

Background

Introduction

- Industrial development begins around 1900. This is relatively late; the railroad arrived in 1849, the Burlington waterfront had already seen its logging heyday in the 1870s and 1880s, and Pine Street was laid out in 1870 (although it did not extend this far south at that time).

- While logging was Burlington's primary industry in the late-19th century, by 1900 the industry had declined so its industrial sector was forced to diversify. Much of the development along Pine Street began at around this time, as new factories replaced the former mill yards of the late-19th century.

- The western portion of Flynn Ave was just a small, rural dirt road that accessed a farm located near the entrance to Oakledge Park until it became utilized for recreational purposes in the late-19th century, for industrial purposes beginning at the turn of the century, and then for residential uses beginning in the early-20th century and continuing until the late-20th century.

- Early industrial development along Flynn Ave was motivated by the proximity to the railroad (important for shipping goods) and the availability of large parcels close to downtown and Pine Street, while later development clearly capitalized on the proximity to Route 7.

- Today, we see a really interesting and diverse mix of seemingly incompatible uses along this ½-mile stretch of Flynn Ave between Pine St and Oakledge that manage to co-exist naturally and harmoniously: residential, commercial, industrial, institutional (child care) and recreational, interspersed with natural, wooded areas and a railroad. This diversity provides the neighborhood with its vibrant, eclectic and artistic feeling, particularly as many of the former industrial buildings have been retained and converted to new commercial uses. Yet somehow the effect of Flynn Ave is calming and pleasant to the pedestrian and cyclist.

Howard Park

- The reason why Flynn Ave was originally known as Park Ave until 1934.

- Developed in the 1880s and improved in 1889 by W.C. Fisher for use as a horse race track and animal exhibition space- right in the location of the 180 Flynn Ave factory complex. **1889 PLAN**

- Designed to educate the public about traditional agricultural activities, as well as provide a venue for betting; the VT State Fair was also periodically hosted here by the Champlain Valley Fair Association. It was accessed either by horse and buggy rentals from St. Paul Street, or by a special train from downtown that operated during events.

- Despite many efforts to promote events at Howard Park in the newspapers, it was rather short-lived. A December, 1901 article in the *Burlington Free Press (BFP)* reports that "the day of fairs and horse trots in this vicinity seems to be at an end;" the property was then transferred to the Lumiere North American Company for \$11,000. This marks the beginning of industrial development along the Flynn Ave corridor.

180 Flynn Ave: Lumiere North American Company

- Factory constructed in 1902. Articles in the BFP stated such things as: "Lumiere Company Coming to Howard Park. Manager White, Who is in the City, Outlines the Plans- About \$100,000 to be Invested in

the Plant and 100 Operatives Employed” and “Changes at Howard Park: Old Fair Ground Has Lost Its Familiar Look.” Character of the neighborhood was drastically changed.

- City and its citizens lobbied to have the company locate here by exempting them from taxation for 10 years, recognizing what a boon it would be for the local economy.

- Company founded by the Lumiere Brothers of Lyons, France- they essentially invented the mechanism for producing color photographs by using what they called the “autochrome” plate in 1903, which was manufactured here at this plant after it was released to the market in 1907. They were also credited with creating the first motion picture in 1895 (“Workers Leaving the Lumiere Factory”).

- However, they closed the doors on this plant by 1912 and opened up one small office in NYC that became entirely devoted to motion picture production. They had realized that it was as cheap to import their photographic materials from France as producing them in Burlington.

- Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of 1906 shows: railroad spur to coal house which still exists (now utilized by Enpro), coal house, office attached to Switchback building, “entire building used for manufacturing of photographic dry plates”

180 Flynn Ave: Vermont Hardware Company

- J. J. Flynn purchased the factory at public auction for \$17,000 in May 1914. He was a prominent local realtor/ developer who funded the construction of the Flynn Theater in 1930. In 1916, the Vermont Hardware Company moved into the space and set up a wholesale operation.

- Early example of “adaptive reuse”- VT Hardware had to renovate the factory (which had very few windows) and make several additions. Early on, they specialized in “shelf hardware, glass, auto accessories, sporting goods, paints/ varnishes, Atwater-Kent radios, etc.”

- According to telephone directories, they still exist today in this location, almost 100 years later, known as the “Howard Facilities.” But their name appears to have changed to Express Appliance & Kitchens

- Today, the complex houses a variety of uses: antique store, movers, appliance store, art gallery, etc.

2 Flynn Ave: Enpro (former Standard Oil Company)

- Original Howard Park property purchased by the Lumieres extended all the way to the shore of the lake; it was separated after the factory was sold to Flynn (Lumiere factory had anticipated expansion).

- In 1915, Standard Oil Company of NY (SOCONY) purchased the property and used it to store/ process oil until 1946. After that, several other oil companies, including Mobil, used the location late into the 20th century.

- Burlington Waterfront was the home to no less than 80 large oil tanks in the mid to late-20th century.

- Interestingly, Enpro does basically the opposite- they treat waste/ recycle hazardous waste, not harvest and provide it.

Oakledge Park and Flynn Ave

- Flynn Ave was originally created as a dirt driveway for a small farm that was located in the vicinity of the present-day entrance to Oakledge Park.

- 245-acre farm purchased by Dr. William Seward Webb (of Shelburne Farms) in 1883. Farmhouse converted into a gatehouse and large, Victorian-style manor house constructed at the top of the grassy knoll at Oakledge Park in 1884.

- Webbs (who resided in NYC) summered at "Oakledge Farm" until they constructed Shelburne Farms in 1888. Seward began breeding horses here and participated in tobaggoning and "coasting" down the hill. With the height of industrialization in the late-nineteenth century, it was very common for wealthy urbanites of the Gilded Age to flee the cities during the summer months.

