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written about 1935

CALDWELL HISTORY

Preface

Assuming that a general history of Caldwell district would be interesting and informative, not only to its own inhabitants, but also to the average Youngstown citizen, the author has decided to write down the data and impressions which he has gathered from a variety of sources. He wishes to give his most sincere thanks and appreciation to all those who have in any way aided him in this undertaking, and special recognition for the same to the following individuals: Miss Margaret Modland, Miss Mary Haddow, Miss Margaret McNab, Mrs. Mary Hogan, Miss Cecilia Flannery, Miss Mable M. Marcus, Mrs. Warren Williamson, Miss Sarah Simms, Mr. Pete Manning, Mr. Charles Westlake, Mr. Dennis Cregan, Mr. Hubert Weikert, Mr. Milan R. Karas, Mr. Paul L. Strait, Mr. Sidney R. Kreps, The Reality Guarantee and Trust Co., The Mahoning County Court House, and The Youngstown Board of Education.

Practically every Youngstown person has either heard of, visited, or lived in this part of the city, specifically known as Caldwell district and probably better known as "Monkey's Nest" or lower Brier Hill. But after all, what does the average outsider (or insider for that matter) really know about this district except perhaps that it is located on the north-west side of town and inhabited mostly by the foreign and colored classes of people. But that is merely surface knowledge! You must learn its past and present history, if you are really to know and understand the romance of life that has gone into its making. You must realize that this district offers everyone a wonderful opportunity to study some of the most vital phases of hereditary and environmental philosophies; an opportunity to learn and to love those people who give their bodies and souls to a "melting pot" of American civilization.

In order that you may have a more concrete foundation on which to construct your concepts, and a guide to your future observations of this district let's consider some relatively important questions. What are its boundary lines? Well, generally speaking, the northern boundary is that part of West Federal Street between West Lake Crossing and Worthington Streets; and the southern boundary is the Mahoning River. The territory which this comprises is most or all of Caldwell District, Lower Brier Hill, "Monkey's Nest", or whatever you may call it. Do these names suggest anything to you? Have you ever wondered who were the first settlers, what nationality they were, and how they made their living?

As is most often the case in the history of America cities, this too was at first all farm land. People lived and tilled the ground where we now find the mills, the streets, and the workers homes. But who were the original land owners? During the latter part of the eighteenth century the State of Connecticut sold three million acres of land from the eastern end of what was then known as the Connecticut Western Reserve to Joseph Howland and forty-seven others for one million two hundred dollars, that is

approximately forty cents per acre. Joseph Howland and his accompanied members formed a deed of trust with John Caldwell, John Morgan, and Jonathan Brase, conveying to them the right to survey, plat, and sell this land. The Caldwell family holds a very important place in the historical background of not only this district, but also of the city as a whole. Manes and Henry Caldwell owned considerable land, and the house of their farm was located on Wells Street. An interesting thing about these two men is that they were stone masons by trade, and they helped to build the monument that stands on the Public Square today. Did you know that before these men could start on the erection of the monument they first had to fill up the frog pond that was then on that very spot? If you remember that frog pond, then you must have been one of the early pioneers of Youngstown. Because of the influential lives of the Caldwell family the name has remained for posterity to revere. Caldwell Street, Caldwell School, and Caldwell Settlement are called so in its honor. The next time you come in contact with any of the above try to remember the historical significance.

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Let us continue with this narrative and try to get a glimpse of life in this community both as it was and as it is today. In order to give you a clear and comprehensive picture, the time must be divided into three periods; the Nordic, Southern Slav and Colored eras.

Taking up the Nordic period first, we find that the Welsh were among the first settlers in this community. They were mostly farmers and coal miners and came here to follow these lines. When the coal mines were worked out they began to move nearer the city, particularly the Caldwell District. A short time later, about 1863, the Cartwright Mill, which was one of the first mills to be built in this vicinity, was erected on Moore Street, which is now known as West Rayen Avenue, east of Stull Street now West Avenue. This mill, which was built by S. K. Sheld, Wm. Clark, James Cartwright, and P. J. Lundry, produced hoops for barrels, buckets and tubs, was the beginning of the gigantic steel industry of today.

