

View from The Overlook



THE JOURNAL OF THE CLEVELAND HEIGHTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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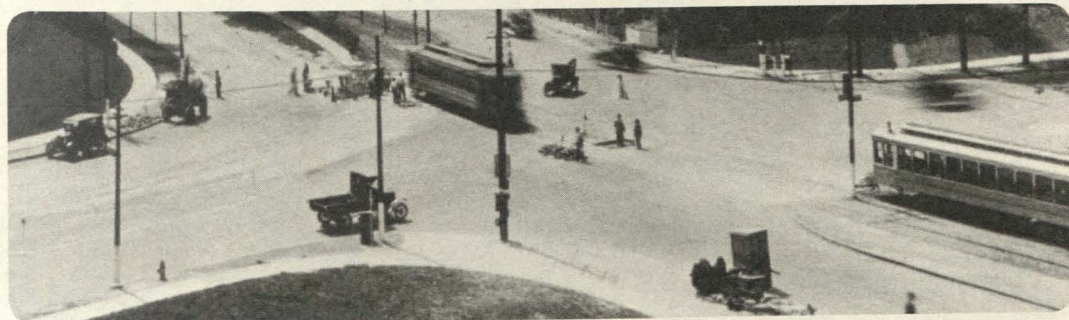
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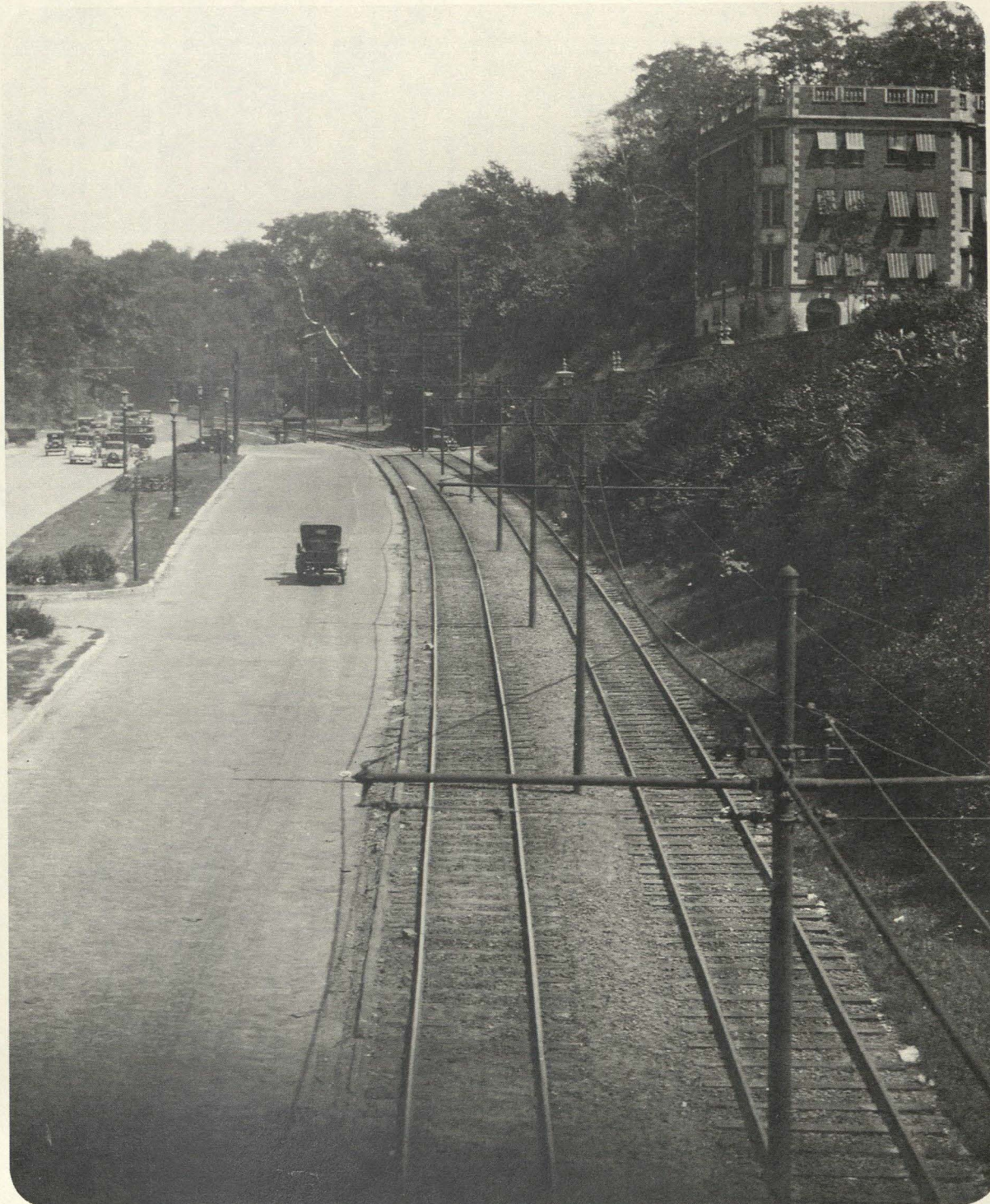
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Riding the Witches to Heathen Ridge

