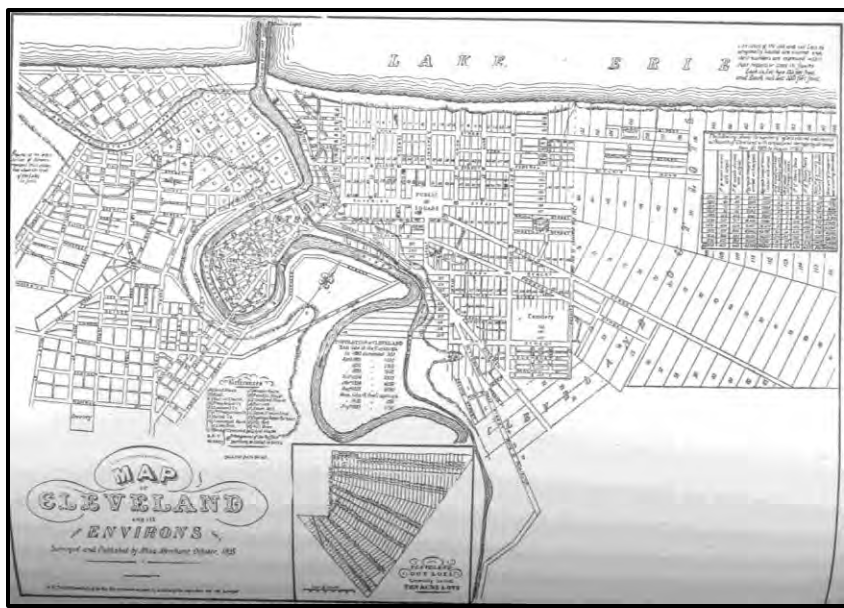


The Irish and The Angle



Irish immigrants first arrived in numbers along the banks of the Cuyahoga River in 1825, when construction began on the Ohio and Erie Canal. With its northern terminus in Cleveland located near where Superior Avenue met the river, the canal was built to move goods between Lake Erie and the Ohio River. The earliest canal diggers probably only sheltered in Cleveland in temporary work camps and followed the work south. But in 1827, the Cleveland city fathers decided to eliminate the last bend of the meandering Cuyahoga River—which at that time emptied into the lake near present-day W. 54th Street—and hired workers to dig a new mouth that would provide more direct access to the lake. Settlement was at first more dense along the so-called “Irishtown Bend” between the canal terminus and the Columbus Street Bridge—an area packed with wholesale warehouses.



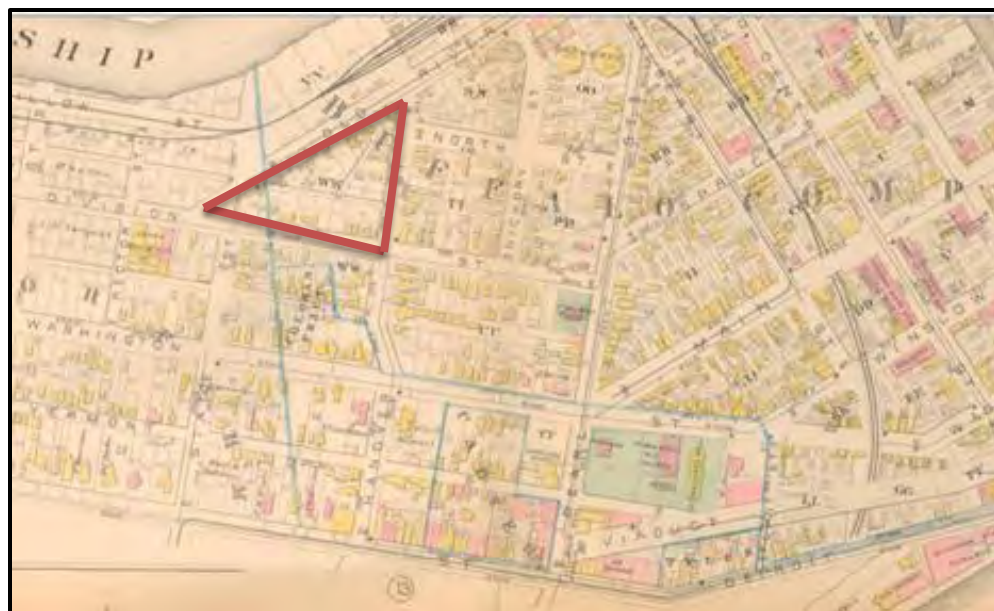
As the city entered the industrial age, several factors pushed settlement north along the west bank of the Cuyahoga to the area later known as “The Angle:” the growth of the shipbuilding industry along the abandoned river channel on Whiskey Island, the lakefront route of the New York Central Railroad, which began construction in 1847, and the growth of the iron and steel industries in the 1850s and 1860s, which spurred Great Lakes shipping traffic and required docks at the mouth of the river. The massive movement of supplies and materials needed to support the Civil War effort in the early 1860s also brought Cleveland to the forefront as a center for transportation and industry and as a place where immigrants might find jobs.