Coming about the same time as the Cartwright Mill were the Erie Railroad, which passes through on the north side of the neighborhood, and Clark's Shingle Bent Factory, which stood on a site now occupied by the City Coal and Supply Company. Later Ring's Sucker Factory replaced the Shingle Factory.

Leaving the industrial picture and turning elsewhere we find that in 1865 to 1870 this community was mostly a cow pasture with a lovely peach orchard as its beauty spot. Where the beautiful peach orchard, which was once the pride of its owners, stood now stands a desolate scrap heap. The orchard was sacrificed to the ever expanding industrial era.

The houses, which were few and far between, were not originally built upon the sites they now occupy but were moved in from Vienna, Churchhill and Power's Mine, on the other side of the Mahoning River. The streets were unpaved and the sidewalks consisted of three boards laid side by side. Ardale Street, which is one of the oldest streets in Youngstown, was merely a lane for cows to cross the railroad tracks.

The commercial needs of the community at that time were taken care of by Mr. Dan Gallegher, who had a General Store and Saloon on the corner of Ardale and Moore Streets. Moore Street, which was the first street in the neighborhood to be paved, was named after Hugh Moore, one of the early settlers. Sharing this business with Gallegher were: John McGuire, John Moore Sr., and Mr. Bates. The former two had stores and saloons on Moore Street, while the latter ran a general store on the spot now taken up by the Sherman Scrap Yard. Mr. Bates sold out to John Healey who later turned the business over to his son.

The neighborhood had no churches now nor schools and therefore the religious needs of the people were taken care of by St. Columbia's Church, a little wooden building on Wood Street. It had the service of a visiting priest who came on horseback from Minerva. Other churches which were of service were: The Methodist Church on Front Street, First Presbyterian on Wick Avenue, and St. Ann's Church in Brier Hill.

Because there were no schools in the Caldwell District the children had to go to Wood Street School where they were taught by Miss Thorn, one of the earliest teachers here.

The people of those days did not enjoy the services of a newsboy who daily delivers the newspapers to our front doors today, but rather they had

to congregate in front of Jewell's Drug Store on West Federal Street, where a man arrived on horseback from Cleveland daily at about 11 o'clock to inform them of what was going on in the city and outside world. Later a newspaper was published in Canfield, Ohio.

Seeing the success of the Cartwright Mill, E. E. Well, Thomas Wells, Benjamin Rowley, Dr. W. L. Buchner, Herman C. Buchner, Covington Westlake, George Achins and Henry Wick together financed the Youngstown Rolling Mill which was built in 1871-72 near Hezlop Street, where the Union Works of the Carnegie Steel Company is now located. This mill like the Cartwright Mill made hoops and tank iron.

The steel industry made the community take on the appearance of a thriving neighborhood which attracted the better type of the working classes who saw in it a golden opportunity to better their conditions in life. It was at this time that the English and German settlers came over. With the coming of these working people many problems arose, the most paramount of which was taking care of the needy who were temporarily incapacitated by sickness or other misfortune. We had no Allied Council or F. E. R. A., and therefore their place was taken by the Mennonites, a charitable group of people who had a settlement on Federal Street where the Y. M. C. A. is now located. Those people gave considerable aid and assistance to the needy in this district. The Mennonites were not only Community-minded insofar as providing aid for the needy, but they also established Youngstown's first Fresh Air Camp which was located in North Jackson. They allowed the people of Caldwell District an opportunity to send twenty-five children to their camp at various times in the summer.

While all the above events were taking place, the people of the Caldwell District were fighting for a public school and just as July the 4th, 1776 is a red-letter day in the history of our Country, July the 5th, 1886 might in its way be considered the red-letter day in the history of free public education in the Caldwell District, for it was on that day that the Board of Education made the people's dreams come true by purchasing a lot on Caldwell Street from James Caldwell where a two-room schoolhouse was built and completed in January 1887. The first teachers of the school were: Miss Rose Reibel and Miss Moisner; and the first custodian was Mr. James Good. Later on two more rooms were added and finally three portables were built to take care of the steady overflow. This school was unlike other schools in one respect. It had an 18ft. fence all around the schoolyard. The fence was put up to protect the children, not only from physical harm but also from the sights, some of which were entirely unsuited for the eyes of children to see. This fence served its purpose for years to come, finally being torn down after 1922.

