

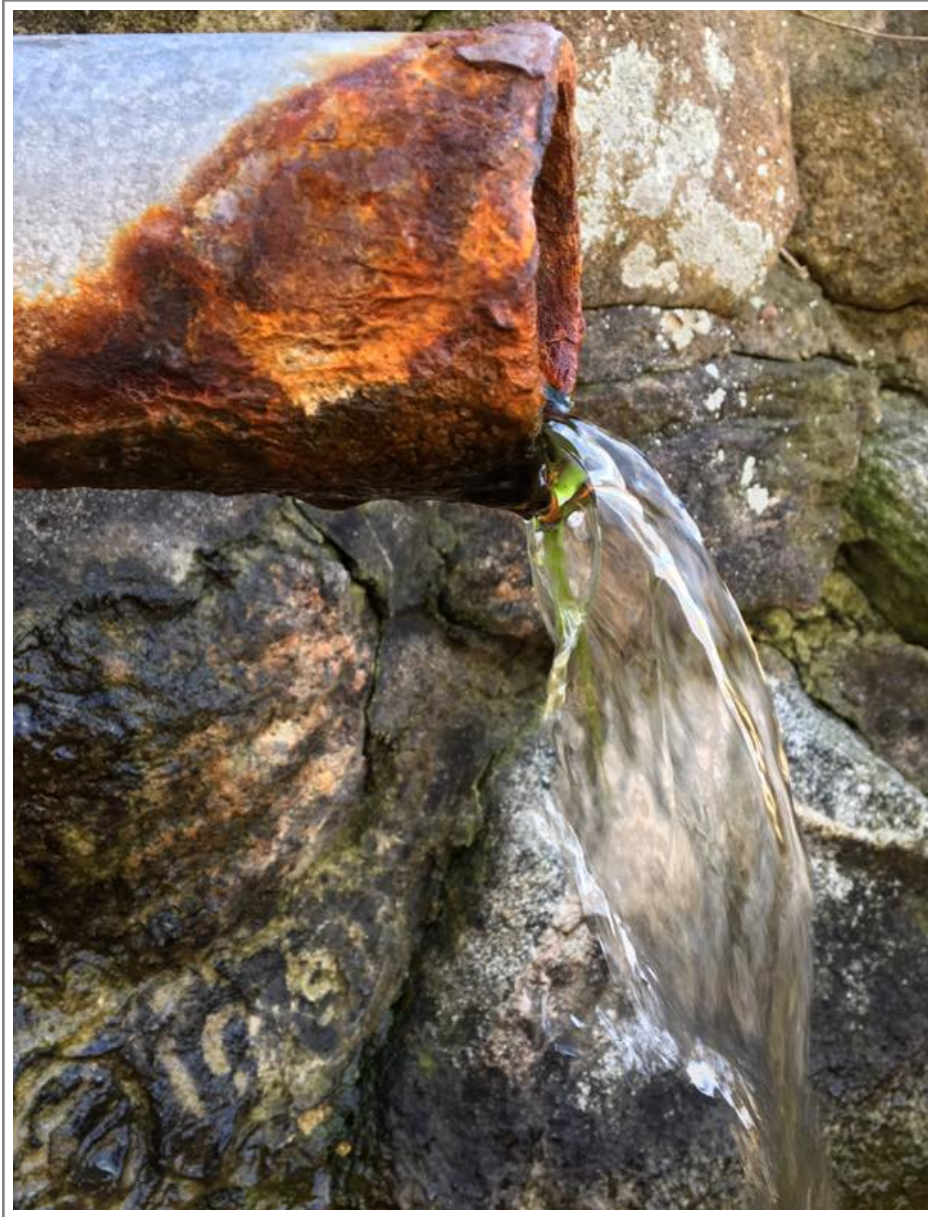
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# A Thirst for History

## The Reason for Downtown Amherst's Location — the Old Spring & Hon. Josiah Harris

Col. Matthew W. Nahorn - 2018

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*Amherst's Old Spring Historic Site — the unconfined aquifer seep spring, which has been flowing much longer than the thought of Amherst originated, is largely the reason for the Town's location.*

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## Introduction

The location of the nucleus of a town is often dependent upon a few but central factors. These main factors, such as economics, proximity to natural resources, early land ownership, safety, and geography can unintentionally dictate future history and often how a town will or will not succeed. Downtown centers across the United States have been dependent on a few central factors, as noted. Amherst, Ohio's downtown location presents a unique and interesting perspective illustrating these factors. Reasons for the location of many early American towns are provided when one closely examines a slice of the cross section of the history, geography, and hydrologic resources of the Amherst area, as an example for other downtown locations. Basic human needs, such as that of potable water, must also not be overlooked. Downtown Amherst's location is directly related to ancient, natural, hydrological features that persist today, along with early land ownership and geographic advantages created by thousands of years of changing landscapes.

