



### III. THE CLEVELAND~ MASSILLON ROAD CORRIDOR TODAY

Long-term settlement and development/land use patterns have given Bath Township, and the Cleveland-Massillon Road Corridor in particular, their distinctive rural character. In general, the pattern has been one of widely-spaced individual buildings (or small complexes such as farms) in the areas outside the three villages. By contrast, in the villages -- Ghent, Bath Center, and Hammond's Corners -- there is denser clustering of development and a blend of residential and commercial uses. However, traditional "Midwestern downtown" areas, which typically had continuous rows of commercial storefronts in a single district that was the economic heart of the community, never developed in Bath Township. Instead, development occurred in a pattern more typical of New England rural communities. This grew naturally, no doubt, from the direct New England connections of the Western Reserve area of Ohio. In New England, the town was the equivalent of the township in Ohio, and in the rural towns there typically was no single main area of settlement. Instead, small villages grew at natural nodes such as major crossroads or sources of water power, and the country in between developed as scattered houses and farm complexes. Relatively little commercial land use, such as stores, offices, and similar uses, occurred outside the village nodes.

With some fairly recent exceptions, this same pattern still is typical of Bath Township today.

In the area between the villages, and elsewhere in the township, development generally is scattered and low-density, and the New England character and feel

is very distinct. The exceptions are the occasional areas where individual commercial properties, strip centers, and some clusters of commercial uses have been built during about the past 30 years. Despite these, most commercial development has been centered in Ghent and Hammond's Corners, two of the traditional commercial nodes. The combination of natural features, New England-inspired settlement patterns and traditional building types contributes to the sense of rural character that township residents value so highly.

Cleveland-Massillon Road Corridor is a major road that has an ever increasing volume of traffic due to the heavy commercial development in the northern (Richfield) and southern (Montrose) portions of the township; the proximity of the corridor to Interstate 77 (which runs parallel a short distance to the east); and the increased residential development that has taken place in the township over the past 20 years.

### *Natural Environment*

Like its built environment, Bath Township's natural environment is diverse. The Cleveland-Massillon Road Corridor traverses a variety of landforms and landscape features in a short distance. In general, the character of the corridor goes from hilly and heavily wooded at the south end to more level and open, with fewer large stands of trees and more open farm fields at the north end. The distinctive features that contribute to the character of the corridor include the following:



- Extensive tree cover, especially in the southern half of the corridor (cited repeatedly in interviews as one of the most important components of the environment -- especially large, older trees).
- Streams and creeks winding through the area, creating wooded ravines -- again primarily in the southern half of the corridor.
- Cleveland-Massillon Road's profile reflects the rolling hills and other aspects of the corridor's topography; the road has not been extensively cut and filled to eliminate vertical curves, except at the intersection in Bath Center.



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- Ponds of various sizes and shapes, which create vistas along their shorelines and around which there has not been extensive development.



- In the northern half of the corridor, the landscape is dominated by flatter land and more distant views. In this area, open fields with trees edging them create vistas across the fields and views beyond the fields to distant treelines and hillsides.

Elements of the built environment are frequently sited in traditional ways, taking advantage of both the township's topography and its natural/physical environment. Houses, farm complexes, and commercial buildings, for example, often are nestled against hillsides or at the base of a slope, providing wind and weather protection. In other cases, buildings are built so they have views across stream valleys or ponds but, where possible, they are located out of the flood plain. By contrast, public buildings such as the school and the former and current township halls at

Bath Center are sited for easy access from principal roads, though the view across the pond behind the current township hall was clearly important in its design and placement.

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### ***Building Types and Styles***

The roughly 150 buildings in the Cleveland-Massillon Road Corridor reflect the diversity of Bath Township's architecture, which ranges from the early 19th to the late 20th century. Some of the buildings have been built only recently, while



*The woolen mill in Ghent was built in 1832 and is now used as a residence.*

some are listed in the National Register of Historic Places and date to the early 19th century. There is a blend of residential, commercial, and farm architecture, as well as institutional. Although there are no consistent patterns in building type or style -- historic structures may be found anywhere in the corridor, as may recent commercial buildings or contemporary homes -- the predominant building material is wood and there are no overly large "superbox-retail" types of development. The well-preserved barns are among the most distinctive structures and are strong visual indicators of the rural character of much of the corridor and of the entire township.



Described below are the building types/stylistic categories into which the architecture of the corridor may be divided. The term "vernacular" originally referred to indigenous or local design, but today is understood to mean a building employing common or traditional architectural elements but not representative of an academic style.