The early 1860s coincided with a several year stretch of bad weather and bad growing conditions in the West of Ireland, particularly on Achill Island in County Mayo. For immigrants leaving Ireland at that time, as so many from Achill Parish did, Cleveland was a promising destination. Once immigrants found a place where they could make a decent living, they tended, by a process called chain migration, to encourage family and friends back “in the old country” to join them in the same location. Thus it was that an early nickname for the area west of the river by the lake was “Achill Patch.” Another series of bad weather and growing years in the early 1880s in Achill Parish and County Mayo at large led to another wave of immigration that further cemented the ties between Cleveland and County Mayo and Achill in particular.



The nickname “The Angle” is short for “The Triangle.” Disputes about the location of “The Triangle” abound. But initially the designation only applied specifically to the roughly triangular piece of land formed by the boundaries of West 28th Street (formerly Hanover), Division Avenue, and River Road, as marked below on an 1881 map of the city. Gradually, however, the nickname came to be extended to the entire wedge of land north of Detroit that sloped down to the river and constituted St. Malachi’s Parish.



PHOTOGRAPHS:

1835 “Ahaz-Merchant” map of Cleveland, courtesy of Western Reserve Historical Society; A view of the Cuyahoga River circa 1870, looking north from about Superior Avenue, courtesy of Western Reserve Historical Society; Cranes on the Iron Ore Docks, circa 1870, courtesy of Cleveland Public Library; Railroad workers, circa 1910, courtesy of John Gill; 1881 Hopkins City Atlas, courtesy of Cleveland Public Library.

St. Malachi Parish—The Early Years

The founding of early churches in Cleveland reflects the patterns of immigration that shaped the city. Canal work prompted the arrival of immigrant workers in 1825, and, in 1826, Irish and German families organized Cleveland's first Catholic church, St. Mary's on the Flats. The city's rapid growth as a transportation hub led to the appointment of the first resident pastor for St. Mary's in 1835. The influx of Irish immigrants fleeing the Famine prompted Cleveland's designation as a diocesan seat in 1847 and the appointment of its first bishop, the French-born Amadeus Rappe. Bishop Rappe immediately recognized the need for more than one church building. Within a few years, he set in motion the foundation of St. Patrick's (West Park, 1848) to serve outlying rural communities west of the city, the Cathedral of St. John (1848-1852) to serve the city center, St. Patrick's (Bridge, 1852) to serve the population west of the Cuyahoga River, and the parish that became Holy Name (1854) to serve the area south of the city.

The railroad and the iron ore docks that fueled the city's emerging industrial economy—and the jobs created—led to the founding of St. Malachi Parish in 1865. Bishop Rappe chose Fr. James P. Maloney (also spelled Moloney or Molony) to organize the new parish. Like many of the "pioneer" priests of the Diocese of Cleveland, Fr. Maloney was a native of Ireland, born about 1829 in County Tipperary. An immigrant himself, he studied for the priesthood in Cleveland and was ordained by Bishop Rappe.

