HOFMANN DAM
Riverside
Cook County
Illinois

HAER NO. IL-163

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Midwest Regional Office
601 Riverfront Drive
Omaha, NE 68102

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

HAER NO. IL-163

Location: Lyons and Riverside, Cook County, Illinois
Spanning the Des Plaines River

U.S.G.S. Berwyn 7.5 Minute Series Quadrangle
Section 2, Township 38N, Range 12E
Section 35, Township 39North, Range 12E

UTM Coordinates:	Zone 16
Northwest Pier	0431689E
	4630021N
Southeast Pier	0431735E
	4629967N

Present Owner: The Illinois Department of Natural Resources

Present Use: The Hofmann dam is a low-head dam spanning the Des Plaines River. The low-head dam is scheduled for removal due to problems related to safety, water quality and aquatic habitat.

Significance: The Hofmann dam site has contributed to the development of Chicago and its surrounding suburbs since its inception nearly 140 years past. The Hofmann dam can be traced as far back as the 1830s, when it was built in order to aid the first sawmill production of Northeastern Illinois. It continued to function as a mill dam through the mid-1800s serving a gristmill for the second half of the century. During this time, Frederick Law Olmsted specifically addressed the dam in the first planned suburban community of Riverside, Illinois, in 1868, marking a significant contribution to the field of landscape architecture and design.

Early in the 1900s, construction of the concrete Hofmann dam and tower represented not only the rise of recreational boating and picnicking, but also the beginning of industry, the production of new materials and the innovative drive necessary to accomplish new technology. Specifically, the concrete structures of Niagara Park, designed after the Illinois and Michigan Canal's Dellwood Park of Lockport, Illinois, represent the aspirations of George Hofmann, Jr., in his attempt to create a recreational complex powered by its own hydro-electricity. Lastly, the dam, as the result of the dumping of raw sewage into the Des Plaines River, initiated the implementation of improved sanitation in the western suburbs of Chicago through the first half of the twentieth century.

The Hofmann tower, located adjacent to the dam, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the Hofmann dam is partially located within the Riverside National Historic Landmark district. The United States Army Corps of Engineers consulted with the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, the National Park Service, Midwest Regional Office, the Advisory Council of Historic Preservation, and various interested parties determined that removal of the Hofmann dam and subsequent ecosystem restoration was an adverse effect. Level II Historic American Engineering Record is required under the Memorandum of Agreement.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of Erection: The present dam spanning the Des Plaines River between the towns of Riverside and Lyons was erected in 1950 and is the last of a series of dams to be constructed at this site. The Hofmann dam site boasts a natural waterfall. In 1827 David Laughton and his brother, Bernardus Laughton, utilized this geographical feature and built a dam in connection with a local sawmill downstream. The second dam, framed in stone and timber, was constructed in 1866. Landowners, Dr. George M. Fox and Mr. Jarvis M. Fox, oversaw the construction of this dam in congruence with opening the Riverside Milling Company that same year. Due to the frailty of the building materials, the 1866 dam was destroyed by flood and rebuilt numerous times before George Hofmann improved the structure by erecting the Hofmann dam in 1908. The Hofmann dam was of a horse shoe shape. It was constructed by the H.W. Sauber Construction Company of Lockport, Illinois.

   The Hofmann dam, intended as a more permanent means of pooling water for recreational purposes as well as to aid the creation and supply of electricity for the recreational park, remained intact until 1928 when raw sewage and sludge began to collect in large amounts behind it. In an attempt to halt the detrimental pollution, Mr. Hofmann refused demands made by the Des Plaines Valley residents as well as the Chicago Sanitary District to open his gates and allow the sludge to pass. As a result of his stance the Sanitary District of Chicago, Department of Permanent Plants and Structures built a by-pass at the Hofmann dam in 1928. This structure, located on the north bank of the river, running west-east in congruence with the river flow, was implemented in order to control high pollution levels which had been accumulating behind the dam.

In 1950 the State of Illinois Department of Public Works and Building, Division of Waterways replaced the horse shoe shaped Hofmann dam with the present dam. The straight designed dam was built immediately east of the Hofmann Dam remains. Additionally, at this time, various concrete walls aligning the river, which were original to Hofmann's design, were removed and reconstructed. Specifically, these walls include those on the north bank, east of the by-pass.

2. Engineers: David Laughton and his brother, Bernardus Laughton, collectively referred to as the Laughton Brothers, constructed the first dam to be built at the site post 1827. The natural geography of the dam site, a waterfall, aided the initial builders in accomplishing function and design.[1]

The second dam, constructed in 1866, was framed in stone and timber. Landowners, Dr. George M. Fox and Mr. Jarvis M. Fox, oversaw the construction of this dam in congruence with opening the Riverside Milling Company that same year.

The Hofmann dam of 1908 was constructed by the H.W. Sauber Construction Co of Lockport, Illinois.

Engineers of the current dam built in 1950 include: Arthur H. Stowe, Submitted by Engineer of Design, Harvey W. Hill, Recommended by Principal Engineer and Thomas B. Casey, Approved by Chief Engineer.

3. First and subsequent owners: Title documents dating as far back as the 1830s confirm ownership of the right to build a dam at the present day site. Secondary historical resources discuss the existence of a dam in the 1830s that was improved in 1866. Primary documentation referencing the existence of the dam built in 1866 acknowledges Mr. Jarvis M. Fox and Dr. George M. Fox as designers, builders and co-owners of the dam and surrounding property.

Ownership of the dam property, which, in certain cases, overlaps with the ownership of the Riverside Milling Company property, is as follows[2]:

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[1] Rose Marie Benedetti and Virginia Bulat, *Portage, Pioneers and Pubs: A History of Lyons, Illinois* (Chicago: Angel Guardian Orphanage Press, 1963), 30-31; and Philip Vierling, *Early Water Powered Mills of the Des Plaines River and Its Tributaries* (Chicago: Illinois Country Outdoor Guides, 1995), 46-49.

[2] Philip Vierling, *Early Water Powered Mills of the Des Plaines River and Its Tributaries* (Chicago: Illinois Country Outdoor Guides, 1995), 45-54.

1827-28	First dam built by Laughton brothers in connection with mill constructed downstream.
1830s	Right to build a dam and earliest mill acquired by Stephen Forbes.
1836	Norman Little purchased property from Stephen Forbes, upon which existed earliest dam and first mill – Due to early conditions of the Des Plaines River, Little could not succeed without a sufficient dam – Laughton mill ceased to exist.
1834	Right to build a dam sold to Theodorus Doty (regarding second mill).
1853	Dam property leased to William B. Egan.
Post 1854	Dam property sold to Stephen White.
1866	Dam and Riverside Milling Company built by Fox brothers only date supported by primary resource.
1868	Olmsted plan for Riverside: Riverside developed along north bank of Des Plaines River. Mill Bridge Street named after Forbes' Mill/Dr. Fox's Mill.
1872	Dam property owned by William Hough and William H. Barclay.
1873	Dam property owned by George H. Hough.
1879	(January) Dam property sold to J. H. Shear.
1879	(November) Dam property sold to George and William Hough and Henry D. Bennett.
1880	Dam property sold to Jesse Hart and Henry D. Bennett.
1881	Dam property owned by Jesse Hart.