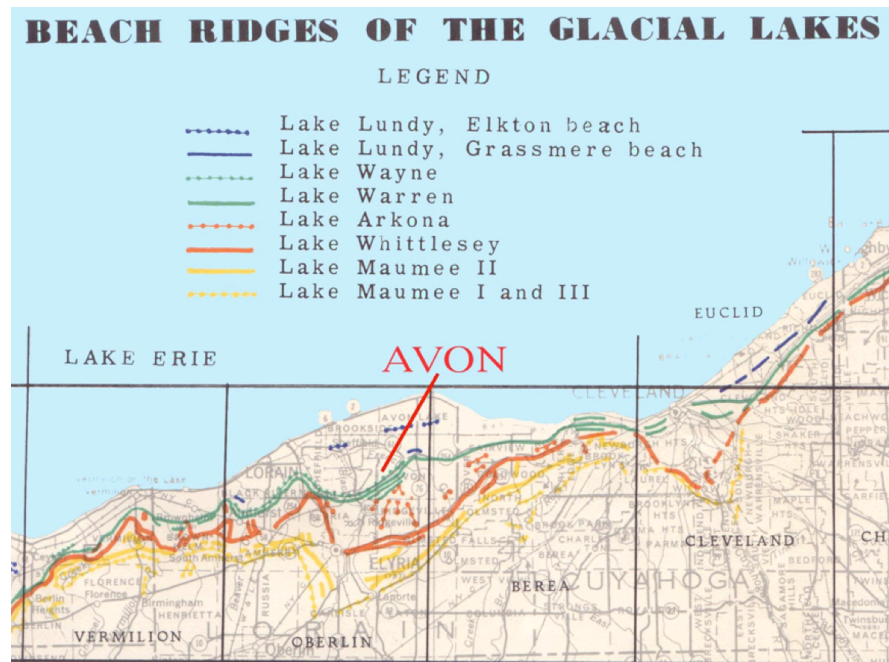


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## Ancient Beach Ridge

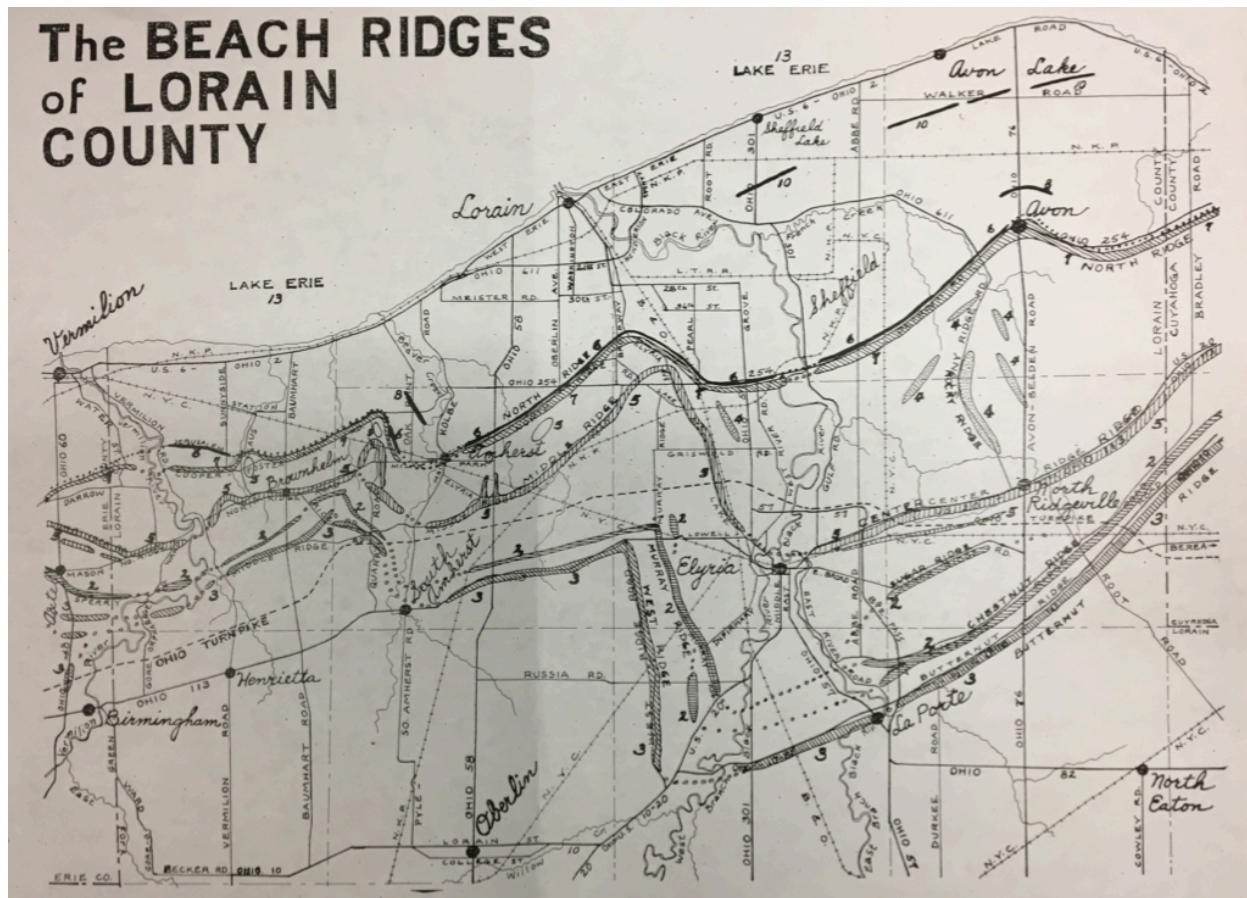
Northern Ohio provides unique opportunities to the student of geological and topographical history. Residents of this area are likely to daily traverse these natural features while paying little attention to their origin and why travel routes are located upon these features. The geography in this area still shows remnants of the ancient glacial lake stages and related beach ridges. Each is an ancient beach ridge or part of an ancient, glacial lake stage once located here, thousands of years ago.

Some 20,000 years ago, near the culmination of the last Ice Age, giant glaciers of over a mile in height moved into this area, scouring the land beneath, initiating a process of growth and retreat of these glacial features. Isostasy and isostatic rebound as a result of this enormous ice weight upon the land, helped determine, direct, dictate, and continue to facilitate current watershed drainage patterns that we see locally today. The general flow of the



watersheds and their watercourses are a consequence of the glacial activity, subsequent lake levels, and ultimately, the resulting topography. As the giant glaciers retreated by melting back, temporary glacial lakes (and lagoons) formed in front of these glaciers, and these lakes both aided in creating sand and pushing it up into beach ridges, those being the geologically significant ridges that we see today. These ridges are often very well-drained because of their sandy soil composition (sand being created by the lake water weathering process of sandstone outcroppings). This soil composition and particular stratigraphy also allows for the creation of natural springs, several of which are located along the South and North Ridges, near here. Each ridge generally represents a different lake stage or level, until about 4,300 years ago, when Lake Erie finally retreated to its present level, as the Niagara River opened up, finally free of glacial ice, allowing current flow patterns to become established in

the Great Lakes Watershed. Water in this area continues to attempt to reach its local and ultimate base levels today. These beach ridges, their elevation and soil composition, are a main reason for the relatively numerous springs in this area.

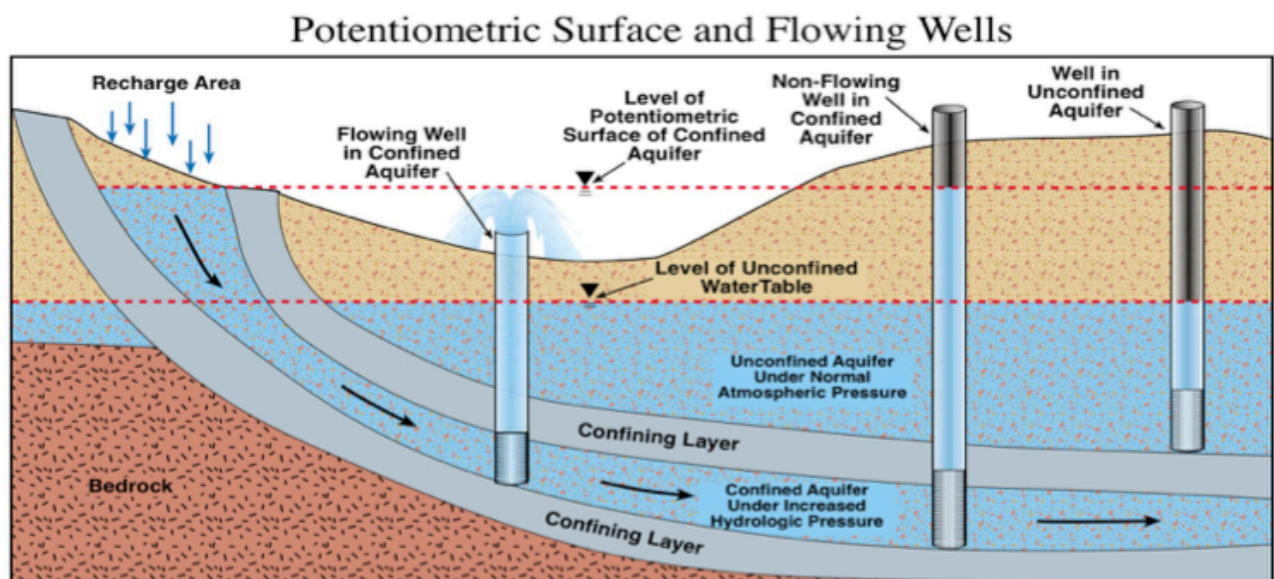


## Unconfined Aquifer — The Old Spring

Natural seep springs are located all along the ancient beach ridges of northern Ohio. These springs are largely a direct function of the sandy soil of the beach ridges and their elevation changes. A few of these springs have been turned into commercial ventures, such as the present-day Cherry Knoll Spring at historic Whiskeyville (Routes 58 & 113) and White House Artesian Springs also on the South Ridge, just opposite the West Ridge. An unconfined aquifer is just that — an aquifer that is not confined by any rock layers either above or below, allowing the free flow, collection, and ingress/egress of water from one area to another.