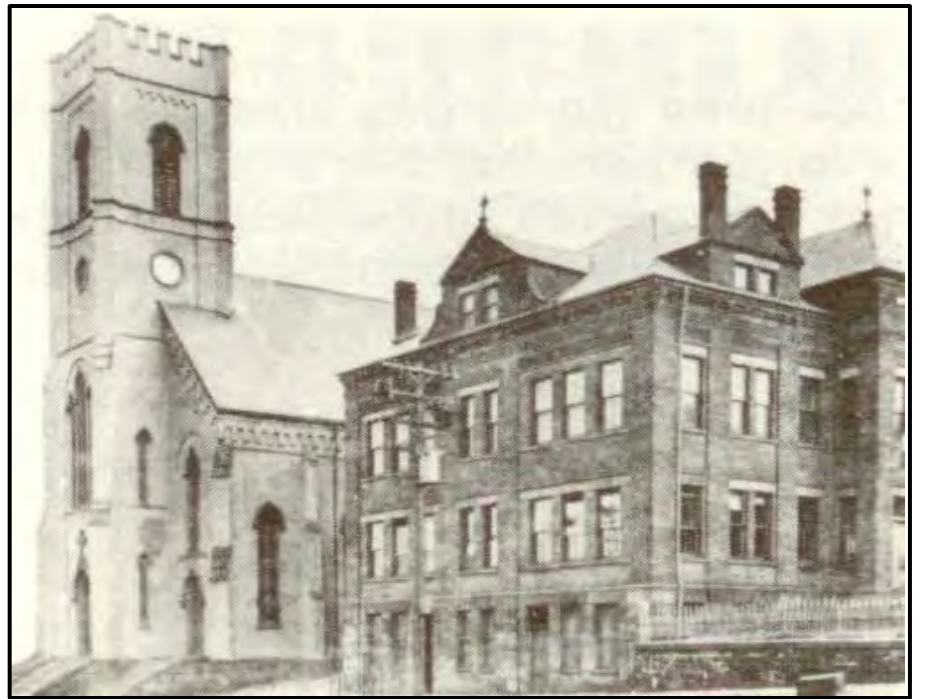
Early pastors such as Fr. Maloney had to be builders as well as spiritual leaders. While the new parish community worshipped temporarily at St. Mary's on the Flats, Fr. Maloney set about identifying a site, fundraising, and overseeing the construction of a new parish church on Washington Street. This he accomplished despite the fact that his parishioners, as the *Plain Dealer* noted in 1871, were "among the poorest in the city." Praised by the *Plain Dealer* for his "strong determination" and "indomitable perseverance," Fr. Maloney was able to have an imposing church—at a reported cost of \$75,000—ready for dedication in March 1871.

Bishop Rappe depended on strong figures such as Fr. Maloney to build a parish from the ground up. Fr. Maloney shared the value that Bishop Rappe and his successor, Bishop Richard Gilmour, placed on Catholic education. In 1871, the year of the church dedication, Fr. Maloney also paid \$9,100 for a Cleveland Public School building at the corner of Pearl (West 25th) and Division Streets that would serve as the parish school. A second school building for girls opened in 1885 under the administration of the Ursuline nuns. The boys continued to attend school for a time in the Pearl Street building, eventually under the tutelage of the Christian Brothers.

Fr. Maloney also promoted a cause dear to Bishop Rappe's heart—total abstinence from alcohol. St. Malachi Parish sponsored a Temperance Society, as did many other early parishes. Like many of his Irish-born colleagues, Fr. Maloney also saw the parish as ministering to the community's social needs—an arena that the bishops were less comfortable with but one that eased the entry of newly arrived immigrants. St. Malachi Parish formed a "Literary and Debating Society" for adults and offered recreational activities for children at the LaSalle Club. Fr. Maloney also provided space for meetings in support of the cause of Irish nationalism.