For the enjoyment of the young folks there were two bath houses on the south side of the Mahoning River, across from West Avenue. Here the boys and girls used to go swimming.

I am sure that many people are anxious to know how the community received its name of "Monkey's Nest". In the early part of the nineteenth century Mr. Tom Collins had a saloon on Bridge Street. He used to keep Monkeys in the window as sort of an attraction and advertisement. It has also been said and verified that the reason for the Monkeys in the window was not an attraction but rather a request by several influential citizens

from other parts of the city who patronized the place and who at times were not positive that they could locate the establishment. They thought therefore, that the Monkeys in the window would aid them in finding the saloon.

Things went on quietly for a time with immigrants from southern Europe coming in now and then. Some of these people went back to their native countries and pictured America as a glorious land of opportunity and plenty. They fired their own people with a desire and ambition to come to America where they could make their fortune in a short time. The few immigrants that came now and then were the forerunners of the new immigration which started in 1890 and continued up to the World War. These people, the majority of whom were peasants and framers, came here with the intention of making their fortunes in a comparatively short time and returning again to their native land where they could spend the rest of their days in peace and plenty. Many of them carried out their original intentions but many others remained here, reared families and adopted America as their native land.

Leaving their own country and coming to America these people came into contact with a culture and standard of living entirely unfamiliar to them and entirely unlike the one they had just left behind them. Therefore they picked out certain spots into which they congregated; spots where they could live up to their own standards and cultures. The Caldwell District, being near the steel mills, was one of these picked areas into which the immigrants came in such large numbers that they soon overcrowded the district, forcing the original settlers to move into other parts of the city.

At this time a wife was a premium and literally worth her weight in gold. A man who was fortunate enough to possess one of these "beasts of burden" immediately set up a boarding house into which the Croation, Hungarian and other southern slav newcomers rushed in such appalling numbers that they broke every existing rule of health and sanitation. Let us take time out to get a picture of one of these homes.

Here was a five room house which consisted of three rooms on the first floor and two rooms on the second. On the first floor there was a kitchen, a middle room somewhat similar to our dining room and a bedroom. In the house lived a family who had four children. All six members of the family occupied the bedroom downstairs. The two rooms upstairs were occupied by twenty-four boarders, twelve of whom worked the night shift and twelve of whom worked the day turn. Each upstairs bedroom held two double beds which were in continuous use. The men who worked nights slept during the day and the men who worked day turn used the beds at night, at the rate of three men to a bed. About the room one saw trunks and clothes piled up waist high and they took up so much space that there was hardly room enough to turn around. The women of the household did all of the washing, ironing, cooking and cleaning for this group of thirty people. In return for her services each boarder paid her three dollars per month. The household expenses such as food, utilities, heat and so forth were all added up and divided proportionally among the boarders. In order to accomplish everything that had to be done, it was necessary for these women to get up at 4 o'clock and keep busy until dark. At the end of a day's work how much time and how much energy do you think such women had to give to their children? Is it a wonder that so many of them went down to a premature grave or if still living are but mere shells of their former selves? They sacrificed their happiness and their lives in a "melting pot" of American civilization, so that their children might have a better start and be better equipped to meet life's battles.

Another interesting story of the suffering that these women went through is the following:

Mrs. X, who lived with her husband in a box-car on the _____ Railroad gave birth to a son on Saturday evening and was up on Sunday morning to make breakfast for a group of hungry boarders. During all this time she was unattended by either a doctor or a nurse.

Such is a picture of their home life. Now let us turn to their outside association. When they first came here they couldn't speak the language, didn't know the laws nor customs and were therefore forced to segregate themselves in groups and neighborhoods which virtually made towns within the town. The Croation, Hungarian or other South Slav who could speak the English language was much in demand for he was their interpreter, advisor and would-be lawyer.

