

FOREST CITY PARK



Forest City Cafe

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by
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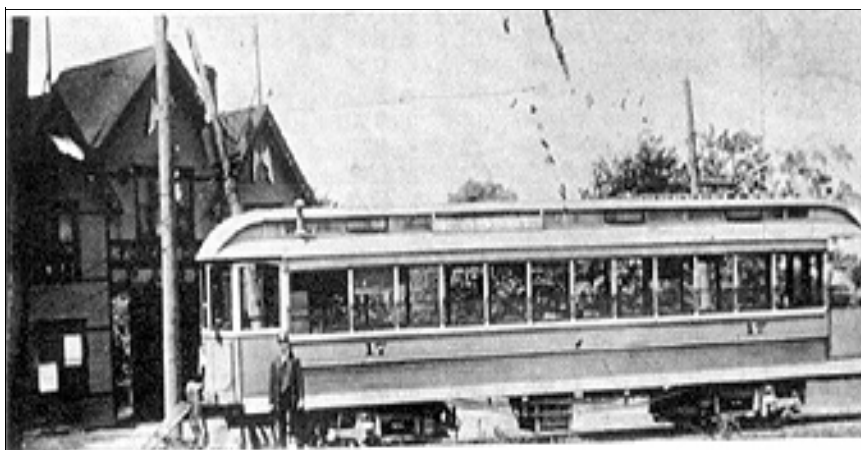
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BEYERLE - FOREST CITY PARK

There is a wasteland south of the junction of Sykora and Beyerle Avenues off Independence Road in Cleveland's southeast side that is quite incongruous with its surroundings, the steel mills, *Washington Park*, and well-kept homes that form its borders. This abandoned area of slag filled gullies, weeds, scrub brush and unkept wild grass offers no clue that the field was once the recreational Mecca of thousands of Clevelanders.

Although George William Beyerle owned a 42 acre plot south of the junction of Sykora and Beyerle Streets off Independence Road since the early 1870's, he did not begin developing the parcel until 1883. He initially landscaped about 30 acres and changed the land's title to *Beyerle Zoological Company*, indicating the presence of animals on the premises. He announced the creation of an amusement park, Cleveland's first such attraction, by inserting the following advertisement in the 1885 CLEVELAND DIRECTORY:

"For the information of Families, Social Parties, Societies, Sunday Schools and Churches, that it is no longer necessary to travel 50 or 100 miles to reach a suitable and beautiful place for a Pic-nic or excursion. It is situated



Forest City Park entrance gate

only three miles south of the Public Square, near Independence and Petrie Streets, and contains over thirty acres, consisting of beautiful woods, adorned by walks promenades and buildings, pavilion and tower, and



Boating lake with bridges in background

valleys beautified by an attractive lake, which had an area of over seven acres, of hills which are connected by bridges crossing the lake, one of the bridges being 600 feet in length and 60 feet above the surface of the lake. There will be 12 new boats on the lake for the pleasure of the public, the pavilion is a very large building and will accommodate 5,000 people. It is carefully built, with a first class floor for dancing and skating. The tower is 50 feet above the highest spot in the grounds, where from the public can get a beautiful view of Lake Erie and the beautiful surroundings".

"The Connotton Valley Depot, on Independence Street, is seven minutes walking distance. On short notice conveyances will be furnished, from any point, direct to the park, at reasonable prices. The park adequately supplies a long needed want of our citizens, and I intend, year by year, to add to the beauties, curiosities and attractions."

"Any inquiries will receive prompt attention by writing, telephoning or calling at the above address."

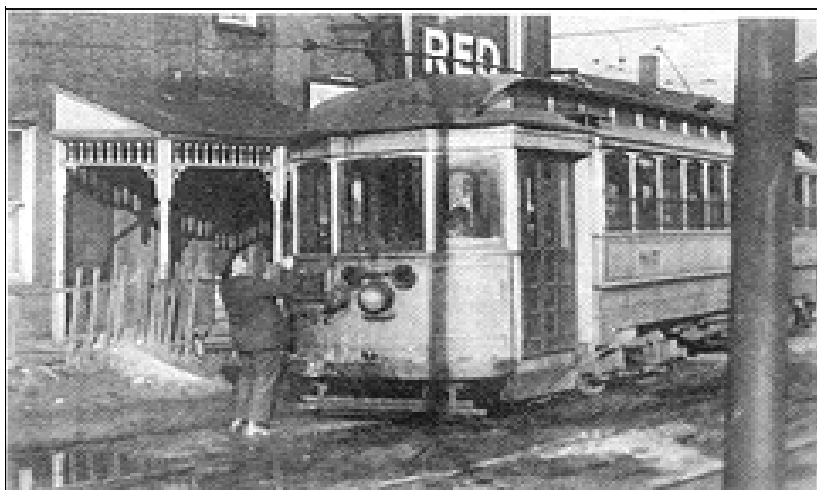
The office address for Beyerle's Park was given as 13 Public Square, Room 3 and his telephone number as 1839.