Amherst's Old Spring site is located at the base of a portion of the North Ridge ancient beach ridge feature, along present-day Milan Avenue, in downtown Amherst. The Old

Spring was recognized as being such an integral factor and important to the Amherst community, that two stone arches were built to memorialize this historic, well-known (and used), natural feature. The Spring was also used in business ventures, such as a brewery in the second half of the 19th century and in business advertisements. For example, August Nabakowski (below) operated a roofing and sheet-metal business directly across from the Milan Avenue entrance to the Old Spring site in the 20th century. In his business advertising



he often included the phrase, “across from the Old Spring” as most people of the time knew well the location of this hydrologic feature.

Over the years various individuals have understood the Old Spring’s importance to the Amherst-area’s local history and thus have taken it upon themselves to maintain the Spring basin. Previous to the author’s work, Ralph Zilch, of note, worked to beautify the area. Most recently, since 2013, as a dedicated local historian, the author has worked diligently to ensure the area is kept clean and not spoiled by overgrowth or any trash left by visitors or those passing by. Furthermore, the author has worked to re-mortar stones into the lower cobblestone feature (original backdrop constructed in 1914 to beautify the



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area for the Old Home Week celebration) and keep the old Milan Avenue cobblestone roadway clear of leaves and debris. Of note, the cobblestone walkway one utilizes to gain



access to the Old Spring is the original Milan Avenue roadway, used before the current Avenue was created, when most of the road was still dirt. In the 1890s, when the railroads were being raised at the request of the Railroad companies, Milan Avenue was also raised, the grade made less steep, and the roadway was moved slightly northward. The author continues to maintain this historic site of downtown Amherst, by way of regular maintenance efforts, signage restoration, and general public awareness of this important spot through public presentations and talks.

Citizens from all around northern Ohio, not only Amherst, would bring their jugs and containers to collect the crisp, clear, cool water of Amherst's Old Spring. The author's grandmother would visit the area, coming from Lorain with her family and make a day trip to the Old Spring just to collect this water that was preferred over other area resources. Today a small sign over the Spring basin notes that the water is "unfit for human consumption." One of the most common questions posed after presentations that the author provides is based around this sign: is the water truly not safe? The short and safe answer is that because of the type of natural spring feature, it is often prone to become contaminated at



any given time from, for example, a leaking sewage pipe or something that may have been dumped and allowed to percolate into the ground. Being an unconfined aquifer seep spring, the risk for contamination is quite possible. To be safe, at all times, the water must be treated as unsafe, and it is advised that it not be consumed. Even if a water test is performed, it is very possible that by the time the results are read from that test, a contaminant has worked its way into the water flowing forth from the pipe. It should however be noted that the natural features of soil are in fact a very effective filter, in many cases. Finally, a box of metal or wood was at one time placed behind the cobblestone backdrop to collect the water and allow for a more regular flow out of the pipe. It is possible that this collection facility could fail and break down, or already is doing so, allowing for contaminants to enter the water likely at a slow and background rate. A few years ago the author of this report collected a sample, and after properly preparing it and boiling it for some time, tasted the water. It was quite metallic in taste and likely not something one would enjoy drinking. This is possibly a result of decomposing materials slowly leaching into the water.

Historically however, the Spring's water has been a central resource of Northern Ohio. "Spring Popular During Drouth" is the title of a September 18, 1908 "Amherst News" article.

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The brief news clipping states that, “The spring in the rear of the town hall is a popular place these days. Many of the wells about town have gone dry. People come to the spring for water, and a large number of horses are taken there daily. The supply of water does not seem to diminish.” Flow rate tests have been conducted by the New Indian Ridge Museum’s Col. Matthew W. Nahorn, author of this report, on several different occasions and during different weather conditions. The simple and regulated test of measuring the amount of time for the Old Spring’s flow from the current pipe to fill a one-gallon plastic jug revealed that it took approximately 49-56 seconds to fill the one-gallon jug. These tests have regularly shown that it takes less than one minute to completely fill a gallon jug. The flow does not significantly fluctuate during wet or dry seasons or cold versus warmer times. The flow is generally regular and unchanged, regardless of the time of year such a test is conducted. This is a very interesting and important factor of Amherst's Old Spring. Its regularity of flow was significant to its importance for those individuals who relied upon its resource.





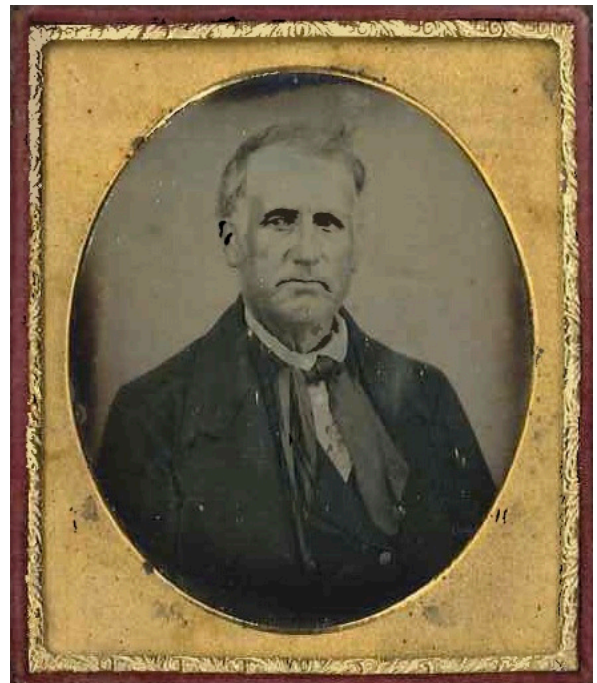
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## Design Factors – The New England Background & Hon. Josiah Harris

In order to appreciate the location and original plat layout of downtown Amherst, Ohio, it is imperative to review and understand early New England towns in the eastern United States, often from where early settlers of towns in Ohio originated. These towns are often centered around a 'town green' or 'commons' area — a publicly owned parcel of land utilized in multiple ways. These pieces of land remained open and cleared, used for public grazing, auction sales, a place to gather and sometimes sell items, and later, sometimes were transformed into a true town center, where a town hall or government office space was built.