By William C. Barrow





Riding the Witches to Heathen Ridge

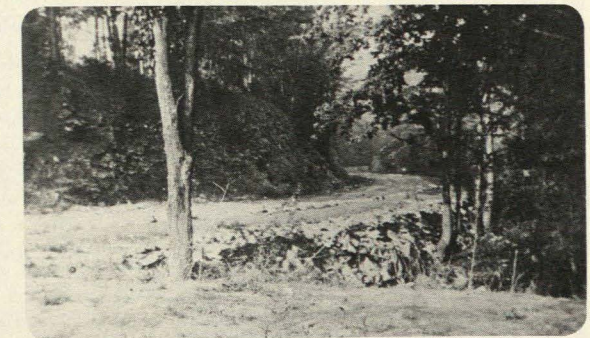
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Writing this in his 1896 Centennial History of Cleveland, C. A. Urann voiced wonderment about the newly electrified city streetcars—harbingers of a new age in transportation. These powerful vehicles would open Cleveland's eastern "Heights" to real estate development, turning a quiet, rural location for horse farms and occasional Gypsy encampments (thus the nickname Heathen Ridge) into today's beautiful Euclid Heights neighborhood. That same electrical transportation technology would also open the hinterlands of the North Union Shaker settlement (no heathens there) to the Van Sweringens' fabulous Shaker Heights. Going up to Euclid Heights, or down from Shaker, the story of these two pace-setting communities starts with the conquest of steep hills.

Early Ups and Downs

Location has always been the master key to profitable real estate development. But location is more than good schools, classy neighbors and lake views. Location is also about something that 21st-century developers often take for granted: accessibility. And for developers in the low-horsepower 19th century, accessibility wasn't something you could count on. In fact, some choice lands were just too elevated to become feasible developments. In the Cleveland area, such land was found in the Portage Escarpment: the bucolic foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, i.e., "The Heights."

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At left: The electric streetcars up Cedar Glen opened The Heights for development by being able to power up the hill. (NKP Collection, Cleveland State University Library.)

Above right: In 1893, as Euclid Heights was being conceived, commuting to the city would have had to start here, at the top of Cedar Glen.

Cover Photo: View of Cedar Hill, taken from the former Doctors' Hospital, c. 1920s. Cedar Road enters the intersection from the left. The streetcar on the right is on Euclid Heights Boulevard.

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.

From the Executive Director

First, I'd like to extend many thanks and fond farewells to the two members of our Board of Trustees who stepped down last month. For many years, Sue Godfrey and Chris Roy have volunteered their time and efforts to help the Cleveland Heights Historical Society fulfill its mission. They will be missed.

I have exciting news of a project that is in the planning stages. This fall, the Cleveland Heights Historical Society hopes to debut a "community digital archive" on its website. We've already been working with several of Cleveland Heights High School Social Studies teacher Justin Hons' students to digitize materials provided to us by the Cleveland Heights Fire Department. These and other historic materials—including items submitted by you—will be available to view for free on our website once the online archive is up and running. Keep checking our Facebook page for more details.

We should also mention that several reference sources were omitted from our Spring 2014 newsletter ("CH/UH Libraries? Coventry Wrote the Book"). They include:

- Mark Souther, "Coventry Village Library," Cleveland Historical, <http://clevelandhistorical.org/items/show/443>.
- Marion Kelly, *More Than Just Books*, Friends of the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Library, 1979.
- Minutes of the Cleveland Heights Public Library Board, 1917.