1882	(May) Dam property owned by Jesse Hart and Thomas Hart.
1886	Dam property owned by Jesse Hart.
1888	Dam property owned by Charles E. Wardrobe and Elbert Blodgett.
1897	Dam property owned by George Hermann (Mills last owner).
Post 1897	Second mill burned to ground – building materials used in construction of Tower Inn at nearby site.
1907	George W. Hofmann Jr. purchases dam site, begins construction of dam and tower, which housed control of water level ("Early Powered Water Mills of the Des Plaines River and its Tributaries, Illinois"). H.W. Sauber Construction Co of Lockport, Illinois, built tower for $400,000 – at same time, dam was improved (concrete and horse-shoe design) – tower houses four flood gates and two flood basins to control water level of river above dam (visible on ground floor). Hofmann Park or "Niagara Park" consisted of the dam, excursion boats, tower, Hofmann Park for picnicking, and remodeled Riverview Club House (office and caretaker's quarters). Construction complete September 6, 1908.[3]
1928	By-Pass: The Sanitary District of Chicago, Department of Permanent Plants and Structures. Chicago Sanitary District built Sewage By-Pass to counteract the refusal of George Hofmann, Jr., to open the gates of the Hofmann dam necessary to promote free flowing of sludge and sediment from behind the dam.

[3] John C. Eichacker, "One Remembered/One Almost Forgotten: The Lyons Hofmann Tower, A symbol of the age of recreation," n.d., 8, Local History File, Lyons Public Library, Lyons, Illinois.

1936	Works Progress Administration worked August through September: removed dam supports and old crest.
	Establishment of Mosquito Abatement – Lyle Clark.
1938	Retaining wall (on riverbank at Swan Pond Park) built by Waterworks Progress Administration.
1946	George Hofmann, Jr., died – heirs relinquished tower/dam to Forest Preserve through condemnation proceedings.
1950	Construction of 1950 dam.
1961-69	Debate over ecological improvement.
1972	Ordinance adopted by Riverside to transfer control of dam to state in order to control pollution issues.
1982	Forest Preserve transferred ownership to Lyons.
Present	Owner - The Illinois Department of Natural Resources.[4]

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: The Laughton Brothers constructed the first dam to be built at the site in 1827. The natural geography of the dam site, a waterfall, aided the initial builders in accomplishing function and design.

Erected in 1866, constructed of stone and timber this dam replaced the Laughtons' dam which was implemented into a natural waterfall, in order to aid function and design. Landowners, Dr. George M. Fox and Mr. Jarvis M. Fox, oversaw the construction of this dam congruent with opening the Riverside Milling Company.

The Hofmann dam of 1908 was constructed by the H.W. Sauber Construction Co of Lockport, Illinois.

Engineers of the current dam built in 1950 included: Arthur H. Stowe,

[4] Vierling, *Early Water Powered Mills of the Des Plaines River and Its Tributaries,* 45-54.

Submitted by Engineer of Design, Harvey W. Hill, Recommended by Principal Engineer and Thomas B. Casey, Approved by Chief Engineer

5. Original Plans and construction:

Laughton Brothers' dam
There are no original plans of the Laughtons' dam built ca. 1827.

Fox Brothers' dam
There are no original plans of the Fox Brothers' Mill House dam built 1866.

Hofmann dam
State of Illinois, Department of Public Works and Buildings, Division of Waterways: Proposed Hofmann dam in Des Plaines River, Cook County, Illinois, 1950: Existing portions of Dam - Hofmann dam "to be removed" (blueprints), referenced on Sheets 2-5, 7-8.

Sheet 2: General Layout –
- Existing Dam;
- Existing Guide Wall;
- Existing Reinforced Concrete tower;
- Existing Abutment Wall;
- Existing Concrete Wall; and
- Existing Riprap, Concrete Wall and Curb.

Sheet 3: Dam Layout and Details
- Existing Reinforced Concrete tower;
- Existing Wall; and
- Existing Steps.

Sheet 4: West Retaining Wall Details
- Existing Steps; and
- Existing Concrete Curb Wall.

Sheet 5: Details Around Outlet of By-Pass
- Existing Wall;
- Existing Recess; and
- Existing Concrete Apron.

Sheet 7: Miscellaneous Details
- Existing Dam;
- Existing Tower;
- Existing Walls; and
- Existing Structure.

Sheet 8: Trash Rack Details
- Existing Concrete;

Top of Existing Slab;
Existing Concrete Pier; and
Existing Face of Pier.

By-Pass at Hofmann dam
State of Illinois, Department of Public Works and Buildings, Division of Waterways: Proposed Hofmann dam in Des Plaines River, Cook County, Illinois, 1950: Existing portions of By-Pass "to remain" (blueprints), referenced on Sheets 2-5, 7.

Sheet 2: General Layout –
Existing By-Pass Inlet;
Existing By-Pass Structure; and
Existing By-Pass Outlet.
Sheet 3: Dam Layout and Details
Existing By-Pass Inlet; and
Existing By-Pass Outlet.
Sheet 4: West Retaining Wall Details
Existing By-Pass;
Existing Structure; and
Existing By-Pass Outlet.
Sheet 5: Details Around Outlet of By-Pass
Existing By-Pass Walls;
Existing Outlet; and
Floor of the Existing Outlet.
Sheet 7: Miscellaneous Details
Existing Walls of Existing By-Pass Outlet.

The Sanitary District of Chicago, Department of Permanent Plants and Structures: By-Pass at Hofmann dam Des Plaines River, July 10, 1928. Stamped Received by the Division of Waterways, Chicago, Illinois, Feb. 5, 1968.

Current Dam
State of Illinois, Department of Public Works and Buildings, Division of Waterways: Proposed Hofmann dam in Des Plaines River, Cook County, Illinois, 1950: Sheets 1-8.

Sheet 1: Cover and Title
Sheet 2: General Layout
Sheet 3: Dam Layout and Details
Sheet 4: West Retaining Wall Details

Sheet 5: Details Around Outlet of By-Pass
Sheet 6: Wall Rail Details
Sheet 7: Miscellaneous Details
Sheet 8: Trash Rack Details

6. Alterations and Additions: Originally a natural waterfall/dam, the first man-made dam in this location was built by the Laughton Brothers ca. 1827.

The next dam built at this site was built by Dr. George M. Fox and Mr. Jarvis M. Fox in 1866. The Fox Brothers built this dam in congruence with a mill they constructed on their property. This mill appears on the 1890 Snyder's Real Estate Map as well as the 1895 Sanborn Fire Insurance map. The mill, however, is not depicted on the 1871 J. Van Vechten Map or the 1898 Snyder's Real Estate Map. Moreover, the dam appears in the Map of the Olmsted's General Plan in 1868. It is located on Mill Bridge Road which was named due to the historic Riverside Milling Company location. This dam was constructed from stone and timbers, as seen in historic photographs. It had a crest of 24.5' and was designed in the shape of a horse-shoe. This dam, while constructed with only semi-permanent materials, was reconstructed numerous times throughout its existence from 1866 through 1908. The original design remained the same during these periods of rebuilding.

