

FARMS AT THE CORNER OF ABBE AND DETROIT ROADS

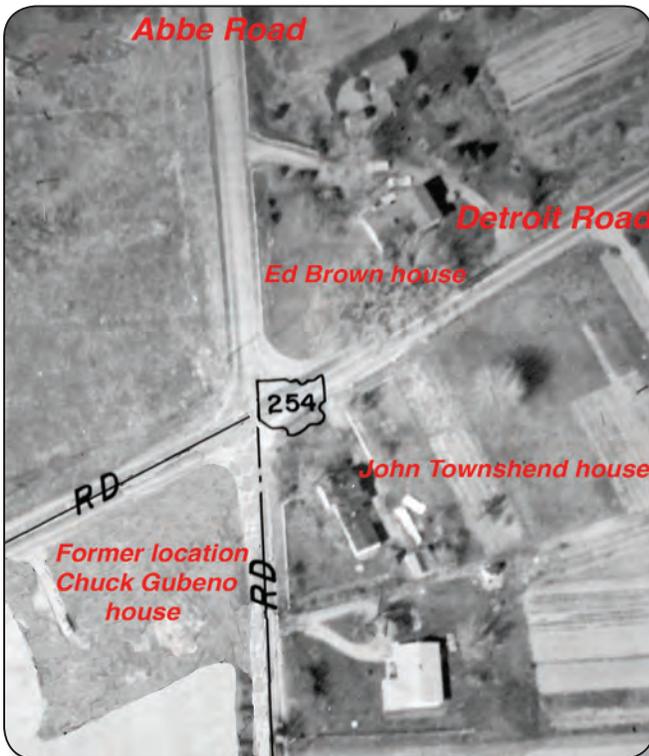
The intersection of Abbe and Detroit Roads has undergone a dramatic transition in the past 50 years. Farmhouses and farm fields once occupied the four corners at the intersection. The farmhouses disappeared in the 1960s because they were obstructions to the widening of Detroit Road (SR 254) required for its approach to Interstate-90. Today, clockwise from the northeast corner, Sheetz convenience store/fuel station, Sears hardware store, KeyBank, and Giant Eagle have replaced them. Society members, Eileen [Brown] Craven and her brother Edward “Bud” Brown, Jr., who grew up in the farmhouse on the northeast corner, donated several of the accompanying photographs that trace the changes that have taken place at this crossroads over the past century.



Intersection of Abbe and Detroit Roads toward the east in 1966; Edward Brown house (left) and John Townshend house (right).



Detroit Road about 500 feet west of the Abbe Road intersection in 1966. A cabbage field is shown to the right (south) and a hay field to the left (north) on the slope of North Ridge.



Aerial photograph of the intersection of Abbe and Detroit Roads in 1966 showing the locations of the Edward Brown and John Townshend homes (Lorain County Engineer).

Intersection of Abbe Road and Detroit Road in February 2011—clockwise from upper left (northeast corner): Sheetz convenience store/fuel station, Sears appliance & hardware store (closed in 2015), KeyBank (former Donatos Pizza), and Giant Eagle grocery store.



Detroit Road (SR 254) about 500 feet west of the Abbe Road intersection in February 2011.





Greek Revival-style house at the northeast corner of Abbe & Detroit Roads in 1882 when owned by the James Fox family. Mrs. James (Martha) Fox and her son Edward are standing near the main door.



Fox family house in 1913. From left to right, Arthur (son of Edward and Clara), Edward, James, and Clara. Martha had died in 1911. Note the main entrance door is sided over.

Farmhouses were built on North Ridge in the mid-1800s when the Greek Revival tradition provided a design which suited both the resources of the owner and skills of the Western Reserve carpenters. They featured a central chimney around which fireplaces were built in three surrounding rooms. They also had one-story wings, which normally contained the kitchen and a shallow porch under the roofline. The formal entrance was centered in the two-story section. The house on the northeast corner took advantage of the ridge contour with a foundation that rose to the top of the ridge in the back with a terrace at the lower level. In October 1922, ten generations after William Brewster arrived onboard the Mayflower, descendant Edward Brewster Brown, Sr. (1904-1990) settled in Sheffield with his mother, Minnie May [Brainerd] Brown (1861-1947). This took place soon after Edward's father, Wilfred Brown (1861-1922) who had settled on Murray Ridge (Elyria Township) in 1877, was dragged to death by a team of young horses on his farm. Edward, assuming the position of male head of the family, wanted to try gardening. With his mother, he bought a small farm of 23.5 acres on Detroit

Road at the Abbe Road crossing. The farm, which included side-gable Greek Revival-style farmhouse, was purchased from the Edward Fox family.

The 1895 Tax Map for Sheffield Township indicates James Fox the as the owner of the property. James (1844-1919) and his wife Martha (1835-1911) are buried in Block E of Garfield Cemetery. By 1922, when the house was sold to the Brown family, James' son Edward (1877-1949) and wife Clara (1878-1954) were the head of the Fox family. Going back in time, the Fox family is known to have lived in the house in 1882, but the 1874 Tax Map shows that eight years earlier both the northeast and southeast corners of the present day Abbe-Detroit Roads intersection had dwellings belonging to the John Townshend family. Unfortunately, the earliest tax map for Sheffield Township (1851) does not include dwelling symbols, but at that time John Warden owned the property at the northeast corner of Abbe and Detroit Roads and he is believed to have been the builder of the house. John Warden came to this country in 1831. Sheffield Historian, Doris Burrell, reported in 1966, "It is a Sheffield legend, not yet disproved, that Warden won the heavyweight boxing title in England before he emigrated to America."

In any event, in the early 1830s John Warden purchased 35 acres of land in Lot No. 2 of Sheffield Township from General Hart's heirs. Warden's deed indicates that the land was surveyed by William Day, son of Captain John Day—one of the original proprietors of Sheffield, who died in 1827. John Warden and his wife Mary had at least two children: Elizabeth (born 1836) and William Henry (born 1849), who served as Lorain County sheriff from 1899-1903. William Henry is known to have been born in the house that once stood on the northeast corner, but it is not known whether Elizabeth was born there, so conservatively speaking, the house was built at least 162 years ago.

In 1928 Edward Brown, Sr. married Leona Meyers (1905-1976) and here they raised their family of six children: Eileen May (1929-2014), Edward Brewster, Jr. "Bud" (b. 1931), Sara Ann "Sally"



House at northeast corner of Abbe & Detroit Roads in 1946 when owned by the Edward Brown, Sr. family.



Brown family barn to the north of the house in 1962, located along Abbe Road.



Edward and Leona Brown's children at their home, 5327 Detroit Road—clockwise from top left: (a) Bud, Joann, Sally, Nancy, and Marilyn (left to right) packed into Bud's toy wagon (1941). (b) Brown family daughters: Eileen, Sally, Marilyn, Joann, and Nancy (back to front) at north side of house in 1943. (c) Bud, Eileen, Sally, and Marilyn (left to right) in 1946 (Brown family).

(1933-2010), Marilyn Jean (1934-2014), Joann Zittella (1936-2009), and Nancy Lee (b. 1939). Today, Bud lives in Sheffield Village not far from the original homestead and Nancy in St. Louis.

