

Urban Design Students Focus on Howard Street Corridor

Bill Van Nostran

Following five weeks of researching the Howard Street Corridor, the clock began ticking for four teams of graduate

students from Kent State University's Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative (CUDC). During the weekend of Octo-

ber 13, the architectural design students participated in the intense process of a charrette. As explained in our last issue, "charrette" is a French term for an architectural exercise where students were given a design problem to solve within an allotted time—in this case, Saturday and Sunday.

"It's a way of generating several interesting approaches to the same design problem in a short period of time," explains Christopher Diehl, CUDC Director. "It's also an ideal way to expose students to real clients and design challenges."

In this case, the clients consisted of Howard Street Corridor stakeholders, including Cascade Locks Park Association (CLPA). In conducting research, students interviewed the stakeholders, walked the terrain and studied the area's rich history.

Howard Street Offers Many Possibilities

"You have a diverse set of topics within a quarter of a mile," says Diehl. "There's the lush beauty of the valley with the towpath trail leading into the center of downtown Akron. The area is rich in history—from the early influence of the canal to the growth of industry in Akron. And, of course, there's the inspiring story of Howard Street as the hub of a thriving African-American community—including the locale's vibrant jazz scene."

As part of their research, students had access to the master plan for organizations such as CLPA, Elizabeth Park, North-
(Please see Urban Design, Pg 6)



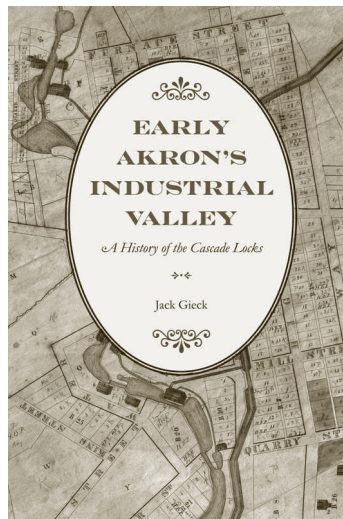
Kent State University graduate students collaborate on a design for the Howard Street Corridor

Book About the Cascade Locks Comes Out in December

Bridget Garvin

It is thrilling to have a new book that will be a quick and thorough resource for visitors to the park, CLPA volunteers and supporters, history buffs AND CLPA staff. Early Akron's Industrial Valley, A History of the Cascade Locks by Jack Gieck depicts the history of the area centered on the terrain that rises to the summit in Akron. This same slope that demanded our Cascade Locks to negotiate the rise provided opportunity for entrepreneurs to harness water power for mills. Akron thus emerged as one of the first industrial cen-

ters in the American Midwest. The book also includes a guide and map by Chuck Ayers that can easily be taken on the Towpath Trail to locate historic sites and remnants. A History of the Cascade Locks is published by Kent State University Press and will **début at the Mustill Store on December 15th**. Come meet the author and be one of the first to buy a signed copy. The Store will be open from 12-3pm with several other good holiday gift buys. Gieck will also be signing books at The Bookseller on Sunday, December 16 from 1-3pm.



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From the Executive Director

We have been planning for it for several years. It is a major piece of the Cascade Locks Park Master Plan, and will be a major addition to our growing neighborhood. I'm talking about the Schumacher's Cascade Mill Site, a project that will join other neighborhood improvement projects at the north end of Downtown Akron to create recreational, educational and other quality of life enhancements for both residents and visitors.

The construction plans for the park site are complete and the organization is rallying. We're rallying around the project, rallying around what it will become and mean to Akron. Rallying around the major impact it will have. The



Bridget Garvin

*The kindly term for their neighborhood was "seedy" or "unsafe".
--- Virginia Wojno-Forney*

Mill Site is the main focus of CLPA and, together with our partners we are committed to see the vision become a reality. This project has been and continues to be completely collaborative with the involvement of many partners including Metro Parks, Serving Summit County and the City of Akron.

