Cleveland Waterfront
Beginnings

by John R. Wolfs

This is the seventh in a series of articles about historical events that shaped our Cleveland waterfront today.

Beginning in 1927, plans were prepared by various administrations, commissions and the Chamber of Commerce for Cleveland's waterfront. However, none of the five plans proposed prior to 1942 were adopted by a Council Ordinance. In 1942, a City Planning Commission design which extended from Rocky River to Euclid was approved.

The plan proposed a massive fill along the shoreline from W. 200th St. in Rocky River to Edgewater Park in Cleveland for a major highway along the toe of the bluff. The proposal for Edgewater Park was much as it is at present. Whiskey Island to W. 3rd St. was to be docks and shipping facilities was this has been partially realized.

The Mall, from W. 3rd St. to E. 9th St. was to complement the only exhibit remaining from the 1936 Great Lakes Expo, the Donald Gray Gardens. This proposed concept is not at great variance from the inner harbor plan now being implemented; particularly as the city proposes to redevelop Docks 30 and 32 to make public-oriented use at present.

The area from E. 9th St. to Gordon Park was to be used for park purposes, lagoons, drill fields and hydro-plane anchorage. This latter use was an obsolete concept, and the plan was amended in 1945 to provide for a lakefront airport. The Municipal Light Plant and Nicholson Terminal were existing and therefore excepted from the plan.

Continuing northerly, the plan duplicated the shorway concept proposed for the west side. The highway would continue along Bratenahl, past the Easterly Sewage Plant to the city limits at E. 185th St., where it was to rejoin Lakeshore Boulevard. A Corps of Engineers (COE) study of erosion along the Perkins Beach, White City and Wildwood areas recommended groins and a sand beach, but no remedial work has occurred to address that concept of the original plan.

It was not until conflict with the Economic Development Agency (EDA) federal requirements for funding the 1973 "Gateway Plan" (a plan for development of E. 9th St., now the inner harbor area) that the 1942 plan was repealed, leaving the city with no overall plan. It is this vacuum, that saw the CLEVELAND WATERFRONT COALITION essential to guard against non-water related activities that will detract from the lakefront.

Post World War II events shaped several aspects of the lakefront format which ignored the '42 plan. Bert Porter, the County Engineer, prepared a comprehensive highway plan to solve the area's need to improve the arterial road system and to serve the commuting public. Neither public transportation, largely dependent on streetcars, nor the existing shorway improvements sufficed. When President Eisenhower sponsored the "Interstate and Defense Highway" bill with 90% federal funding, the plans were ready. Cleveland contributed 5% of the cost within the city limits' share. In suburban areas the State contributed the full 10% and the County participated in certain specific projects. This formula at least gave the city some degree of control of design through the City Engineer's office, which administered the consultants contracts.

As a result, the shorway east became I-90 and followed the C & O tracks through Bratenahl, but decimated Gordon Park. It also moved inland through the heart of the westside, parallel to Lorain Avenue, skating Lakewood and Rocky River, but sparing Edgewater Park. I-71 used undeveloped lands in Brookside Park and a flyover field near the airport on the far westside, reserved for the glide path of Hopkins main runway.

Solid waste disposal in Cleveland, with its huge amount of waste due to demolition of substandard buildings, worn-out appliances, furniture and the throw-away age, overtaxed the city's incinerator at West 3rd Street. Until the Bishop Road

City of Brooklyn, the lakefront was used as a dump. Hugh fires set during a south wind boomeranged to the west, then the wind shifted and Mayor Celebrezze was glad to see the end of this problem. The dump at Gordon Park was yet to come.

The long-awaited St. Lawrence Seaway was opened in 1959 by President Eisenhower and Queen Elizabeth. While Canada and the U.S. shared the costs, the lock system matched the Canadian Welland Canal locks between Lakes Erie and Ontario, Canada's seaports are in the Maritimes Provinces at Halifax and St. John's, and at their largest city, Montreal. While Montreal is 1,000 miles from the Atlantic, there are no restrictions of locks and a 35 foot channel depth vs a 27 foot channel in the balance of the project, it has an obvious advantage.

The city, under the Director William Rogers and Mayor Ralph Locher, built Docks 28, 30 and 32 and the 150-ton heavy lift crane, "The Buckeye Booster". The "Stadium Boat Works" site was purchased for Dock 26, and the Cleveland Stevedore Company built a storage building as part of their lease. This was followed by Dock 24, when the Penney RR sold part of their obsolete coach yard between W. 9th St. and S. 3rd St. because passenger traffic was no more. Only the NYC RR parcel post building was still in use. An EDA grant helped the city construct the buildings on Docks 30 and 32.

As a result of concern over pollution and part of a national movement, Congress created the Federal Water Pollution Control Administration (FWPCA). The COE was severely criticized for open lake dumping of dredgings from various rivers, including the Cuyahoga. A pilot program started on the Great Lakes with Cleveland as one of eight study areas.

A containment dike was first used in '68 for river and harbor dredging; the first of four such areas, Dikes 9 and 12 expanded into the east channel that was to be a future runway, but the COE failed to finish this concept with Dike 10, adjacent to the east channel and instead moved to Gordon Park and Dike 14. Wher this project was first proposed, it was the solution to the dump site created at the E. 2nd St. marina that failed when the two sunken freighters broke up due to wave action. The 329 million COE dike area will eventually add 21 acres to Gordon Park, and should be filled by 1991 for redevelopment by the State of Ohio according to plans.