Bud Brown recalls with fondness growing up in the house on the northeast corner of the intersection. On several occasions he has mentioned, "It was a great place to be raised." A particularly memorable person for Bud was "Grandpa Townshend" as all the kids in the neighborhood called John Townshend, who lived on the southeast corner of Abbe and Detroit Roads. In 1930s and early 1940s when Bud was a boy, Townshend farmed the land surrounding the intersection. He didn't have a tractor, using horses to till the field and harvest the crops. He raised grass for winter feed for his livestock on the north slope of the ridge and cut it with a horse-drawn sickle-bar. Bud would delight in riding in the hay wagon with Grandpa Townshend as an attached loader thrust the hay onto the bed of the wagon by the motion of the turning wheels. The hay was taken to the Townshend barn [near where Sears Hardware is located] where a huge set of tongs would grasp the load as horses pulled on an attached rope. This would lift the hay to the top of the barn where it could then be directed to lofts on the either side of the barn. Eileen, Bud's older sister, told a story about him and his infatuation with fire. It seems that as a young boy Bud liked to play with matches and nearly caught the house afire on a couple of occasions. Bud claims it was the girls playing with candles that first caught a baby mattress on fire and later window curtains. With the mattress burning, they called the fire chief, Walter McAllister, who lived a short distance to the west on Detroit Road. Walter dashed to the house, grabbed the little mattress, and threw it out the window—ending the crisis. In later years, Bud joined the Sheffield Village Volunteer Fire Department where he eventually served as Chief from 1967 to 1990. Ironically, Bud finally got his chance to burn the old house down in 1966 when the Ohio Department of Transportation bought the house to widen Detroit Road and asked the Fire Department to set it on fire as a practice drill for the Village firefighters.

Of the historic dwelling that once stood on the corner, Doris Burrell wrote in the March 13, 1966 issue of the *Lorain Journal*, "The white house that clings to the north ridge on the northeast corner of the Abbe Road–Detroit Road intersection aged gracefully for nearly a century and a half. But progress doesn't respect age or history, and the house will soon become a victim of progress. The site soon will be teeming with activity of giant earthmovers, as preparations for a super highway begin. Residents of Sheffield hate to see it go, the Browns more than others. Its removal will destroy one more landmark of the county, one more example of early Greek Revival architecture always to be associated with the settlement of the Western Reserve." Looking at the these old photographs and comparing them with today, one has to wonder if indeed progress has been made.



Edward Brown, Sr.'s home at the northeast corner of Abbe & Detroit Roads in 1964, two years before the widening of Detroit Road.



John Townshend house on the southeast corner of Abbe & Detroit Roads in December 1964.



Edward Brown house being burned in 1966 to accommodate widening of Detroit Road.



Construction of I-90 interchange at SR 254 in 1966 (view to the north), which required the widening of Detroit Road.



Chuck Gubeno's house at southwest corner of intersection being moved farther south on Abbe Road when Detroit Road was widened. This house was later torn down to make way for the Cobblestone shopping area.

FERGUSON FARMSTEAD

The Ohio Historic Inventory (OHI) was initiated in 1965 to document noteworthy historic landmarks within the State of Ohio. On June 30, 2010, the Sheffield Village Historical Society submitted a OHI nomination for the Ferguson House at 4567 East River Road to the Ohio Historic Preservation Office. Jeannine [Ferguson] Barnes and Charles Herdendorf prepared the nomination document from historic records. The Ferguson House has been entered in the Ohio Historic Inventory.

This one and one-half story gable farmhouse, located at the corner of East River Road and Walnut Avenue, was the first house to be built in the first subdivision established in what would become the Village of Sheffield. The Ferguson family lived on the property in the mid-1900s and operated a small-scale comprehensive farm. The land where the subdivision was created was primarily farmland (grain and pasture) after pioneer settlement in the early 1800s. There were no structures on the property until the 1920s when The Farm Reality Company acquired a 108-acre tract of land at this locality. The Farm Reality Company initiated a real estate development known as Acre Farms. The tract was divided into several-acre plots and dedicated avenues were laid out. The Ferguson house was built circa 1926. The Guy Ferguson family was the first to have a comprehensive small-scale farm in the subdivision, including livestock, poultry, and vegetable crops. The Ferguson farm consisted of seven outbuildings: (1) large timber barn (~30 x 40 feet) with three stalls and a hay loft, (2) corn crib, (3) smoke house, (4) chicken coop and brooder house, (5) rabbit hutch, (6) pig sty, and (7) an outhouse.

The farmhouse features a large front porch that extends almost across the entire front of the house. Two square columns at the north and south ends of the porch support the porch roof. Originally the porch had a central opening and six steps leading directly to the front door. In the late 1980s the porch was altered by moving the steps and opening to the south end of the porch. The original windows were 3/1 and have been replaced by 1/1 windows. The foundation material is rock-faced concrete block.



The Ferguson House as it appeared in 1949 when Guy Ferguson operated a small-scale comprehensive farm on the property (Jeannine Barnes).



The Ferguson House at 4567 East River Road in 2007, now the home of the Dennis German family.

The basement was constructed with an interior two-foot deep shelf about five feet above the floor. An interior stairway leads down to the main room of the basement, which once contained a large icebox. A fruit cellar and coal bin were once located at the west end of the basement. There is also an exterior cellar doorway on the north side of the house.

Originally the interior main floor consisted of a bedroom, living room, parlor, kitchen, dining area, and a small sleeping room. The parlor has an arched passageway to the living room that was flanked by cupboards with leaded glass doors and twist locks. The centrally located rear door opens on to a hallway that was flanked by floor to ceiling built-in cupboards. The house had two sinks, each fitted with a hand pump from a water well or cistern. Two bedrooms were located on the upper level, accessed by a stairway from the parlor. A half wall was located at the top of the stairs on the right-hand side as one climbed the stairs. Eave storage compartments were once located along the north and south walls and ran the entire length of the house before dormers were added in the 1970s. Currently the Dennis German family lives in this house.



Guy Ferguson with his daughters, Jeannine (left) on her pony "Smokey" and Shirley on "Red" in 1949 (Jeannine Barnes)

**ACKERMAN FAMILY FARM
—THE LAST OF ITS KIND**

Jean Ackerman is proprietor of the oldest operating farm in Sheffield Village, founded by her ancestors over 160 years ago. In fact, Jean's farm is the only one left here with a full agricultural complement—including livestock, poultry, honey bees, row crops, grains, berries, a vineyard, an orchard, and even fish and turtle ponds managed by her son Paul. To visit her farm on "apple butter day" is a treat always to be remembered. From sunup until late afternoon bushels of apples are stewed in a large iron cauldron over an open fire. Visitors take turns continually stirring the boiling apples with a wooden paddle until a thick paste evolves. The "butter" is then poured into glass jars and sealed for later enjoyment. A few years ago the author had the good fortune to be the last one to stir before the pour. John Edwards had brought fresh bread rolls, which meant I was permitted to dab the buns along the paddles and be the first to savor the warm apple butter.

The Ackerman farm, which might more properly be known as the Schwartz–Blaha–Ackerman farm, has its roots in Bavaria. Heinrich and Magdalena Schwartz were among a group of German Catholic immigrants who settled in Sheffield and organized the mission parish of St. Teresa of Avila in 1845.

The 80-acre Schwartz farm was located on Bennett (now Abbe) Road about a quarter mile north of French Creek. Their son, John Schwartz, was a young child when the family came to America and eventually became the proprietor of the family farm. On June 8, 1869, John married Franceska Blitz at the bride's parish church of St. Mary on French Creek in Avon.

Franceska was born in the Bavarian hamlet of Schwarzhöfe about 1840. She immigrated to Avon Township with her family in 1847. Being small for her age, she was excused heavy farm and household chores, which enabled her to attend the log school at French Creek. This experience was to play an important role in her future and the lives of her children.



Jean Ackerman on the porch of her 1860s farmhouse holding an aerial photograph of the farm taken in 1952. Jean is the fifth generation of her family to run the farm.