George Hofmann, Jr., modified the stone and timber dam in 1908. He performed major alterations by demolishing the stone and timber dam and rebuilding a concrete dam, in a similar horse-shoe design. At the same time, Mr. Hofmann constructed the Hofmann tower southeast of the dam, which houses four flood gates and two flood basins designed to control the water level of the river above the dam. Additionally, George Hofmann, Jr., constructed seventeen boat docks west of the dam as well as numerous retaining walls, steps, an underground tunnel and walkways on and along the Hofmann dam site. The Hofmann dam's horse-shoe shape was accomplished by arranging five straight walls, of various lengths, at angles resembling a U-shape. This design is detailed on The Sanitary District of Chicago, Department of Permanent Plants and Structures: By-Pass at Hofmann dam, Des Plaines River, July 10, 1928; the State of Illinois, Department of Public Works and Buildings, Division of Waterways: Proposed Hofmann dam in Des Plaines River, Cook County, Illinois, 1950: Existing portions of Dam - Hofmann dam "to be removed" (blueprints), referenced on Sheets 2-5 and 7-8; and as illustrated on numerous undated historic photographs that are provided. The Hofmann dam and its

concurrent structures remained in their original condition until a sewage by-pass was added to the north bank of the dam in 1928.

The Sanitary District of Chicago, Department of Permanent Plants and Structures built a by-pass at the Hofmann dam in 1928. This structure, located on the north bank of the river, running west-east, in congruence with the river flow, was implemented in order to control high pollution levels which had been accumulating behind the dam.

In 1950 the State of Illinois Department of Public Works and Building, Division of Waterways replaced the horse shoe shaped Hofmann dam with the present dam. The straight designed dam was built immediately east of the Hofmann Dam remains. Additionally, at this time, various concrete walls aligning the river, which were original to Hofmann's design, were removed and reconstructed. Specifically, these walls include those on the north bank, east of the by-pass.

In April, 1984, the State of Illinois removed and repaired the retaining walls east of the tower on the south bank. By removing said retaining walls, the passage openings located at water level on the retaining wall, which permitted the outlet of water from under the Hofmann tower on its east side, were removed and replaced by a solid retaining wall. Furthermore, various decks, walkways and the underground tunnel constructed by Hofmann were removed and/or filled in at this time. While severely deteriorated, the boat docks located west of the dam on the south bank remain and are visible at low water mark. The Hofmann tower remains intact.

1827-1828	First mill built by Laughton brothers at the site of a natural waterfall.
1866	Dam and Riverside Milling Company built by Fox brothers only date supported by primary resource (First crest of dam = 24.55' (Bernstein, Elizabeth: The Landmark).
1897	Dam property sold to George Hermann (Mills last owner). Second mill burned to ground – building materials used in construction of Tower Inn.
1907	George W. Hofmann Jr. purchases dam site and

begins construction.

1908	H.W. Sauber Construction Co of Lockport, Illinois, built tower for $400,000 – at same time, dam was improved (concrete and horse-shoe design) – tower houses four flood gates and two flood basins to control water level of river above dam (visible on ground floor). Hofmann Park or "Niagara Park" consisted of the dam, excursion boats, tower, Hofmann Park for picnicking, remodeled Riverview Club House (office and caretaker's quarters). Construction complete September 6, 1908. Crest = 25.56, length = 243' (Bernstein: The Landmark).
1928	By-Pass: The Sanitary District of Chicago, Department of Permanent Plants and Structures. Chicago Sanitary District built Sewage By-Pass to counteract the refusal of George Hofmann, Jr., to open the gates of the Hofmann dam necessary to promote free flowing of sludge and sediment from behind the dam.
1936	Works Progress Administration worked August through September: removed dam supports and old crest.
	Establishment of Mosquito Abatement – Lyle Clark.
1938	Retaining wall (on riverbank at Swan Pond Park) constructed by Waterworks Progress Administration.
1950	Construction of 1950 dam[5].

B. Historical Background

Located just west of the Lyons-Riverside Bridge is the Hofmann dam site. This 1950 structure began as a natural waterfall, but was improved to become a dam beginning as early as the late 1820s. Historically, this dam aided in mill production and recreation. Its design and function improved the landscape architecture of the Riverside Historic District within which it is partially located. In the early 1900s, the dam's function took on yet

[5] Ibid.

another role as it was utilized for the creation and control of water power. George Hofmann planned and built Niagara Park, a complex designed after Dellwood Park in Lockport, Illinois which combined functional architecture, housing the machinery necessary to create electricity, with unconventional architectural attractions to create a recreational site.

The Hofmann dam has created as intermittent sanitation problem in the Des Plaines River since the early 1900s. Additionally, it served as a source of controversy regarding river pollution and the right to control water level. Overall, the historical background of the Hofmann dam site covers three distinct themes of productivity, recreation, and pollution. Most importantly, while the dam has been destroyed and rebuilt numerous times since its inception, the pooled water level behind the dam and created by such, has remained the primary contributor to each of these themes.

Pre-1866: Chicago Portage, Fur Trading, the Green Bay Trail, a Natural Dam and Stephen Forbes (The Transfer of Rights to Build a Dam)-Productivity

Before the city presently known as Chicago, Illinois was settled and incorporated, a small village named Lyons, just 12 miles west, began development. Home of Portage Creek, a section of travel along the Chicago Portage, the town of Lyons influenced the origination and growth of Chicago and its surrounding suburbs. The Chicago Portage, a means of travel from the Mississippi to the Great Lakes region initiated by the Northwest Indians and utilized and promoted by Father Marquette and Louis Joilet's expedition in 1672, advanced the discovery of present day Chicago by way of Lyons, Illinois[6].

Due to its location, Lyons developed initially as a tavern town, where pioneers sought food and comfort during their travels along the Chicago Portage. Settlement of this land is attributed primarily to the Laughton Brothers, David and Bernardus Laughton, who settled in the area in 1828.[7] An article in the Lyons Gazetter describes Lyons in 1834, "Lyons is a town site on the Des Plaines at Laughton's old trading house twelve miles west

[6] Regarding the Chicago Portage trail, specifically, beginning at the Mississippi a traveler could connect to the Illinois River in Grafton, Illinois and thus, the Des Plaines River, one of its major tributaries. Once at Lyons on the Des Plaines, a shallow creek called the Portage Creek linked the traveler to Mud Lake via a two mile passageway. Upon crossing Mud Lake, a one and one-half mile land portage connected the eastern end of Mud Lake to the West Fork of the South Branch of the Chicago River. Once on the Chicago River, one had direct connection to Lake Michigan and the opportunities at hand. Benedetti and Bulat, *Portage, Pioneers and Pubs: A History of Lyons, Illinois*, 30-31.
[7] A.T. Andreas, *History of Chicago* (Chicago: A.T. Andreas, 1884), 23; and Benedetti and Bulat, *Portage, Pioneers and Pubs: A History of Lyons, Illinois*, 90.

of Chicago. It has a sawmill, three houses, and a tavern."[8] While ownership eventually changed hands, the Laughton Brothers built the first homes and ran their trading house, additionally referenced as a tavern and sawmill located near Laughton's Ford[9]. It was this first mill that initiated the need for a dam at the Hofmann dam site.

The Hofmann dam site originated as a natural dam on the Green Bay Trail of the Indian, also known as, Riverside Ford,[10] which can be seen on the Van Vechten Map of Indian Trails.[11] Here the Laughton Brothers built a semi-permanent dam to aid in mill production.[12] Due to the increasing need for pioneers to build shelters for themselves and their families, the Laughton Brothers began production as early as pre-1830. They successfully built the first sawmill in northeastern Illinois[13] which produced timber for the surrounding Chicago-land area, including the wagon industry and early retailers such as Weber, Schuttler and Poterman of Chicago.[14]

The Laughton Brothers sold their property to Norman Little in 1836. Unable to sustain mill production due to the harsh conditions of the Des Plaines River and the insufficient dams, he sold the property to Stephen Forbes, a prominent pioneer in the development of both Lyons and Riverside. The original sawmill is presumed to have closed around 1839.[15] Consequently, the property changed hands numerous times until a more substantial dam was built by the Fox Brothers in 1866.[16] A detailed description of ownership is listed in this document under "PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION/A. Physical History/3. First and

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[8] Andreas, *History of Chicago*, 23; and Benedetti and Bulat, *Portage, Pioneers and Pubs: A History of Lyons, Illinois*, 30.