At the time of Fr. Maloney's death in 1903, he was the oldest serving priest in the Cleveland diocese and one of the last surviving who had been ordained by Bishop Rappe. He was buried, along with many of his seminary classmates, in St. John Cemetery on Woodland Avenue. At the time of Fr. Maloney's death, the *Plain Dealer* reported that St. Malachi Parish had grown to number 3,000 individuals; other accounts reckoned the parish population at 2,000 families. Fr. Maloney's long-time assistant, Fr. John McHale, had been working in the parish since 1889. With a special interest in producing plays and other entertainments, Fr. McHale readily stepped up to continue Fr. Maloney's active style of stewardship.

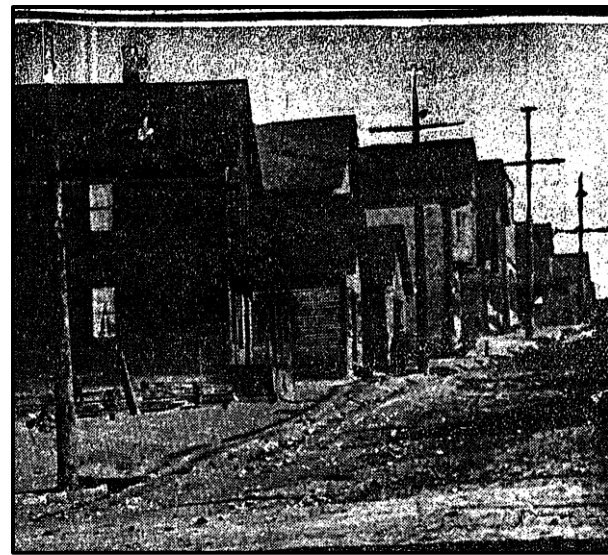
PHOTOGRAPHS: The original St. Malachi church, courtesy of the Catholic Diocese; Fr. James Maloney is seated on the far right in this 1870 photograph of Irish-born priests of the Cleveland diocese, courtesy of the Catholic Diocese; Fr. James Maloney and Fr. John McHale, from the *Plain Dealer*.



This display was prepared by Margaret Lynch,
Irish American Archives Society

Life in the Angle

On Cleveland's near west side, the relatively higher ground of what is now called Ohio City was settled first. The swampy low-lying areas by the river were considered to be unhealthy breeding grounds for typhoid fever and other deadly diseases. However, jobs in the railroad and shipbuilding yards and on the docks led to the settlement of the "Angle" neighborhood along the river. The housing stock in the Angle was poor in quality, and the lots were narrow. Outsiders associated the neighborhood with what today would be called the "urban ills" of drinking, fighting, and crime. In 1908, the *Plain Dealer* summed up the common perception that "It is a crowded, wicked place."