John and Franceska's home and farm were only a short distance to the north and across the road from St. Teresa parish church. At that time, a one-room parish school was located northwest of the original frame church (1852-1907), about where the community building now stands. In the 1870s and 1880s it was customary for lay schoolteachers to stay with local families throughout the school year. During the time when their three children (Mary Magdalena, George, and Francis) were growing up, John and Franceska boarded the schoolmistress in their home. With the teacher in their midst, dinner conversation was often stimulating and informative. Franceska, inspired by one of the teachers who was an accomplished organist, purchased an organ and enrolled herself and her sons in music lessons. Her eldest son, George, turned out to be the most talented and frequently played his mother's favorite hymns. Unusual for families in the 1880s, Franceska saw to it that all of her children completed the eighth grade and long after graduation encouraged them to read and learn.

George Schwartz (1873-1942) went on to be the proprietor of the family farm after his parents died. He married Margaret Gubeno on July 6, 1904, and they had two children, Frances in 1908 and John in 1916. George was of medium build, had red hair and blue eyes, and possessed an easy-going personality, but was strict with the children. Because of his good education, he worked for many years as a clerk for the Nickel Plate Road in South Lorain, but at the same time he was able to continue managing the farm. His wife Margaret was stricken with influenza in 1918, which may have weakened her heart and she died the next year. At a young age, George's daughter Frances took over the responsibilities of housekeeper and raising her brother John. As a reward for her years of sacrifice, on her eighteen birthday George bought her a robin's egg blue Ford convertible.

Then came the Great Depression. In the early 1930s George realized that his son John was destined to become a priest. The family went without pleasures to pay for John's education at St. Ignatius High School in Cleveland, John Carroll College, and St. Mary Seminary. John J. Schwartz was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Cleveland on May 31, 1941. John had the honor of being Sheffield's first native-born priest. George lived to see this proud event, but died of arteriosclerosis the next year. Frances married Rudy Blaha on August 31, 1932 and they continued to operate the family farm.

Frances and Rudy had one child, Jean, born on February 6, 1934. Jean attended nearby St. Teresa School through the eighth grade. Receiving a scholarship, she graduated from Lorain St. Mary's Academy in 1952. Jean earned a Bachelor of Science degree in nursing at St. John College of Cleveland (now Ursuline College). On November 4, 1961, she married widower Fred "Jake" Ackerman. Jake's first wife, Alice Gilbert, had died a few years earlier leaving him with four young children to raise (Harold born in 1949, Suzanne in 1952, Max in 1956, and Larry in 1958). Jean and Jake went on to have seven children of their own (Barbara born in 1962, Ann in 1964, Paul in 1965, Rudy in 1967, John in 1968, Frances in 1970, and Daniel in 1973). With the death of Rudy Blaha in 1978, Jean and Jake Ackerman took



George and Margaret [Gubeno] Schwartz on the front porch of the family farmhouse with their dog "Bippus." Photograph-1910.



Frances [Schwartz] and Rudy F. Blaha, the fourth proprietors of the family farm. (photograph-1967).



Jean [Blaha] and Fred "Jake" Ackerman in 1982.

on the management of the family farm. In 1991 Jake passed away, leaving Jean and her children to carry on the tradition.

The Schwartz-Blaha-Ackerman farmhouse was originally built by John Schwartz in the 1860s. In 1990 this structure was placed on the Ohio Historic Inventory (No. LOR-362-9) by Dr. David R. Bush of Case Western Reserve University. Dr. Bush described the farmhouse as:

“A residence having a one and one half gable roof with a wing. The main entrance is off-center on the long facade and is protected by an open verandah with shed roof. A gable dormer is set in the shed roof directly above the main entrance. The verandah has a low spindle railing with turned posts and decorative brackets. Windows are 6/1 sash, double hung with plain wood frames and sills. Window heads are shaped with decorative swag within [ornamental festoon of flowers]. Roof trim consists of projecting, boxed eaves and verges with a wide, plain frieze. The roof material is slate and the brick chimney is original. The foundation material is mortared natural stone. The barns and sheds are contemporaneous with the house.”

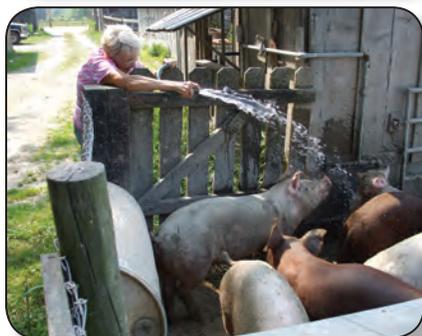


Ackerman Family farmhouse built in the 1860s, exterior restoration completed by the family in 2008.



Aerial view of the Schwartz-Blaha-Ackerman Family Farm in 2007.

A Summer Day at the Ackerman Family Farm



Jean Ackerman stands alongside a historic planter (top), pulls an onion and feeds her chickens (second row), and waters the hogs (bottom); canning apple butter at the Ackerman farm.

HISTORY OF SHEFFIELD VILLAGE'S GREENHOUSE INDUSTRY

Driving along Detroit Road today, one would scarcely realize that a few decades ago North Ridge was home to a thriving “Hot House” Tomato Industry that produced upwards of 2,500 tons of tomatoes each year, valued at over \$5,000,000. In fact, the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* (April 9, 1972) referred to our area as the “Greenhouse Capital of America,” while the *Gasco News* (Summer 1967) went so far as to recognize northeastern Ohio as the “Greenhouse Capital of the World.” It all started at Sheffield in 1927 when John Hoag and his son Ellis (Bud) initiated the greenhouse industry by placing 2.2 acres of farmland under glass at the southeast corner of the Village. Hoag’s original greenhouse was composed of seven interconnected houses, each 411 feet long

and varying from 32 to 36 feet wide. In 1937-1938 Hoag added an additional six houses, bringing the total glass-covered area to just over 4 acres.

The sandy soils of North Ridge proved ideal for growing tomatoes and gourmet cucumbers in greenhouses. After World War II, several other farmers along the Ridge encased many acres under glass. By the late 1970s, ten growers had approximately 24 acres in greenhouse production. The new greenhouses were typically 32 to 36 feet wide by 330 feet long. Walter McAllister (2.6 acres) was the first of the new generation of growers, followed by John Laskin (0.7 acre), Tom Wolfe (3 acres), Ed Peterson (0.8 acre), Gene Riegelsberger (2 acres), Bob Hiltabiddle (1.8 acres), Charles & Bill DeChant (3.2 acres), David Hawley (4 acres), and Wesley Walter (1.5 acres). Although all are gone now, the locations of these former greenhouses are shown on the accompanying map on page 133.

The annual greenhouse tomato production took place in two cycles. Seeds would normally be started in hotbeds in late October or November and by late December or January seedlings could be planted in greenhouse rows from 160 to 200 feet long. The tomato harvest would begin between Valentine’s and St. Patrick’s Day. This first picking would typically yield approximately 15,000 to 18,000 baskets per acre (each basket weighted about 8 lbs.). The expired plants, up to 18 feet in length, would be pulled out in July, the ground sterilized to kill any fungus or weed seeds, and the second cycle would begin. Large boilers were used to produce steam for the sterilization process. Farm ponds, and later (1960s) city water from Elyria, were used to supply the millions of gallons of water required for irrigation and sterilization. City water proved to be superior to pond water, especially in reducing boiler-clogging problems. The second harvest generally lasted from late September to Thanksgiving. Lower sunlight levels for the second picking resulted in small yields, about 6,000 to 9,000 baskets per acre. Under ideal conditions, a grower could expect to gross over \$100,000 per acre if tomatoes were being retailed at \$1.00/lb.