[9] Laughton's Ford is but one of a series of fording spots located in the immediate area surrounding Lyons, Illinois and utilized historically by the American Indians and the pioneers and explorers who followed. The remaining three fords are commonly referred to as Indian or Riverside Ford, Stoney Ford, and Summit Ford. Benedetti and Bulat, *Portage, Pioneers and Pubs: A History of Lyons, Illinois*, 28; and Vierling. *Early Water Powered Mills of the Des Plaines River and Its Tributaries*, 54.

[10] "A ford was located in Riverside just below the natural dam, and was known as 'Indian Ford' or 'Riverside Ford'. Travelers on the Green Bay trail used this ford." Benedetti and Bulat, *Portage, Pioneers and Pubs: A History of Lyons, Illinois*, 28.

[11] Bessie Louise Pierce, *A History of Chicago: Volume I, The Beginning of a City, 1673-1848* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1937), 98.; and M.M. Quaife, *Chicago's Highways Old and New: From Indian Trail to Motor Road*, (Chicago: D.F. Keller & Company, 1923), 95.

[12] Vierling, *Early Water Powered Mills of the Des Plaines River and Its Tributaries*, 11.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Benedetti and Bulat, *Portage, Pioneers and Pubs: A History of Lyons, Illinois*, 46.

[15] Vierling, *Early Water Powered Mills of the Des Plaines River and Its Tributaries*, 11.

[16] Ibid., 47-54.

subsequent owners." This more substantial dam directly aided production of a grist-mill, entitled, the Riverside Milling Company, the second mill along the same section of the Des Plaines River.

Historical Use of Dams in Connection with Water Powered Mills: Riverside Milling Company – Productivity

The inception of the Riverside Milling Company and an improved dam with which to advance production was not realized until 1866. Prior to this date, the rights to improve the Hofmann dam site, as well as build a mill, changed possession and were eventually auctioned to Stephen White and Dr. George M. Fox. Since neither man possessed the ability to build both a mill and a dam, Mr. White sold his half-interest to Dr. George Fox's brother, Jarvis M. Fox. Shortly thereafter, Dr. George Fox and his brother Jarvis M. Fox opened the doors of the Riverside Milling Company for business.[17]

While ownership of the Riverside Milling Company changed quite frequently over its 31 years of existence, the mill remained successful as a grist-mill. A description of the mill illustrates the orientation as running southwest to northeast, situated directly above its mill race.[18] Located east of the present day Lyons-Riverside Bridge, historically known as the Mill Bridge, the Riverside Mills and the mill race ran along the flow of the river from the Hofmann dam site, its primary source of water power.[19]

The Dam, Landscape Design, and Frederick Law Olmsted – Recreation

While the Riverside Milling Company was located on the south bank of the Des Plaines River, the dam at the Hofmann dam site, built specifically in connection with the mill, linked the south bank of the Des Plaines River belonging to Lyons, Illinois to the north bank of the river owned by the community of Riverside, Illinois. Originally planned in 1868-69 and developed into the mid-1900s, Riverside, Illinois was designed by Frederick Law Olmsted Sr., Calvert Bowyer Vaux & Co., Landscape Architects. As a result of this, a large section of Riverside is designated as a National Historic Landmark, entitled the Riverside Historic District. The Hofmann dam is included in the district.

[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.; and Sanborn Map Company, *Lyons, Illinois*, (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1895), 85.

Olmsted, Vaux & Co., designed the suburban residential community of Riverside for developer, Emory Childs of the Riverside Improvement Company.[20] Inspiration for this suburban community, "the first planned model community,"[21] stemmed from Olmsted's beliefs in the benefit of open space and the positive attributes of living amongst nature. Specifically, his original 1868-69 plan for Riverside captured five innovations that continue to be studied and applied to the field of landscape architecture.[22] These innovations include deviation from the common grid pattern of city lots common of the period and the enhancement of the natural topography of a site and its curvilinear design, the creation of an economically integrated community, depressed roadways to ensure a view of nature possessing high integrity, the introduction of deed restrictions to inhibit the private ownership and the construction of fences and the introduction of parkways into the suburban street setting.[23] These innovations, when implemented by Olmsted, paved the way to the peaceful and feasibly attained, suburban setting of Riverside. Within this setting was the Hofmann dam site.

Frederick Law Olmsted had a specific interest in the curvilinear shaped mill-dam. He addressed its function and design in his *Preliminary Report Upon the Proposed Suburban Village at Riverside, Near Chicago,* 1868 by stating:[24]

> It will probably be best to increase the height of the mill-dam so as to enlarge the area of the public water suitable for boating and skating, and so as to completely cover some low, flat ground now exposed in low stages of the river. At the same time, a larger outlet should be provided to prevent floods above the dam from injuring the shore. A public drive and walk should be carried near the edge of the bank in such a way as to avoid destroying the more valuable trees growing upon it, and there should be pretty boat-landings, terraces, balconies overhanging the water, and pavilions at

[20] Patricia M. O'Donnell, Glenn T. Stach, Charles Eliot Beveridge and Heidi Hohmann, *Riverside, National Historic Landmark Registration Form* (United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2004), 4.
[21] Ibid., 2.
[22] Robert Heidrich, *Riverside Landscape Architectural District National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form* (United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1969), 4.
[23] Ibid., 2.
[24] Olmsted, Vaux & Co., Landscape Architects, *Preliminary Report Upon the Proposed Suburban Village at Riverside, Near Chicago* (New York: Sutton, Bowne & Co., Printers, 1868), 28.

> points desirable for observing regattas, mainly of rustic character, and to be half overgrown with vines.[25]

Frederick Law Olmsted included the mill-dam in his design for the Village of Riverside. Additionally, he specifically named the street of Millbridge Road after the significant mill complex created by the Riverside Milling Company.

While Olmsted can be directly referenced regarding the design of the mill-dam, he also made comment on the ecological integrity of the river. Frederick Law Olmsted, in the *Preliminary Report Upon the Proposed Suburban Village at Riverside, Near Chicago,* 1868 stated:

> The water of the river is said to be ordinarily very clear, and we found it tolerably so after a heavy rain, which is remarkable in a prairie stream. It abounds with fish and wild fowl, is adapted to pleasure-boating, and can be improved in this respect. In parts, it already presents much beauty, and is everywhere susceptible of being refined and enriched by art to a degree which will render it altogether charming.[26]

The aspects of both recreation and ecological stabilization were realized and anticipated by Olmsted. They remained the key uses of the dam while its function of mill-dam dissipated with the burning of the mill in 1897. For the next eleven years, the Hofmann dam site served the communities of Riverside and Lyons as a recreational site. Eventually, the roles of recreation and ecological stabilization were significantly affected with the purchase of the Hofmann dam site by George Hofmann, Jr., in 1907.

