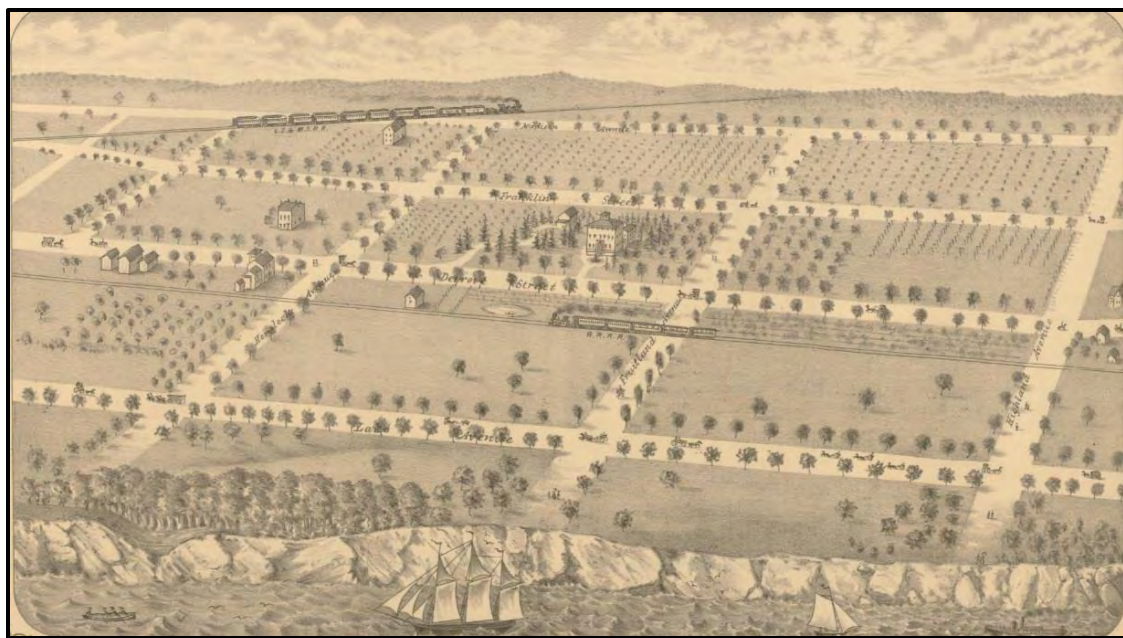
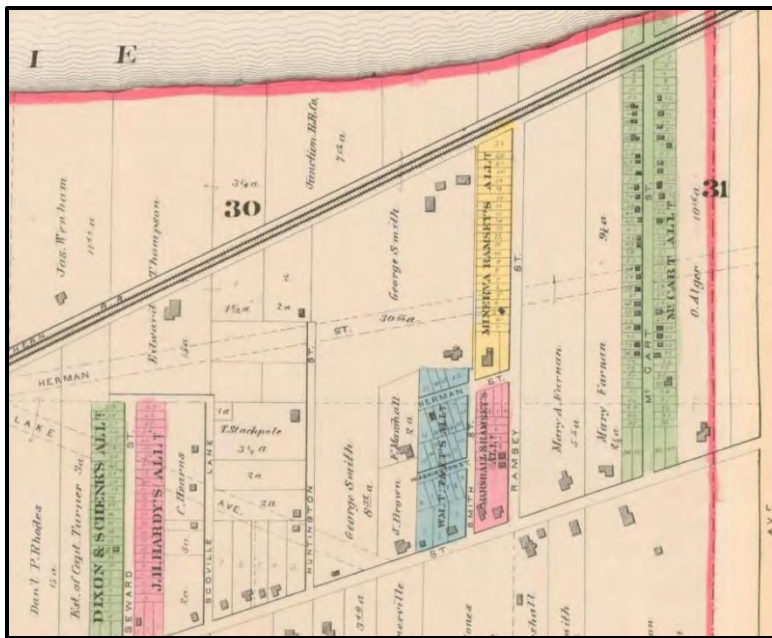


The Irish and “Detroit-Shoreway”



In the 1860s and 1870s, more than a hundred years before there was a Cleveland neighborhood called “Detroit Shoreway,” the area now known by that name was sparsely settled with scattered farms and homesteads. Incorporated as the Village of West Cleveland in 1871, the area first attracted well-to-do families seeking to escape the congestion of a city that was experiencing rapid growth in industry and population in the decade after the Civil War. One of those families was the Farnans.