Technology innovation in the greenhouse industry of the mid-twentieth century came from two sources: (1) the growers themselves and (2) research centers such as Ohio State University's Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center (OARDC) at Wooster. Soil testing was unknown in the early stages of the industry before OARDC implemented nutrient-level tests in both the soil and in plant tissues. The introduction of water-soluble fertilizers contributed to greater yields—from the late 1920s to the 1970s tomato production more than doubled. To reduce bacterial and fungal contamination, growers switched to a mulch containing peanut hulls, as compared to straw and animal manure that had been used for many years. Another innovation of the mid-1960s was a special generating unit that burned a mixture of natural gas and air to produce carbon dioxide, which enriched the greenhouse atmosphere speeding photosynthesis and increasing plant growth and tomato production. Research identified carbon dioxide (CO₂) as the most limiting factor in the growth of greenhouse crops. Normal atmospheric conditions of 300 parts per million (ppm) of CO₂ were found to be limiting, while 1,500 to 2,000 ppm produced the most optimal growth. This innovation was dubbed “the best thing that happened to the tomato since it came inside out of the cold.”

The greenhouse growers in Sheffield, Avon, and communities to the east belonged to a cooperative association in Berea, Ohio known as the Greenhouse Vegetables Packing Company. Growers would truck their produce to this facility where it would be sorted, graded, and packed for distribution to markets. Starting in 1981, growers would load their tomatoes and cucumbers into 30-lb. tubs that were color coded to identify the particular greenhouse where the produce was grown. At peak production, approximately 90 greenhouse growers in northeastern Ohio belonged to the association. Another organization from downtown Cleveland, known as the Cleveland Growers Marketing Company handled the sales and distribution of the tomato crop. In 1971 these two organizations merged. Several local growers, including Bud Hoag, Tom Wolfe, and Bob Hiltabiddle, served as officers in these organizations.



Construction of Ellis “Bud” Hoag’s Greenhouses in 1937 (Bob and Marilou Hiltabiddle).

In addition to the amortization cost of constructing the greenhouse, growers also had to cope with ever-rising fuel costs to heat the greenhouses and the necessity to hire temporary labor to pick the tomato crop. The practice of hiring pickers for most North Ridge farmers in Sheffield and Avon (not just greenhouse growers) in the 1940s to 1970s was to take a truck into South Lorain neighborhoods to recruit Mexican migrants and European “DPs” (World War II displaced persons) as “day pickers” who would be paid at the end of each work day.

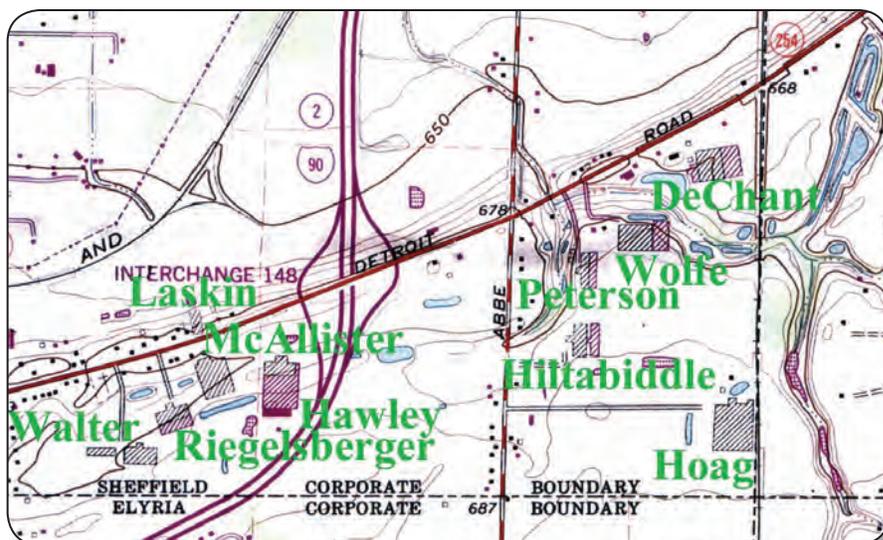


Hiltabiddle Greenhouses on Hoag Drive in 1992 (Bob and Marilou Hiltabiddle).



Ellis "Bud" Hoag, owner of Hoag's Greenhouses on Abbe Road in the 1940s (Jack Hoag).

Another concern was proper pollination of the tomato blossoms—clusters of 3 to 7 yellow flowers, each about 1 inch across. In the greenhouse, where natural wind pollination was not possible, it had to be effected by either shaking plants once a day or using a mechanical vibrator. Overwatering could also be a problem, which was overcome by using drip irrigation methods. However, the weather could be the worst enemy. On June 8, 1953 a devastating tornado hit the Sheffield greenhouses—75% of Hoag's Greenhouses were destroyed. Because of the potential of tiny glass shards in the tomatoes, the entire crop had to be destroyed. Adversity can bring out the best in people—the next day growers and friends from all over northeastern Ohio arrived with tools in hand to begin the task of rebuilding the greenhouses. Several returned to work nights glazing the greenhouses.



U.S. Geological Survey topographic map of Sheffield's North Ridge showing the location of greenhouses in 1979.



McAllister Greenhouses in the 1960s; boiler house at center (Patricia Riegelsberger). The McAllister home at the right in the photograph now houses the Sheffield History Center.

DIRECTORY OF SHEFFIELD VILLAGE GREENHOUSES

Greenhouse Name	Original Owner	Built	Acres	Major Crop(s)	Last Owner	Demolished
Hoag's Greenhouses	John Hoag	1927	4.2	Tomatoes & cucumbers	John E. Hoag	1992
McAllister Greenhouses	Walter McAllister	1947	2.6	Tomatoes	William Spierings	1987
Laskin Greenhouses	John Laskin	1949	0.7	Tomatoes	John Laskin	1978
DeChant Greenhouses	Charles & Wm. DeChant	1953	3.2	Tomatoes & cucumbers	Charles & William Dechant	2004
Thomas Wolfe Greenhouses	Thomas Wolfe	1955	3.0	Tomatoes & radishes	Thomas Wolfe	1996
Peterson Greenhouses	Edmond Peterson	1956	0.8	Tomatoes	Edmond Peterson	1983
Riegelsberger Greenhouses	Gene Riegelsberger	1957	2.0	Tomatoes	Maria Gardens	2006
Hiltabiddle Greenhouses	Robert Hiltabiddle	1958	1.8	Tomatoes & cucumbers	Robert Hiltabiddle	1995
Walter Greenhouses	Wesley Walter	1958	1.5	Tomatoes	Willoway Nursery	2006
Hawley Greenhouses	David Hawley	1960	4.0	Tomatoes	Hawley (J. & A. Lyons, mgrs)	1985



Sterilization process in Hoag's Greenhouses (Bob Hiltabiddle).



Interior of Hoag's Greenhouses in 1967 (Jack Hoag).



Jack Hoag (left) and Bud Hoag (right) display produce from Hoag's Greenhouses in 1976.



Bob Hiltabiddle spraying tomato plants in Hiltabiddle Greenhouses in the 1980s (Bob Hiltabiddle).



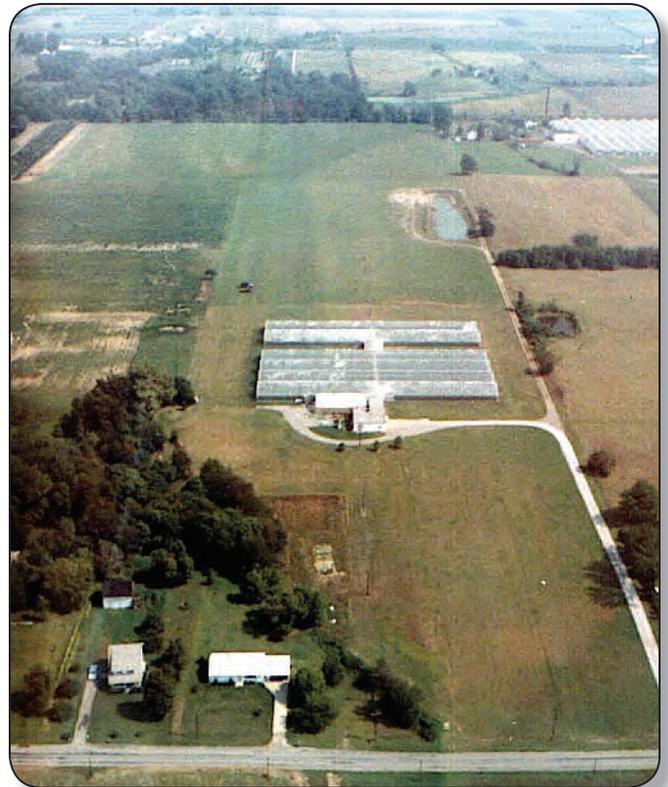
Aerial view toward the west showing Sheffield Village greenhouses; top—Walter Greenhouses, center—Riegelsberger Greenhouses, bottom—McAllister Greenhouses (Bob Hiltabiddle).