- **Early 19th Century Greek Revival Style Vernacular Residential**

The Greek Revival style is commonly associated with the Western Reserve, since a number of "textbook" examples of the style exist in the region and its

architectural development began when the style was popular in the early 19th century. Although the vernacular houses in Bath Township are smaller in scale and simpler in design than those found, for example, at Hale Farm, they still retain their early 19th century character. These houses are of wood frame construction, typically one to one-and-a-half stories in height, with a gabled roofline. A cornice with returns is a common feature in the gable ends. Other features include double-hung windows, many with historic multi-paned sash, and entrances with fluted trim and cornerblocks.

- **Late 19th Century Farmhouse Vernacular Residential**

There are a number of good examples of late 19th century vernacular farmhouses in the Cleveland-Massillon Road Corridor. Among the most common forms is the Gabled Ell -- which is usually two to two-and-a-half stories in height, with an L- or T-shaped plan, an intersecting gabled or hipped roofline, and a porch located in the area where the two wings join. These houses can have either simple or very decorative front porches and window and door trim. Although this style was popular in both brick and frame, the wood frame version is by far the most common in Bath Township.



- **Early 20th Century Residential**

There are a number of houses along Cleveland-Massillon Road that date from the early decades of the 20th century. There are examples of Bungalows and Four Squares, along with vernacular examples influenced by the Colonial Revival style of the period. The Bungalows are characterized by their gabled rooflines, which frequently extend to form the porch





roof; central dormers; and porches across the front. The Four Square is either square or rectangular in form with a steeply pitched hipped or gabled roofline, roof dormers, and simple door and window trim. The vernacular Colonial Revival houses feature details

such as columns; pediments; multi-pane windows; and gabled or gambrel rooflines, sometimes with dormers.

- **Post-World War II Residential**

The housing stock from this period reflects the popularity of the Ranch and houses with some level of "colonial" detailing. There are several examples of each of these types. The Ranch houses are characterized by their horizontal

form, single story height, variety of window types (including large picture windows) and gabled or hipped rooflines. The houses with "colonial" detailing range from one-and-a-half to two-and-a-half stories in height, with typical features including pedimented entrances and dormers, multi-paned windows, and shutters.



- **Barns and Other Farm Outbuildings**

Among the most distinctive buildings found along the Cleveland-Massillon Road Corridor are the barns. All are of frame construction with vertical siding and gabled rooflines, but they vary in size and details. Most are also bank barns, where the entrance on one side of the barn is reached from a bank of earth and at a level higher than the other side of the barn. A few have many windows, while others have very few. One of the most decorative has a central cupola. Some farmsteads have a large barn and several smaller frame buildings, also with gabled rooflines.

- **Institutional/Public**

The buildings in this category include the historic Township Hall, the current Township Hall and Fire Station, the Bath Township School, and several churches scattered along the corridor. These buildings range in age from early 20th century to contemporary structures. Although they vary in style and

materials, they tend to be built in a scale that fits in with the predominantly residential and rural character of the corridor.



- **Historic Commercial**

There are very few historic commercial buildings located along the corridor. The most obvious one, which dates from the early 20th century, is the former general store located in Hammond's Corners. It was originally a frame structure with a false front and a traditional storefront, although it has been updated and now has a more contemporary appearance.

- **Strip Commercial**

There are several examples of strip commercial development along Cleveland-Massillon Road. Although they are very different in terms of height (there are both one and two story examples), architectural styles, and use of materials, they all are linear in nature with multiple storefronts or office spaces and all have expanses of parking in front of the building.

- **Post-World War II or Contemporary Free-Standing Commercial**

There are some examples of free-standing commercial structures dating from the second half of the 20th century in the corridor. These are single-use buildings and include banks, residential-scaled offices, and larger office buildings with multiple tenants.

- **Automobile-Related**

Examples of automobile-related commercial architecture, most of which is fairly new, include several gas stations that convey a sense of "corporate" architecture. These buildings are readily identified by their large canopies with corporate logos and single story service buildings. One older automobile-related building is a modest single story masonry building without any decorative details.

- **Unique/One-of-a-Kind**

There are a few buildings that are unique in the corridor and merit special mention. Two are located in Ghent -- the historic mill building dating from the early 19th century and now converted to a residence with a long horizontal profile, original wood siding and multi-paned windows; and a small octagonal board-and-batten frame outbuilding located in the sideyard of a home.



