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Marktown: Clayton Mark's Planned Worker Community in Northwest Indiana

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...(Marktown)...deserves to be restored to its former glory, keeping the tenants of historic preservation as the foundation of its future ... (Myers, 2007, para. 9).

Marktown is an urban planned worker community in East Chicago, Indiana, built in 1917 from marshland to provide a complete community for workers at The Mark Manufacturing Company. In the construction of Marktown there was an emphasis on tasteful housing in a humane environment (Shaw, 2002). The industries in East Chicago have since expanded to the borders of Marktown, so that today Marktown is a historic residential island surrounded by one of the densest industrial complexes in the world (Shaw, 2002). This self-contained community has a unique characteristic as noted in Ripley's *Believe It or Not* (1967), the streets serve as walkways, and the cars are parked on the sidewalks (Taylor, Stevens, Ponder, & Brockman, 1989). In 2007, Marktown was listed as one of the seven wonders of Northwest Indiana (Myers, 2007).

It is important to have an understanding of the historical roots that drove the development of Marktown. During the later part of the 1800's, the United States went through a period known as the Gilded Age (Twain & Warner, 1873). During this period a national transportation network was created and the U.S. economy grew at the fastest rate in its history. With the beginning of the modern industrial economy, the corporation became the dominant form of business. Large numbers of workers emigrated to the U.S. to gain employment at these newly created, rapidly growing industries. A need arose for the building of communities for workers (Shrock, 2004).

An early planned worker community was built from 1881 to 1884 by George Pullman to meet the need for housing the workers of his company, the Pullman Palace Car Company (Leyendecker, 1992). This community, known as Pullman, was located on the south side of Chicago about 15 miles from the site where Marktown was built some 30 years later. Pullman consisted of 1750 units constructed to house 5500 workers. The houses were owned by the Pullman Palace Car Company, and the rents were deducted from the wages of the workers. Because Pullman gave priority in hiring to its tenants, many workers felt coerced to live there and pay the rents, which were higher than other comparable housing (Buder 1968; Lindsey, 1942).

The stock market in the United States crashed in 1893 causing a depression in the United States. To compensate for the reduced demand for its products, the Pullman Palace Car Company drastically reduced the wages of its workers, but not the wages of officers or managers (Buder 1968; Lindsey, 1942). Moreover, Pullman kept the rents for the company-owned houses the same. During this period Pullman also gave corporate dividends to shareholders. This was deemed unacceptable to the workers during those hard times. The conditions in the town of Pullman became a focal point of a nationwide railroad strike in 1894. This strike had a large impact on the United States and the Chicagoland region. As a result of this strike, Pullman was forced to sell the company-owned houses, a move that was resisted until 1907 (Buder 1968; Lindsey, 1942).

It was around this time that the mood of the country shifted to include a concern for the rights of workers and their well-being. A period known as the Progressive Era (1890-1920) developed in which the people in cities and towns across the United States became concerned with educational and social reforms, and many people became activists for change (Pease, 1962). Some of the issues at the forefront were unemployment, labor unrest, and abuses of corporate power. The influx of immigrants and the expanding cities exacerbated the problems of crime, corruption, and poverty. A growing group of professionals developed a strong faith in the ability of educated people to overcome these problems by providing good education, a safe environment, and an efficient workplace (Frankel & Dye, 1991; Milkis, & Mileur, 1999).

A number of activist volunteer organizations developed, and the Chicagoland area was central to this activism (Mattson, 1998). Jane Addams, the first woman to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, was a powerful voice for progressivism. Her tireless efforts at social reform and her work to obtain proper

housing for the poor led to group homes being established in Chicago's slums to aid the poor urban residents (Berson, 2004). It was during this period that Clayton Mark, the founder of Marktown, rose to prominence. It is noteworthy that Mark worked with Jane Addams on a number of educational and social reforms ("Moved to pity", 1903, May 16; "Women caught", 1903, Feb. 8). Mark's plans for Marktown included provisions for a humane and progressive quality of life for employees, and reflected a concern for better conditions for workers (Davis, 1997).

The Founder of Marktown: Clayton Mark

Clayton Mark was born in 1858 in Federicksburg, PA, and moved to Chicago with his family in 1872 ("Clayton Mark", 1936). He stopped his formal education after completing seventh grade at Brown School in Chicago ("Clayton Mark", 1936; "Named for", 1896). When Clayton was 17 his father's dry goods business burnt down, and the family relocated to Carroll, Iowa to start another general merchandising store ("It is with", 1936). Clayton stayed in Chicago and began his career as a file clerk for Chicago Malleable Iron Co. in 1876, where he received a wage of 70 cents a day (7 cents an hour for 10 hours a day). Mark quickly advanced to secretary, Director of the Chicago District, and vice-president (Eaton, 1969). He maintained his position on the Board of Directors until his death ("Clayton Mark, Veteran", 1936, July 8). In 1888 he founded in a co-partnership with his father Cyrus Mark, the Mark Manufacturing Company ("Interesting things", 1922; Mark, 1915). The company started out manufacturing well points, small castings used in the construction of wells. Mark had the ability to anticipate demand, and he proceeded to acquire facilities to meet that demand (Eaton, 1969). He bought a pipe mill in Evanston, IL in 1900, another in Ohio in 1901, a zinc mining company in 1906, and in 1916 Mark built a steel mill in Indiana Harbor to supply his own requirements for steel (Eaton, 1969; "June 30th birthdate", 1949).