Walter Farnan, an Irish immigrant, founded a brass works near the Cuyahoga River on Center Street in 1852. Walter’s son James Farnan purchased 12 acres of farmland north of Detroit in 1860. When Walter died in 1866, James took charge of the family’s successful foundry; in 1870 James began building a substantial home on his West Cleveland property, which was originally located where Mt. Carmel Church now stands, on Detroit Avenue between West 69th and 70th streets. James Farnan died in 1875 when he was only in his forties; his widow Mary, daughter of William Kinney--a Civil War captain and one of Cleveland’s first police officers--, not only raised the couple’s four children, but also stepped up to run Farnan Brass Works. So successful at business was Mary Farnan that in 1894 she was able to hire up-and-coming architect W. D. Benes to remodel her home on Detroit. (Benes later partnered with Benjamin Hubbell to design the West Side Market in 1912 and the Cleveland Museum of Art in 1916.)

In 1888, Mary’s daughter Margaret Farnan married the son of another wealthy family, Louis Smith. As a wedding present, on a strip of the Farnan land, Louis built the house that still stands at 7200 Detroit. Louis’s father, Patrick Smith, had immigrated from Ireland to Cleveland with his parents at age 9, in about 1836. As a young man, Patrick Smith entered into the business of dredging and deepening the channel of the Cuyahoga River. He also operated the city’s largest tugboat service. Louis and his brother James inherited their father’s highly successful business.

Mary Farnan died in 1911; aside from her daughter Margaret Smith, her other children did not survive to adulthood or did not marry. After Mary’s death, there were potential buyers for the Farnan property, but not the old Italianate mansion. One of Mary Farnan’s servants, Ida King, had in 1901 married Thomas Masterson, an Irish immigrant who lived with a brother, widowed mother, and other family members on West 73rd Street near Herman, only a few blocks from the Farnan house. In 1917, Thomas Masterson, a laborer who was nicknamed “Coal Oil,” purchased the house that his wife had worked in and moved it to a lot they owned on Herman at West 73rd Street. The house remained in the Masterson family until Ida’s death in 1968. It has been lovingly restored by a Cleveland couple who purchased the home in the 1990s. (The diocese opened Mt. Carmel Parish on the former Farnan property in 1928.)

In 1947, Daniel Berry purchased the Smith House on Detroit; the premises of the funeral business Berry was operating at West 65th and Detroit were too small to accommodate the post-war trend toward holding wakes outside the family house in funeral “homes.” The present-day Craciun-Berry Funeral Home still operates out of the same house.

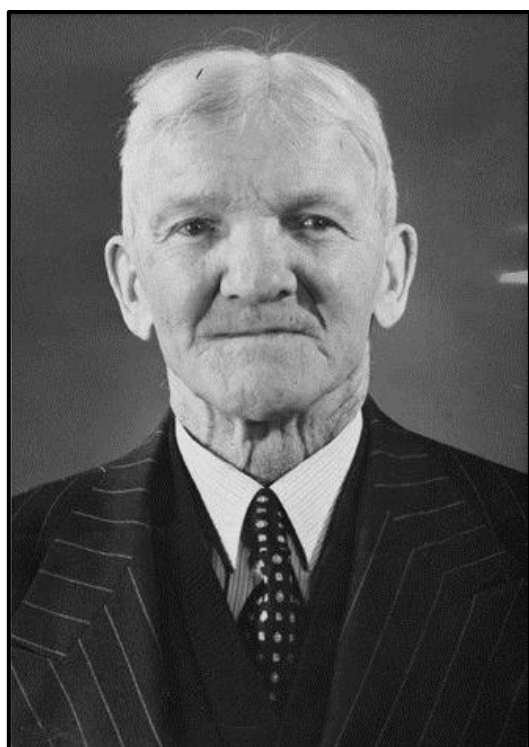
IMAGES:

Above, right:
Detail, Plate 141,
Atlas of Cuyaboga
County, Ohio, D.
J. Lake (1874)

Above, left:
Detail, Map,
Plates 144-45,
Lake Atlas.