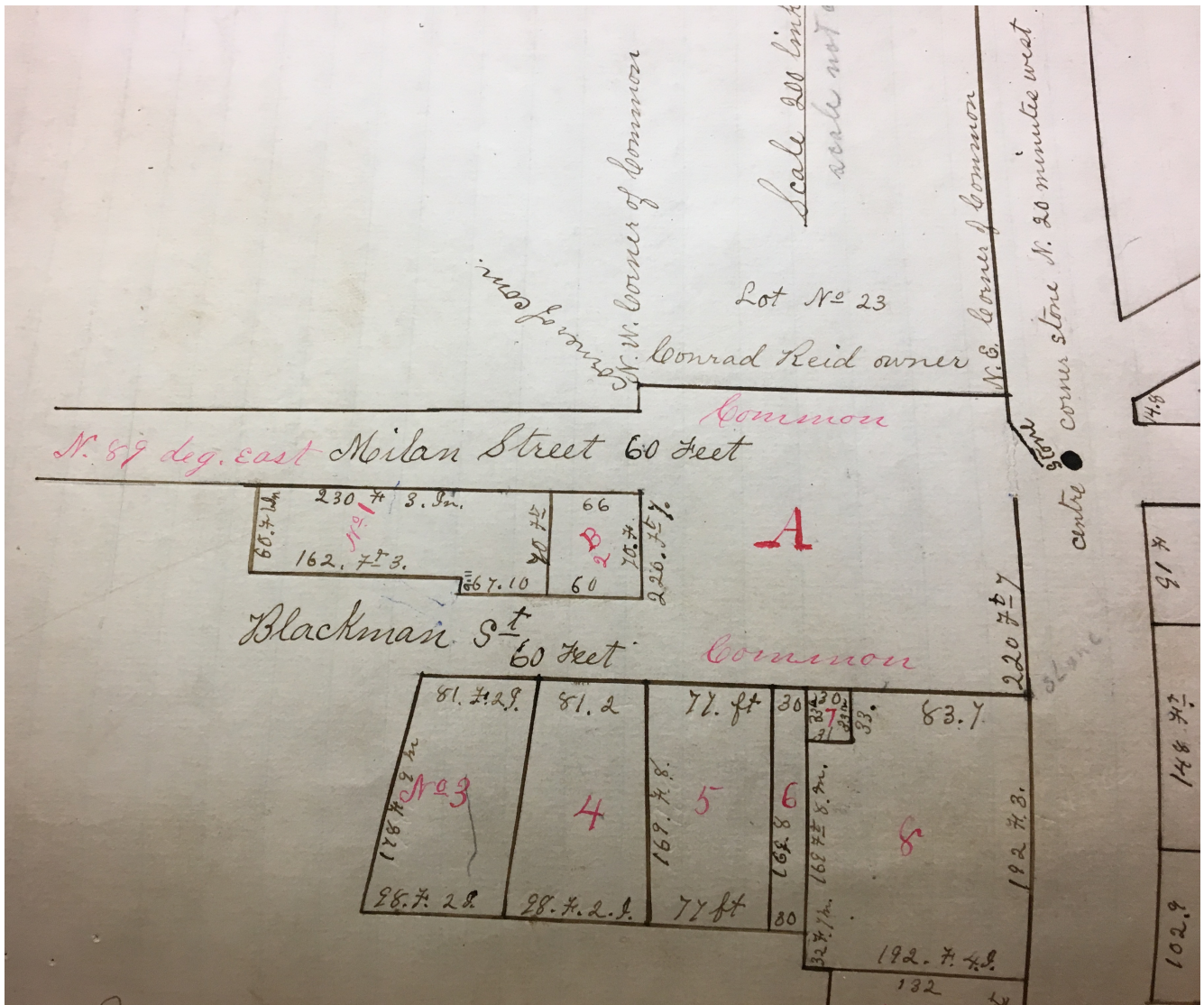
The early settlers who moved westward from the New England area, settling towns of Northern Ohio, often brought with them the town design features from their hometowns or county seats of their home county. Broadly, notice the downtowns of Elyria (Lorain County's seat of government), Wellington, and Oberlin, just as examples of town design, all of which maintain a central town square, in one manner or another. Streets around the town centers often were named Court Street, Park Place, or some such variation, as town government (and its court or judicial system) functioned here in this center, along with an open park environment. Usually beginning as an open park/public space, sometimes this area was turned into the center of local government, or it was left open or used in both manners. (Note the changing history and the unique evolution of Oberlin, Ohio's Tappan Square.)

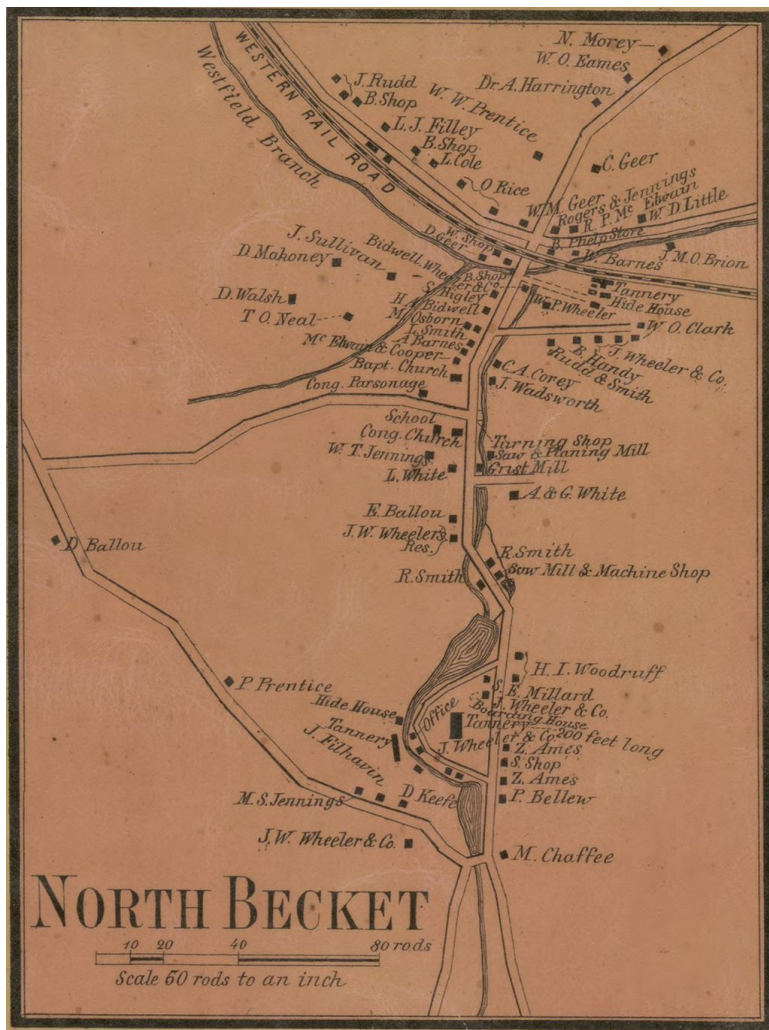
The Honorable Josiah Harris (1783-1868) is one such individual upon whom we will focus. As a true philanthropist, politician, and civic-minded individual, he should rightly be remembered or known as the founder of the original downtown area of Amherst, Ohio. Jacob Shupe (1778-1832) and his wife Catherine were the first settlers of Amherst, as a whole, and started industry in this area, spurring development and growth in the general area. Before Shupe's saw (1811) and grist (1813) mills, powered by Beaver Creek, anyone wanting to settle here and get lumber sawn or grain ground was required to travel either to the Cuyahoga or



Huron Rivers, the locations of the closest mills – the Amherst area was truly an “in-between” locale. A trip to these mills on those rivers required at least a few days on the primitive, crude “roads” or better denoted as “pathways.” Shupe and Harris were two pillars of the fledgling Amherst community.

The first acre of land cleared in the downtown area of Amherst was the space bordered by Beaver Court (then Blackman St., 1836 Town plat), later the location of the Braun Homestead. Harris himself performed the axe work and land clearing here. While Harris was felling trees for a small log house, Jacob Shupe, who had already settled about 1 ½ miles north along Beaver Creek in 1811, heard Harris in the distance. Harris was met with two curious visitors: Shupe and his hired carpenter, Ralph Lyons, who trekked to (present-day downtown Amherst) investigate the noise. Shupe had established a distillery (1815) by now, and he brought some of his brew with him to properly greet Harris. The two then welcomed