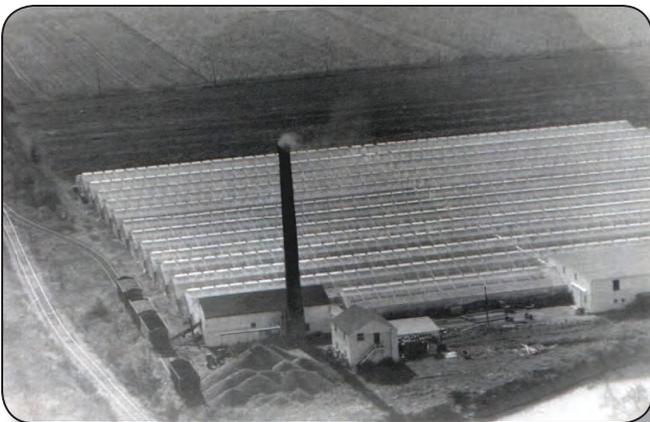
Aerial view toward the east showing Sheffield greenhouses with Abbe Road in the foreground; from left to right—Wolfe Greenhouses, Peterson Greenhouses, Hiltabiddle Greenhouses, and Hoag's Greenhouses.



Aerial view toward the northeast showing Sheffield greenhouses; upper left—Laskin Greenhouses and lower right—McAllister Greenhouses (Patricia Riegelsberger).



Aerial view toward the east showing Sheffield Village greenhouses with Abbe Road in the foreground; upper right—Hoag's Greenhouses and center—Hiltabiddle Greenhouses (Bob Hiltabiddle).



Aerial view of Hoag's Greenhouses in 1940s. Note railroad siding and rail cars loaded with coal for boilers (Jack Hoag).



View of toronado damage to Hoag's Greenhouses in June 1953 (Jack Hoag).

In the late 1980s and early 1990s a number of other factors conspired to cause the decline and eventual demise of the greenhouse industry in Sheffield and surrounding communities along North Ridge. In December 1989 a killing frost in Florida destroyed that state's tomato crop. Growers there scrambled to replant, resulting in a glut of Florida tomatoes later in the year in direct competition with the greenhouse tomatoes of northeastern Ohio. Also, Mexican grown tomatoes were being imported and sold at prices below the cost of growing tomatoes locally. Continually escalating fuel prices and tougher and tougher EPA regulations made it impossible to produce tomatoes at a profit. Many growers found themselves in debt—some in Sheffield were unable to pay back loans as high as \$300,000 without selling off their property to developers. Tragically, three northeastern Ohio growers attempted suicide and two succeeded. OhioEPA was relentless in its prosecution of emission standards for greenhouse boilers to the point where one Sheffield grower was fined \$10,000 for trying to stay in business. Some switched to growing flowers, but environmental regulations made even this impossible. One by one the growers were put out of business, Hoag—the oldest greenhouse in Sheffield—closed in 1991, while DeChant—using creative marketing schemes—was able to hold on until 2003. Two others of the original greenhouses remained in Sheffield until 2006, being used to raise ornamental shrubbery and flowers. When Maria Gardens closed (formerly Riegelsberger Greenhouses) and Willoway Nursery tore down the Wesley Walter Greenhouses that same year, the final chapter of a once flourishing Sheffield industry was written.

SHEFFIELD'S VINTAGE TRACTORS

Sixty years ago Sheffield Village was quite a different place than it is today—East River, Gulf, and Lake Breeze Roads were then SR 301, and the Village had no traffic lights. The population was about 1,147—only 232 homes and 7 businesses were located in the Village then, as compared to some 3,660 homes and 250 businesses located herein 2015.



Barney Jungbluth with his International 8-16 kerosene tractor in the late 1930s at his Abbe Road farm (Gladys Wisnieski).



Clyde McAllister, Sheffield Village's first mayor, riding his steel-wheeled tractor on his Detroit Road farm in the early 1930s (Patricia Riegelsberger).



Charles "Edward" Herdendorf, Jr's 1941 Ford-Ferguson 9N at his peach orchard on East River Road in 1952. The dog's name was "Snooper" and his driving skills were marginal.

In 1948 the Page-Baldwin & Brown Company of Columbus, Ohio conducted a survey of the rural areas of Lorain County and published the *Lorain County, Ohio Directory*, which contained a “Telephone Street Guide and Householders’ Directory” that listed each home and business in the Village. The directory also contained a wealth of other useful information, including the names of the head of each household and spouse, number of children, place of employment, type of farm and acreage, and the make and years of automobiles, trucks, and tractors.

At the time of the 1948 survey there were 114 farms operating in Sheffield with approximately 2,880 acres of land under cultivation. Sixty-two of the farmers indicated that they owned one or more tractors, yielding a total of 67 tractors for the Village. The accompanying table, derived from the 1948 Directory and other sources, lists the farmers, street location of the farm, number of acres, and the type(s) of tractor(s) for each farm.

Today, we are fortunate that a number of vintage tractors remain in our Village, and have been lovingly restored. The accompanying photographs illustrate a few of the older tractors that tilled the soil in the 1930s, followed by a few of those from the 1940s through the 1960s that have been restored.



Ron Forster with his restored 1955 Oliver 77 tractor. This tractor was purchased new by former Sheffield police chief Mike Hanko. Ron acquired it in 1990 and undertook the restoration work.

