

Massillon Museum
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catastrophic flood which completely destroyed
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THE STORY OF

HOW MASSILLON OBTAINED

THREE VIADUCTS

AND

A COMPLETE FLOOD CONTROL PROGRAM

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To reconstruct this program, a
committee was formed to study the
problem. The committee was
composed of the following members:

In the early 1930's, flood control in Massillon was to be included in the Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District. A sum of \$1,125,000 was allocated for flood control in Massillon. It was intended that a dam would be built some distance north of Massillon that would safeguard the city in time of flood. Upon a completely detailed study and surveys for the program, this dam was found to be entirely too expensive. The topography of the land was so level, and this dam would extend over such vast territory that it would have devastated much of Canal Fulton, Clinton and Warwick, necessitated moving of railroads and highways--making it very costly. The benefited property in Massillon would have been assessed very high in some cases, even more than the value of the property. As a result the Chamber of Commerce asked to be withdrawn from the Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District, which separation took place. There was also the feeling that in Massillon flood control should be combined with grade elimination.

Col. J. D. Arthur, of the U. S. Engineers, was working on a combined program for Massillon that would effect both flood control and grade elimination at the same time. His program, as developed at that time, is practically the same as now being completed.

To present this program, a group of about thirty citizens met to discuss the problem. It was decided to set up a committee designated as

The Massillon Citizens Flood Control and Viaduct Committee. This was in the fall of 1936 and C. O. Finefrock was named chairman, Charles G. King, vice chairman, and Charles N. Hostetter, secretary and counsel.

With Col. Arthur's aid and guidance in following the necessary procedure through Congress, C. O. Finefrock and Charles Hostetter made many trips to Washington to work with various groups and individuals to present their cause.

In order to interest the Engineers and the Federal Government in the program, it was necessary to make a careful survey of all the floods suffered in Massillon over a period of years and the costs and damages caused thereby, as well as the railroad accidents, noting the number of deaths caused by them. There was competition with cities all over the United States for Government funds for this type of program. From the surveys made, the relation of costs of the program to the benefits to be received, ranked Massillon in a high position for its program.

In order to have a Conservancy District set up to deal with the Federal Government, State of Ohio, county, city and corporations affected by the project to be accomplished, it was necessary to petition the courts to form a district, which was done by organizing a group of citizens to call on property holders to sign petitions to form the district. 2,700 signatures were obtained, representing over 50 per cent of the tax valuation of the city.

The Massillon Conservancy District was set up January 31, 1939, and three directors were appointed: C. O. Finefrock, P. J. Bordner and Leonard Larson. These men met immediately to organize the district and set up an office to proceed immediately with the work. C. O. Finefrock was elected president and P. J. Bordner, vice-president. They employed Charles N. Hostetter as secretary and counsel for the district. The District is officially classified as a "political subdivision of the State of Ohio" set up by the courts to work with corporations and individuals necessary to further this program. At the time the district was set up, it was necessary to have funds to carry on the work--so \$16,000.00 was borrowed for preliminary expenses. This money was later paid from funds raised by the Conservancy District to carry on the work of flood control and the grade elimination program.

Included in the work of the district was a general plan for the viaducts and flood control--followed by a determination of the U. S. Engineers of the monies the Federal Government could contribute, according to the 1938 Flood Control Bill. (This bill enabled the Federal Government to pay all costs of flood control.) This they agreed to do.

The district then had to work out the cost of the three viaducts and to determine how to raise the money necessary to build them, to construct Sippo and Wetmore pressure conduits, pay for all lands and damages, and to carry on routine expenses of the district to complete the work. The district

had to satisfy the Federal Government that they were financially able to carry out the program as set up in the proposed plan.

Charles N. Hostetter and C. O. Finefrock made numerous trips to Washington to contact the chairman and each member of the Budget Committee of Congress and other members of Congress to familiarize them with the program for Massillon and to explain the great need for it.

On March 23, 1939, P. J. Bordner, Charles N. Hostetter, C. O. Finefrock and James Seccombe, the congressional representative of our district, appeared before the Budget Committee of Congress to present the program for Massillon. It was accepted and approved by this committee and met the approval of the Chief of the War Department and \$800,000 was turned over to Col. J. D. Arthur to start the work in Massillon at once.

This was a happy event for the Committee, as they had been told that they were wasting their time and money for the program could never be put over.

Two days later fourteen men from the Corps of U. S. Engineers were in the city making surveys starting the work for flood control in Massillon.