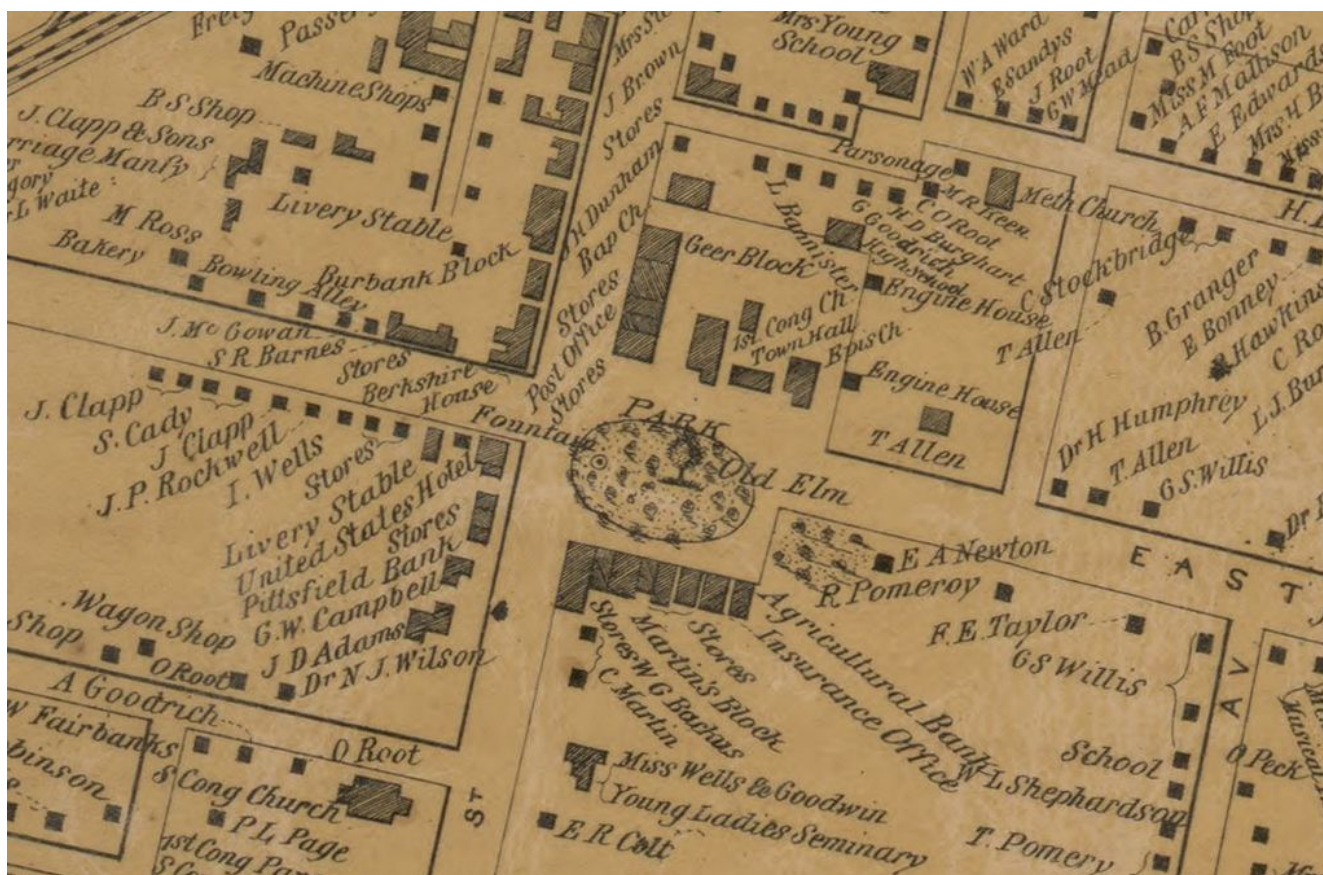
Harris this way, and as it was July 4, they celebrated the first Fourth of July in Amherst in this manner. The year was 1818.

Judge Harris was originally from the hills of Becket, Berkshire County, Massachusetts. He understood how land and its resources helped dictate town location. In order to appreciate the full story, it is imperative to review Harris' background: he is known as a pioneer of Ohio, but his history is broad and varied. He was a justice of the peace for 36 years (elected in 1821); a postmaster for over 40 years (appointed in 1823); first sheriff of Lorain County (elected 1829); elected to serve in the House of the General Assembly of Ohio, representing Lorain and Medina Counties, and

then as a State Senator for the same area (This was a time when the decision was made to create Lorain County (1822; 1824) and carve it out of Cuyahoga, Huron, and Medina Counties.); and the first settler in what would become the downtown of Amherst, Ohio (generally known as the founder of Amherst Village, although Jacob Shupe is known as the founder of Amherst as a whole). Of note, while in the State House, he worked against those who championed the cause to rescind Oberlin College's charter, largely because of the College's strong stance on abolitionism.

Williams' "History of Lorain County" (1879) states, "He was, during a long life, the object of universal respect, and his memory is revered by all who knew him." Interestingly, he was an agent for many eastern landowners, aiding in selecting particular locations and parcels in the west. In order to fully understand Judge Harris' history, it is necessary to publish a block quote from Wright's 1916 "A Standard History of Lorain County, Ohio:"

“In 1827 Judge Harris represented Cuyahoga County in the state House of Representatives. Such was the condition of the roads and conveyances at that time that Judge Harris rode his horse to Columbus, wintered him there, and returned on horseback in the spring. After representing Lorain and Medina in the House two terms, he was elected senator from the same district and served for two years. Although a member of the dominant party in the Legislature, he successfully resisted its attempt to repeal the charter of Oberlin College, then obnoxious to many on account of its abolition tendencies. At the time of his death in Amherst Village, March 26, 1868, at the age of eighty-four, Judge Harris was one of the oldest postmasters in the United States, having held office for more than forty years. He was first appointed by Postmaster General Return J. Meigs, whose term expired in 1823 as a member of the Monroe cabinet.”



The historic county seat of Berkshire County, Massachusetts (founded in 1761) is Pittsfield, Massachusetts (settled in 1752, incorporated in 1761), its largest city (detail map included). Walking here from Massachusetts, in 1814 he initially visited the area that would become Amherst, in order to scout the land and determine the best, available property he

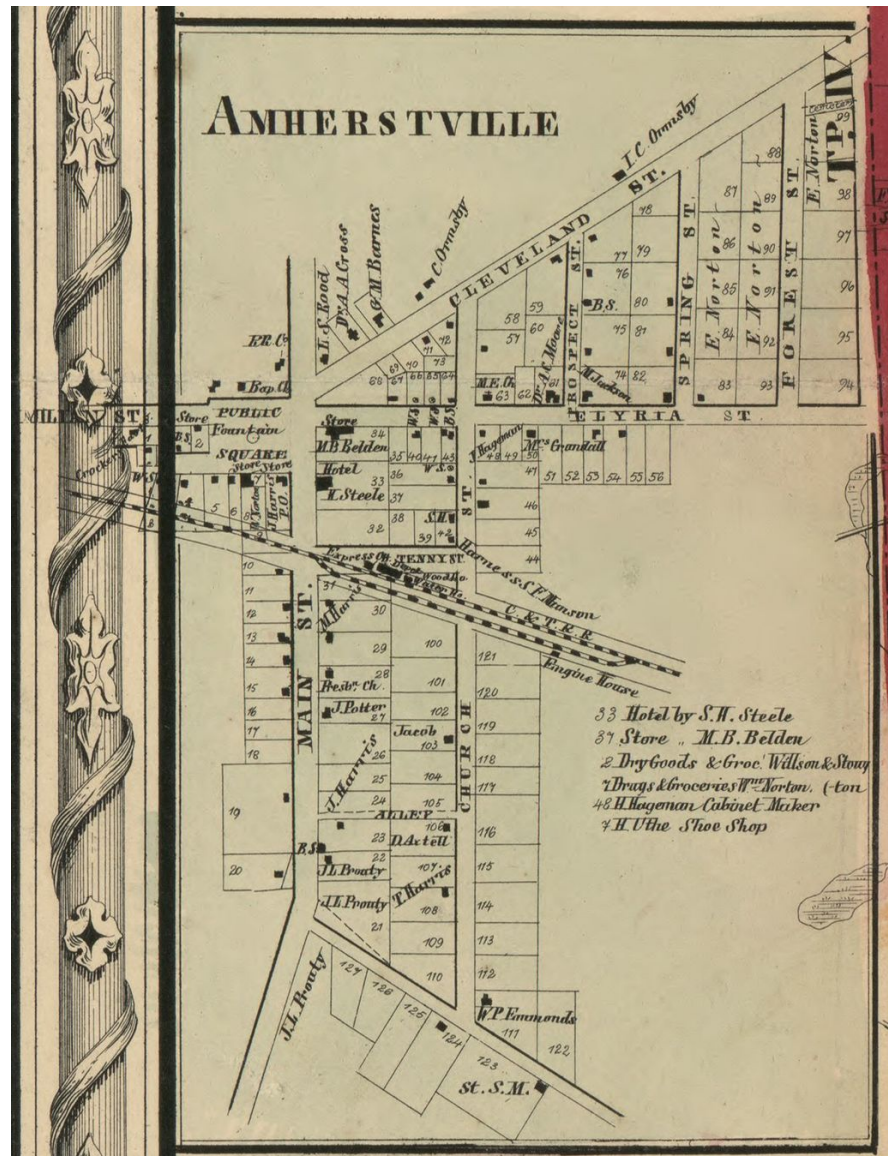
wished to acquire. Four years later he returned and permanently settled in Black River, which would become Amherst.