SHEFFIELD FARMS & TRACTORS—1948

Farmer	Location	Acres	Tractor Type(s)
Stephen Belko	Colorado Avenue	10	Fordson (1934), Dodge (1936)
Lewis Betzel	Detroit Road	43	Farmall
Rudy Blaha	Abbe Road	40	Ford-Ferguson 9N (1946)
Ellis Briggs	Detroit Road	1	Briggs & Stratton
Joseph Bring	East River Road	—	Fordson
Michael Bruder	Lake Breeze Road	59	John Deere
Burrell, Dwight & Ken	East River Road	50	tractor
Alex Butti	Detroit Road	20	Ford-Ferguson 2N (1945)
John Campbell	Colorado Avenue	10	Gibson (1948)
Walter Carlin	East River Road	—	Fordson (1929)
Louis Chozinski	Colorado Avenue	12	Fordson (1924)
Carl Cunningham	East River Road	50	International Harvester (1939)
Arthur DeChant	Abbe Road	43	Ford-Ferguson 2N (1942)
Charles DeChant	Detroit Road	18	International (1947)
Herbert DeChant	Detroit Road	57	Farmall
Joseph DeChant	Abbe Road	125	Farmall Harvester
Raymond DeChant	Abbe Road	150	Ford-Ferguson 9N (1940)
Frank Dolacki	Colorado Avenue	32	Fordson (1928)
Raymond Dunfee	Detroit Road	25	Ford-Ferguson
Guy Ferguson	East River Road	8	Gibson (1941)
Albert Findora	Colorado Avenue	25	Ford-Ferguson (1938)
Harold Freshwater	Abbe Road	25	McCormick
Nick Frolick	East River Road	56	Oliver (1945)
Arthur Gallum	Colorado Avenue	35	Ford-Ferguson (1940), McCormick-Deering (1928)
Harry Garber	French Creek Road	15	Allis-Chalmers
Steve Gargus	Detroit Road	6	John Deere
Murray Greenup	Detroit Road	17	John Deere
George Gubeno	Detroit Road	48	Fordson, John Deere
Steve Halasz	Harris Road	48	Case “HC”
Michael Hanko	Harris Road	75	Case (1938), Ford-Ferguson
Henry Hill	Colorado Avenue	30	Fordson (1929)
Edward Herdendorf	East River Road	3	Ford-Ferguson 9N (1940s)
Bernard Jungbluth	Abbe Road	60	Farmall (1942)
Andrew Kelling	Colorado Avenue	61	John Deere
James Kilpatrick	Harris Road	11	Farmall (1947)
Frank Klingshirn	East River Road	—	Ford (1928), Dodge
William Knight	Detroit Road	—	John Deere
William Krause	Abbe Road	2	Stravley
Herbert Langthorp	Detroit Road	—	Ford-Ferguson 9N (1946)
John Laskin	Detroit Road	41	John Deere
John Laven	Harris Road	30	Silver King (1938)
Edward Mackert	Abbe Road	60	Farmall, Fordson
Kenneth McAllister	Detroit Road	35	Ford, John Deere
Walter McAllister	Detroit Road	33	Ford-Ferguson (1941), International Cub (1947)
Henry McFarland	Detroit Road	19	International (1947)
Daniel Milloff	Abbe Road	19	Fordson (1927)
Frank Minnick	Colorado Avenue	23	Farmall (1932)
Alfred Mohr	Detroit Road	14	Allis-Chalmers
Charles Naro	Lake Breeze Road	71	Ford-Ferguson
Jacob Nekrick	East River Road	—	John Deere
James Novak	Abbe Road	18	Farmall (1945)
Paul Poor	East River Road	—	Case
Raymond Potter	Detroit Road	16	Blackhawk
George Rieth	Colorado Avenue	20	Farmall (1939)
William Roth	Colorado Avenue	45	Ford-Ferguson 9N (1941)
Albert Schmidt	Lake Breeze Road	15	homemade tractor
Alvin Schmitz	Abbe Road	16	tractor (1944)
Andrew Schmitz	Colorado Avenue	16	John Deere
Al Schneider	Abbe Road	68	Farmall
McDallas Taylor	Abbe Road	41	Farmall
John Townsend	Detroit Road	25	John Deere
Hugh Wilkerson	Colorado Avenue	10	Fordson (1929)
Lawrence Winter	Abbe Road	35	Farmall (1939)



Max Ackerman with his 1941 Ford-Ferguson 9N tractor at the Ackerosa on Abbe Road. William Roth purchased this tractor new from J. R. Dall Ford in Elyria. Max restored the tractor tin 2009 after buying it from Dennis Urig at Camp Wahoo. At one time the Kelling family also owned the tractor.



Donald Hammer with Garfield Farms' 1962 International 404 tractor. Charles E. Herdendorf, Jr. purchased this tractor new from Elyria Implement Company for \$2,600.



Fleet of vintage tractors on the Ackerman Farm on Abbe Road. From left to right: 1956 Ford 860, 1948 Ford 8N, and 1953 Farmall Cub (photograph by Max Ackerman).



Circa 1954 International Harvester McCormick Farmall H tractor that once belonged to the Burrell family on East River Road at French Creek (upper photo). The Ternes family restored this tractor in 2002. Tim Ternes shows how the belt-driven buzz saw is mounted on the front of Farmall H tractor (lower photo).



Rick Ternes (left) and his father Tim Ternes, with their restored 1951 John Deere B tractor. Over a million were manufactured.

CLETRAC CRAWLER TRACTORS

Have you ever heard of a CLETRAC? We have over a dozen of them right here in Sheffield Village. They are a marvelous invention of Rollin H. White (1872-1962), founder of a Cleveland company that eventually became known as Cletrac, Inc., which produced thousands of these unique crawler tractors for military and civilian use from 1916 to 1965. White's brilliant career, which included this and several other inventions, was recognized in 2010 with his induction into the National Inventors Hall of Fame. Thomas Edison, another Ohioan, was the first in 1973 when the Hall of Fame was founded in Washington, D.C.

Rollin H. White

Rollin Henry White was born in Cleveland and educated at Brooks Military Academy, a college preparatory school for males that operated in Cleveland from 1874 to 1891. The academy was established by wealthy Clevelanders in honor of Rev. Frederick Brooks, rector of St. Paul's Episcopal Church. He had dreamed of opening a prep school for young men. The school admitted boys and young men from 7 to 20 years of age and was first located on Prospect Avenue at the southwest corner of East 14th Street. Its first headmaster was John S. White, a Harvard graduate. After 1882 Amos H. Thompson served as President of the school. In 1875 the school moved into a new building on Silbey Avenue, funded by men such as financier and railroad magnate Jephtha Homer Wade. The new structure included a drill hall, armory, gymnasium, and chemical laboratory. Military training was conducted by a U.S. Army officer. The school closed in 1891 and the building was destroyed by fire in 1908.

Following his education at Brooks, White attended Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. In 1898 he went to work at his father's factory in Cleveland, the White Sewing Machine Company.



Rollin Henry White (1872-1962), inventor of the Cletrac crawler tractor, was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame, Washington, D.C. on May 4, 2011.

The following year he invented a flash boiler to generate steam rapidly and safely in passenger vehicles. A few years later he designed an engine with high and low pressure cylinders, for which he won a gold medal at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis. White's automobiles, known as *White Steamers*, produced by his White Motor Company garnered respect winning several competitions and setting speed records. In 1912, Rollin White turned his talents to designing a crawler tractor—one with articulated steel bands passing around the wheels for travel on rough ground.

Cletrac Crawler Tractors

In 1916, with a capital investment of \$6 million, Rollin H. White organized the Cleveland Motor Plow Co. on Euclid Avenue, to produce the crawler-type tractor he had developed for general farm use four years earlier. Renamed as the Cleveland Tractor Co. in 1917, he sold 40,000 tractors in the United States and 70 foreign countries in the first decade of manufacturing, many for military applications in World War I. During the Great Depression of the 1930s the needs of the Civilian Conservation Corps and public works projects kept the plant open. By 1937 the firm, which then employed 1,500 workers, enjoyed record tractor sales in America and abroad. Before World War II, the company had introduced several lower-priced tractors with 4-cylinder engines for use by the small farmer.

The military application of Cleveland Tractor's products became dominant during World War II when the firm manufactured a new, high-speed tractor for hauling artillery. Another specialized military tractor, the MG-1 (nicknamed the "Bomber Nurse"), was produced with rubber cleats for use on grass airfields. This unique tractor came equipped with a high-pressure air compressor, 24-volt generator, nitrogen bottle, winch, and center-mount drawbar for maximum traction that allowed it to tow B-17s around soggy English airfields with relative ease. Although the company received a steady flow of orders, low defense-work profits and research costs for new products convinced President White to sell the company to the 96-year-old Oliver Corp. of Chicago in 1944.

