

The Cleveland and Eastern Railroad & The Maple Leaf Land Company *by Dan Collister*

Now we turn to 1900, a very important year for Gates Mills. Two things happened almost simultaneously: the beginning of the Cleveland and Eastern Railway Company – the Interurban – and the Maple Leaf Land Company.

The Interurban was the creation mainly of two Clevelanders: Henry Everett and Edward Moore. They foresaw a need for transportation from Cleveland east through Geauga County to Chardon and Burton. The Cleveland trolley previously ended at Mayfield and Taylor Roads. The Cleveland and Eastern Railroad (C and E) obtained rights to extend the tracks along the right of way of Mayfield Road eastward.

As you know, the steep terrain of Gates Mills was difficult to traverse. The trolley turned about 45 degrees approximately where St. Francis Church is now and crossed where Gates Mills Boulevard makes its circle, going down along Berkshire Road. You can still see the roadbed as you drive down Berkshire. Short of Epping, it turns sharply left (north) and runs behind the Thayer and Burton estates, then turns sharply again right (east) and dives down Main Street and over the iron bridge into the village.

The Interurban immediately allowed Gates Mills residents to commute to Cleveland in little more than an hour. A “Bankers Special” left at 7:20 a.m., complete with the day’s newspapers to read on the ride downtown, arriving at Public Square at 8:30 a.m. It meant that people could live year-round in Gates Mills instead of merely having summer cottages there. The Baldwin and Ginn estates at the top of Old Mill pre-dated this event, showing how prescient they were.

Meanwhile, the Maple Leaf Land Company, made up of many of the same investors, including Everett and Moore, bought up about 2,000 acres in the heart of Gates Mills from the landholders and farmers there and began to market them to wealthy Clevelanders. They renovated the Western Reserve cottages along Old Mill Road into year-round homes and bought the Old Eagle Tavern, originally Holsey Gates’ home, and called it the Maple Leaf Tavern. The Mill Race widened into a small lagoon near the club, and they advertised outings to the village, including boat rides on the Mill Race.

All of this came to a climax in 1909, when the Chagrin Valley Hunt group, promoting fox hunting, bought the Maple Leaf Tavern for \$16,000 and established the Club.

(Dan Collister’s book, *The Horse*, is available for purchase at The Gates Mills Historical Society.)