.

was reported in a history on Warrensville township as having a sawmill on the "Shaker Brook" in 1820 (most likely on the land belonging to his in-laws).⁵

Enter the Shakers

The Dodge family sold their Lot 11 land to Return Russell in 1823 for \$1,000 (\$8.47 an acre). Although the land deed does not hint at the presence of a mill, other sources indicate a partially constructed sawmill on the lot.

Return Russell and wife Jerusha Osborn sold their parcel in 1828 to Shaker Union Village trustees Nathan Sharp and Daniel Boyd for the same price of \$1,000. At this time, the deed mentions that the sale was to include "all improvements, watercourse profits, and appurtenances whatsoever to the said premises belonging." This confirms that by 1828, Lot 11 had been "improved" with a mill and dam. *continued on page 13*

The Russell Family

Ralph Russell is considered the founder of the North Union Shakers. He was the brother of Elisha and Return Russell (owners of Lot 11) and had many other siblings. All were children of pioneers Jacob Russell (1746-1821) and Esther Dunham (c. 1750-1835) who arrived in the Western Reserve to the village of Newburgh,

(now a part of Cleveland) in 1812. Jacob Russell had fought in the Revolutionary War and was a miller back east in Windsor Locke, Connecticut, His children grew up around mills. In 1813 Jacob purchased Lot 23 (the horseshoe-shaped lot encompassing the Upper Shaker Lake) from Lemuel Storrs (1753-1816) and Betsy Champion (1762-1845) of Connecticut, probably with the intention of starting a mill. It is this lot upon which the newly formed Shaker sect first erected their cabins after

Jacob's death. Jacob also purchased Lot 34 which became part of the Shaker lands.

When Jacob Russell died, he was buried on his land—now the north side of South Park Boulevard just east of Lee Road. It is marked by a small fence and boulder with historical plaque. A year later Ralph Russell took a trip to the Union Ohio Shaker Village (near Lebanon Ohio) to seek out the Shakers and investigate their religion and way of life. On the way home, he reported that he was followed by a horizontal ray of light that rose up into a tree of light beside his cabin. This vision marked his conversion to Shakerism and led to the startup of the North Union Village. Thirty eight Russell family members were soon indoctrinated. Other relatives, close friends and neighbors also joined. New converts increased the sect's numbers to nearly 300 in their heyday (the 1840s). However, the average population likely numbered around 200, even counting the

> Winter Shakers who expressed interest in becoming Shakers and abided by the rules, but often left again as soon as their prospects improved. Ralph Russell was eventually replaced as leader. He later parted ways with the sect and lived out his life with his mother, wife Laura Elsworth (who rejoined him) and some of their children in Bentlevville, OH. Most of the other Russells remained and played an integral part in Shaker history. Ralph's nephew Samuel was a Shaker leader for more than

18 years. The graves of Ralph and his immediate family can be found in Bentleyville at the family's Union Cemetery. Russell family members belonging to the Shaker sect were originally buried in the Shaker cemetery on South Park Road near Lee Road. When the Van Sweringen brothers bought the land, the individual handcarved tombstones were discarded and the bodies dug up and dumped unceremoniously in a mass grave in the Warrensville West Cemetery on Lee Road. The Shaker Historical Society erected a plaque to help restore some respect and dignity to their memory and to their final resting place.

The Rich History of Lot 11

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In 1836, the new sawmill with cooper shop would be built, along with the largest and final dam on the Lower Shaker Lake.

The four-acre parcel of the upper fourth of Lot 11 belonged to Solomon Rockwell (1764-1838) and his brother Martin Rockwell (c.1772-1851) of Windsor and Colebrook, CT. They were descendants of early colonial planters who had arrived in America in 1630. The two Rockwell brothers (along with other siblings) ran a water-powered "iron works" in the late 1700s in Colebrook.⁶ They never moved out to the Western Reserve but sold their four-acre investment near the Doan Brook to Elisha Russell and John Pomeroy Root in 1833. Elisha and John were already Shakers by this time. In 1848 the two transferred the land to the Shaker trustees at the Union Shaker Village near Dayton, Ohio. Union Village was the "parent" (overseeing colony) to the North Union Shakers.

The upper 41 acres of Lot 11 belonged to General Martin Smith III (1762- c.1850) and wife Sarah Kellogg (1763-1834) originally of Connecticut.⁷ The Smiths, who cleared 400 acres of native land in Vernon Township, OH, and raised a large family there, sold their distant Warrensville Township Lot 11 parcel in 1835 for \$230 (about \$5.61 per acre) to Elisha Russell who was already a Shaker member. Elisha sold the parcel in 1836 for \$5.94 an acre, officially to the North Union Shaker trustees, who at the time were his nephew Samuel Russell, Riley Honey and himself. By 1836 the Shakers owned all three parcels of Lot 11. They would eventually own almost 1400 continuous acres across 14 different lots in this area. The Shakers had already been thriving since 1822 on land just to the east, and could now expand their village into this new lot. As shown in Figure 6, the village of the Mill Family (also called the "North Family" or "Second Family"), eventually had more than 20 structures continued on page 14

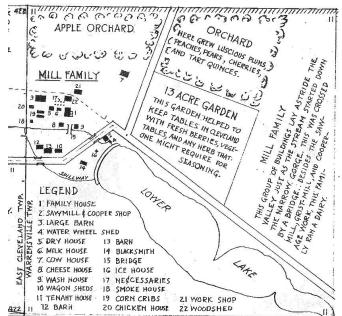


Figure 6: In 1961, Earl Gurney Mead, drawing on his extensive knowledge of the Shakers, mapped out the location of 60 or more buildings that once stood in the area that served the Shakers. This small portion of that map shows the location of the Mill Family's Lot 11 structures as they existed in 1870. Left of center on this map, marked with a "2," is the position of the sawmill.