We will be working to rally the community over the next several months. If you would like someone to speak to one of your groups to share our enthusiasm, please give me a call or an email at (330-374-5625, bgarvin@ameritech.net)

Recently, our founder, Virginia Wojno-Forney talked to a group about her feelings for the project. I was so moved, I asked her to write it down to share. Although difficult to share the full breadth of Virginia's infectious enthusiasm on paper, I'm hopeful this will help portray the feeling of this project. Speech made 11-8-07 by Virginia Wojno-Forney:

I came to Akron in 1948. Akron was rightfully termed the Rubber Capital of the world. Goodrich, Goodyear, Firestone and General worked 24 hours a day, six hour shifts, producing almost all the tires for Detroit's cars. We had two major hotels, Portage and Mayflower, for whites only, two on Howard Street for those termed "Negroes." Combined with the smell of rubber was toasted oats for Quaker Oats was equally productive, its factory almost downtown on Howard Street, adjacent to the Ohio & Erie Canal. There were three department stores and on O'Neil's remnant day, one stayed away for there wasn't room on the sidewalks for the casual pedestrian. We had at least four movie theaters: the

Civic, Palace, Forum and Ritz, excellent restaurants and, of course, the jazz clubs on Howard Street. In addition to the jazz clubs, Howard Street was home to Shafer Leather, and Schumacher's, where glass containers lining one wall displayed 5 cent cookies and spices ground to order on the other. Yeager's upscale department store had a Howard Street entry just a few steps from the iconic flatiron building. My eye doctor, Dr. Freeman, was there as was my father-in-law's grocery store, Wojno's Meats. The major event was Thanksgiving when both Polsky's and O'Neil's unveiled their animated windows, the beginning of Christmas season.

Fast forward to the year 1989, the year the city purchased the Mustill Store and House from Pete Ramnitz. Portage Hotel now was a home for pigeons and the Mayflower had become a senior citizen denizen. Not one tire was produced and only Goodyear remains. Quaker Oats is gone as was the flatiron building, as most of Howard Street disappeared in the name of "urban renewal". Locks 3-9 flowed underground in a huge culvert, physicians had moved to the suburbs and the May Company suddenly locked up O'Neil's. Most of Main Street was boarded up, looked deserted.

BUT...

At the old steam plant, the Ohio & Erie Canal re-emerged, flowed down the cascade of locks to the old Mustill Store and House, still in situ next to Lock 15. The kindly term for their neighborhood was "seedy" or "unsafe".

Here we are in the year 2007.

The Mustill House and Store have been carefully rehabilitated to appear as they did during the canal era. The Towpath Trail runs right along the front of both, due to diligent lobbying by canal buffs (Bruce Norton) and planning experts (Tom Long). The store is now a visitors' center and the office of CLPA. We have the train station, the Cascade Village, mirroring architecture of Mustill. Northside has revitalized and property values have soared. No longer are we a seedy neighborhood but a destination place for hikers, bikers, tourists and school children.

The story does not end here. In my living room, I have a bronze statuette, which belonged to my grandparents, of the Roman goddess, Fortuna. She was the goddess of good fortune, stands on a wheel, which is the symbol of good fortune, good luck. We are going to build a wheel in the Schumacher Mill Site Park. It will be the remembrance of the overshot wheel in the Schumacher Mill, but I propose that this wheel will not only recall Akron's history, but also its place as a unique city, unlike any other in Ohio. It shall become Akron's symbol of good fortune. Yes, we lost the canal, have no mills or cereal, no farm machinery nor clay products. Most obvious of all, we lost the rubber industry. But our wheel turns; we have polymers, a burgeoning university, three major hospitals with ancillary medical facilities, the Towpath Trail and tourists who have discovered what a great place this is. What a better symbol represents Akron than our wheel, audacious as it will be, lighted at night, to proclaim that we are definitely the city of good fortune. We are Akron.



SPOTLIGHT ON... **Bob Keener** By Susan Kinnamon

When the question “How did you first get involved with Cascade Locks Park Association?” is asked, it would be very interesting to know how many people would respond exactly as Bob Keener did. Virginia Wojno-Forney, founder of CLPA has shared her vision with so many people and her enthusiasm has brought countless volunteers to Ferndale Avenue, home of the Mustill Store. A note on a fundraising letter from Virginia, encouraging him to become involved, was the impetus. Keener says that “he is thrilled to be a part of such a super organization.”

