



## **Olde Towne East**

### **Streetcar Suburb and Middle Class Affluence**

#### **Historical Context and Overview**

During the so-called Gilded Age that followed the Civil War, U.S. cities grew rapidly as business owners built their factories in cities with good transportation systems. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Industrial Revolution had transformed the United States into the leading economic power in the world. The city of Columbus, which had doubled in population during the Civil War, was successfully emerging as an industrial city in the post-war period.

As Columbus industrialized, a new group of white collar workers—managers, engineers, and sales representatives—formed a new middle class in the city. The development of the streetcar (initially horse-drawn, later electric) made it possible for these middle class residents to move away from the industrial neighborhoods and form “suburbs” from which they could commute to their jobs in the city.

From the 1890s to the 1920s, Olde Towne East was the place to live in Columbus for the city’s wealthiest members. Captains of business and industry built their dream houses along Broad Street. Meanwhile, Main Street became the commercial corridor of the city with theaters, restaurants, stores, and professional businesses that served the residential neighborhood.

#### **Standards Alignment**

##### **Ohio’s New Learning Standards: K-12 Social Studies**

Grade 3, Content Statement 3: Local communities change over time.

Grade 3, Content Statement 7: Systems of transportation and communication move people, products and ideas from place to place.

HS American History Content Statement 10: The rise of corporations, heavy industry, mechanized farming and technological innovations transformed the American economy from an agrarian to an increasingly urban industrial society.

HS American History Content Statement 12: Immigration, internal migration and urbanization transformed American life.

#### **Learning Objectives**

- Discuss the effects that improvements in transportation technology had on the growth of the city of Columbus.
- Explain the importance of transportation technological advances in American industry.
- Analyze the effects that transportation had on the downtown and suburban areas.
- Explain how increasing middle-class affluence during the Industrial Era contributed to the development of streetcar suburbs.
- Discuss how the Olde Towne East area has changed over time.

## Discussion Questions

1. How did the development of the streetcar impact neighborhoods east of downtown?
2. Why did the neighborhood sprawl grow to the east during the 1890s through the 1920s? What was going on in areas in other directions from downtown?
3. How was the development of the streetcar suburb related to the rise of the middle class?
4. How did the development of Broad Street reflect the increasing wealth of the Gilded Age?
5. Why did people on Broad Street not want the traffic coming in and out of Columbus to travel on their street, but the people on Main Street did want the in and out traffic on their street?

## Extension Activity

Pull up the map of Columbus in 1872 (<http://www.bigmapblog.com/2011/us40-32-columbus-ohio-birdseye-map-1872-bailey/>). Note the Columbus landmarks at the time, as well as the use of green space in the near-east side during this time period. Compare this map with a current map of the Olde Towne East area (attached). Discuss differences, looking at green space, streets, places of interest, etc.

Investigate the history of the streetcar. Discuss the pros and cons regarding horse-drawn streetcars versus electric streetcars. Students participate in a town forum and argue pro- or anti- electric streetcars. Students should consider cost, supplies, time of preparation, appearance, maintenance, future implications, and other community concerns.

## Additional Resources

Teaching Columbus website: <http://www.teachingcolumbus.omeka.net/collections/show/36>

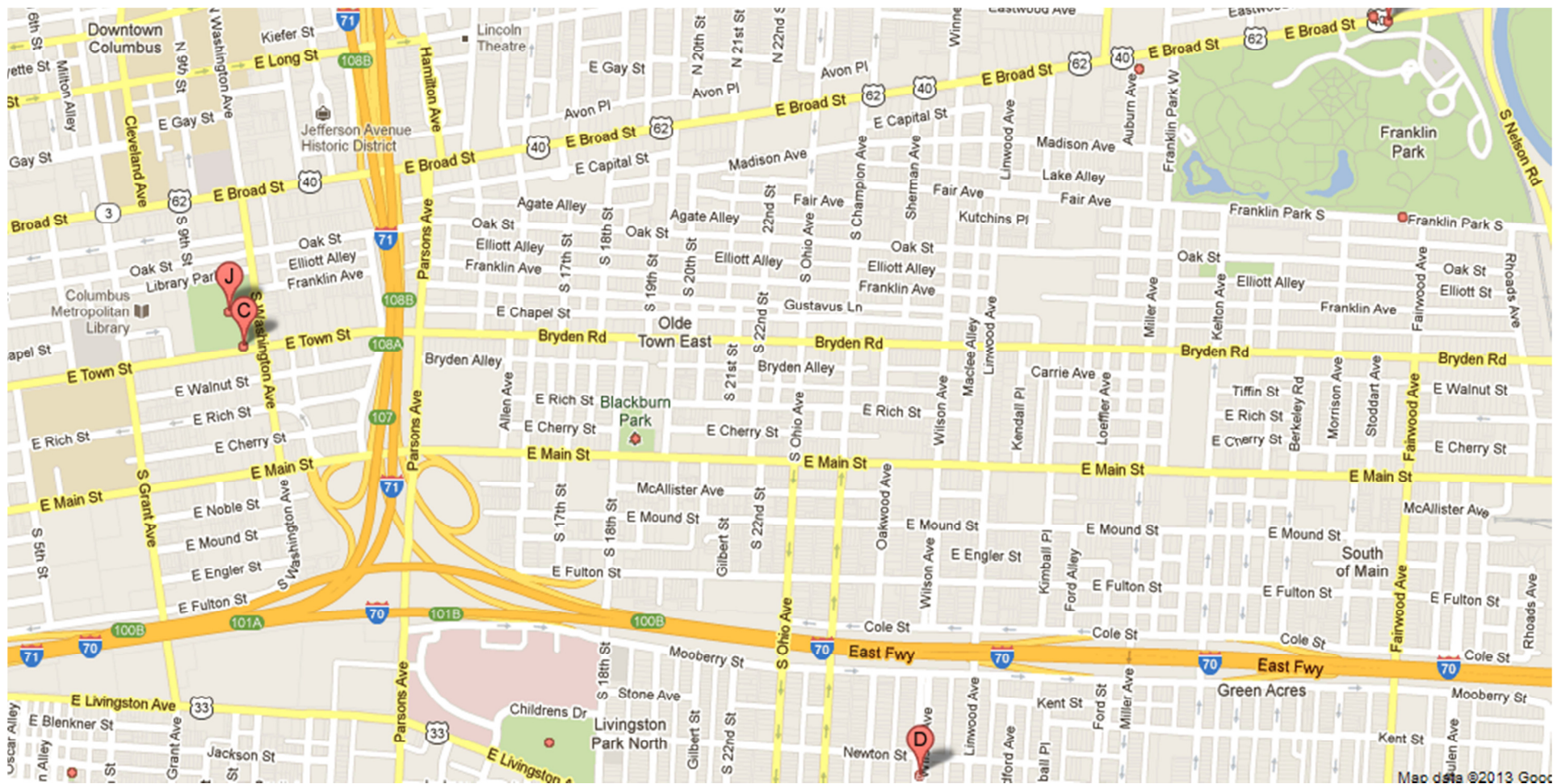
- Thematic collection of historic postcards

History of the Streetcar: <http://inventors.about.com/library/inventors/blstreetcars.htm>

Clickable Map of Columbus Neighborhoods: <http://www.city-data.com/nbmaps/neigh-Columbus-Ohio.html>

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## Olde Towne East Today

Google Maps, February 2013