At first, not having tradesmen of their own, they were forced to deal with people who already had established businesses. One of the first man to have this foreign trade was Ed. Wolsh, and because of the difficulty to spell and pronounce his customers' names, he gave them numbers. Later on one of their own members opened up a saloon and butcher shop on the corner of Manning and Dakota St. All of the foreign trade flocked to him and soon he was acclaimed as the Croation "Czar". He was not only their saloon keeper, butcher and advisor, he was also their banker; for a large number of the people, not knowing about the regular banks and not knowing how to deal with them even if they knew about the banks, turned their money over to Mr. Mogus for safekeeping.

Just as the Croations acclaimed Mr. Mogus as their "Czar", the Hungarians heaped similar honors and prestige upon Mr. Vasco who was their leader and representative. Mr. Vasco had a saloon on St. Claire Avenue.

The bit events in the lives of these people were funerals, christenings and weddings. Every member of their group that died was given a near high military funeral with every organization that he belonged to turning out in full regalia. Flage flapped in the breeze and bands played in the funeral procession.

Christenings were celebrated with feasting and rejoicing.

The gala event was the wedding, preparation for which started weeks in

advance. The feasting and merrymaking lasted for about a week at a time and every "successful" wedding ended in a free-for-all fight. The custom of presenting gifts at a Croation wedding differed somewhat from our American custom. We Americans present material gifts to the newly married couple, while the Croations presented money. It was not uncommon for a newly married Croation couple to get as high as \$2,000 or \$2,500 total as wedding gifts.

These customs have been absorbed to such an extent by the every-increasing s¹/₂port pf Americanism shown by these people, that at the present time a Croation boy or girl would hardly recognize them as customs of his parents.

The people who remained here betan to ortanize by making Fraternal Unions and even building their own churches and schools. The Croations built their church and school on Covington Street while the Hungarian Baptist build a church on Manning Avenue. The latter church was the first one on the district.

In the early 1900's Miss Margaret McNab was principal of the Caldwell School. She did some very constructive work under the crowded and trying conditions. The building which could adequately handle only three grades was so overcrowded that many of the children were forced to go to the Covington Street School.

The period between 1910 and the World War was one of community improvement. In 1910 Miss Sarah A Simms became the first public school nurse in which capacity she served until 1918 when she was forced to resign due to her mother's illness. Her territory inwcluded half of the city and she visited Stambaugh, Tod, Washington, Brier Hill, Jefferson and Caldwell Schools. Three times a week she visited Caldwell School where she had a dispensary in the basement and there she administered first-aid and gave medical examinations to 40 or 50 children each visit. Anything such as itch, burns, cuts and bruises

was taken care of. Miss Simms didn't restrict her work to the schools, she also visited the homes on special individual cases. On top of all this she instructed a group of older girls in the art of nursing, dressing and taking care of babies.

In 1910 Thomas Kernan had a hotel on the corner of Crescent and St. Claire Streets.

In 1911 Mr. Welsh had a moving picture theater on the corner of Rayen and St. Claire Avenues. Opposite the theater was a public dance hall. All of these places have since been turn down or discontinued.

At about this time, the period between 1910 and 1912, Dr. Harry E. Welsh, Miss Simms and Miss Margaret McNab saw the necessity of a community Settlement and urged that one be constructed. In order to make this possible, Dr. R. D. Gibson donated some land on Manning Avenue in memory of his mother, Mrs. Neilson, and on this site was constructed the Neilson House, which was built from funds donated by Mrs. Henry Garlich, Y.W.C.A., the Visiting Nurses and the Carnegie Steel Company. This settlement was and still is under the supervision of the Y.W.C.A., and is used for foreign mothers' clubs and children's kindergarden.

Mrs. C. A. Bridgemen, the former Miss Margaret Modeland, a graduate nurse who is now living in China, undertook the Settlement work here under the Y.W.C.A. supervision. This was really the first settlement work in Youngstown.

Others assisting were: Miss Treassa Peebles who taught elocution, and Miss Harrette Rhoads who taught music. Mrs. C. A. Bridgeman had classes in cooking, millinery and dressmaking.

Dr. Sam Sedwitz, who was the first welfare doctor in Youngstown, assisted in volunteer infant work here.