In the newsletter article entitled, "Living Large in Cleveland Heights" (Winter 2012) we mentioned that the Howell-Hinds house (now the home of Nottingham Spirk) was in Cleveland Heights. The parcel is actually in Cleveland.

Lastly, the Board of Trustees is proposing a revision of the Cleveland Heights Historical Society's by-laws, which were first written in 1983. To review the 1983 by-laws and the proposed by-laws, visit www.chhistory.org/blog. The new by-laws will be voted on at our next meeting, Thursday, October 2 at 7 p.m. at Lee Road Library. You can direct any questions or comments to mazie.adams@gmail.com.

And as always, thank you for your continued support!

Michael Rotman

Riding the Witches to Heathen Ridge

For most of the 19th century, elevation wasn't a serious issue for Clevelanders. The rapidly growing city had plenty of level, accessible land to meet its needs. Residents of "The Heights" were mostly farmers and quarrymen whose routines didn't require daily descents and ascents to and from the city. By the end of the century, however, the leading edge of eastern development was the East End, around Doan's Corners and today's Hough neighborhood.

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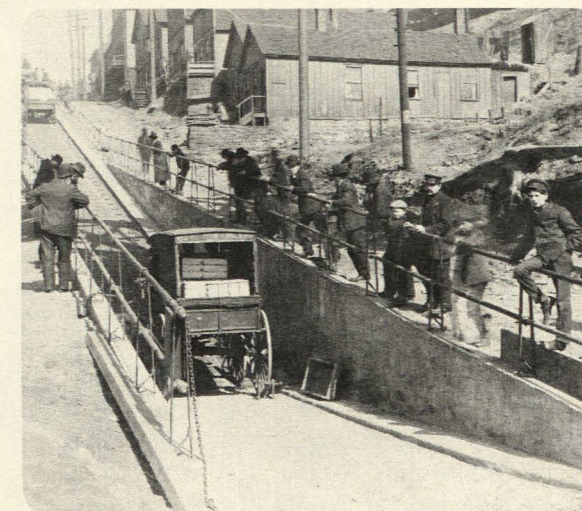
The question then was where the growth would go when the wave of development crashed up against the Heights, especially for the Millionaires' Row class who had been gradually migrating out Euclid Avenue, seeking relief from the ills of inner city pollution, population, trouble and taxes. Some of the elite remained coiled around the park-like estate of Jeptha Wade (the core of University Circle today) while others moved on toward Lake County or Bratenahl. But at least one challenge remained: overcoming the steep grade of the escarpment and opening The Heights for development.

Steep grades were a problem for Cleveland businessmen elsewhere. Founded as a port city, where the Cuyahoga River meets Lake Erie, Cleveland was sited to take advantage of the portage connection to the Ohio and Mississippi river systems. Much of the heavy freight moving

through Cleveland occurred at water levels 80 feet below the plateau, which contained most of Cleveland's residences and retail activity. Cleveland attorney Stephen Kurtzeil has argued that the famous division and rivalry between Cleveland's East and West Sides wasn't due to the river. The issue was the river's flanking steep cliffs, which impeded movement in the days before high-level bridges and powerful engines.

One early solution is exemplified by Cleveland's development of the Smead Rolling Road, a mechanical hoist that hauled loaded wagons up Eagle Avenue to the Central Market from the Flats, where goods were off-loaded from ships, canal boats and railroads. Started in 1904, this was a brief experiment that lasted until gasoline engine technology and new rail freight yards up on the plateau rendered it unnecessary (see photo below).

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Above: The Smead Rolling Road hauling wagons up Eagle Avenue from the Flats, showing the steep elevations flanking the Cuyahoga River (Farragher Construction Collection, CSU Library).

Riding the Witches to Heathen Ridge

The Heights presented the same problem. How would heavy freight and mass transit efficiently and routinely climb to the top of the escarpment? Pedestrians, horsemen and light carriages could make the trip, and teams of horses could pull some freight up. But attempting to use streetcars pulled by horses would be Sisyphean.¹

Patrick Calhoun arrives

The solution was electric streetcar technology, a breakthrough in which Cleveland played an important role. In 1884, Edward Bentley and Walter Knight conducted experiments in electrifying streetcars for the East Cleveland Railway Company. During the late 1880s, the company's line was advancing out Euclid Avenue, toward Collamer and Collinwood—parallel to, but not up, the escarpment.

