



## II. OVERVIEW AND HISTORY

### *of Cleveland-Massillon Road Corridor*

Bath Township is located in the western part of Summit County in an area of the state known as Connecticut's Western Reserve. The Western Reserve, which covered all or part of 13 Ohio counties, was land that Connecticut retained when it ceded its other claims of western lands to the federal government in 1786. The Western Reserve lands were surveyed into townships of five miles square. The land was made available

for sale in 1795 and was sold to 35 buyers (each purchased large parcels for later resale) for a total of \$1.2 million.

A late nineteenth century history of the township described its physical condition as "rough and precipitous" and therefore not as attractive to early settlers as other neighboring townships. In fact, early settlers (mostly from Connecticut) moved into the area at the beginning of the 19th century but settlement remained very sparse for nearly two decades. Yellow Creek was the principal waterway in the township and attracted the earliest development since water was available to power mills.

Ghent, named after the Treaty of Ghent which ended the War of 1812, was the largest of the three settlements that developed in Bath Township and was different in character from the others because of its location along Yellow Creek. A sawmill was built along the creek in 1818, and it was soon followed by a number of other mills. The village also had other businesses which, like the mills, served the local population. Houses were interspersed among the other buildings in Ghent.



*The simple forms and materials of traditional architectural design provide a precedent for contemporary design in the Cleveland-Massillon Road Corridor.*

Hammond's Corners was known as the "Crossroads of the Township" because it was the location of one of the largest general stores in the area. Farmers from throughout the township would do business here, so it also served as an informal social center of the larger community. Other commercial activities, along with a few houses, formed this settlement.

Although there were a few concentrated settlements, Bath Township was largely a sparsely developed rural township for most of its history. The population of the township numbered 1,425 in 1840 but had dropped to 900 by 1890. The current population of 10,000 is the result of growth primarily over the last two decades.

Bath Township's pattern of settlement is very similar to that found in rural New England, with small settlements consisting of freestanding individual buildings, closely spaced, in a village setting; with a gradual transition to buildings farther apart on the edges of the settlements and then finally the farmsteads with widely spaced houses, barns, and other farm buildings.



*Ghent Village's New England roots can be seen in its irregular settlement patterns and random building placement.*

Transportation has always played a key role in the history and development of communities. In Bath Township, transportation has been limited to roads, since the township was bypassed by both the canal and railroads in the 19th century and Yellow Creek was not navigable. Cleveland-Massillon Road was the major north-south road through the center of the township. It provided a through route for traffic between Cleveland and Massillon and served as the connector for all three of the township's settlements.

Portions of the road were paved in brick early in the 20th century. With the advent of the automobile and the need for paved roads, Cleveland-Massillon Road was later fully paved. Both commercial and residential development took place along the length of the Cleveland-Massillon Road Corridor during the 20th century, although it tended to follow traditional building patterns. There are a few exceptions and examples of strip shopping centers, but even these were located adjacent to areas where denser settlement had already occurred.

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