About the same time that the Neilson House was built, construction started

on the first playground in the neighborhood. It was built by Leo Guhman on Hezlip Street where the Union Works Playground now stands. Mr. Guhman was aided financially by Mr. Henry Stambaugh. Later the Carnegie Steel Company gave its assistance and made it one of the best playgrounds in the city. When the boom came to Youngstown, Carnegie Steel Company took some of this land on which they build an office and a line of garages.

This playground, under the direction of the Carnegie Steel Company, was the recreational center of the community for about ten years. It was closed during the years of 1930 and 1931, and thereby forced the children to play out in the streets where the danger, dirt and filth were so pronounced that it could easily be seen that there was an urgent need for safe and clean recreational facilities. The Caldwell Settlement with the aid of the Children's Welfare Bureau reopened the playground in 1932 and kept it open through the years 1933, 1934, and 1935.

At first stone-throwing was a pastime and many boys became very expert in the art of missile tossing. Much of this, however, was stopped when their energies were directed into such channels as basketball, baseball, and volley ball which were supplied to them through the opening of the playground in the summer time and the Butler Gym in the winter.

As time went on these people worked and lived contentedly. Then came the World War with its accompanying boom and it was followed by the steel strike. The Steel Companies were now in the position where they either had to close up their plants or bring workers up from the South. They chose the latter course. This started the colored movement toward the steel mills. The first colored people in this district were the Flemming family. They came in about 1915.

At first there was much friction between these groups, going even as far as showing itself in a miniature race riot. This condition, however, due to the

fact that the colored and white children have been taught together in school and have played together has been remedied to a large extent.

In 1922 Miss Mary Haddow became principal of the old Caldwell School. It still had the eighteen foot fence around it and was so crowded that it was necessary to use two school sessions. The morning session lasted from eight until twelve and the afternoon session from twelve until four. There were eighteen teachers, half of whom taught in the morning and half in the afternoon. The pupils were mostly of foreign born parents with only ten colored students and one Irish student among them. The school not only taught the children but performed a similar service for their parents who were instructed in the Americanization classes which were held during the evening.

In the late twenties, the Juvenile Court authorities seeing that the delinquency rate for children was higher in the Caldwell District than in any other district in Youngstown and that this rate was rapidly increasing decided to investigate the conditions, locate the causes and attempt to remedy them.

About this same time Miss Mary Haddow and Judge Dahl Cooper saw the need-less predicament that the neighborhood was in. This neighborhood which needed recreational centers more than any other section in the city did not have a single place where the young people might congregate for recreational purposes in winter or in summer. Because of this condition the children were forced to play in the streets or along the railroad tracks. These places, besides being very dangerous to life and limb, were the means through which the children sooner or later came before the Juvenile Court. Hucksters' wagons were attached, delivery trucks were robbed, coal and scrap iron was knocked off passing freight trains and sold. The money derived from such transactions was used to satisfy luxurious and immoral desires.

Gangs which took to thieving were formed. The boys knew the schedules of the coal and scrip-iron freights; and made it a practice to work in pairs and get as much coal and scrip-iron as they could. While one boy climbed the train and knocked off coal, another one would go along the track and gather it up. It was then sold for 25¢ a sack. To many boys and their families this was the sole means of livelihood. One boy reported that for one period during the depression no one in his family was employed. The family consisted of seven and the money that he received from the sale of coal and scrip-iron was their only means of support. His earnings averaged about \$17.00 a month.

Although great improvement has been made in the line of "coal and scrip-iron hustling" as it is termed in this locality, it is still a problem of the neighborhood for not so long ago the writer, while watching a ball game in the playground, was suddenly surprised to see the boys stop in the middle of an exciting game and dash to the railroad tracks to knock coal off a passing freight. When a check up was made it was found that thirteen boys had left the ball game to catch the train.

Many times gangs of boys between the ages of 12 and 18 could be seen on the streets and between buildings shooting dice for small amounts of money that were made in the above mentioned way.

Bootleg liquor was made and sold. It was of a very cheap brand and had a bad effect upon the physical health of many of its users.

The "bug" or number racket came in and is played to a very large extent by folks in many homes.

What worse conditions could a conscientious social worker run up against?