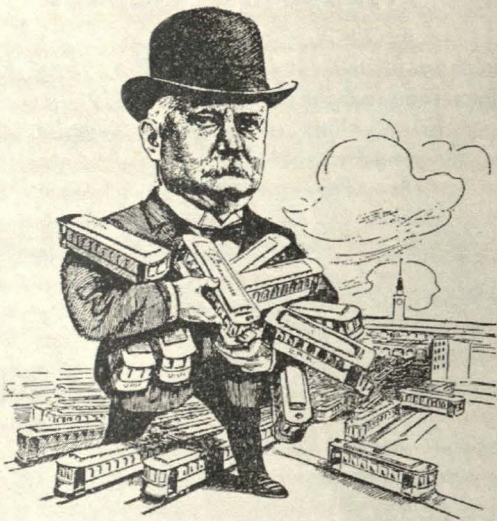
Patrick Calhoun was the person who connected electric streetcar developments with what would eventually be called Cleveland Heights.



Patrick Calhoun

Calhoun was a grandson of United States Vice President John C. Calhoun and lead partner in the Atlanta law firm of Calhoun, King and Spaulding. Prior to coming to Cleveland in 1890, Calhoun had specialized in railroad matters. According to a story told by his daughter, Calhoun came to the city on railroad business and, having time to spare, went to see the new memorial for President Garfield at Lake View Cemetery. Taken by his hosts to the escarpment to view the monument from above, Calhoun realized that the open lands would be perfect for an elite subdivision.

¹There are reports of quarried blocks of stone from Doan Brook sent down Cedar Glen on rails, powered only by gravity.



PATRICK CALHOUN
A drawing from *Men Who Made San Francisco*.

An editorial cartoon from San Francisco depicting Patrick Calhoun's entanglement with that city's streetcar franchise.

Calhoun's epiphany was likely shared by his hosts, who also were real estate promoters and may have been seizing the moment to introduce him to The Heights. In addition, Calhoun had been involved with the Richmond Terminal Railroad, where he observed the innovations of electrified-streetcar pioneer Frank J. Sprague. Sprague's work demonstrated the ability of electrified streetcars to negotiate steep grades, thereby opening new territories for development. Coming to Cleveland and appraising the pace and direction of development, Calhoun readily applied the lessons of Richmond to the promise of the Heights.

The site had other amenities to recommend it. Besides the sought-after charm and perceived healthful effects of an elevated site, the land at the top of Cedar Glen was convenient to the Doan's Corners community. There was the park-like Lake View Cemetery to the north and recently-donated park lands along Doan's Brook

to the south. Cedar Glen also crested onto a flat plateau of Euclid Bluestone, backed by a low secondary rise of Berea Sandstone, which gave the site splendid views of the city and lake, as well as huge supplies of building materials. Calling their development the Euclid Heights Allotment, Calhoun and his partners started work in 1890, halted during the Panic of 1893, and resumed shortly thereafter.