His residence was listed as 33 Osborn. It appears that Beyerle either relocated or passed away in 1889 because his name is not listed in the 1890 CLEVELAND DIRECTORY. The park was also purchased by A. B. Schwab et al on May 5, 1889 and its name was changed to *Forest City Amusement Park*.

The park's title was transferred to B. Remceke, Trustee on September 14, 1898.

Cleveland annexed a portion of the Independence Road area in 1894 and partitioned 22 acres from the southern boundary of *Forest City Park* to *Washington Park* when the latter was organized in 1899. On January 29, 1901 the remainder of *Forest City Park* was placed under the jurisdiction of *Peoples Savings Association*.

During the final 15 years of the 1800's the park celebrated a number of accomplishments, the importance of which is reflected by the availability of public transportation. Besides access via the *Connotton Valley Railway*, Cleveland Railway ran a single track spur line from Petrie (now E. 49th Street) and a "dinkey" took visitors to the park's Sykora entrance gate. The latter conveyance was a trolley with controls on each end to permit a motorman to, travel back and forth without the need of a turnaround.



Cleveland Railway Company "dinkey"

Once inside the park, patrons were treated to a variety of attractions. Besides the activities listed in Beyerle's 1885 advertisement, there was a bowling alley, shooting gallery, theater, Merry-Go-Round and a forerunner of the Roller-Coaster, a three track thrill ride called the Toboggan.

In 1893 the park had 100,000 customers and on June 9th of the following year it featured a Professor Gotlieb Burns who would beat the world's record for a high dive. In 1895 the celebrated *Iowa State Band* presented a 60 member concert and it was an exciting day on June 14th, 1896 when a match was staged between the noted Professor Burns and Canadian

FOREST CITY PARK.
SUNDAY, JUNE 23.
Celebrated Iowa State Band, 60 Men.
The Musical Craze of the World's Fair.
GRAND CONCERT.
Their last appearance in Cleveland in complete form.
Willson av. cars direct to Park.
Admission 15c.

champion, Toronto Red.

In keeping with the patriotic fervor stirred up by the Spanish-American War, there was a presentation of "The Battle of Manila" and "The Blowing Up of the Maine" in 1898. Other park attractions of the era were artistic bag punching demonstrations, cycling contests and comic vaudeville acts.

Another popular ingredient of nineteenth century life, beer and liquor, were also available in the park and saloons



Beyerle Park Restaurant

stood like sentinels at the junction of Beyerle and Sykora in front of the park's entrance. Popular spots of the day were *Eberhard's Restaurant* and *Beyerle Park Restaurant and Tavern*. Judging by the signs in their windows, *Bohemian Lager Beer* was a popular brand. Even today, converted stores on Independence Road and Sykora show signs that they were one-time taverns and, no doubt, the *Forest City Tavern*, founded in 1886 at the junction of Independence Road and Beyerle Court, catered to the park's clientele.

On February 9, 1902 the Humphrey family, owners of *Euclid Beach Amusement Park*, purchased *Forest City Park* under the corporate name of *Zoological Park Company*. Because the Humphreys were strict prohibitionists, they immediately banned the sale or consumption of alcoholic

beverages in the park.

The Humphreys ran the park from 1902 until 1906 and placed companion advertisements for both establishments

ADDRESS ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO THE COMPANY

Wm. H. H. Humphrey, Pres.
David Humphrey, Gen. Mgr.

THE HUMPHREY PARK PLAN

W. S. Humphrey, Pres.
H. B. D. Humphrey, Mgr.

BUSINESS PLACES
Euclid at Superior
Euclid at Ontario St.
Euclid at Wade Park
Euclid Beach Park
Forest City Park

Euclid Beach Park

Forest City Park

NO ROOM FOR BEER IN A PLEASURE PARK

Cleveland, O. 1900

CLEAN, MORAL AMUSEMENTS & ENTERTAINMENTS AND MORE OF THEM
Everyone wants RIGHT in an playground
None WISH to come
No Freaks, Fakes or 'Fresh' People

under the name of *The Humphrey Park Plan*. During the latter part of 1906 they ceased active management of *Forest City Park* and sold some of their interests to purchase a popular skating rink and one-time home of the *Cleveland Barons* hockey team the *Elysium* on Euclid and 107th Street.

However, the family retained a majority interest in the park. This is verified by the filing of quit claim deeds on May 3, 1914 to six members of the Humphrey family under the name of *The Humphrey Company*.

By the teens the automobile was gaining popularity as a mode of transportation and the park, established during the period of railway and horse drawn vehicles, had no parking facilities. In addition, *Luna Park*, a competitor who served alcohol on its grounds and had modern rides, was drawing patrons from the older and "dry" park.

Strong competition, declining attendance, and a devastating 1917 fire brought an end to *Forest City Park*.