Flood control, as being constructed in Massillon by the Federal Government, through the Corps of U. S. Engineers, includes widening, deepening and straightening the river channel through the city, taking out all the sharp bends that retarded the water, starting at the north end of the city just south of Lake Street where Newman Creek empties into the river. The

west levee of the river extends around to the west, across Third Street, and over the railroad tracks to the high ground, and the levee on the east side of the river extends easterly across the Ohio Canal to the high ground so that all waters from the north will be brought in over the spillway at the north end of the river improvement. A 3 1/2 ft. storm-water sewer is built through the spillway that will lead all of the storm water from the lowlands directly south of these levees to the west side of the river from where it will be pumped into the river by a pumping station. There will be three other pumping stations located at low places along the river where the storm water will be pumped into the channel.

The river channel on the bottom varies from 135 feet to 165 feet. The levees slope out to the top, making it much wider at the top of the levee. This carries all the way down through the city to south of Oberlin Road, being straightened so as to let the water pass through the city much faster than before. The river channel will carry 25 per cent more water than passed through the city in 1913, which was the greatest flood within the memory of anyone living today.

It is felt that this project will solve the flood hazard in the city for all time. Two pressure conduits to take care of all storm water coming into the city from Sippo and Wetmore creeks were constructed in the early part of the program, and have saved the city and its citizens more already

than they are paying for the entire program.

Taking care of flood control made it necessary to move the Pennsylvania Railroad over to the west side of the river south of Tremont Street and moving other tracks, as well as building the two railroad bridges over the new river, one for the B. & O. and W. & L. E. Railroads and the other for the Pennsylvania Railroad. This bridge carries about all of the curve for the new tracks and is a wonderful piece of engineering. A spur off of the Pennsylvania Railroad south of Tremont Street along the east levee, passing through under the east ends of the Tremont and Lincoln Way viaducts will take care of the Ohio Drilling Company, Peoples Coal Company, The Fulmer Supply Company and any others that may locate in this neighborhood.

All costs of flood control are being paid for by the Federal Government and this work is being constructed by their contractors through the Corps of U. S. Engineers and supervised by their inspectors who are doing a wonderful piece of work for the Massillon Conservancy District.

After many trips to Washington and Columbus, the Highway Department in Columbus, together with the Federal Bureau of Roads, have agreed to build and pay all costs in connection with the Lincoln Way viaduct, excepting the lands and damages necessary to its construction. In accordance with this agreement, the Highway Department, with the assistance of the Federal Bureau of Roads, is completing this viaduct which will be one of the finest in the country.

Three contractors have had a part on Lincoln Way. The John F. Casey Company built the abutments and piers, there being over 4,000 yards of concrete in this part alone, as well as heavy steel reinforcement.

The piers in the river bed have about 270 large piling which are driven into the ground as much as seventy feet below the bed of the river. These were filled with concrete and the foundations were built on these, making a structure that should be good for all time.

The beam construction was fabricated and placed by the Mt. Vernon Bridge Company. There are 1,625,000 pounds of steel in this part of the structure alone.

The remainder of the Lincoln Way Viaduct and all approaches are being constructed by The Vogt Construction Company of this city. The viaduct proper is 680 feet long, 52 feet wide between curbs and about 66 feet wide over all. The roadbed has a heavy concrete slab reinforced with 35 tons of steel. And this, as well as all approaches, will be covered with 2 1/2 inches of black top, making a smooth surface over all. The high curb is poured as part of the sidewalk and forms the outside of the viaduct, being reinforced with steel and tying the entire structure together. Concrete posts for the railing are about seven feet apart all the way across the bridge and as far on approaches as necessary for the safety of pedestrians, with a ten inch curb fitting along between posts and shaped, ornamental iron fastened into the posts, making a beautiful structure. Heavy posts extend up from the

ends of the piers outside of the railing on which the light posts will be fastened.

The Lincoln Way Viaduct with approaches is about 1,500 feet long and is 66 feet wide between curbs on the approaches, providing free flow of traffic.

The Tremont Street Viaduct with approaches is about 1,300 feet long, 40 feet wide between curbs, and 54 feet over all with a clover leaf at the west approach, giving easy access to Fifth Street, north and south, the B. & O. freight and passenger depot and The Ceres Supply Company. This structure was completed and opened to the public early in October of 1948, as well as the river channel through this part of the city. The traveling public already know what a blessing this is to them.

The Cherry Street Viaduct is being built in two parts, an east and west abutment and three piers between, carrying you over the railroad tracks with a solid ground fill of about 100 feet between the west abutment of this part and the east abutment of the part going over the new river channel with three piers and the east abutment of the viaduct. The west approach will extend to Cliff Street, making a nice grade to the bridge proper. The location of all railroads west of the new river channel enables us to make the drop while crossing the channel of the river and shortens all three viaducts without damaging much property. The Cherry Street Viaduct will have

the same type of construction as the Tremont Street Viaduct. The Cherry Street Viaduct, as well as the entire river program north of Lincoln Way, is being built by the Wright Construction Company of Michigan.