Center: Farnan-
Masterson and
Smith-Berry
Houses

Right: Thomas
“Coal Oil”
Masterson



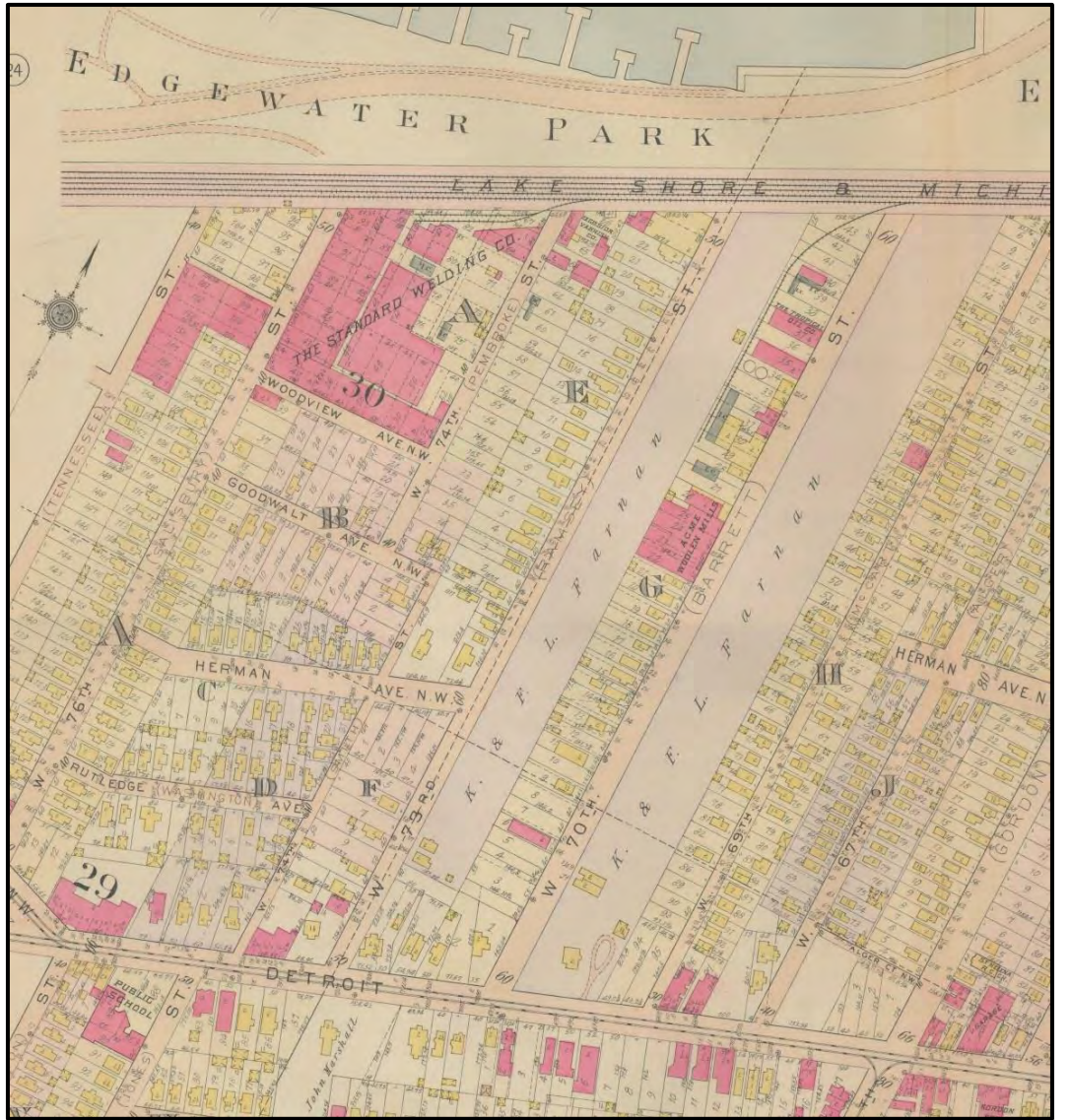
Support comes in part
from the residents of
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Growth, Gangs, and Notoriety

Families like the Farnans and the Smiths purchased land in “West Cleveland” in order to build spacious homes for themselves. Others who bought property in the area in the 1860s and 1870s were—or became—real estate speculators who sought to develop affordable residential “allotments,” or subdivisions, to accommodate Cleveland’s growing working population.