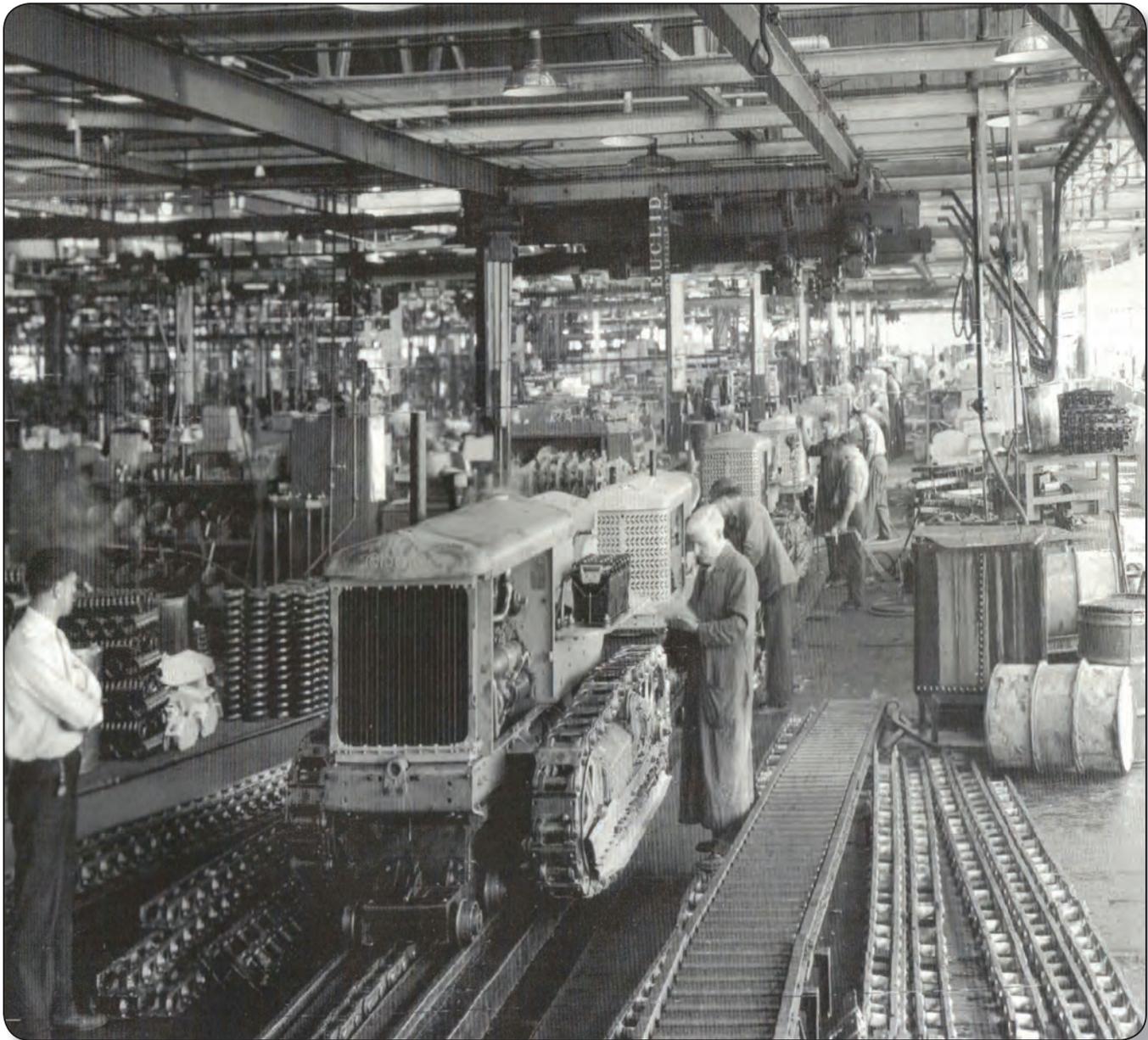


Cletrac tractor sales promotional memorabilia (courtesy of Mike Stockard).

Oliver invested \$3.5 million in the aging Cleveland plant to develop new products. However, Cleveland Tractor remained unprofitable until the Korean War revived its business. Oliver produced tractors branded Oliver-Cletrac into the 1950s renaming its Cleveland facilities Cletrac, Inc. in 1959. The demise of the Cleveland plant came in 1961 when White Motor Company bought the local Cletrac inventories, engineering designs, and machine tools, then closed the plant. The site of the Cletrac plant at 19300 Euclid Avenue is now the home of the massive Indian Hills Senior Community, one of the largest retirement complexes in the mid-west. Cletrac tractors continued to be produced for a few more years in Charles City, Iowa, with the last one “crawling” off the line in 1965, ending 49 years of production. Over the years some 57 model-variations of Cletrac tractors were produced.



Cleveland Tractor Company general offices and works, consisting of 7 acres of floor space at 19300 Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio, operated at this location from 1916 to 1961 (Mike Stockard).



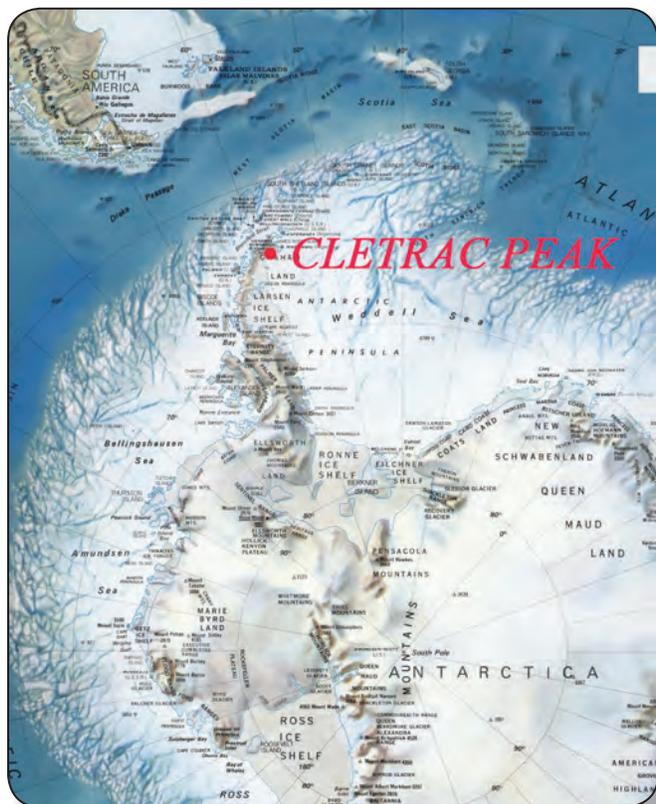
View of the assembly line inside the Cleveland Tractor Company factory in the late 1930s (Floyd County Historical Society, Charles City, Iowa).

Cletrac Peak

A special honor has been awarded to Cletrac tractors—the naming of a geographic feature. Cletrac Peak (latitude 64°20'S; longitude 59°38'W) is a conspicuous, steep-sided peak at the northwest corner of Larsen Inlet on the Antarctic Peninsula. A Cletrac was the first tractor to be used successfully in the Antarctic, specifically Model 80-60 employed by Admiral Richard Byrd during his 1933–35 expedition. The peak was first mapped by the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey (1960–1961), and named by the United Kingdom Antarctic Place-Names Committee for Cletrac tractors made by the Cleveland Tractor Company.



Cletrac Peak, named for the use of Cletrac tractors by Adm. Byrd's Antarctic Expeditions in the 1930s, is located in this mountain range on the Antarctic Peninsula (photographed by author in February 1989).