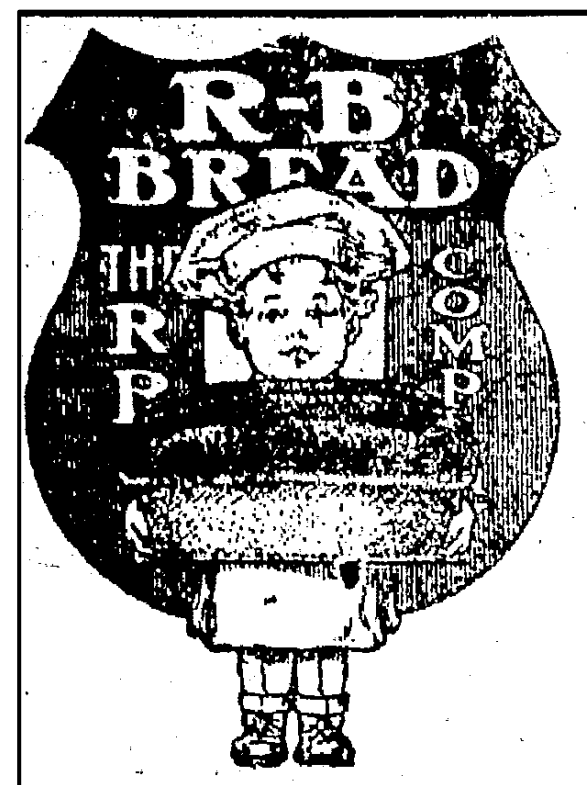


Life in the Angle was undeniably difficult. The dock workers were day laborers who showed up each day not knowing whether they would work or not. Many workers lost their lives in disasters, such as the 1896 sinking of a ferry boat bringing men from the Angle to the shipbuilding yards on Whiskey Island or the 1916 water tunnel explosion. Other individuals lost life or limbs when cranes slipped on the iron ore docks.

Yet the Angle was a close-knit community. Neighbors helped those who couldn't read or write with immigration paperwork or letters sent back home. They tended each other's sick and buried each other's dead. Some prospered and stayed. Patrick Smith, who came to Cleveland with his parents in 1836 at the age of 9—operated a successful dredging and tugboat operation, served on City Council, and was a pillar of the parish. Police Captain Michael English lived on Washington Street. Joseph T. Feighan, father of banker John T. Feighan, ran a grocery store on Main Street. The Angle's most famous son, boxer Johnny Kilbane—a water boy on the docks and a switchman for the railroad—boxed at the LaSalle Club and held the world featherweight title from 1912-1923. Aspirations weren't only for the well-known, however. At the time of Fr. Maloney's death in 1903, 50 graduates of the St. Malachi's Girls School were said to have become teachers.



In memories of the Angle circa 1915 shared by Beatrice Gallagher Lynch, the neighborhood was a hardscrabble but friendly place. Hucksters like the Stadlers, who sold soap in exchange for grease, hawked wares from horse-drawn wagons. Frank Wright filled each family's bucket with milk from huge cans. On Fridays, Martin Skelly sold fish. Children followed Dan the Pie Man on his rounds to the stores in the Burns Pies wagon. Fifty pound blocks of ice and coal at \$3.50 a ton were delivered to the homes—though hard-pressed families also sent children to pick coal off cars in the train yards. When a train loaded with peanuts pulled in, the aroma of roasted peanuts soon filled the air.



Women and children shopped nearly every day at neighborhood stores like Mrs. Haley's on 28th Street for smaller items, and several times a week for larger purchases at the West Side Market and stores along 25th Street—Sword's Drug Store, C.D. Kenney's Tea and Coffee, and Westropp Wallpaper and Paint. Children were sent to R.B. Bread Company at 28th and Bridge to buy day-old bread and bags of broken crackers and cookies for a dime. Ice cream at Bevan's was a special treat, perhaps after amateur vaudeville night at Mitty De Vere's Majestic Theatre.

Depleted housing stock, clearance for building a high level bridge in 1912, and the spread of industry—the manufacturing company Parker-Hannifin got its start in the Angle in 1918—caused a precipitous population decline. By 1933, only 50 families were registered in St. Malachi Parish, though after the Lakeview Terrace projects were built in 1937 the number climbed to 400. Fire destroyed the original church on December 23, 1943. And yet the parish rebuilt, held on, and repurposed in service of those on the margins of city life. It remains, as it has for 150 years, a beacon of hope and welcome.

PHOTOGRAPHS: 1908 photograph from the *Plain Dealer*, looking up 28th Street from River Road; Patrick Smith, leading citizen of St. Malachi Parish; Logo of the R.B. Bread Company, circa 1912, from the *Plain Dealer*; this panoramic photograph taken in 1915 in front of the wall around St. Malachi's school property required a lengthy enough exposure that boxer Johnny Kilbane was able to run from one side to the other and appear at both ends.