1908: Improvement of Dam by George Hofmann – Recreation

George Hofmann Sr. came to Chicago from Germany in the early 1800's. While he lived mainly in Chicago, his family frequently ventured out to Lyons where they owned much property. Additionally, George Hofmann Sr. and his three sons, John, Valentine, and George Jr., were in the brewing business and distributed Hofmann Brewery Beer at Doty's tavern in Lyons, Illinois. Doty's Tavern, built at the site of the then burned Riverside Milling Company, was but one of many properties in Lyons owned by the Hofmann family in the triangle area, currently surrounded by Barrypoint

[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid., 15.

Road, Joliet Road and Ogden Avenue. Through direct purchase and acquisition from family, George Hofmann Jr. eventually took possession of the Hofmann dam site in 1907. Shortly thereafter, he began reconstructing three structures and improving open grounds for his new attraction, Niagara Park.

Niagara Park, named for the outcrop of bedrock which constitutes the floor of the Des Plaines at the Hofmann dam area,[27] was the common name of George Hofmann Jr.'s recreation park. Niagara Park advertised clam bakes, boat rides, family picnicking and outdoor entertainment. For the same reason that Lyons, Illinois was popular among early American pioneers, it was frequented by Chicago-land area residents in the early 1900s in search of hospitality, a ride on the Des Plaines in the "Al Hofmann" or the "Niagara," and a drink.

Located among the historically "dry" towns of LaGrange, Riverside, and Berwyn, Lyons boasted a number of beer gardens and affordable family outing venues. In fact, the business owners in Lyons, such as George Hofmann, funded and ran trolley lines to their establishments from numerous areas not already serviced by public transportation. The introduction of the Western Electric Company in Cicero caused an influx of residents in west Chicago as well as Berwyn and Cicero.[28] With this influx came the West Towns Street Railway, which connected Lyons, Berwyn, and LaGrange to the plant, and the expansion of the West Side Elevated to Harlem Ave.[29]

Just before transportation to Lyons began to increase, a similar series of events occurred in Joliet, Illinois in 1906.[30] After the Chicago and Joliet Railway Company completed its trackage between 48th and Archer Avenue, they hired H.W. Sauber Construction Company to build Dellwood Park along the railway route in Lockport, Illinois. A 67-acre recreation area equipped with a 30-foot-high dam, Dellwood Park captured the weekend attention and currency of Chicago residents. Two years later, George Hofmann Jr. hired the same construction company to build the Hofmann dam and tower at Niagara Park using concrete.

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[27] Numerous secondary sources falsely lay claim to this outcrop of bedrock as the only of its class that does not resurface again until Niagara Falls. Mention has been made that Mr. Hofmann chose the name Niagara Park for this reason.

[28] Eichacker, "One Remembered/One Almost Forgotten: The Lyons Hofmann Tower, A Symbol of the age of recreation," 19.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

George Hofmann, Jr., built his dam at the Hofmann dam site in a horse-shoe design, similar to the previous dam. He drastically improved the permanence of the structure by building it with concrete. While the dam spanned the entire width of the Des Plaines, it comprised but a section of a larger superstructure. This concrete base connected the tower, dam and platforms on either side of the Des Plaines River.[31]

From plans that he supposedly smuggled from Germany, George Hofmann constructed a tower eight stories tall, consisting of five solid concrete floors. Of these floors, the first floor measured 12' high and the remainders, 24' high.[32]

In connection with the construction of the Hofmann dam and tower, George Hofmann revamped the exterior of the Riverview Club House in the same design as his newly built Hofmann tower. This building served as the main office of Niagara Park. Upon completion of the Hofmann dam, tower and office, Niagara Park occupied the land south of the Des Plaines River north of present day Ogden Avenue.

While the beer garden and facilities mainly occupied the triangle section of land surrounded by present day Joliet Road, Barrypoint Road, and Ogden Avenue, as well as the land east of the Niagara Park offices located on Joliet Road, the boat docks and boat house extended as far west along the Des Plaines River as the triangle property.[33] This is indicated by the presence of structural beams which once held up the wooden dock of Hofmann recreational boating enterprise.[34]

One can view the design original to the time of George Hofmann, Jr.'s Niagara Park in the wall immediately west of the tower. This wall, displaying large concrete spheres on concrete pillars, remains intact. Additionally, possible evidence of a turbine used in attempt to produce electricity, and dam controls are still visible on the first floor of the tower structure. A solid retaining wall along the east side of the tower[35] replaced a previous retaining wall that once held an opening through which water freely flowed under the tower. This passage way, coupled with a large section cut from the base of the tower, suggests the presence of machinery

[31] The Sanitary District of Chicago, Department of Permanent Plants and Structures: By-Pass at Hofmann Dam Des Plaines River, July 10, 1928. Stamped Received by the Division of Waterways, Chicago, Illinois, Feb. 5, 1968.
[32] Eichacker, "One Remembered One Almost Forgotten: The Lyons Hofmann Tower, A Symbol of the age of recreation," 1.
[33] Sanborn Map Company, *Lyons, Illinois* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1909), 85.
[34] See Current Photos
[35] John Mach of the Des Plaines River/Lyons River Rats, interview by author, 30 June 2004.

used in the production of hydro-electricity.

The success of George Hofmann's Niagara Park disappeared as the growing population along the Des Plaines River and Salt Creek began dumping raw sewage into the river. While intended to retain a pool of water for boating, the Hofmann dam was retaining raw sewage and sludge. The presence of this pollution sent potential customers and even nearby residents to new homes and other recreational facilities in the area.

Ultimately, the implementation of prohibition in July, 1919 put a tremendous burden on George Hofmann, Jr., as the owner of a brewery and beer garden.[36] George Hofmann eventually closed his doors for business in the 1920s. However, he did not go quietly. Appalled by the raw sewage that contributed to the demise of his outdoor recreation and brewing business, George Hofmann, Jr., adamantly opposed the dumping activities and was an advocate for the sanitation of the Des Plaines River.

1928: By-Passing the Dam – Pollution

Historically, residents of the Des Plaines Valley and state and city officials complained of pollution of the Des Plaines River as early as the late 1800s. In 1914, when reports regarding the sources of pollution began, possible solutions were investigated by the Chicago Sanitary District in an attempt to improve the horrific conditions of the river. Investigations revealed that the location of the Hofmann dam (downstream from the poorly operating Maywood Treatment Plant and the La Grange and other Salt Creek sewage outfalls), was a primary contributor to the pollution. Further examination revealed that the Hofmann dam, and George Hofmann, Jr.'s refusal to open and operate the gates there, also contributed to the sludge piled behind the dam. While study of the Des Plaines River's pollution dilemma ignited further inquiry into the proper treatment of sewage disposal, it also provoked a legal battle between state officials and George Hofmann, Jr., regarding the ownership and operation rights of a dam by an individual when private property is inherently public by cause and effect.

While the conflict regarding ownership had not yet been resolved, during the year of 1928, a sewage By-Pass system was built into the north bank of the Des Plaines River, the property owned by Riverside. While the legalities regarding the necessity of a permit were underway, the President of the Sanitary District resumed construction. It was not until the

[36] Eichacker, "One Remembered One Almost Forgotten The Lyons Hofmann Tower: A Symbol of the age of recreation," 19.

conclusion of construction that a verdict was returned and a permit deemed necessary to complete the by-pass. To the relief of Riverside and all residents of the Des Plaines River valley, the dam had been underhandedly by-passed and the sludge could begin filtering down stream.