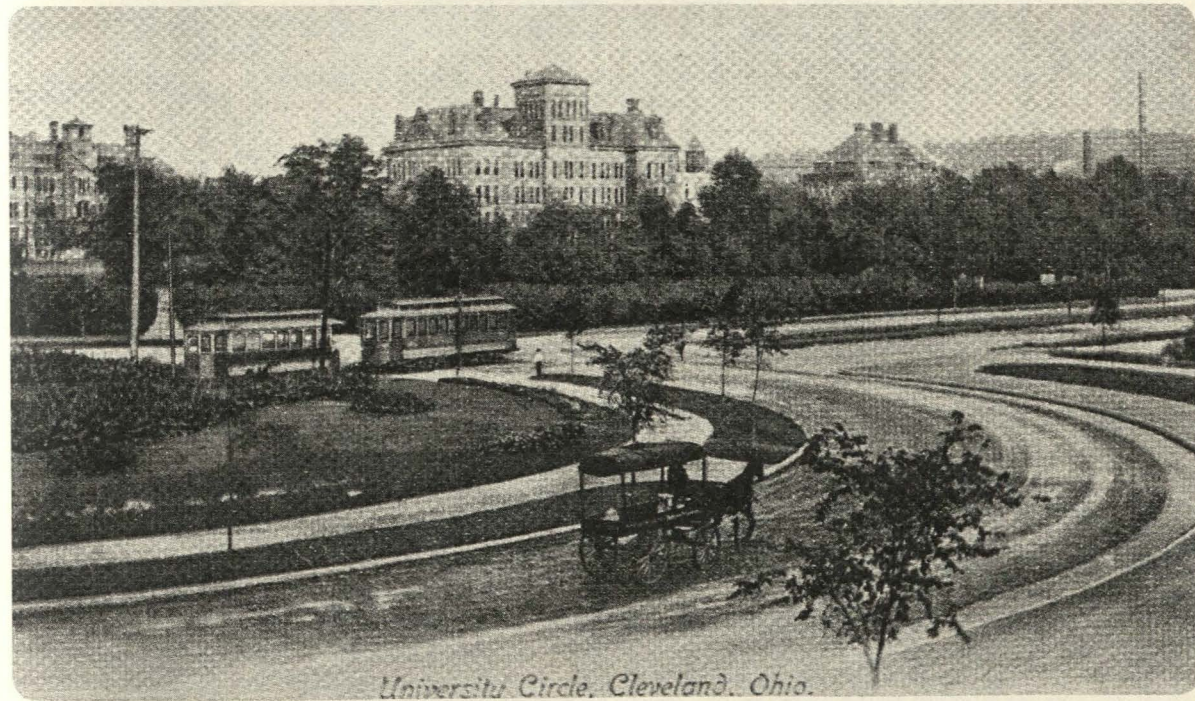
Scaling the Heights

The key to development was getting residents to and from the site to their jobs downtown. The wealthiest could afford carriages but the clear need was for an electric streetcar with sufficient power to mount the hill at Cedar Glen. Early promotional literature mentioned a gasoline-powered omnibus, but a streetcar would be the key.

Recognizing this, Calhoun strove to link his proposed allotment with the emerging center of art, education and parks where Doan's Brook crossed Euclid Avenue. There, part of the Jephtha Wade estate had been bequeathed to the city for parkland—one jewel in a string of donated sites along the brook: Shaker Lakes and Ambler, Wade, Rockefeller and Gordon Parks. The city fathers wanted an entrance to this park system so Calhoun, in company with John D. Rockefeller and Case Institute of Technology, donated the land that would become the University Circle streetcar roundabout.² In the process, Calhoun wedded his development to University Circle and created a beautiful entryway of his own (see photo below).

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²Thence came the name for the entire district: University Circle.



Patrick Calhoun donated some of the land for the new University Circle, in order to provide a first-class streetcar entrance to Euclid Heights (Walter Leedy Postcard Collection, CSU Library).

TICKETS ON SALE NOW!

HEIGHTS COMMUNITY CONGRESS

37th Annual Heights Heritage Home & Garden Tour



ART OF THE HOME

Sunday, September 21, 2014
12:00 Noon to 6:00 PM
Preview Party • September 20, 2014 • The College Club