A lifetime resident of Akron, Keener was born on Jefferson Avenue and grew up in Fairlawn Heights in a family which contributed much to the history of Akron. His grandmother’s family farm was the first piece of property purchased by Mr. Seiberling, President of the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company, for the Goodyear Heights neighborhood that he

built to house rubber workers. Keener’s great-grandfather was one of three founders of the O’Neil Company. A graduate of Western Reserve Academy and Princeton University, he proudly displays a license plate which reads TIGER 68, a reference to his alma mater and his graduating class, and a gift from his wife.

Keener has had an interesting and eclectic career. He began as a stockbroker and had a financial services company. In his mid-40’s, following a discussion with his wife, he sold his business and returned to the classrooms of the University of Akron to pursue a masters degree in history. He then went on to do PhD studies at the University of Michigan. He completed the class work portion, but did not write a dissertation. He may still do so in the future. He currently serves on the University of Akron faculty as an Adjunct Professor of History. This semester he is teaching Historical Methods,

which is a requirement for history and education majors. Keener teaches them how to write a research paper as well as a class called Era of the American Revolution. Next semester he will be teaching classes in American colonial history and Ohio history. He is a part owner of HallStar, a company founded in Akron in 1919 and currently headquartered in Chicago. The company manufactures plasticizers for rubber and plastic products and a variety of additives for personal care products, including the SPF factor for sunscreens. He makes frequent business trips to Chicago as the outside director.

In addition to giving of his time and talent to CLPA, he also is a proud and active member of Trinity Lutheran Church, a professional genealogist, serving on the Board of Trustees of the Ohio Genealogical Society, and Founding President of the Great Lakes Chapter of the Association of Professional

Genealogists. He belongs to the Sons of the American Revolution and is a Past President of the Summit County Historical Society.

Keener is married to Polly and proudly speaks of her career as an artist and cartoonist. She is the author of a textbook, “Cartooning”, and writes a cartoon strip, “Hamster Alley” which is syndicated to over 500 weekly newspapers. They are the parents of Ted, a former Navy aviator who is currently studying at the University of Akron to become a Registered Nurse, and Whitney, a second year graduate student at Cleveland State, studying clinical psychology. In his spare time Keener enjoys walking on the Towpath with his two dogs, a Siberian Husky and a Pomeranian.

Thank you, Virginia, for writing that note to Bob Keener, and thank you, Bob Keener, for all that you have done and will continue to do for CLPA!

Full Tummies, Warm Glow and Good Cheer at Mustill Store Dinner Ellen Otto

Tom Keith, a long time CLPA Board Member, won the “Hot Jazz” bidding for a dinner served at the Mustill Store. Phil January, CLPA President, Bridget Garvin, Executive Director, and Ellen Otto, also a Board Member, donated and prepared the dinner served at the store on October 26. Although the night was cool with a misty drizzle, Keith’s party of ten gathered under a canopy behind the store for cocktails (“Mustill Mash”, better known as Whiskey Old Fashions) and hors d’oeuvres. A blazing fire added warmth and a welcoming

glow for the merry group.

Guests were called to dinner by Fred Mustill, a.k.a. Bill Van Nostran, CLPA Board Member and Mustill impersonator. They found an inviting formal table set with gold linens, china, crystal and silver—a charming juxtaposition to the rustic store. A centerpiece of pumpkins, fall foliage and candles completed the table. Store doors were open for guests to enjoy the soft breeze and sound of rushing water flowing down Lock 15 outside the store.

Fred Mustill toasted the group and inquired if they were canal boat captains or just travelers? He talked about getting his wagon wheel fixed earlier that day and set a wonderful tone (circa:1850) for the remainder of the evening.

The dinner that followed was *somewhat* typical of a meal the Mustill family might have served company in their era. Guests enjoyed pumpkin soup, followed by Waldorf salad served with crusty bread and apple butter. The double entrée featured salmon and pork ten-

derloin accompanied by plum chutney. Squash casserole and a broiled tomato added color to the plate. A selection of pies completed the menu. Oh ... and lots of wine added to the warm glow!