Ownership and control of the Hofmann dam remained a topic of controversy until power was granted to the Sanitary District of Chicago in 1931 to "remove obstructions from the Des Plaines River by excavating, dredging or filling, within the territorial limits of such Sanitary when necessary to prevent a nuisance therein."[37]

Between the years of 1930 through 1933 a series of improvements were implemented upon the Des Plaines River above the Hofmann dam which resulted in the successful dispersal of approximately 4' of sludge from behind the Hofmann dam. The proceedings leading up to this event also resulted in an improved sewage system for the surrounding areas and the formation of the Cook County Clean Streams Committee, dedicated to accomplishing of all the streams in Cook County, "…an adequate seasonal flow and depth of clear water, free from pollution, so that there may be conserved for the people their health and safety, their recreation spaces, water transportation, aquatic life, property values and agriculture."[38]

In 1935 an engineering committee comprised of representatives of the "Illinois Division of Waterways, State Sanitary Water Board, Cook County Forest Preserve District, The Sanitary District of Chicago, Cook County Clean Streams Committee and Des Plaines Valley Mosquito Abatement District, in cooperation with the Chicago Regional Planning Association…" drafted and accepted rules and guidelines to aid in the proper development of the Des Plaines River. Within this document, they gave themselves full control over the water levels and flow of water at all dams, as well as the "diversion of water for private use during low water periods." [39]

<u>1936: Lowering of the crest of the second dam below 25.56 by Works Progress Administration workers</u>

During the period of 1936, a number of Works Progress Administration

[37] Lyle Clark, *The Des Plaines River Valley Mosquito Abatement District: A History of Efforts to Combat Stream Pollution in the Des Plaines River Watershed by Those in the Vicinity of Riverside*, (Chicago: Mosquito Abatement District, 1936), 15.
[38] Ibid., 19.
[39] Ibid.,1-2.

(WPA) projects were undertaken along the Des Plaines River. One of these projects included the removal of the collapsed wooden crest of the Hofmann dam in 1936.[40] After removing the rickety wooden timbers which constituted the crest of the dam, WPA workers lowered the height of the dam below 25.56' Chicago datum. Since the timbers were never returned or replaced, this action followed by no action triggered much debate regarding the appropriate crest height of the third dam to be constructed in 1950.

1950: Rebuilding the Dam (State of Illinois: Department of Public Works and Buildings: Division of Waterways) - Pollution

Concerns regarding sanitation and pollution of the Des Plaines River persisted when the State of Illinois: Department of Public Works and Buildings, Division of Waterways replaced the horse shoe shaped Hofmann dam with the present dam, a straight designed dam a short distance downstream. Specifically, much debate was publicized regarding the appropriate crest of the new dam. At the time of construction, the Attorney General had advised engineers that:

> The right to maintain the dam at an elevation of 25.56 depends on whether or not the dam was maintained at that height for at least twenty years immediately prior to 1936 and if so whether the lowering of the crest to an elevation of 24.08 in 1936 constituted an abandonment of the right to maintain the same at a crest elevation of 25.56.[41]

Due to the complex history of the Hofmann dam site, the appropriate crest level for the final dam constructed underwent intense scrutiny. Eventually, the final dam was erected in a straight line spanning the entire width of the Des Plaines. The crest level of the previous dam had been lowered below 25.56' Chicago datum or 605.0' U.S.G.S. datum. After much debate, the crest level of this, third dam was constructed at 605.00' U.S.G.S. datum and, thus returned to the crest level at which the first few dams were originally built. This dam remains intact to date.

Since the death of George Hofmann, Jr., in 1946, the Hofmann Tower was sold to Forest Preserve District of Cook County. Window and frames of the Tower were removed in 1954. The Hofmann Tower was recognized as a Village Landmark in 1972. Shortly thereafter, efforts to list the Hofmann

[40] Thomas B. Casey, and J. Lyell Clark, "Discussions on Dam Level," *Riverside News* (Riverside) 24 August 1950, 1.
[41] Ibid., 1.

Tower on the State Register of Historic Places were realized in 1978. This same year, the Tower was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Given the recognized historical status of the Hofmann Tower, a Hofmann Tower Restoration League was formed in 1981. One year later, the building finally closed to elements. Eventually, the Tower was turned over to State of Illinois in 1984 when a new retaining wall was erected by the State. In addition, in 1987, the State installed a new concrete roof and flagpole, repaired the parapets, installed interior electricity, reinforced the floor, installed new steel stairs and railings and duplicated the original door.[42]

PART II. ENGINEERING INFORMATION

A. Architectural Character:

The present dam, while titled the Hofmann dam, is not the dam built by George Hofmann, Jr. Rather, it was built in 1950 by the State of Illinois: Department of Public Works and Buildings, Division of Waterways. The architectural character of the current dam, in comparison to the intention of the 1950 construction, is intact, as no alterations have been made since construction.

However, the 1950 dam is the last of numerous stages for which this dam site is significant. Historically, the pooled water level is the only consistency amongst these varying historically significant phases. While consistently present and contributing to the designed historic landscape, this water level has served various purposes throughout the life of this dam site. Additionally, the horseshoe design of the dam, which deviated only slightly before 1950, was replaced by the current straight dam. This design is not consistent with the varying horse-shoe designs of the previous historical dams.

In his 1868 Preliminary Report Upon the Proposed Suburban Village at Riverside, Near Chicago (*Olmsted, Vaux & Co.*) Frederick Law Olmsted, is quoted stating:

> It will probably be best to increase the height of the mill-dam so as to enlarge the area of the public water suitable

[42] Eichacker, "One Remembered One Almost Forgotten The Lyons Hofmann Tower: A Symbol of the age of recreation," 19.

> for boating and skating, and so as to completely cover some low, flat ground now exposed in low stages of the river. At the same time, a larger outlet should be provided to prevent floods above the dam from injuring the shore. A public drive and walk should be carried near the edge of the bank in such a way as to avoid destroying the more valuable trees growing upon it, and there should be pretty boat-landings, terraces, balconies overhanging the water, and pavilions at points desirable for observing regattas, mainly of rustic character, and to be half overgrown with vines.[43]

This discussion regards the curvilinear designed, horse-shoe dam esteemed by the Fox Brothers with the first dam and George Hofmann, Jr., with the second. The curvilinear design exemplifies Frederick Law Olmsted's landscape architectural theories, upon which the historic town of Riverside, was designed. This design is no longer present.

B. Condition of Fabric:

The visible components of the dam are in excellent condition. The Hofmann tower and those walls remaining on site (from the period of significance involving George Hofmann's construction) are in good to poor condition as they have been deteriorating and have mainly been replaced. Of these structures, only the Hofmann tower has been restored. The by-pass constructed in 1928, while it has not been operated since the 1980s, remains operable and is in good condition.

C. Description of superstructure:

Stream:	Des Plaines River
Location:	Above Barrypoint Road Bridge; Mile 44.45
Type:	Modified Ogee
Material:	Reinforced Concrete
Condition:	Good
Shape:	Straight
Length:	258.5'
Comments:	Dam Has Variable Cross Section Dimensions

[43] Olmsted, Vaux & Co., Landscape Architects, *Preliminary Report Upon the Proposed Suburban Village at Riverside, Near Chicago,* (New York: Sutton, Bowne & Co., Printers, 1868), 28.

Hofmann dam Des Plaines River Ecosystem Restoration Project; Cook County, IL: Figure 3.5

D. Description of substructure:

Reinforced concrete connected with expansion joints.

E. Description of piers:

Historic Boat Slips located southwest of Tower are constructed of reinforced concrete.