Ralph Russell

The Rich History of Lot 11

continued from page 13

even more if one counts all of the outhouses. The Shakers replaced a log cabin they had been using near the mill with a large communal dwelling house (see pages 8-9). They soon built cow barns, a cheese house, spring house (built over the spring so the cool water could be used to "refrigerate"), blacksmith shop, ice house, laundry house (washhouse), meat-smoking and drying houses, chicken coops, corn cribs and, of course, the sawmill. Most of the surrounding forest was cut down for construction of the dam. Lot 11 was then planted in gardens (fruit, vegetables and herbs), and orchards (apples, plums, peaches, pears, quince and cherries).

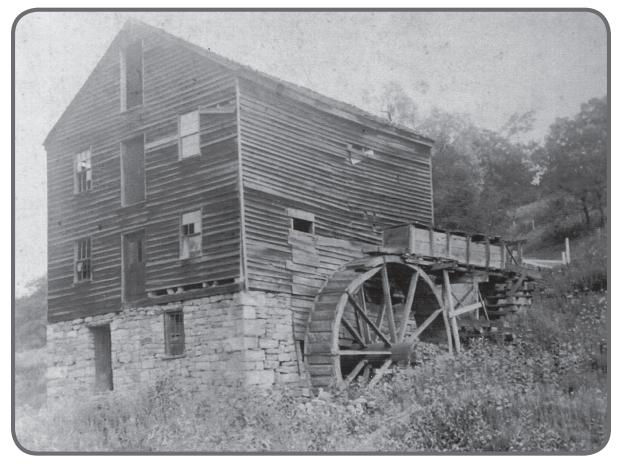


Figure 7: A visitor to Lot 11 in the early 1800s might have chanced upon an overshot water wheel such as the one shown here.

Lot 11's Next Life

The age of the mill would sadly come to an end. The mills of Lot 11, as well as the Shaker Mill Family buildings, were victims of decay, arson and the wrecking ball. The land was purchased by well known names such as Rockefeller, Deming and Van Sweringen people whose vision focused more on the development of a suburban utopia (Figure 8).

Today the 163 acres of Lot 11 are crisscrossed with picturesque streets, one church (Fairmount Presbyterian) and roughly



The suburban (modern day) layout of Lot 11: Approximately 150 residences and one church occupy what was once the Shakers' fields, gardens and orchards. Sources: Sanborn Insurance Maps of Cleveland, 1926, Volume 9, maps 69, 70, 71, 81 and 82. Also Bing.com birds-eye view maps.

155 homes. Still thriving is the Lower Shaker Lake, ever lovely and much patronized and appreciated. Today's inhabitants include dog walkers, joggers, artists, nature lovers, ducks, Canadian geese, two grey herons, myriad deer, and innumerable squirrels and chipmunks. But even among the area's human denizens, few have any inkling that the area was once populated by sheep, cows, orchards, gardens, a score of practical whitewashed buildings, multiple mills and several hundred quaint "Believers" with funny hats and bonnets saying "yea" and "nay."

Notes:

¹It is very common in history for siblings to use different spellings of their surnames. This is the case with the Doan (Doane) brothers.

- ²Timothy and Mary Doane's gravesite, with its monolith marker, can still be seen in the East Cleveland Township Cemetery (directly across Euclid Avenue from Lake View Cemetery, but hidden by the elevated railroad track right-of-way).
- ³Nancy Doane and Samuel Dodge's tombstone is in the old Erie Street Cemetery in downtown Cleveland.
- ⁴Dodge's grandson (also named Samuel Dodge) was a wellknown Cleveland attorney who built and occupied one of the great mansions that lined Overlook Road at the turn of the 20th Century.
- ⁵No other deed for Ezra Smith pertaining to the Heights area could be found at the Cuyahoga County Recorder's office, so the most likely place for his mill was on the in-laws' land in Lot 11.
- ⁶The shallow mill pond of this iron works factory contributed to a malarial outbreak and subsequent deaths in the town, and had to be drained.

⁷General Smith fought in the Revolutionary War and worked as a surveyor and master mason. He and his wife purchased and cleared 400 acres of native land in Vernon Township, OH, and raised a large family on their homestead there. Their son Havilah Smith (1801-1886) described the pioneer life of his boyhood with a memory of "lying awake at night listening to hungry, desperate wolves tearing away at the bark of the log cabin trying to get in."

Editor's note: For the creation of this article (one in a potential series), CHHS Trustee Korbi Roberts compiled a huge bibliographic list as well as a catalog of relevant deeds and legal documents. Space prohibits us from identifying this material here, but we encourage interested readers to contact CHHS (heightshistory@gmail.com) and we will be happy to send you the information.