For more information or to order tickets online visit: www.HeightsCongress.org

HCC
HEIGHTS COMMUNITY CONGRESS

ART OF THE HOME

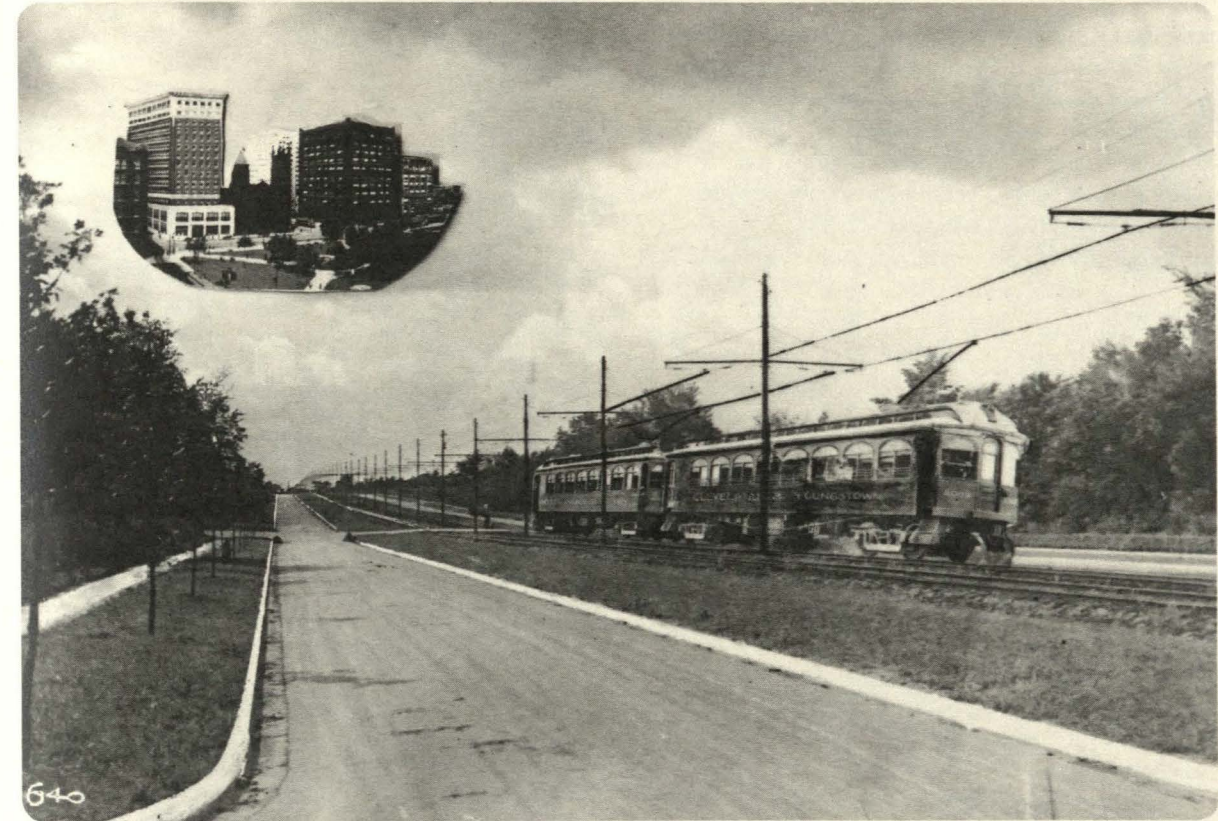
Heights Community Congress is rolling out the red carpet to again feature a wonderful array of seven unique homes and three gardens for this year's Heights Heritage Home & Garden Tour, September 21st from Noon to 6:00 p.m. Tour tickets are \$20 each (\$25 day of the Tour), and are available at the following locations:

- Appletree Books - Cedar-Fairmount
- Heinen's - University Heights
- Bremec's - Cedar Road
- The Stone Oven - Lee Road
- Cleveland Heights City Hall - 2nd Floor
- Zagara's Marketplace - Lee Road

All ticket locations, except City Hall, will be open the day of the Tour.

www.heightscongress.org

Riding the Witches to Heathen Ridge



As the Heights developed farther from the edge (repeating much of the architectural and street patterns introduced by Euclid Heights), the streetcars led the way, opening new parcels for sale. In the early decades of the 20th century, for example, Oris and Mantis Van Sweringen successfully extended streetcars into their Fairmount Boulevard development, but found the distances to be a strain on the transit company's patience and the commuting times of their proposed residents.³ They needed a faster means of traveling between downtown Cleveland

and the vast tract of land they were eyeing for development: the former home of the North Union of Shakers in Warrensville Township.

The Van Sweringens solved the problem by creating a direct, high-speed rail route that bypassed the streetcars. Their Cleveland & Youngstown Railroad operated an interurban line—a high-speed, heavy-duty, electrified

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³The Vans' Fairmount Boulevard development, now referred to as Shaker Farm, was recently added to the National Register of Historic Places.

Above: Artist's rendition of a C&Y Interurban along Shaker Boulevard (Cleveland Union Terminal Collection, CSU Library).