West of 65th Street, one of the earliest such developers was John McCart. McCart was an Irish immigrant who originally farmed the strip of land that he purchased north of Detroit at what is now West 69th Street. But in 1869 he petitioned the village officers for permission to subdivide a portion of his land into ninety-two residential lots, each 40-foot wide, along both sides of a narrow street. McCart and other speculators sold lots but also eventually built and sold houses as well, making the further key decision to rent houses as well. W. J. Gordon, O. Alger, and Minerva Ramsey were other property owners in the area who gave their names to West 65th Street, West 67th Street, and West 73rd Street respectively. But McCart was particularly aggressive about advertising cheap rent and attracting the city’s working poor, especially fellow immigrants who were living in crowded conditions alongside the docks on the West Side of the Cuyahoga River in the neighborhood known as the Angle.



The Angle already had a reputation for saloons, fights, and gangs. And unfortunately, the scrappy Angle residents brought those urban ills with them as they moved westward. By the 1890s, McCart Street had become as crowded as the Angle had been a decade earlier and was tagged with the stigma of the McCart Street Gang. The gang members were teenagers and young adult men who engaged in petty thievery and brutal assaults. Members of the McCart Street Gang were arrested and imprisoned, and the gang gradually faded away. The street names in the area were changed to a numbered system in 1906, offering the possibility of erasing their negative associations. However, in the 1910s there was talk of another gang in the neighborhood—the Cheyenne Gang, which was supposed to be “headquartered” on West 67th Street, north of Detroit, near the railroad tracks.

Whether or not the Cheyenne gang existed, alleged members were identified as being involved in a notorious incident that took place at West 75th and Detroit on November 21, 1914. At that time the *Plain Dealer* and the newly-merged *News-Leader* were engaged in a vicious newspaper circulation war. At stake was not only the distribution of newspapers but also the bookmaking operations that were rumored to operate under the cover of newsstands. The *Leader* was widely accused of hiring a gang of Chicago “thugs” to head its circulation operations, but many of the distributors—for both papers—were young Irish-American Clevelanders living in the city’s core areas of Irish settlement—what is now the Detroit-Shoreway neighborhood, the Angle, and Newburgh, south of the city, amidst the steel mills.

Toward the end of 1914 escalating clashes occurred between *Leader* and *Plain Dealer* distributors-- culminating in the murder of a young man named Thomas Gibbons on Detroit at West 75th Street in front of a cluster of stores and saloons known then as “Detroit Center.” Gibbons, a former newspaper boy who had just taken a job as a railroad switchman, was named as a member of the Cheyenne Gang. The gang had reportedly gathered that night to defend one of its own, a William Chambers who was a *Plain Dealer* Circulation Manager. Both sides accused the other of bringing guns to the confrontation. A *Leader* distributor successfully claimed that he shot Gibbons in self-defense. Whatever the truth of the matter, “Detroit Center” was the wrong place at the wrong time for the unfortunate Gibbons.

A *Leader* distributor whose name came up incidentally in the Gibbons trial was a Tommy McGinty. By 1909, McGinty was a promising young boxer in the “stable” of Jimmy Dunn, the manager of Johnny Kilbane. But McGinty was injured in 1911 and was unable to continue boxing. He eventually became a boxing promoter and later gained notoriety as “Black Jack McGinty,” owner of the Mounds Club and investor in the Las Vegas Desert Inn. McGinty stepped from the newsstands of Detroit Avenue into the annals of the city’s notorious characters.

McCart Street Gang.
 Sheriff Ryan and Deputy Sheriff Abrams, together with a posse of police from the eighth precinct station, went out early this morning after the McCart street gang, who were indicted by the grand jury on a charge of burglary and larceny for entering the saloon of Michael Greilis on Alger street on the morning of July 26 last and stealing two kegs of beer. They caught Patrick Gorman, Richard Patterson, Michael Gallagher, Frank Hoban, Peter Gorman, Edward Forbes, Harry Dunyre. They were all out on bail.

THREE MEN HELD AS BULLET VICTIM LIES NEAR DEATH
 Give Themselves Up to Authorities and Are Admitted to Bail by Judge Levine.
 Wounded Switchman Makes Statement, Declares He Was Shot at Without Cause.
 WITNESSES SAY MISSILES CAME FROM AUTOMOBILE
 Police Search City to Get Affidavits From Spectators of Affray.
 Life was slowly ebbing from Thomas Gibbons, B. & O. switchman and victim of Saturday night's shooting affray at Detroit-av N. W. and W. 75th-st, when three *Leader-News* employes, hunted by police, early yesterday morning gave themselves up.

IMAGES:

Above: Detail, Plate 12, *Plat-book of the City of Cleveland, Ohio*, Vol. 2 (Hopkins, 1912)

The article about the McCart Street Gang appeared in *The Plain Dealer* on October 9, 1891.