Soon after the district was set up in 1939, the District worked out an agreement with the Army Corps of the U. S. Engineers whereby they would construct the two pressure conduits and all flood control and the Tremont and Cherry Street viaducts. The conservancy district turned over to the Corps of Engineers the money necessary to pay their part of the costs. In addition to this amount, the Massillon Conservancy District had to pay all costs and damages to property affected by the pressure conduits and the three viaducts to get an estimate of the amount of money needed by the Massillon Conservancy District to cover their responsibility in the program. Photographs were taken of all properties needed in the program, and a careful appraisal was made by the appraisers that were appointed by the Conservancy Court. A careful budget was set up to purchase these properties to build the Sippo and Wetmore conduits and to cover all costs that were the responsibility of the district. The Massillon Conservancy District purchased about \$360,000 worth of property that was needed in the program.

To raise the money necessary for the program, an appraisal of benefits was made against the B. & O., Pennsylvania and the W. & L. E. Railroads, as well as the county and city. The amounts each of these were

to pay and did pay were: the three railroads, \$200,000, the county, \$392,500, and the city, \$345,000. These amounts were agreed upon after many conferences with each of them and all felt these amounts were very fair.

Through conferences with the U. S. Engineers, we decided to construct the pressure conduits first, as we were working to a dead-line to let a contract by a certain time, and there was a lot of work to do before that could be done. Though they didn't have a dollar to buy the properties necessary to let this contract, they understood options on these properties would be enough to award the contract. Three weeks before the contract had to be awarded, they found it was necessary to have warranty deeds and abstracts of title to all properties needed for this contract. We obtained deeds and abstracts for these properties, the officers of the district giving them a signed statement agreeing we would not record the deeds until they had received the money for their property. The contract for these conduits was awarded to the United Construction Company of Grand Rapids, Michigan, on June 17, 1940. The conservancy district sold bonds to cover the cost of the city's share of the program and paid for the properties that we had received deeds and abstracts for. The U. S. Engineers advertised for bids to complete all work of flood control and to build the Tremont and Cherry Street Viaducts.

Because of conditions, this bid was very high and they felt they

would not be justified to award this large contract at the time. After many conferences, it was decided to break the remainder into three contracts and on July 16, 1941, a contract was awarded to the E. J. Albrecht Company of Chicago to take care of all flood control south of Tremont Street, excepting the steel work on the Pennsylvania Railroad bridge. This contract included a new bridge at Walnut Street and a lot of railroad relocation. By the time this contract was nearing completion, we were in World War II, to such an extent the work had to be discontinued for the duration of the war. As soon as possible after the war the United States Engineers advertised for bids on the Tremont viaduct along with the approaches and clover leaf at the west end of the viaduct, as well as the channel improvement from just south of Tremont Street to just north of Lincoln Way. The contract for this part of the work was awarded to the John F. Casey Company of Pittsburgh in June 1947. This contract was completed in December of 1948.

A contract was awarded to the Wright Construction Company of Michigan July 16, 1948. This contract provides for the construction of the Cherry Street Viaduct and takes care of all flood control work north of Lincoln Way, excepting the building of the four pumping stations, which contract will be let within a few months. It will require all of 1950 to complete the entire program.

The Mount Vernon Bridge Company was awarded the contract

to fabricate and erect the Pennsylvania bridge in February of 1946 and later was given a contract to fabricate and construct the beam work for the Lincoln Way Viaduct.

The Wright Construction Company are filling the old river channel with the extra spoilage ground left from the new channel. This will enable the city to open Federal Street from Lincoln Way northwest to Third Street, N. W., with double parking all the way and to put a drive north to Agathon Field and northerly along this field to Third Street, N. W. All the parking for the Agathon Field and for the city can be had as a by-product of this program.

A "must" is the truck route taking the trucks from Routes 21 and 241 through the city under the tail of Tremont and Lincoln Way Viaduct leading them north along the levee on the east side of the new channel, and taking the trucks off of Route 30, keeping them out of the center of town. A beautiful drive with parks and playgrounds could be put in along this new channel that would be a pleasure to many people.

The completion of the Massillon Conservancy District's Flood Control and Grade Elimination Program will be the fulfillment of a dream that has been in the hearts and minds of many of our citizens, who for the past fifty years have worked on various committees trying to solve this program.

We have refrained from using names, but we do want to mention the late Charles N. Hostetter: Without his work in connection with this program it would never have been accomplished. Also, Colonel J. D. Arthur and Colonel Harry Pockras of the United States Army Corps of Engineers, from the Huntington Office, whose cooperation and invaluable service have contributed most effectively in bringing to completion this \$10,000,000.00 project at a cost to Massillon of but \$345,000.00 and at a cost to the county of but \$392,500.00.

We are grateful to the Federal Government, the Federal Bureau of Roads, and the Ohio Division of Highways for the great parts they have played in making this program possible.

It is great to be a citizen of the U. S. A. where such things can be accomplished.