



Tri-Village Entrepreneurs

Historical Context and Overview

Entrepreneurs organize the use of productive resources (natural resources, human resources, and capital goods) to produce goods or services in an economy. Entrepreneurship comes with risks (loss of savings and investments) and rewards (profit). Entrepreneurs are willing to take risks to develop new products or businesses. They recognize opportunities to use productive resources to make a profit and accept the risks involved in competing with other producers.

The Tri-Village area—Marble Cliff, Grandview, and Upper Arlington—owes its development to successful entrepreneurs in the early 20th century. Sylvio Casparis, George Urlin, the Sells Brothers, King Thompson, and Don Casto, Sr. were key entrepreneurs in the Tri-Village area.

The earliest area developments were built from the natural resource of white limestone. In 1899, Sylvio Casparis purchased a limestone quarry and later merged several others under the Marble Cliff Quarries name. He brought in hundreds of Italian stone workers to work and live in the quarries. The Marble Cliff neighborhood developed around the limestone industry.

The Grandview community developed to the east of Marble Cliff. It was here that entrepreneur George Urlin built his mansion home with a “grand view” of the landscape. Urlin was successful in the photography, bicycle, and real estate businesses. In 1927, Don Casto, Sr. built the area’s first shopping center, the Bank Block, along Grandview Avenue. It offered a new way to shop, with three grocery stores and a bank, merging retail and the automobile into one place at one time.

Sellsville emerged as a separate community to support the needs of the winter headquarters of the Sells Brothers Circus, near the present-day Lennox Town Center on Olentangy River Road.

North of Marble Cliff and Grandview, King Thompson established Upper Arlington. King, and his brother Ben, purchased 840 acres of farmland to develop this community.

Standards Alignment

Ohio’s Learning Standards: Social Studies

Grade 3

Content Statement 5. Daily life is influenced by the agriculture, industry and natural resources in different communities.

Content Statement 17. A consumer is a person whose wants are satisfied by using goods and services. A producer makes goods and/or provides services.

Grade 4

Content Statement 23. Entrepreneurs organize productive resources and take risks to make a profit and compete with other producers.

Grade 5

Content Statement 16: The availability of productive resources and the division of labor impact productive capacity.

Grade 6

Content Statement 13. The fundamental questions of economics include what to produce, how to produce and for whom to produce.

Grade 8

Content Statement 22. Choices made by individuals, businesses and governments have both present and future consequences.

Learning Objectives

- Explain the role of producers and consumers in an economy.
- Define entrepreneurs and explain the risks and rewards of entrepreneurship.
- Identify natural resources in the Tri-Village area and explain how these resources impacted the area.
- Discuss the role of entrepreneurs in the growth and development of Marble Cliff, Grandview and Upper Arlington.

Discussion Questions

1. What natural resources were available the Tri-Village area? How did these resources impact the economy?
2. What are some examples of producers and consumers identified in this segment?
3. How did the white limestone natural resource along the Scioto River impact the development of the Tri-Village area? What impact is still evident today?
4. How did Sylvio Casparis organize natural and human resources to increase productivity in his quarries?
5. What risks did Casparis, Don Casto, Sr., and King Thompson take? What were the rewards?
6. What was unique about the Bank Block established by Don Casto, Sr.? How did this development reflect changes in American life in the 1920s?

Extension Activities

- Have students assume the role of an entrepreneur. Students should determine a product or business and develop a business plan. The plan should explain how they will use productive resources and answer the fundamental economic questions.
- Have students research more about the entrepreneurs of Tri-Village and the businesses they developed. Students can present their findings in a multimedia presentation.

Additional Resources

- Grandview/Marble Cliff Historical Society: <http://www.ghmchs.org/>
- Marble Cliff Quarry: <http://www.columbusrailroads.com/new/?menu=06Industry&submenu=05Marble%20Cliff%20Quarry>
- History of Upper Arlington: <https://www.uaoh.net/departments/division.php?structureid=591>
- UA Archives: Thompson Family Archives: <http://www.uaarchives.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/p16276coll1>