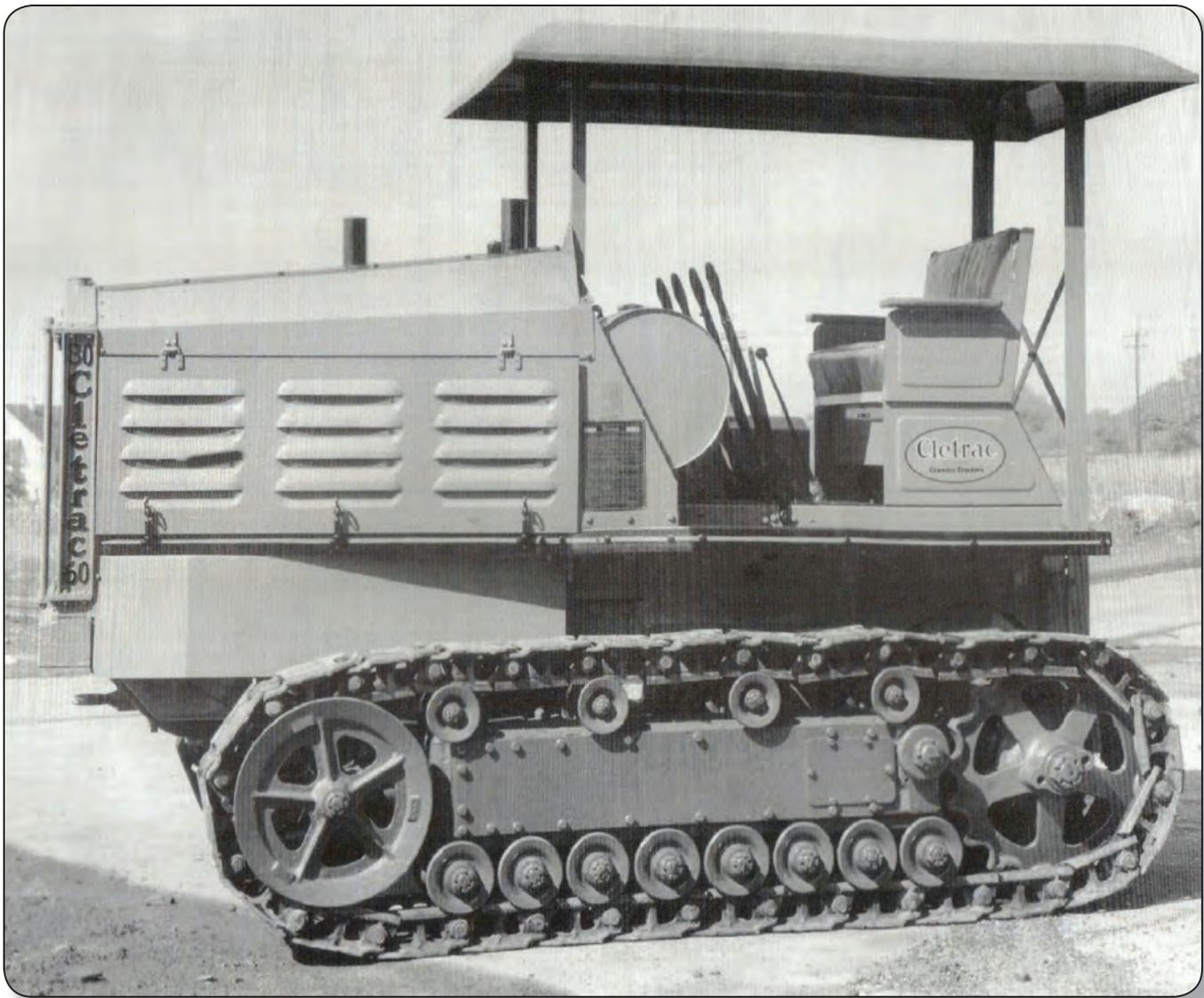
Map of Antarctica showing the location of Cletrac Peak.

Tom Walther's Cletrac Adventure

Tom Walther (1930–2014) formerly of Harris Road, was a Cletrac driver—the year was 1942. Tom, at the tender age of 12, worked on the Nusdorfer farm in Avon Lake at the northeast corner of Route 83 and Walker Road. Here, Farmer Nusdorfer operated a 100-acre orchard of apple and peach trees. Young Tom was assigned the job of periodically spraying the trees with insecticides and fungicides. Most of the time he would do this alone by pulling an automatic sprayer behind the farmer's green Cletrac tractor. One day when Nusdorfer was gone, Tom's job



Models K-20 and A-30 Cletrac tractors were successfully used on farms (a) and for road grading (b) in the United States and Europe in the 1920s–1940s (Mike Stockard).



Model 80-60 Cletrac, built from 1930 to 1932, was the type used by Adm. Byrd in Antarctica. It was fitted with a Wisconsin DT-3 gasoline engine and optional canopy. This tractor was shipped to the Philadelphia Navy Yard in September 1931 to serve in Antarctica (Floyd County Historical Society, Charles City, Iowa).

was to mix the spray solution, attach the sprayer to the power takeoff on the tractor, and undertake the task of going up and down the rows of trees, coating them with a fine spray.

All went as normal until Tom made an exceptionally sharp turn. Snap! One of the tracks was thrown off a front wheel. Tom was horrified. What would Nusdorfer say? But he was determined to get the track back on the wheel before the farmer returned—not an easy task for a grown man. It seemed impossible for a boy alone. Not sure of what to do, Tom loosened the tension bolt on the main spring and somehow with a long pry bar and a lot of fortitude was able to ease the track back on the front wheel. When Nusdorfer returned all was well and Tom had completed his task with no one the wiser. That was over 70 years ago. The corner of Route 83 and Walker Road is quite a different place today, but Tom recalled fondly driving the Cletrac up and down the rows of apple and peach trees that once stood there.

James Schilens' Cletrac Collection

James Schilens, Jr. has collected 14 Cletrac tractors in the last 10 years. Jim, born in 1961, was raised in Sheffield Village on the Charles DeChant Homestead and his father, James Paul Schilens, Sr., still lives on North Ridge. Jim's mother, Clara Marie [DeChant] Schilens, passed away in 1989 at the young age of 48. Jim now makes his home in Avon Lake. He is a registered landscape architect with offices on Center Ridge Road in Westlake. He started collecting Cletrac tractors about 10 years ago, encouraged by his Uncle Philip DeChant. Philip owned a farm on Abbe Road that was purchased by the Ford Motor Company as part of its Avon Lake factory. Philip, a World War II veteran, was so enamored with his Cletrac tractor that when he died in 2006, he instructed that an image of a Cletrac be carved into his gravestone. The attractive black granite stone is in the new section of St. Teresa Cemetery. Philip's son, John DeChant of Wooster, Ohio, also has a collection of 12 nicely

restored Cletrac tractors. Collectors, like Jim and his cousin John, who are infatuated with Cletrac, refer to themselves as having “Iron-itis.”

How does one acquire a Cletrac? Jim scans the Internet, tours county fairs, hears of them by “word of mouth,” and follows the newsletters of the many Cletrac clubs throughout the country. He has found Cletracs for his collection as far away as California. He houses his collection in a storage building on North Ridge in Sheffield Village. Jim’s “long-term goal” is to collect two each of the various Cletrac tractor styles produced in Cleveland. He envisions restoring one of each model and leaving the other in its used condition. His current collection includes early models from about 1917 to others in the 1940s. He doubts if he can find them all because only 300 were produced for a few rare models. In total about 20 models were built, and with styling innovations for some models, some 50 iterations are out there somewhere.

Views of Jim Schilens’ Cletrac collection



Cletrac tractor Model 12 (W), built from 1919 to 1932, was powered by a Weidley-Cletrac gasoline engine.



Cletrac tractor Model 55, built from 1932 to 1936, could be fitted with a scraper blade and an air compressor. This model was powered by a Wisconsin gasoline engine.



Jim Schilens proudly exhibits his Cletrac tractor Model 40-D, shown here with a Sergeant overhead loader used for mining. This model, built in 1935 and 1936, was powered by a Hercules diesel engine.



Cletrac tractor Model BG, built from 1937 to 1945, was powered by a Hercules gasoline engine.



Cletrac tractor Model MG-1, known as the “Bomber Nurse” during World War II, was fitted with rubber tracks for use on sod airfields. This model was built for military applications from 1941 to 1943.



Sheffield Congregational Church (circa 1915).