With his increasing wealth, Mark was passionate about giving back. His chief civic interest was in the field of public education ("Clayton Mark, Veteran", 1936, July 8), and he had a large impact on the shaping of the Chicago School Systems. In 1893 he worked with Dr. Harper (the first president of the University of Chicago) and others to plan a West Side Academy in Chicago that would greatly lessen the cost of preparing for college and university courses ("Planning a west", 1893). Mark served on the Board of Education from 1896-1905, and served as its President from 1902-1905 (Gilbert & Bryson, 1929). Due to his efforts many needful reforms were instituted, and he was heralded as "a very constructive influence in matters of public education" (Gilbert & Bryson, 1929, p.794).

As President of the Board of Education, Clayton Mark facilitated the building of new schools to alleviate crowded conditions, including the Edgar Allen Poe School in Pullman ("\$80,000 school", 1903, Feb. 18). Many of Mark's efforts were aimed at increasing the efficiency of the school system and increasing attendance. He advocated the appointment and promotion of teachers based on merit, and freeing the Superintendent of Schools from any political interference. These reforms were adopted. Other improvements to the schools during the time that Mark was President of the Board of

Education included better sanitary conditions, the establishment of school playgrounds, the extension of technical schools, and the incorporation of kindergartens into public schools (Eaton, 1969).

Clayton Mark served several terms as President of the Civic Federation of Chicago from 1907 to 1929, one of the most active reform groups that addressed a great variety of the city's social and political problems (Eaton, 1969; Sutherland, 1943). Historians have described Mark as taking part in a phenomenal number of civic affairs with overwhelming energy and drive (Coventry, Meyer, & Miller, 2003; Eaton, 1969). It was written about Mark's civic efforts that "...he tried in every way to protect and foster the things in life that made it possible for him so it would be possible for others" ("Clayton Mark", 1936, p.2).

While Mark was Chairman of the Educational Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago, he advocated the development of vocational educational programs. For inspiration, Mark sent a representative to Europe to study its methods of vocational education (Gilbert & Bryson, 1929).

Recommendations were made, and as a result of these efforts vocational schools were recognized as entitled to support (Eaton, 1969). This pattern of sending colleagues to Europe for inspiration and study in order to implement the findings in the Chicagoland area was evidenced again when Mark sent the architect of Marktown overseas for inspiration.

Marktown: The Vision and Construction

By 1916 Clayton Mark's needs for steel in his business increased to such a level that he built a steel plant, primarily to service his own businesses. Mark chose 190 acres of marshland in Indiana Harbor, East Chicago as the location for his factory and its comprehensive worker community. Many of the workers were immigrants from Europe ("Marktown", 2003). In 1917 the construction of Marktown began out of a desire to create an ideal community, one where it was hoped that "...physically clean living conditions would yield morally clean – and productive-workers" (Guelcher, 2002. para. 3). Marktown in the 1920's was described as a model of architectural harmony and neatness (Guelcher, 2002).

The architect commissioned by Clayton Mark for Marktown was Howard Van Doren Shaw. It is noteworthy that Mark chose Shaw to design a model community for his factory workers in East Chicago in that Shaw had previously done the majority of his work designing mansions for wealthy clients. In fact Shaw had designed Clayton Mark's own home in Lake Forest, IL in 1912 (Coventry et al., 2003). Mark wanted his workers' community to be aesthetically pleasing as well as functional, so he sent Shaw to Europe to study European worker villages. It is interesting to note that the chosen design for Marktown was an English one, with the single family houses constructed in a Tudor Revival style (Taylor et al., 1989). The homes where Clayton Mark grew up in Lebanon County, Pennsylvania near the Cornwall Iron Furnace (one of the oldest ironworks in the United States), have been described as similar to those in the countryside of England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales (Silverman, 1998). This

may have played a part in the final design of Marktown, which has been described as an attempt to recreate a gracious English country village ("Marktown", 1989).

The plan for Marktown was described as a model city designed to house 8,000 employees in 200 houses ("Model city", 1917). Each house was to be well-built, sturdy, and fireproof, with garden spaces and no alleys. Along with the houses, the plan called for public lawns between the houses and the sidewalk, a recreation building, both elementary and high schools, a post office, a movie theatre, and a recreational park with tennis courts ("Model city", 1917; Myers, 2003a). In contrast to the Pullman model in which workers were not allowed to own their homes, the residents of Marktown had the opportunity to either rent or purchase their homes on easy terms over a 5 year period, with a rebate on the price after 5 years as a bonus ("Model city", 1917).