F. Description of abutments:

Expansion joints secure together the various sections of the dam.

G. Engineering approaches:

Blueprints detailing the 1950 construction of the current dam state that all efforts should be taken to preserve the existing by-pass structure and steps. All concrete disturbed from these features was to be re-poured in the same manner as originally.

H. Site

The integrity of the site is good in regard to the remaining pool of water at the base of the Hofmann Tower. This pool of water contributed to the development of historic Riverside and the era in which George Hofmann, Jr., improved the site for recreational purposes. Additionally, it is this same pool that enabled polluting sludge to accumulate behind the dam.

In regard to the design of the previous dams, the site is in poor condition as the historic design of the original dams no longer exists. Both the form and function discussed at varying stages of the Hofmann dam's development by significant individuals such as Frederick Law Olmsted, The Sanitary District of Chicago, Works Progress Administration and the engineers involved in the 1950 construction differ. Additionally, these varying goals were never completely attained. The issue of bountiful plant and river life of the Des Plaines River, as desired by Olmsted, has not been addressed until recent ecological restoration developments.

Additionally, the view of this historic site has been compromised by recent

construction, currently underway along the south bank of the Des Plaines River. Construction is of a large condominium structure, of a scale similar to the Hofmann Tower. This structure occupies a space that was once mainly landscape. The new structure hinders the view of the historical remains built during the significant period of George Hofmann's ownership in 1908, specifically the boat docks and concrete walls along the south bank of the Des Plaines River.

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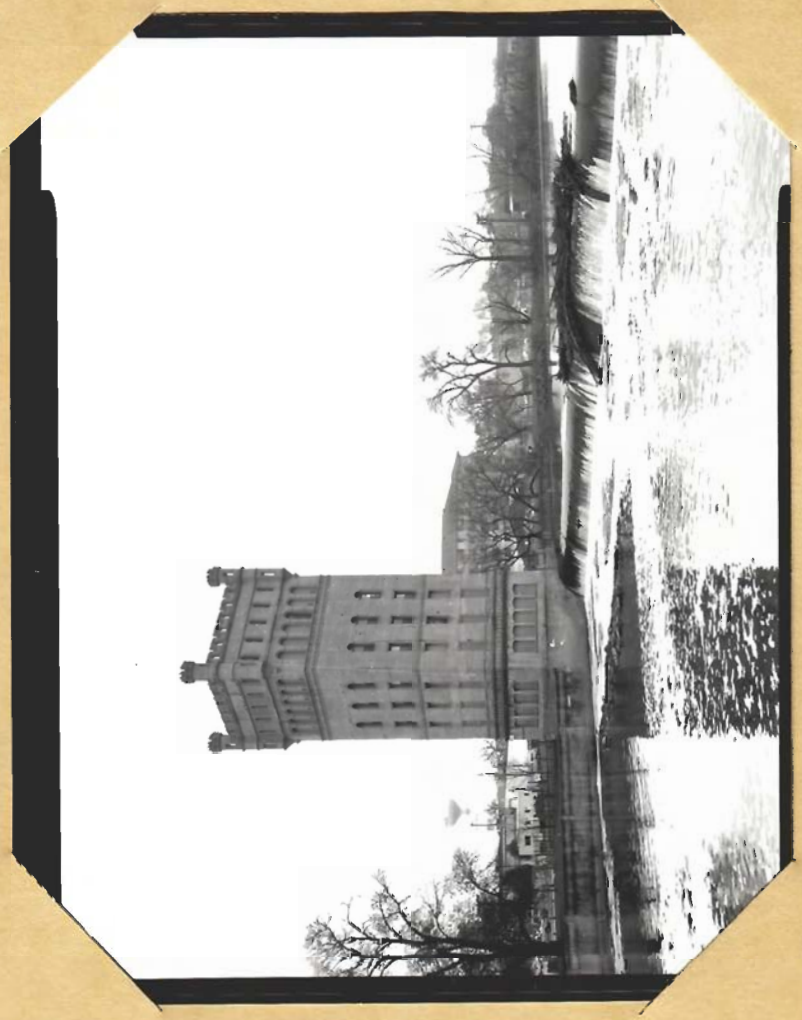

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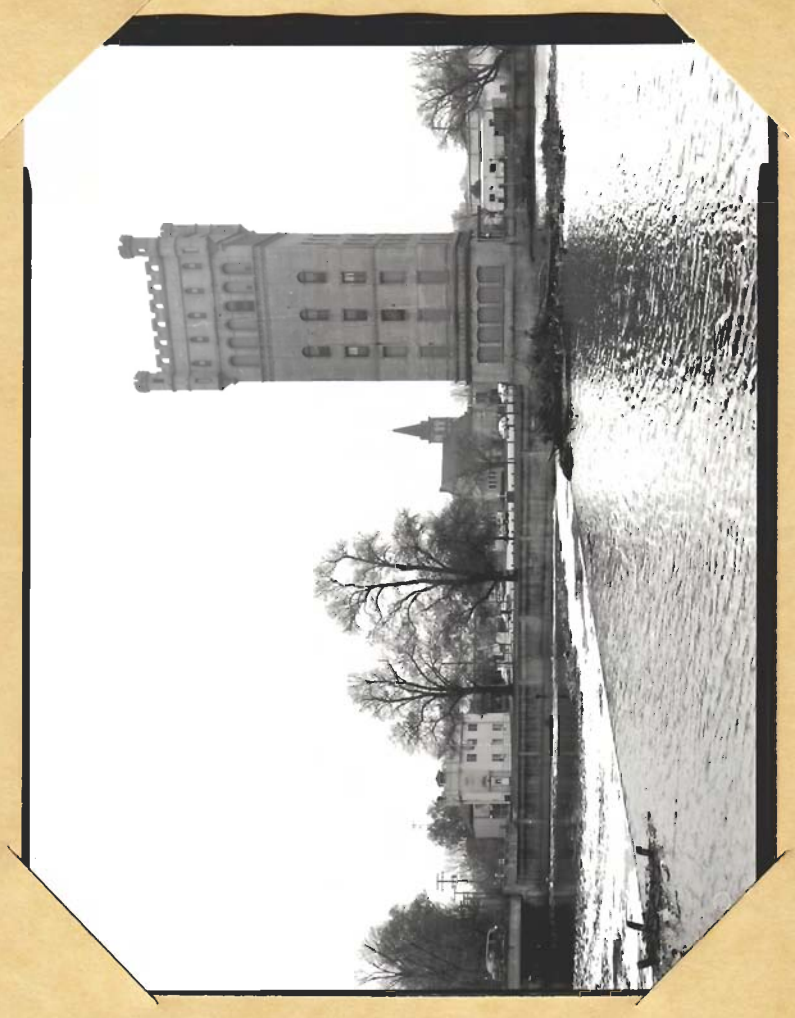