The above article was the seventh part of an intended eight part series, tracing the history of Cleveland's waterfront from the beginning to the present day. The last part was to focus on the establishment of the Port Authority. The death of John Wolfs left an end to the series.

John was a treasure house of information on all aspects of Cleveland, invaluable whether one needed historical data or facts about construction. John loved the Cleveland area and his chosen profession of engineering; he was generous with his time and assistance to many civic and charitable projects and was proud that both his son and daughter followed his steps into the field of engineering.

He will be deeply missed.

DID YOU KNOW?

The coastline of the Great Lakes is over 10,000 miles in length!

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EDITOR: LINDA M. ROUGET
The ODNR 1979 Cleveland Lakefront State Park master plan proposed a number of improvements which were intended to make the waterfront more accessible. We generally think of waterfront accessibility from the standpoint of approaching the water from the land. However, water access to the land is also important and deserves a high priority of implementation.

Access to the land from the water in Cleveland suffers because of physical barriers, the lack of sufficient protected water, and a scarcity of facilities to accommodate that access. In spite of the obstacles, recreational boating on Lake Erie has become increasingly popular. This popularity, and the recent improvements to the Cleveland waterfront, have kindled the interest of entrepreneurs in developing marinas, festival retail facilities and waterfront housing. The Cuyahoga River and the Flats area of Cleveland is a major attraction to recreational boating and festive waterfront activities, and is a logical area for new waterfront development. The river offers protected water, facilities and an exciting, but relaxed atmosphere. However, access to the river is a major problem.

The 1979 plan recognized the attraction the river has for recreational boating, and the difficulty associated with that access. The numerous bridges which cross the Cuyahoga River and the commercial shipping which still ply the river, are an essential attraction to Flats visitors, but they are also deterrents to recreational boating. The Penn Central RR bridge, at the present mouth of the Cuyahoga, is a substantial bottleneck since it lies so low to the water in its down position and must remain down for extended periods to accommodate the rail movement on this primary rail line.

In order to make the Cuyahoga River and all its attraction more accessible and less hazardous, the 1979 plan proposed that the former mouth of the river be reopened in the form of a new channel at the westerly end of the Old River Bed. This channel, approximately 40 feet wide, would form a water connection to the lake just east of Edgewater Park and the westerly sewage treat-

The proposed channel would need to be bridged to provide for:
- vehicular access to Whiskey Island;
- the present main Penn Central line across Whiskey Island; and,
- for rail access to the westerly sewage treatment plant.

It is feasible to build the required bridges at a height that will permit unobstructed power boat access to the Cuyahoga River. Since the estimated achievable clearance height for bridges required to span the new channel is approximately 16', sailboats and other vessels with higher superstructure may still have to utilize the present access to the Cuyahoga. However, the major portion of recreational boating would have freedom of access to the Cuyahoga River through the ne
be protected because of the economic importance and the visual attraction that activity provides.

The new channel access to the Old River Bed can be an economic boon to the Flats in general, and the Old River Bed and Whiskey Island in particular. The impact of the channel on the Flats deserves serious thought and planning to insure that it is a positive influence. It's not in the best interests of the Flats and the city to diminish the historic roots of the Flats by creating new demands which do not take into consideration a balance of the old and the new.

It is essential that early planning and the development of realistic and effective development controls be installed to insure that the Flats remain the exciting, viable place it has become. Such controls should include:

- insuring public access to and along the water edge;
- requiring improvements to vehicular access and storage (parking) systems;
- providing for public transportation;
- insisting that both renovation and new construction be compatible with the existing character of the Flats.

Each new waterfront development gives birth to the next waterfront project, and provides for additional, exciting and diverse activities for the citizens of Cleveland. The proposed new channel to the Old River Bed can be a significant project in the development of Cleveland's waterfront.

William A. Behnke is President of William A. Behnke Associates Incorporated, Landscape Architects. Bill is a long-time member of the Cleveland Waterfront Coalition and serves on the board of trustees.

He is affiliated with the American Society of Landscape Architects and is a strong advocate of sound waterfront development.
CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

Work on the inner harbor is moving ahead in leaps and bounds — actually, the work is progressing at a steady pace, but a lot of it was buried underground until this time and not visible to the sidewalk superintendent.

The wall panels which form the perimeter of the basin are being set, as of this writing most of the panels south of old Erieside have been placed and are getting their first taste of Lake Erie water.

We all know that Cleveland is a unique city, and it turns out that the construction methods being used on our harbor are following in that same fine tradition.

Our last update mentioned that the H-piles, which provide the anchor for the wall panels, were being driven. Turns out that anybody can drive piles straight into the ground, ours had to be driven in at angles which varied, depending on their location. They also weren't just driven to ground level, they were driven 11.5' underground. The piles are almost 100' long, and had to be welded in progress due to FAA height restrictions near Burke Airport.

The wall panels themselves presented another challenge. The presence of Lake Erie, asset that it is, can cause a real headache if you try to use standard construction methods. It was finally decided to do something different: build the concrete forms on old Erieside, pour the panels, then lower the completed panels down over the H-piles into place. Each panel has steel forms on the back which slip over the piles. Slip is probably not the best choice of words, toler-

panels that weigh from 38 tons (76,000 pounds) to 63 tons (126,000 pounds) and H-piles that were driven underground, you are talking precision.

After the panels are in place, the steel and H-piles are surrounded by a form and concrete is poured into the form creating what is called a counterfort. This counterfort locks the wall panel and the H-piles together into a relationship that even Marvin Mitchelson couldn't break; Gibraltar may tumble, but our harbor is here to stay.

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