In addition to adding to CLPA coffers, the dinner provided a wonderful opportunity to introduce some new folks to the magic of Cascade Locks Park. We will look forward to having them join us for future activities ... and perhaps as new members!

Mark Your Calendar You Won't Want to Miss These Events!

Bonfire by the Canal

Friday, December 7, 7:00pm to 9:00pm at the Mustill Store

Grab your scarf and mittens and head for the Mustill Store. You'll find a crackling bonfire to warm you, hotdogs and marshmallows to toast, and Akron trivia games to entertain. Tours and warm beverages inside the store.

Volunteer Holiday Party

Thursday, December 13, 5:30 to 8:00 at Northside Lofts

Cascade Locks Park Association wants to thank you for the approximately 2600 hours you gave since our last holiday party. Your time, effort and creativity are so deeply appreciated – so, come enjoy the fabulous food and beverages and terrific company. By invitation to our Volunteers, RSVP is necessary.

Holiday Open House at the Mustill Store and Book Signing of "Early Akron's Industrial Valley - a History of the Cascade Locks" by Jack Gieck

Saturday, December 15, 12:00 to 3:00pm at the Mustill Store

The store will be decked out in its holiday finery, and author Jack Gieck will be on hand to answer questions and sign copies of his newly released book, centered on the history of our park. Stop by and meet the author, taste the holiday goodies and do a little shopping for that canal, Towpath or history buff in your life. We have maps, books, videos, CDs and much more. Gieck will also be signing books at The Bookseller on Sunday, December 16 from 1-3pm.

Mustill Store Volunteer Training

Wednesday, March 19, OR Saturday, March 22, 12:00 to 2:30pm

Come for lunch and stay for the training. As a Mustill Store greeter, you'll work with other experienced Greeters, welcoming visitors to the store and doing a little light selling of canal and Towpath related materials. You'll choose when and how often you spend time at the store (time slots are 12:00 to 3:00 and 3:00 to 6:00 on Saturdays and Sundays, April through October). If you

enjoy meeting nice people, and have an interest in local history, this is the perfect place for you. Three hours of your time may not sound like a lot, but it is a *HUGE* help to us and we're certain it will be a rewarding experience for you. RSVP is necessary.

Opening Day at the Mustill Store

Saturday, April 5, 12:00 to 3:00pm, Mustill Store

The first day of our 2008 Season! Join us for historical children's games, live music and grilled dogs and burgers for sale in the yard. The Mustill Store is open Saturdays and Sundays, 12:00 to 6:00, April through October.

The Future of Schumacher's Cascade Mill Site Spring Speaker Series

Wednesday, April 23, 7pm at the Mustill Store (free and open to public)

Bridget Garvin, Executive Director of CLPA, will kick off our speaker series with a presentation on the exciting next phase in the Cascade Locks Park. Come hear the details about the plans for Schumacher's Cascade Mill Site at the corner of North and Howard Street in the Park and how we will transform the site to interpret the rich history of the former mill while creating a neighborhood park and Canalway destination.

Canal and Little Cuyahoga River Cleanup

Saturday, May 3, 8:30am to 12:30pm at the Mustill Store

This is *THE* big cleanup of the year - EnviroScience, Inc. of Stow, CLPA and many committed volunteers show up, ready to *Take Out the Trash!* We need *your* help for it to be a success. Breakfast and lunch are provided. Keep Akron Beautiful provides bags and gloves and sponsors this event.

Please remember to check our website at www.cascadelocks.org or call the office at 330-374-5625 for schedule changes or additions.

From the President



Phil January

Over the past few years we have all seen tremendous change in the Cascade Valley. New neighborhoods, new high-rise condominiums and a new Howard Street. Now, with our construction plans completed for the Schumacher Mill site, CLPA will once again change the landscape of the Cascade Valley.