In the accompanying 1858 map detail of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, a well-designed town center, encircled by the businesses and government offices, is clearly portrayed. It is at a crossroads of two major roadways leading in and out of town, that a park or public green space is evident and centralized, which included an “Old Elm” and, interestingly, a “Fountain.” Businesses,

churches, and schools radiate out from this central locale. There is no doubt Judge Harris visited Pittsfield for business and other such affairs during his time in the county. Time spent here would have likely influenced his thoughts on designing a new town in lands to the west. Interestingly, a search of the current structure of Pittsfield, Massachusetts shows that the town still retains the town park / green space, along with a fountain in this space.

Reviewing the 1857 Lorain County wall map, the Amherstville (now Amherst, Ohio) map is included within. Similarities in design and layout show major parallels to Pittsfield, Massachusetts, even down to the “Fountain” feature located within the town center.

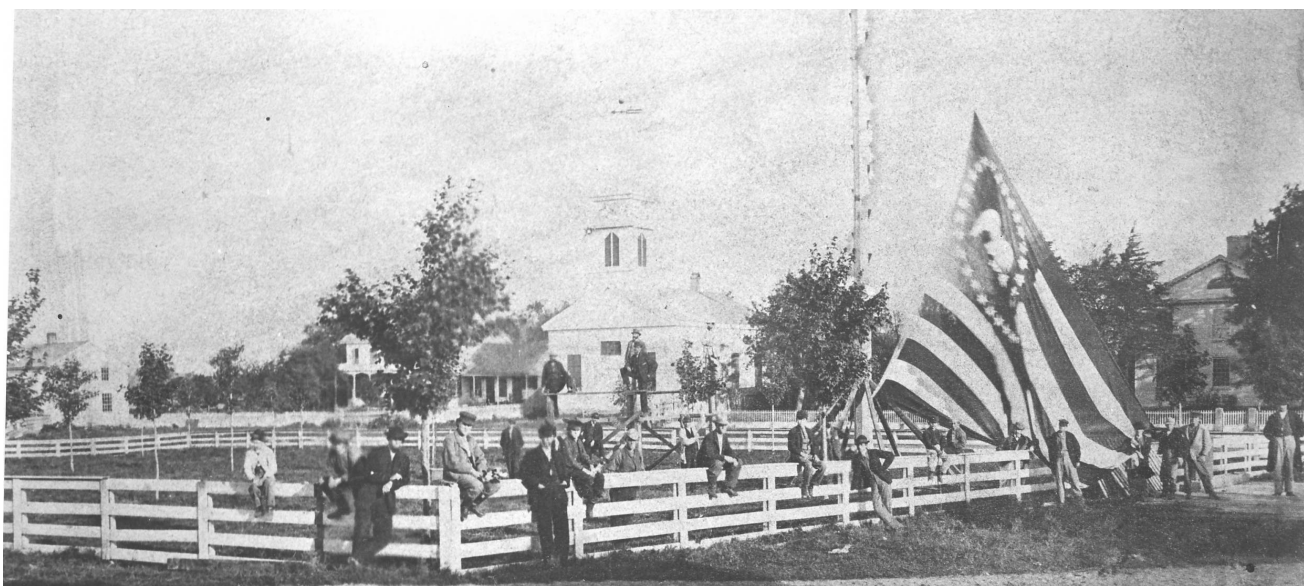
Having owned and then donated the land designated as the town Commons area, Harris placed a restriction upon the land, dictating the construction style and materials



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calling for a Hall of Amherst sandstone later to be built here, when this permanent Town Hall venture could be funded. Over the years, the townspeople voted down constructing such a Town Hall of sandstone, largely because of the cost, but by 1884 it had been approved and built. The building boasts three floors, including a former opera house / stage in the uppermost level, and the fire department (until 1959) and police station (until 1996) were in the lowest level. City (historically, 'Town') offices and Council chambers are still located on the first floor. Interestingly, Josiah Harris donated the structure used as the first Amherst Town Hall as well, which was originally a two-story wood frame house, believed to have originally been located behind the present Town Hall and later moved to its former location (278-280 Church St.), until being demolished in 2015. Harris also donated land for the first Union schoolhouse in Town, a brick building (1856-1893).

Other ventures in which Josiah Harris was involved included operating a tavern and a brickyard. He shall be remembered as a great statesman and forward-looking philanthropist, who moved the fledgling community of what ultimately became Amherst, forward. The City of Amherst today is indebted to both Shupe and Harris for their steadfast dedication to the community of what would become Amherst, Ohio. The Honorable Josiah Harris died at the age of 84 in 1868. He is buried at the Cleveland Street Cemetery in Amherst.



The included, Civil War-era, early photograph of the Town Commons, shows a popular spot in town, which was enclosed by a white, wooden fence. The Baptist Church is seen, then with its steeple, and today, still in the same location but without the steeple and used as a duplex housing unit. Capt. Stanton Sholes' house is seen on the far right of the photograph.

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He founded the Methodist Church in Amherst, and his house was later moved around the corner, onto Milan Avenue and turned into another double housing unit. His background and history in and pertinent to Amherst is quite interesting, but it is not necessary to recount it here, as it is out of the scope of this report. None-the-less, it is fascinating, and the student of local history ought to be familiar with Capt. Sholes and his story. The flag prominently shown, is a Civil War-era army regimental flag or community based standard flag design at the time of the onset of the Civil War.



## Location — Why Here?

Seven years prior to Harris' settlement, Jacob and Catherine Shupe, coming from Pennsylvania in 1811, settled about one-and-one-half miles north of present-day downtown Amherst, Ohio. Here they immediately started an early, up-and-down sash-style sawmill (1811) and gristmill (1813). These mills spurred development and opened the way for future settlement to occur in what would become northern Lorain County (at the time still part of Huron County). Shupe is rightly considered the founder of Amherst, Ohio, and its first settler, who constructed the first frame house (c.1812) in Amherst and very likely Lorain County, which still stands today on its original foundation. It must be noted that Jacob Shupe also participated in the first funeral in Amherst (1818); was the first farmer in Amherst, started the first distillery (1818), and was the father of the first native-born pioneer child in Amherst (1811). However, the Honorable Josiah Harris chose land just north of Shupe's mills location to found and plat the town center, and important reasons exist for this decision.



