

*Lacustrine Refuge in the Cuyahoga AOC Project, Wildwood Lakefront State Park, Cleveland OH.  
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## **Observations on historical resources in the Euclid Creek estuary**

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The Euclid Creek estuary is a dynamic natural environment. During the last two centuries, the relatively fluid substrate has had several chapters of historical landscape transformation, each leaving characteristic material traces. Important maritime activities apparently centered in the area of the Villa Angela Drive bridge, a locale highly transformed by recent engineering for park access and flood control. The Lacustrine Refuge project will work generally upstream of the historical maritime area. Nevertheless, care must be taken at the project's northwestern reaches.

### **Post Glacial Entrenched Meanders**

Figure 1 map ref: A, B, C

The Euclid Creek lake plain channel runs NW-ward from Euclid Ave to the current lakeshore. Here, the creek has excavated a ravine 20-40ft deep and several hundred yards wide. The channel emerged with the opening of Niagara Falls, about 12,600 years ago. Before the Niagara outflow, pro-glacial Lake Warren covered the entire area now known as the lake plain; the beach strand line generally followed Euclid Avenue. Euclid Creek's mouth lay on this strand line. As Lake Warren receded, Euclid Creek began meandering across the emerging plain. As lake level continued to fall, the meanders became entrenched and the lake plain channel solidified.

Today, the "oxbow" (map ref A) is the final looping meander before the creek's Lake Erie outflow, and the subject of the current Lacustrine Refuge project restoration. Nevertheless, during the 1800s and early 1900s, another looping meander, herein called the "ultimate" meander (map ref C), lay downstream from the oxbow. The ultimate meander is best represented in the Mueller Euclid Township Plate 43 (1898) which, herein, is georeferenced for viewing against a 3m DEM and the Google Earth aerial viewer. Plate 43 shows a tight meander looping SW in the area of the current Villa Angela Drive bridge.

During the nineteenth century, an important natural and cultural area lay between the oxbow and the ultimate meander (map ref B). The "inter-meander" was sheltered from incoming storm surges and surrounded by low-lying land. In today's terms, the inter-meander lies between the oxbow-ACOE channel confluence and the Villa Angela Drive bridge. There is some evidence that the inter-meander at times opened into a broad lagoon. Shipbuilding and stevedoring apparently concentrated in this area. In terms of the Lacustrine Refuge project, the historically-sensitive area is the inter-meander north bank in which historical bulkhead pilings are preserved in the final (S-flowing) oxbow leg.

### **Summary of Historical Activities**

The following entries summarize known historical activities in the Euclid Creek estuary. Each concludes with a sentence about the Lacustrine Refuge project's possible impacts on historical materials. Green text indicates no impact. Red text suggests that care should be taken. The activity placemark points for the prehistoric occupation, shipyard and port 1 are for general reference only. Exact locations are not yet known.

*Prehistoric occupation, c. 1100-1650?*

Figure 1

map ref: prehistoric?

Whittlesey period (1100-1650) Native Americans frequented the mouth bluffs of many Lake Erie tributaries. Substantial summer villages are known for the Cuyahoga and Chagrin estuaries, which flank Euclid Creek. At Euclid Creek, the most likely place for a Whittlesey summer encampment would be the high bluff area occupied by St. John Nottingham Lutheran Church, south of Lake Shore Blvd and south of the project area. *No material evidence of prehistoric Native American settlement is known from the project area itself.*

*Euclid Pottery, 1818-c. 1840*

Figures 1 &amp; 2

map ref: pottery

The estuary area supported what may have been the first stoneware kiln in Cuyahoga County. Operations began with William Gray in 1818. Sure evidence for stoneware appeared in 1823 when father and son, Jacob and Leonard Marsilliot took over the kiln. The Marsilliot's began importing fire clay from Ravenna Township. The kiln operated until the late 1830s, when William Treat established a shipyard on land encompassing site. Documentary evidence suggests that the kiln lay north of the Neff Rd, East Park Dr. intersection.

*The Euclid Pottery site apparently lies outside the current project area.*

*Treat shipyard, 1838-1861*

Figures 1 &amp; 2

map ref: shipyard

Captain William Treat and landowner Charles Moses began shipyard operations by 1838. By 1861, more than a dozen commercial freight schooners and canal boats were built in the estuary. The schooners ranged to 140' in length and displaced up to 380 tons, and constituted the most substantial early constructions in Euclid Township. The shipyard represents an intensive use of estuary timber and local labor. Treat's residence lay at the foot of Neff Rd. This suggests that the weighs may have been located north of the inter-meander.

*There are no known remains of the shipyard in the inter-meander area.*

*Marsilliot home port, c. 1840-1860*

map ref: port 1

After closing the Euclid Pottery about 1838, Leonard Marsilliot and two sons bought the freight schooner *Thomas Corwin* (Ohio governor, 1840-1842). For the next two decades, the home port was Euclid Creek. In 1857, Leonard renamed the ship, *Agnes E. Marsilliot*, after his new daughter-in-law, but then sold it in 1859. The sale of the Marsilliot and the closing of the Treat shipyard probably marked the end of port operations at Euclid Creek. The Marsilliot port facilities most probably lay in the inter-meander area near the current Villa Angela Drive bridge. *There are no known remains of the Marsilliot port the inter-meander area.*

*LS&MS pumping station, 1865-1952*

map ref: pumping

The Lake Shore & Michigan Southern Railroad established a water pumping station (1865-1952). Pumping station remains lie on the west bank of the estuary, just upstream from the ACOE cut.

*The pumping station remains appear to lie outside the project area.*

*Stream bank stabilization, 1870-1900*

Figures 6-11

map ref: N&amp;S bulkhead red traces

In 1874, the Ursuline Sisters began buying estuary land that would total nearly 68 acres by 1898. The land, eventually holding to two schools and a convent, covered both sides of the stream in some areas of the oxbow. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the Ursulines contracted to have their stream banks stabilized during this period. Figures 6-11 represent photographs taken, 1890-1910, in relation to Ursuline school activities. They show timber-built bulkheading on both sides of the channel from the oxbow to the mouth. Some of the timbers remain on the west bank of the S-flowing oxbow channel, above the confluence.

*Care to preserve bulkhead timbers remaining on the west bank of the S-flowing oxbow channel.*

*Final port and bridge, early 1900s*

Figure 1

map ref: port 2

Figures 6 and 7 illustrate wharf facilities, including a substantial derrick, in the ultimate meander area. The images show a large mass of sandstone blocks on the bank and a steam-powered boat (possibly a small tug) in one of the ultimate meander channels. Figure 11, a hand tinted postcard photograph, shows a bridge across the outflow channel with substantial sandstone abutments. It is tempting to believe the bank-strewn sandstone blocks were eventually assembled into the bridge abutments. The two photographs are the latest known evidence of port facilities in the Euclid Creek estuary. *The final port facilities lie outside the project area.*

**Summary**

The Euclid Creek estuary's historical activities represent the early industrialization of Euclid Township. The industrial port apparently lay on the north bank of the inter-meander, an area minimally impacted by the Lacustrine Refuge project. Nevertheless, the archaeological potential of the lower estuary is high. This potential must be preserved. In the course of oxbow restoration, care should be taken to maintain the remaining pilings associated with the stream bank stabilization, 1870-1900. I request that the project manager keep eyes peeled for archaeological resources.