This problem was brought up before Mr. Ray Hagstrom and the trustees of the Children's Service Bureau in 1918 by Miss Mary Haddow and Judge Dahl Cooper. It was decided that the building next to the schoolhouse would answer the purpose and the Caldwell Settlement was established there.

Among those present at the opening banquet were: Mr. S. R. Kreps, Mr. J.

Richenson, Superintendent of Schools, Judge Dahl Cooper, Miss Mary Haddow, Mr. Ray Hagstrom and various members of the Board of Education.

This project, sponsored by the Children's Service Bureau, was established and now maintained through funds from the estates of David Tod Arrel, and Dr. W. L. Buechner and Luch Buechner.

For several years now the Settlement has been spreading its good influence within the neighborhood. Delinquency has been cut down considerably. The people have been and are being educated in the American customs; classes in English writing and speaking have been organized. In short one might call this a very miniature "Hull House".

In the several years of its existence, the Settlement has reached the point where it contains over forty clubs and has an annual attendance of over one hundred thousand people. The Settlement, which was originally under the jurisdiction of Mr. & Mrs. Ridley Gillispie, is now under the direction of Mr. Hubert J. Weikert, who is assisted by Mrs. Emma Anderson, girls' worker, Mr. Robert C. Alm, physical director and such minor assistants and volunteer workers as are deemed necessary.

From the reports of the Juvenile Court we find that the crime rate for this locality as early as five years ago was higher than any other neighborhood in this city. In 1935 the figures show a drop of 50%. This rate is still high but progress has been made and to which agency the credit must go cannot be absolutely determined. The School, Playground, Settlement, Neilson House and the various churches all did their part in this work.

Because of the crowded conditions and an absolute need of a new schoolhouse the new Joseph G. Butler Jr. School was built. It was completed in 1929. This is a new modern school building with 16 rooms and an auditorium which is used by the Caldwell Settlement for club athletic programs.

Miss Mary Haddow is principal of the school and the enrollment is in the neighborhood of 385 pupils.

During the depression the majority of the people were forced to go on relief. They didn't sit back and depend entirely upon this relief however. Gardens were planted and cultivated on every available piece of land. The banks of the Mahoning River took on the appearance of a fertile Mexican valley, for the Mexican people of the community cleared away all the weeds and growth and made a small farm out of it. They even built shetler houses. Those were a miniature duplicate of the farms they left behind in their native land. Many of the products that were cultivated took Blue Ribbons in the several Flower and Garden Shows that were held here.

The Vaheys, Mannings, Caldwelles, Flannerys, Vasco and Mogus were among some of the notable early residents that can be mentioned here.

So for the past seventy-five years this territory has answered its call to the folks who have lived here and who have called it home.

Most of the homes were no grand, but they were the best they had and the people lived contented;y. They loved the highways and the byways and contentment was their creed; and they cherished the joy that this entire neighborhood had for them.

So going into the year 1936, we find that there are 383 houses in a territory which covers 602,400 sq. feet or about 14 acres of land. Of the entire population 52% is colored and 48% white. With the Croations leading and the Hungarians and Ukranians coming next, there are about 15 different nationalities living in the district.

There are 67 non-residential buildings with the Carnegie Steel and ConCrete Companies, Heller Bros, Lumber Co., East Ohio Gas., National Biscuit

Co., Dalzell Bros., Butler School, Caldwell Settlement, and Neilson House the most important. There are 30 storerooms, 3 scrip yards, 1 bakery shop, 1 shoe repair shop, 3 churches, 4 restaurants with saloons, 5 oil companies, 2 warehouses, 1 barber shop, and 1 club house.

It has been recently recommended that a complete demolition of the site, with the exception of the school and business buildings, take place and have Wright's Field on West Federal Street used as a center of a new and modern Housing Program that will take care of 456 families.

For a series of years the Caldwell District has been a refuge to many a struggling family and for many years it was a haven where a dejected and discouraged soul could start life anew on a plane equal to that of those who were around him. However now unsung and unheard it must give way to the march of time and progress. As the curtain begins to close on the last act of this living melodram, we can truthfully say that the Caldwell District, which has outlived its usefulness, has served its purpose as a starting point from which many a Youngstowner has risen to a successful and happy life.