Reviewing downtown Amherst, Ohio, several features immediately and boldly present themselves as reasons for creating a town center here. The elevation right at the Town center is marked at the 682.9' contour, providing excellent vantage points — it is well-drained, a high spot that overlooks the Beaver Creek. The soil here is well-drained and sandy, being less rocky as compared to other areas immediately nearby (sandstone outcroppings). And finally, an unconfined aquifer natural seep spring flows freely from the west end of the North Ridge, an ancient sandy beach ridge of a former level or stage of what is today Lake Erie. It is clear why this area, directly above this spring feature, became the nucleus of present-day Downtown Amherst.

Judge Josiah Harris owned much of the land that would become downtown Amherst, Ohio. And as a forward-thinking, civically-minded philanthropic individual who was



dedicated to the furtherance of Amherst as a town, he donated several parcels of land for public uses.

The incredibly important photograph of "Brewery Hill" & Milan Avenue, looking



eastward, towards Downtown Amherst or the '5 Points area,' is included here, depicting Adam Jaeger, the Town lamplighter with his ladder. This photo is from 1884-1892, when the Street was still mostly dirt, and had not yet been moved slightly northward, when the grade of the hill was lessened (at the same time the railroads were being raised). The Old Spring is marked with an X, and Mr. Fred Beesing's c. 1862 house is still in its original location across from the Spring, before being moved to 818 Cleveland Avenue, when Milan Avenue was moved slightly northward. A spring house is also seen near the Old Spring, where water from the Spring was allowed to flow freely under this structure, acting as an early form of refrigeration for bottles and such that could be placed in the flowing, cool water. Note the dark area under the building, as the structure was raised from the ground, allowing the cold

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water to continuously move through and not freeze. The Braun Brewery, a flat-fronted, sandstone building, is just partially seen on the far right side of the photo.

Economically, the existence of the Spring is another understandable factor for the reason for downtown Amherst's location. Individuals would come from all over to gather this clear, cool water. Early on, a sandstone trough was placed at the base of the hillside to catch the water seeping from the hillside, to allow for water to be easily drawn from the Spring. Later it was tapped in several different manners using holding tanks and piping. Having this resource open and readily available, roadside, naturally drew individuals not only from Amherst but surrounding towns. They then could collect this important natural resource and also complete their business here. Notably, businesses such as a cobbler shop, livery stables, and other profitable ventures were established largely on the well-drained high



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ground, above the Spring but not far from it — having the option of well-drained real estate with a natural unconfined aquifer seep spring was quite advantageous to early Amherstonians. A Baptist church was also founded here at an early date, and the post office was nearby. The Spring allowed for a brewery to later commence operations close-by.

In an excerpt from an article that appeared in “The Elyria Republican,” May 14, 1908, entitled, “Beginnings of Amherst” by Otto Mischke, the economic importance of Amherst’s strategic location around the Old Spring is further illustrated: “Several large capitalists are negotiating for the purchase of the spring with the purpose of building a large hotel.” The article went on to predict that, “Within the course of a few years we may yet see a hotel established there and people from all parts of the union visiting and drinking the water which is warm in the winter and cold as ice in the summer. The place is an ideal one and around it is very beautiful scenery that with a three or four story hotel could overlook the village and the largest sandstone quarries in the world, while below in the valley could be seen the winding course of Beaver Creek. The Lake Shore railway trains run within a stone’s throw of the spring and if the project should materialize Amherst might largely increase in size, the old spring contributing to its growth as it did to the original settlement of the town.” Although the hotel never materialized, the Spring’s economic and historic importance to the Town’s location were still quite evident even ninety years after Josiah Harris established the downtown area here.

Amherst’s downtown area naturally grew out in a radiating, concentric pattern, directly from the Commons area, set aside by Harris, and the Old Spring just below it. After the reputation of Amherst was somewhat established, an entrepreneur, Wilhelm Braun took note. He also understood the importance of downtown Amherst’s location, taking the economic opportunity of coupling the Old Spring’s free-flowing, limitless water source with Amherst’s downtown aspects.

## **Braun Brewery – Then & Now**

Wilhelm Braun saw the opportunity that two enormous factors provided: that of the clear, cool, and never-ceasing flow of water that the Old Spring provided, coupled with the natural foot traffic and all opportunities associated with a downtown business center. Using these major aspects to his advantage, he envisioned a brewery, and in 1860 he is found on Amherst tax records, living and operating a brewery here. The Braun Brewery is prominently



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marked on the 1874 Amherst map, and its location along Milan Street (Avenue), just slightly west and south of the Old Spring, made it a fixture of the Amherst downtown area for years. The original arched cellars of hand-cut sandstone are still under the ground today, and recent history of their rediscovery in 2013, may be found in the next section.



## **Historical Overview Sketch — History of Amherst's Old Spring**

The following is text taken from a research document or historical sketch produced by Col. Nahorn for files at his New Indian Ridge Museum. It has been slightly updated and augmented and contains pertinent and integral information for this research report, even if some details have been repeated; therefore, it is imperative that it be reproduced here:

Although the large sandstone Braun Brewery building is long gone, its beautiful arched, hand-cut sandstone cellars remain today. Most residents had no idea that only a shallow layer of dirt covered these unique structures, but on March 22, 2013 during construction activities for a City storm sewer project, workers uncovered one of the cellars that had been

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sealed for around 80 years. I soon learned of this find, and research began. Only a week before, I was down at the Old Spring, working to unplug, drain and preparing to restore the Spring site once the City project work on the Spring was completed. My research halted, and my research family shifted to the Braun



years. I soon learned of this find, and research began. Only a week before, I was down at the Old Spring, working to unplug, drain and preparing to restore the Spring site once the City project work on the Spring was completed. My research halted, and my research family shifted to the Braun

William ("Wilhelm") Braun (1834-1904), the son of Justus (1806-1862) and Emilie Braun, emigrated from Bremen, Germany and arrived at port in New York on August 2, 1852, with his parents, three brothers, and one sister. Genealogical documents reveal his destination was Ohio, and it looks as if the family initially settled in Brownhelm. He was 18 at the time, and his occupation was listed as "brewer." William first appears in Amherst tax records in 1860. The Braun Homestead, above the brewery, is seen here.



A 1954 newspaper article in the Amherst Historical Society's files provides some insight, stating that Braun leased water from the Old Spring from Mr. Beesing, who lived directly across the street. (The Fred Beesing house, built c. 1862, was later moved to near the corner of Cleveland Ave. and Jackson St. and still stands today.) This was before Milan



Avenue was filled and raised (c. early 1890s when the railroads were being raised), when the Spring was at road-level. (Interestingly, a portion of the original cobblestoned Milan Ave. roadbed can still be walked on today, to enter the Old Spring area.) It is believed that over the years, the Spring has been tapped at slightly differing locations but essentially in the same locale. During Braun's early years, it looks as if the water was piped to the south side of the road for use in his brewery.

In 1914 a backdrop of fieldstone was constructed to beautify the spot for Old Home Week, a town pride event. During the Great Depression years, August Nabakowski, who operated his Nabakowski Roofing & Sheet Metal business (opened 1907) across from the Old Spring, employed workers to construct two stone arches – one at the Milan Ave. entrance and one above the Spring basin. He also made and placed two metal signs, each stating "Old Spring" over or under each arch, respectively, and built two metal bird feeders. A 1941 local newspaper article highlights how he worked with the local Boy Scouts group to create useful souvenir cups of tin cans. These recycled metal cans were collected, and Nabakowski and his workers soldered on the handles and metal plates (which were purchased by the Town Council) when business was slow. The cups were then placed on hooks (one of which still

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exists) in the fieldstone backdrop where the Old Spring pipe empties. Visitors could then grab a cup, fill it with Spring water, and ultimately retain the cup as a souvenir. These cups were sent all across the world, including Norway, England, France, Denmark, Brazil, and Nova Scotia. The cups also made their way throughout the United States, and even President Roosevelt was sent a cup from Amherst's Old Spring.