The article about the Circulation War homicide appeared in *The Plain Dealer* on November 23, 1914.

“Kilbane Town”

What’s in a name? The Detroit-Shoreway neighborhood and its numerous subdivisions have had many names over the years. In 1912, when Johnny Kilbane won his first world featherweight championship, the boxer lived at 7413 Herman Avenue—in the heart of what is now called Detroit-Shoreway. The newspapers of 1912 dubbed the neighborhood “Kilbane Town.”

Kilbane fought his 1912 title match in California. With help from a snowstorm that delayed his train in Kansas, the boxer arrived in Cleveland on March 17. In honor of the hometown hero’s triumphant return, the St. Patrick’s Day Parade was rerouted to start at the old Union Depot on West 6th Street, wind through downtown, then head west along Detroit Avenue to West 75th Street.

In many ways, Kilbane was typical of the Irish Americans living in the neighborhood that proudly sported his name. His father hailed from Achill Island in County Mayo and probably arrived in Cleveland in the early 1880s. Johnny himself was born in St. Malachi Parish in the Angle in 1889. His father worked on the iron ore docks, and Johnny’s first job was as a water boy on the docks. When his father began losing his eyesight when Johnny was still in grade school, Johnny became—like Thomas Gibbons, the young man killed in the “Circulation Wars”—a switchman for the railroad. Johnny was a peer of the young men involved in the “Circulation Wars.” Like them he had moved out of the Angle. When Kilbane went out to California to train for his title fight in 1912, he hired the younger brother of *Plain Dealer* Circulation Manager William Chambers to read the newspaper to his blind father every day.

There were many interconnections among the Irish families that lived on those streets north of Detroit. For instance, in 1917, Johnny Kilbane’s sister-in-law Rose McDonnell married a James Patton. The Pattons lived at 1337 West 67th Street and included Thomas Patton who would later become the president of Republic Steel. The Kilbane and Patton descendants both have copies of the same photograph, taken on the wedding day, of members of the McDonnell, Patton, and Kilbane families grouped in front of the house on Herman.

Many other ethnic groups settled in the neighborhood, as attested by the presence of churches founded to serve specific nationalities, such as the Germans at St. Stephen, the Romanians at St. Mary’s Orthodox and St. Helena, and the Italians at Mt. Carmel. However, the Irish presence remained strong for many decades. St. Colman Parish was carved out of the earlier St. Patrick Parish in 1880, to serve the Irish immigrants moving west along both Detroit and Lorain Avenues. The imposing church that still stands on West 65th Street was dedicated in 1914. It was at 6415 Detroit, now home to Cleveland Public Theatre, that the West Side Irish American Club staked out its first headquarters in the early 1930s. For many years, into the 1940s, the park at West 60th and Herman served as home field for the Cleveland Shamrocks, a team that played both soccer and Gaelic Football.

The railroad already cut through the area in the 1850s before it was heavily settled. Light industry was scattered throughout the neighborhood from its early days. A major employer for several decades was Union Carbide, which produced the “Eveready” battery on an industrial campus that stretched from West 73rd to West 76th Streets south of the railroad tracks. Although the railroad and the factories provided jobs, the extension of streetcar lines and the spread of the automobile prompted further migration westward.

In recent decades, the Detroit Shoreway Community Development Organization and the Gordon Square Arts District have led the way in reviving the neighborhood, with particular focus on the “Gordon Square” hub at West 65th and Detroit. In 2005, Vintage Development Group purchased Union Carbide’s former 13-acre site for the townhouse development now known as Battery Park. In 2012, the Irish American Archives Society began partnering with these entities to find ways to commemorate boxer Johnny Kilbane in the neighborhood that was his home during his prime boxing years. A Johnny Kilbane Memorial in Battery Park will contribute an Irish-American dimension to the renewal of this proud historic neighborhood

IMAGES, top to bottom: McDonnell, Kilbane, and Patton family members in front of 7413 Herman (Courtesy of Hugh A. Gallagher); St. Colman Church; Cleveland Public Theatre—former site of the West Side Irish American Club; the Cleveland Shamrock team in 1941 (Courtesy of Hugh J. Gallagher); Battery Park today.

This display was prepared by Margaret Lynch for the Irish American Archives Society, with support in part from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture and the Michael Talty and Helen Talty Charitable Trust.