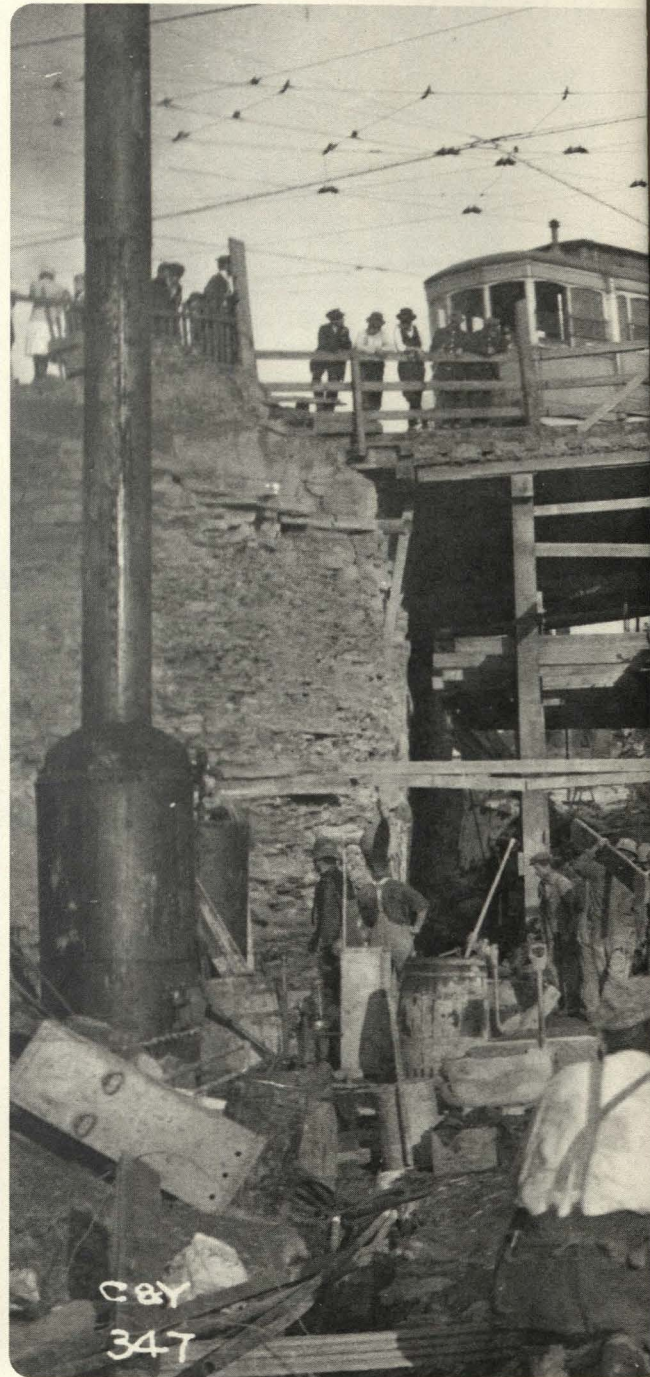
Riding the Witches to Heathen Ridge

passenger train—between the passenger station in the Terminal Tower and Shaker Heights (see photo, previous page). This became the Shaker Rapid: today's Green and Blue RTA lines.

To traverse the escarpment, the Vans constructed a long, gradual causeway between the escarpment and Kingsbury Run. Tracks were raised on a primitive, temporary trestle and "dirt trains" would then dump the ballast to create a permanent earthen support for the tracks. To this day, commuter cars heading downtown pass through Shaker Square and descend into a trench between the east and west lanes of Shaker Boulevard. Passing beneath Woodhill, they come out on top of the causeway and continue descending to Kingsbury Run and the Cuyahoga River Valley, where they travel north and enter Union Station beneath the Terminal Tower (see photo at right).

During the Great Depression, the Van Sweringens' realty and railroad empire fell apart and the brothers died shortly afterwards. Patrick Calhoun had taken over the streetcar franchise for the city of San Francisco following its great earthquake and fire of 1906; he became so enmeshed in that venture that his Euclid Heights Realty Company went bankrupt and the remaining Euclid Heights lots were sold at auction a century ago this year. Ironically, Calhoun was killed by a runaway automobile in Pasadena in 1943. But if automobiles also killed off the streetcars that gave Shaker Heights and Euclid Heights their historic quality and charm, the Shaker Rapid still carries Heights residents to and from downtown, preserving the memory of this vital technological innovation that created today's beautiful Heights lifestyle.

After descending in a trench west from Shaker Square, the C&Y passed under Woodhill Avenue, shown in this construction photograph (Cleveland Union Terminal Collection, CSU Library).



JOIN TODAY!

All members receive the benefit of knowing that their membership dues help advance historic preservation opportunities for Cleveland Heights. Memberships are tax deductible.

The Cleveland Heights Historical Society

PO Box 18337 • Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118

Please accept my yearly membership fee for:

- ☐ \$ 15.00 – The Marcus M. Brown Membership
- ☐ \$ 25.00 – The Patrick Calhoun Membership
- ☐ \$ 50.00 – The Barton and Grant Deming Membership
- ☐ \$100.00 – The John L. Severance Membership

Please make checks available to: *The Cleveland Heights Historical Society*

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