The Spring itself is as old as Beaver Creek, and its history with the City flows directly from the beginnings of Amherst as a town, to today. Of course we all recognize the Spring site as one of the most historic spots in town — where Judge Josiah Harris settled (1818) and where our town's first Fourth of July was celebrated between Harris and Amherst's founding father Jacob Shupe. Josiah Harris, the founder of Amherst's downtown, a philanthropist and pillar of the early community, donated land for the schools and town hall, was a brick yard owner, a tavern owner, early postmaster, the first sheriff of Lorain County, an Ohio state representative, and an Ohio state senator.

"Ye Old Spring" as it was known, soon became the "place to go" for many Lorain County families, where they would bring their empty jugs to be filled with the fresh, cool spring water for many years until it was deemed unsafe for human consumption. In her 1954 newspaper article, June Alexander noted, "Not only Amherst residents but numerous people from other communities come to the spring laden with gallon jugs every day. At times, entire families come to help carry their supply of drinking water from the spring to their waiting automobiles. The spring continues to furnish its refreshing waters to passers-by as well as to its neighbors." My grandmother's family would travel from Lorain to gather water, and they would make a day trip out of this adventure. In later years, my mother and her siblings fondly remember stopping at the Spring on their way home from school.

Located in the Beaver Creek valley, behind the Braun House, was a large stone building, which served as Braun's brewery. A 1963 newspaper article provides more of the story, as we learn directly from Phillip Braun, William Braun's son, that there are two arched sandstone cellars parallel to each other (perpendicular to Beaver Creek) and a third located just to the east. These structures, along with Braun's house, still exist today. The house, restored by the Timko family, was formerly known as 5 Corners Bed & Breakfast. The house appears on an 1874 plat map of the downtown area, along with a notation of "Brewery" denoting the large building nearby, to the west. The sandstone brewery was demolished after Braun disbanded his brewery sometime between 1892-94, when the railroad acquired part of Braun's property, but the cellars were not sealed until the Depression years.



The 1954 newspaper article we found in files at the Amherst Historical Society states, “...the old cellars are still there. One wonders what people will say years from now if they ever uncover these cellars and try to determine what they were used for.” Quite a quote!

The area around the Town Hall, encompassed within Beaver Court and Milan Avenue, is steeped in history. Having begun to delve into the history of the Braun Brewery, it is clear that a small volume could be written just on the history of this little section of the Town. My file folder of information on this topic is now quite large and several inches thick.

Pictures and documents at the Amherst Historical Society and New Indian Ridge Museum served as invaluable sources of information to piece together the shreds of this story. An informal, journal-like document on the history of this important story has been compiled for future reference.





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The Lorain County Preservation Network, an arm of the Lorain County Historical Society, voted to designate the Old Spring site and Braun Homestead (formerly 5 Corners Bed & Breakfast) a Lorain County Historic Landmark, after Col. Nahorn presented them with the case for doing so.

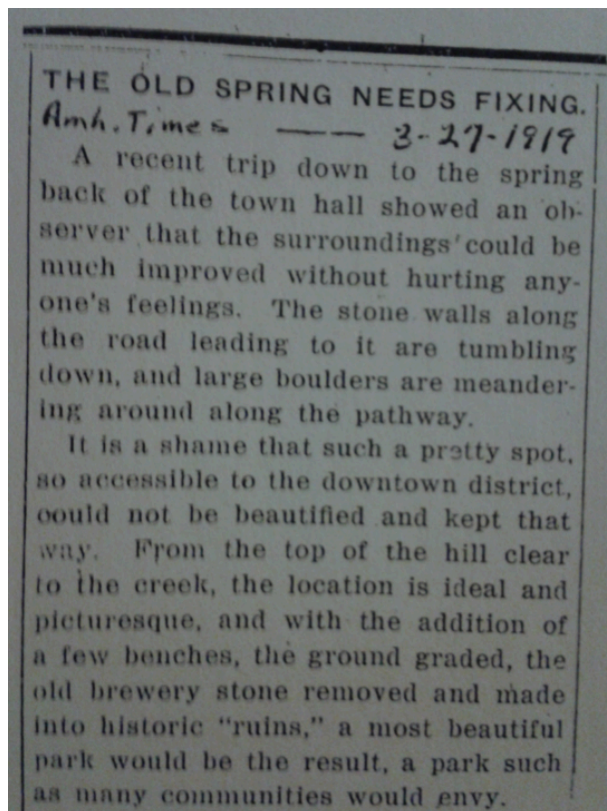
A special acknowledgment must be extended to Joan Miller Rosenbusch, Erin Holvoet, Charlie Marty, Maxine Miller, Ralph Zilch, Jim Wilhelm, Orville Manes, Fay Van Nuys Ott, and Missy and Paul Timko for their help in numerous ways in the preparation of this section.

## Today & Beyond

*The Old Spring still flows today.* If the natural seep spring feature was not located here, it could very well be argued that the Amherst town center would not have been located here and very possibly would have been at Shupe's mills or a nearby alternative location where citizens regularly,

complete their

The Old Spring, setting around it lends downtown citizens to However, the Old natural forces (largely coupled with the regular maintenance as 1919, it has been Spring needed local newspaper the Spring was in need cyclical situation, as decide to "take on" the maintenance of this some years, the area



naturally gathered to business.

and the park-like itself to be an area for naturally gather.

Spring site, because of free-flowing water) human element, needs and upkeep. As early documented that the maintenance. In a article from that year, of "fixing." This is a individuals or groups restoration or historic spot, then after falls into some form of

disrepair, and eventually others decide to take on the challenge once again. As long as the Spring continues to flow, and rain falls from above, the action of moving water — its action of destruction and creation, but in different areas often simultaneously — will endlessly require a need for "fixing" and upkeep of Amherst's Old Spring Historic Site. The work that the author of this report initiated in 2013, with simple tasks such as ensuring the drain is



properly operating, weekly, and regular trash pickup, has been integral for the positive outward appearance of the historic site, around which Amherst was founded. Another task has included re-mortaring stones and restoring concrete steps (before and after views above). Ultimately, this area must continue to be honored and maintained as such.

## Conclusion

Thousands of years of changing landscapes, having been largely caused by natural hydrological forces, allowed for unique and exceptional advantages aiding in the reason for downtown Amherst, Ohio's location. It has been presented that factors such as economics, proximity to natural resources, early land ownership, safety, and geography all contribute to the ultimate location of a town center and whether this town flourishes or ultimately flounders and fails. The decision to place Amherst, Ohio's downtown location here, is a direct result of understanding the importance of the natural seep spring unconfined aquifer located below the hillside, along with the positive attributes the high, well-drained hillside provided to the early settlers of what was ultimately to become Amherst, Ohio. Josiah Harris moved westward, to found and design Amherst's downtown with knowledge of advantages from his own home of Berkshire County, Massachusetts. As a major landowner in what became Amherst, Ohio, he was a central factor in leading the Town's development around the Old Spring site and guiding its growth in a somewhat radial direction outward from there. His selection of prime land and his own stature within the community were key factors in the success of early Amherst. Although today many area residents may not fully understand or appreciate the Old Spring as being important in their modern lives, it is a basic feature of the Town and provides a basic need for us all — water. Its continuous flow reminds us that change is constant, but basic human needs remain the same.



**"BACK to the OLD SPRING"**

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