The realization of Clayton Mark's vision for Marktown was curtailed by the aftereffects of World War 1, and the sale of his steel plant to Youngstown Sheet and Tube (Davis, 1997). In 1918 the Mark Manufacturing Company was merged with other companies to become the Steel and Tube Company of America, one of the largest independent steel companies ("Clayton Mark", 1918' July 11; "Steel & Tube", 1918). Clayton Mark was elected Chairman of the Board of the new company ("Clayton Mark", 1918, July 11). In 1923 this corporation was sold to Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company (Gilbert & Bryson, 1929). At the time that the construction of Marktown was stopped, only 97 buildings had been built, and in keeping with Clayton Mark's passion for education, two of them were schools ("Marktown endures", 1990; Myers, 2004).

Marktown Today

along the southern shore of Lake Michigan, in the smelly, dirty great industrial empires, history lives and dies a little each day... (Mustain & Weisenhaus, 2005, para. 1).

Today, Marktown is a predominately Hispanic, blue collar, low-income Northwest Indiana community that faces significant challenges (Masters, 2006; Shaw, 2002). It struggles to maintain a population, with approximately 25% of the buildings vacant ("Marktown", 2008). The homes of Marktown have been privately owned since 1942, when Marktown went public and houses could be freely bought and sold (Taylor et al., 1989). The mill still provided jobs, but Marktown was on its own. After World War II, there was not enough business for the small shops in Marktown to remain open, and today there are no businesses in Marktown (Shaw, 2002). Eventually the remaining land originally intended for parks and schools was used by Mark Manufacturing's successors for expansion or sold to other enterprises for heavy industrial development. Instead of a self-contained community as envisioned by Clayton Mark and Howard Van Doren Shaw, Marktown became an isolated community surrounded by heavily polluting steel mills and oil refineries (Mustain & Weisenhaus, 1980). And that isolation may have contributed to the vandalism and theft that affects the community, as well as the gang activity that flares up every now and then. Furthermore, there has been an economic downturn in the area

stemming from the 1970's when many of the area steel mills closed or downsized (Guelcher, 2002).

Over the years, the residents of Marktown have saved their community through citizen action. For example, in 1952 Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company petitioned the City of East Chicago to zone Marktown industrial. This could have resulted in the razing of Marktown. Resident protests were successful in preventing this rezoning (Myers, 2003b). The residents have also banded together in beautification efforts. For example, in 2005 they arranged for the East Chicago Redevelopment Commission to supply the funds, with the labor supplied by the residents for the restoration of the English garden wall fences and street side gardens ("It's remarkable", 2005).

As Marktown approaches its 100th anniversary, it is remarkable that while only a fraction of the original plans for Marktown were completed, all of the original structures stand. Many of them are in a dilapidated condition, and it is apparent that there is a need to restore as well as preserve the existing structures. Paint is needed, stucco is cracking and falling off in places, and many houses need a level of reinvestment that residents cannot afford (Guelcher, 2002). Some homes are boarded up awaiting rehabilitation. Funds are required to restore the buildings to their original condition. In 2006, Marktown was listed as one of the ten most endangered landmarks in Indiana (Connor, 2006). The type of restoration permitted is crucial to retaining the authentic historical roots of Marktown.

A leader in many of the preservation efforts for Marktown, long-time resident Paul Myers, has worked to disseminate an understanding of its historical significance (Nolan, 2010; Watson, 1997). Myers is a fifth generation resident (Watson, 1997), beginning with his great-great-grandfather who lived in one of the first houses built in Marktown (Shaw, 2002). Myers' restored home in Marktown was featured as one of 99 historic homes of Indiana (Shaw, 2002).

Clayton Mark's planned worker community in Northwest Indiana is regarded as an important cultural resource of architectural and historical significance ("Marktown", 2003). Marktown was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975 (Schoon, 2003). In the words of the Marktown Revitalization Plan commissioned by the City of East Chicago in 2008, "Marktown is significant as it is a major work by a significant American architect, Howard Van Doren Shaw, for its association with the driving economic force of industry that served as an identity of the region, and is representative of the planned industrial community movement of the late nineteenth and early 20th century." (para. 3). Moving forward in the 21st century, there are plans to seek National Historic Landmark status for Marktown ("Marktown", 2003). This would bring a much needed influx of public cash that, coupled with residents' funds, would allow for the level of restoration needed to preserve Marktown's historical significance. Other planned worker communities, such as Pullman, have been granted National Historic Landmark status (Leavitt, 1981), and this would allow Marktown to join their ranks.

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