- 1929, the Webbs sold the estate and it was converted into a resort known as "Oakledge Manor and Cottages," which operated until 1961. Foundations and chimneys of many of the original cottages are still visible today. In 1971, the City purchased the property and burned down the now run-down house to create Oakledge Park.

South side of Flynn Ave

- Another large oil tank farm was located here since the 1940s through at least the 1980s.

Railroad

- Central Vermont Railroad and Rutland Railroad, which was first constructed through Burlington in 1849. Enabled the growth of Burlington- Burlington could specialize in the export of lumber between its proximity to the lake and the railroad as a means of transportation. Pine Street and other industries along Flynn and Lakeside Aves were purposely built near the railroad or accessed by railroad spurs so that they could export their goods most efficiently. Today, the line is known as the Vermont Railway.

207 Flynn Ave

- Briggs Street opened in 1891.

- As of at least 1894, the Lang & Goodhue Manufacturing Company were advertising themselves as manufacturers and retailers of engines, boilers, water wheels, motors and mill machine supplies with a location on Park Ave. Also advertised themselves as "hydraulic engineers and contractors for complete systems of water works for cities and towns;" they were hired to improve Burlington's water systems in the late-1880s with the invention of a new, high-powered pump.

- Also within this complex in 1894 were the Stewart Hartshorn Shade Roller Factory and the Ransom Hardware Company, manufacturers of bronze hardware. The inclusion of smaller companies' "sub-factories" within this larger complex would define this industrial property throughout the 20th century and into today.

- 1902 fire completely destroyed the Burlington Shoe Factory at the southeast corner of Briggs & Flynn, as well as much of Lang & Goodhue's factory complex. The Burlington Shoe Factory never rebuilt; L&G stayed here until about 1904.

- Property was vacant until it was occupied by the Vermont Construction Company in 1907, who manufactured structural iron pieces and brass castings. Eventually, they became incorporated into the Vermont Structural Steel Corporation in 1921.

- This was a very significant business in Burlington- they worked on numerous buildings and projects in Chittenden County throughout the 20th century. They specialized in the fabrication of structural steel reinforcing steel beams, ornamental iron castings (fire escapes, railings, stairways) and steel plate work.

- Buildings they worked on: Patrick Gymnasium; Gutterson Field House; Given Medical Building; Winooski, Burlington, Essex & South Burlington High Schools; etc.

- Most successful in the 1950s, during which time they employed 150 people and continued to expand this complex throughout the mid-twentieth century. Lots of pride in manufacturing a local product; however, they ceased production and closed in January 1988 due to fierce competition beginning in the 1970s from out-of-state steel manufacturers.

- Today, the complex houses a variety of businesses and has undergone few alterations since the early-20th century.

Briggs St.

- Opened in 1891. Historically has served as the “barrier” between the Ferguson & Scarff Addition, the residential neighborhood developed in the early-twentieth century (many of the homes were purchased by factory workers) and the industrial development to the west.

File Cabinet: “File Under: Southern Connector, Waiting For...”

- Dubbed by some the world’s tallest file cabinet; however, apparently artist Samuel Yates holds the world record for a 7-story tall filing cabinet in Napa, CA. 11 file cabinets with 38 drawers welded together, 40 feet tall, built in 2002 by artist Bren Alvarez. Statement against the planned southern connector- 38 drawers represent the number of years that this project has been held up by bureaucratic processes.

208 Flynn Ave

- The fact that this building today houses such a variety of businesses is not far from its historic use as a complex that had at least 20 businesses at different times throughout the 20th century.

- Structure designed in 1917 by William Edmonson, a consulting engineer from Boston. Apparently it was designed with utmost care to safety, materials & workmanship: fireproof brick walls, concrete floors, tar roofs & iron reinforcements, as well as ample windows for natural light (including skylights). Attention to “mill-style” design.

- VT Milk Chocolate Co. was the first inhabitant- an offshoot of the Massachusetts Chocolate Company. Flynn Ave was deemed an excellent location due to its close proximity to a thriving dairy industry (as well as different modes of transport). Great success early on- during WWI, the Belgian government commissioned \$1K worth of products to be shipped overseas in order to provide relief for troops. This order included Number One Almond Milk Chocolate, Orange Sweet Chocolate, Vanilla Sweet Chocolate, etc.- 400 to 500 tons of chocolate in total!

- Fire destroyed the new structures in May 1918 after an explosion in the shipping room which the BFP claimed was “not the work of a German, Austrian or other alien enemy.” It was dedicated to Burlington and rebuilt its factory after the fire; operated until about 1948.

- Southern portion with multiple skylights was the warehouse- closest part to the railroad loading platform along the western end of the building. Office in the southwest corner, northern portion of the building constructed a little later for additional manufacturing- would be occupied by the Canada Broom Handle Company.

- Shared the factory with several other businesses, including the Canada Broom Handle Company (est. 1925), United Maple Products Limited (est. 1931), Everpure Ice Corporation (est. 1931), Westinghouse

Electrical Supply Co (est. 1935), Canada Dry Bottling Company (1949) and McAuliffe Paper Company (1954). Today, it remains a hodgepodge of different businesses.

Sources include:

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of Burlington (available at UVM's Special Collections)

Burlington City Directories (available at UVM's Special Collections)

Burlington Reference Files on a variety of topics held at UVM's Special Collections

UVM's Landscape Change Program (www.uvm.edu/landscape)

McAllister photo collection available on the Special Collections website (<http://library.uvm.edu/sc>)

Burlington Free Press archives (available through www.chroniclingamerica.gov)

UVM Historic Preservation Program student research (available online at www.uvm.edu/hp)