Ferdinand Schumacher owned and operated the Cascade Mill

and his company later merged with several others that became known as Quaker Oats. The mill was powered by a 35 foot diameter, iron water wheel. The mill ground wheat that was brought to the mill by wagon and then, sent flour to market, by wagon and canal boat.

Our park, at the corners of N. Howard Street and North Street, will provide the neighborhood with a much

needed green space. Joggers, bicyclists and nature lovers will all have a great place to experience the wonders of the Cascade Valley. Art, nature and history all come together at the same point. Experience the growth and future of CLPA! We welcome your vision and support.

Be part of our future! Join us!

Northeast Ohio Environmental Awards Julie January

This fall CLPA received one of the first Northeast Ohio environmental awards, sponsored by Dominion and the Biodiversity Alliance. CLPA was chosen to represent the community category. Being part of an urban redevelopment area, CLPA has the unique opportunity to continue a footprint created over a century ago by the original founders of both the Mustill Store and the Ohio & Erie Canal.

All finalists were honored at a cocktail reception at the Cleveland Botanical Garden, followed by an awards ceremony and lecture at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History. It was a humbling experience to see all of the hard work and dedication that led us to win this award. Little steps lead to great accomplishments.

CLPA is very grateful for this award and the recognition of

the work we are doing in the region. We were proud to show the rest of Northeast

Ohio what is happening in Akron.



Towpath Tidbits Bob Jenkins

The **Schumacher's Cascade Mill Site** is a major focus for the CLPA. Towpath Tidbits takes this opportunity to examine this flour mill and the importance of the flour milling industry in early Akron. **Schumacher's Cascade Mill** was one of five significant flour mills operated in Akron.

Stone Mill, operating in 1832, was powered by water from a mill race diverted from the Little Cuyahoga River. Located on Howard, Ash and Mill Streets, the mill was later known as the **Commins and Allen Mill**. This was the oldest and largest mill in the city. The building was five stories high, and covered an area 60 X 120 feet. It was eventually converted to run on both steam and water power.

The **Allen Woolen Mill**, located at Lock 7 of the Ohio and Erie Canal, was converted to a flour mill in 1856. Renamed Center Mill, it specialized in fine grades of family and baker's flour. The size of the mill was 35 X 110 feet, and could produce up to 225 barrels in 24 hours.

City Mill, on Canal and West Market Streets, and near Lock 9, was originally owned by Greg W. McNeill. The Stone Arch Bridge was erected close to this site.

Aetna Flour Mill, on Lock 12, was built on the site of an iron furnace, hence the name 'Furnace Street.' The foundry burned down once or twice and was eventually rebuilt as a flour mill. Also on this site was a distillery, and close-by was one of Akron's first breweries. **Aetna Flour Mill** was capable of producing 200 barrels of flour in a 24 hour period. The ownership of the mill changed hands many times.

Schumacher's Cascade Mill was built in 1840 by William B. Mitchell with financial help from Judge Leicester King, who later became very involved in the Pennsylvania & Ohio Canal. The mill was named after the village of Cascade, which was centered around Market and Howard Streets. It was designed to produce 300 barrels of flour per day with a yearly total of 40,800 barrels per year. It was the best equipped of all the mills along

the Cascade. The most outstanding feature of **Schumacher's Cascade Mill** was the 35 foot diameter and 37 ton water wheel which powered the mill in the early days of its operation.

Ferdinand Schumacher bought the mill in 1868 for \$73,000, and began to retrofit the mill with the latest equipment... including steam power. The peak years for the mill were the 1870s and 80s. After this time the canals were being used less and the railroad sidings on Mill street were used more. Schumacher sold the mill in 1901 to the American Cereal Company and they used it mainly for storage.

The end came to **Schumacher's Cascade Mill** on Sunday, March 27, 1904 when a fire was discovered by a patrolman on the west side of the mill. All that could be saved was the chimney and water wheel. The water wheel was cut up for scrap in the 1920s.

Hopefully you have enjoyed this brief review of the mills along the Cascade and share CLPA's

enthusiasm about commemorating **Schumacher's Cascade Mill**, an important feature of Akron's heritage.

Material for this article came from "History of Summit County Ohio", by William Perrin.

"The water wheel was cut up for scrap in the 1920s".



Thank You for Your Support

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Urban Design *(Continued from Page 1)*

side Lofts & Restaurants, Cascade Village and Hickory Street Redevelopment. They also interviewed former Howard Street residents.

Seeped in the culture, geography and topography of the Howard Street neighborhood, the four design teams went to work imagining the future potential of the area and generating plans and drawings. "I haven't seen the students as passionate about a project as they were about this one," comments Diehl.

Formal Presentation

The charrette concluded on Tuesday, October 16, when the four teams presented their concepts to the stakeholders and the public. "It was fascinating to see the different approaches and ideas from the four teams," says Bridget Garvin, CLPA Executive Director.

"It's also a great way for the surrounding neighborhood to benefit from professional urban design consultation for a relatively small amount of money,"

Diehl explained.

As a follow-up, the four designs will be critically analyzed to identify strengths and weaknesses to develop what will likely be a hybrid final design. "Incorporating the best ideas into a unified whole will lead to a shared vision for the neighborhood," says Bridget Garvin. "We'll all be moving forward using the same road map for the future." This final design product will result in a concluding presentation to all stakeholders. Students are also

assembling a book containing all their research, documentation and preliminary designs resulting from the charrette.

"One of the beauties of this process," says Diehl, "is that people who live and work in an area often don't see the potential of local resources because they are too close to them. The charrette presents ideas unencumbered by preconceptions or limitations."

Beech Street Trailhead Update Bridget Garvin

Plans are underway for a trailhead at the south end of the Cascade Locks Park, where the Beech Street Plant once stood. CLPA has been working with the City of Akron, which is leading the project, to design a trailhead parking lot, complete with a kiosk welcoming visitors to the “top” of the Cascade

Locks Park.

The design also includes a trail leading down to the Towpath, railroad track remnants and the remains of the eastern wall of the plant. Visitors will be able to enter the site through an opening in the wall, which was once the coal chute. This pro-

ject will be constructed in 2008, and should be complete in August, around the same time as the Towpath Trail extension over the Innerbelt.

Both projects will be major milestones in the development of the Cascade Locks Park and our vision to connect into

downtown. More announcements will come on events surrounding these momentous occasions, as the Towpath Trail continues to re-emerge through downtown Akron.

Sizzlin’ Hot Items at the Mustill Store

Walks around Akron: Rediscovering a City in Transition

Russ Musarra and Chuck Ayers

This is the essential guide to places well-known, virtually unknown, or almost forgotten in Akron. Beautiful artwork and engaging text document places you never knew were here, or that have been altered or altogether disappeared since these essays began in 1987. A must have for any Akronite. Soft, \$20; Hard, \$43

Early Akron’s Industrial Valley: a History of the Cascade Locks

Jack Gieck

We can’t wait to get our hands on this book! Luckily, it will be released just in time for our Saturday, December 15 Mustill Store Holiday Open House. Mr. Gieck gives the history and mechanics of

Akron’s Cascade Locks system with its 16 lock staircase, rising 149 feet in a single mile to the Akron Summit – and giving “rise” to a dozen-plus industries, able to ship their goods from New York to New Orleans via the Ohio & Erie Canal. The book includes many historical photos as well as a Canalway Hike and Bike Guide through the Cascade Locks Park. Jack will be at the Holiday Open House at the Mustill Store (see ‘Mark Your Calendar’ on page 4) to answer questions and sign copies. Soft, \$12

Cuyahoga Valley National Park Handbook

Carolyn V. Platt, *forward by John F. Seiberling*

A park that reaches from Cleveland to Akron needs a handbook – and this book is it. The photos are a feast for the eyes, and the prose very readable. Anyone who loves the outdoors will enjoy this. Soft, \$10

Cascade Locks Park Association

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The Cascade Chronicle is published three times a year by the CLPA.

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Membership Benefits include:

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Just fill out the form and mail it with your check, made out to the “CLPA”, to: **CLPA, 248 Ferndale Street, Akron, Ohio 44304**

Yes! I want to join the CLPA at the following level:

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