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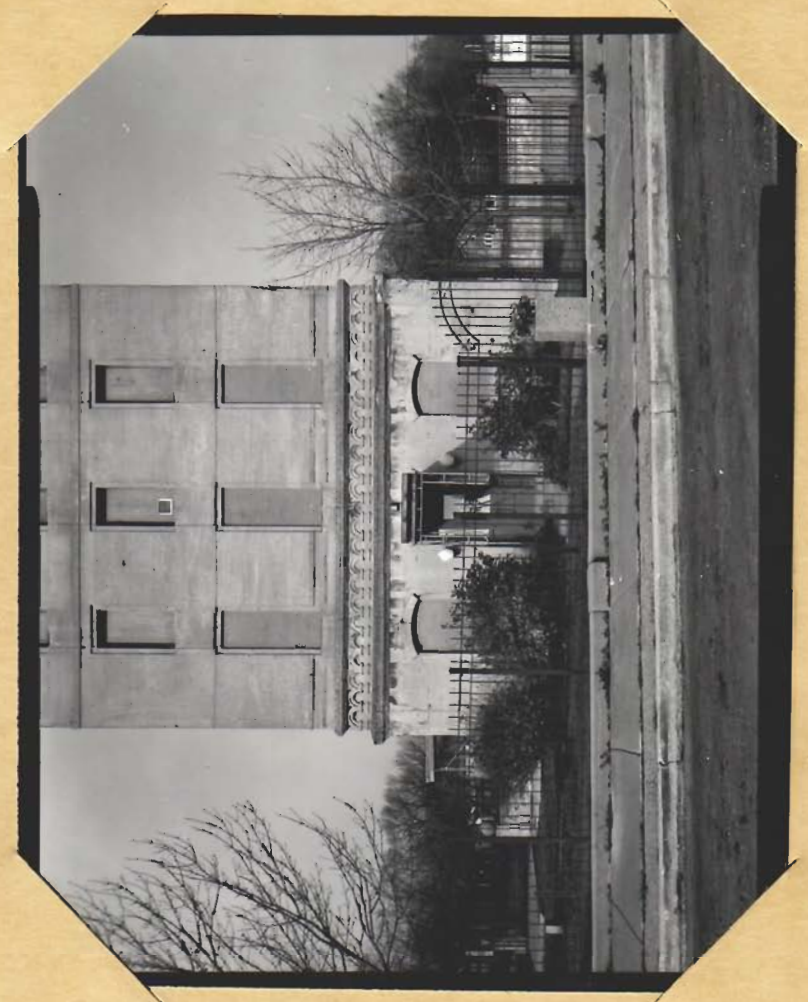

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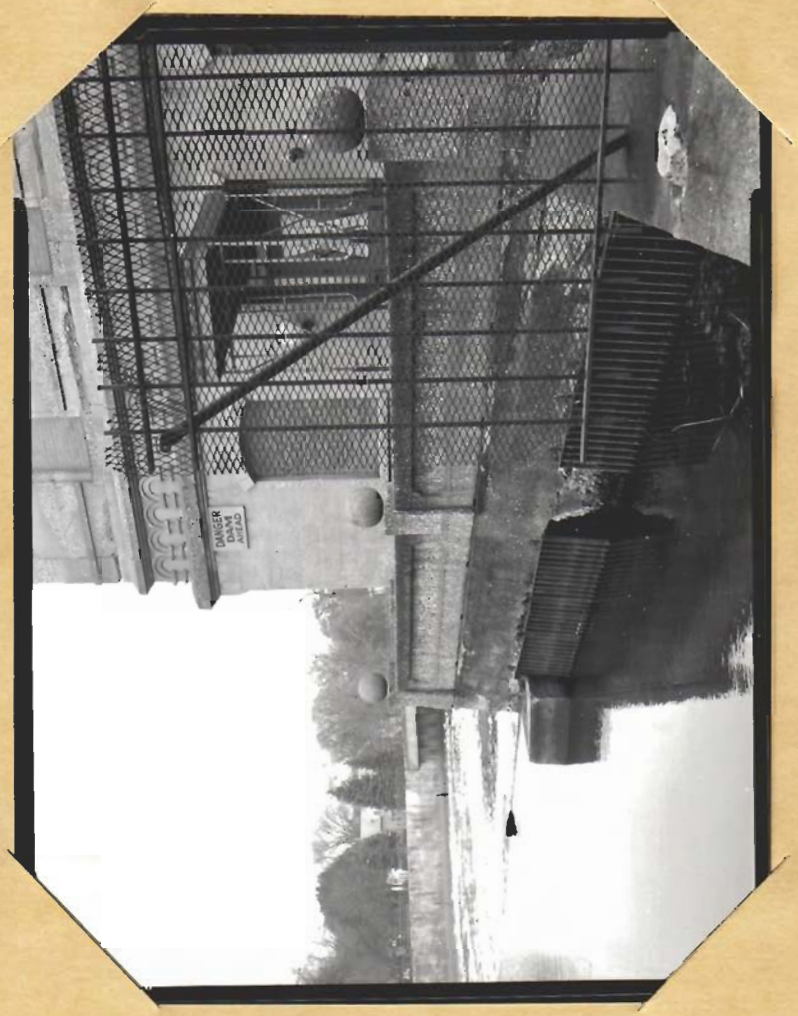

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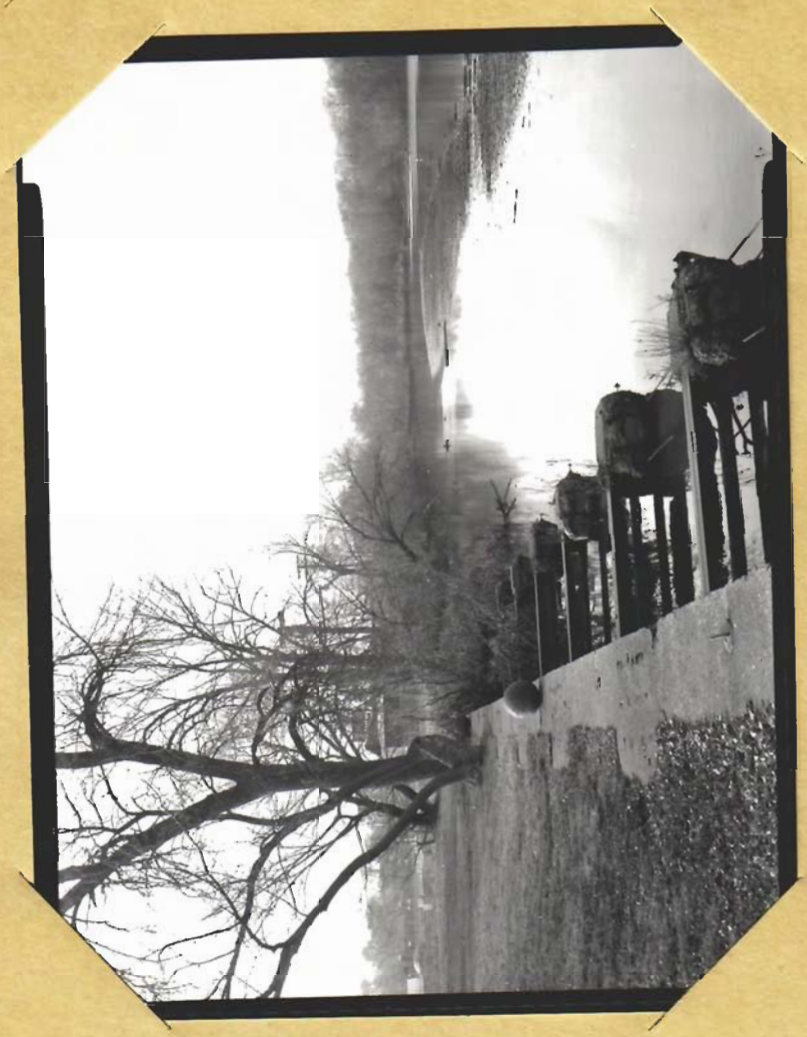

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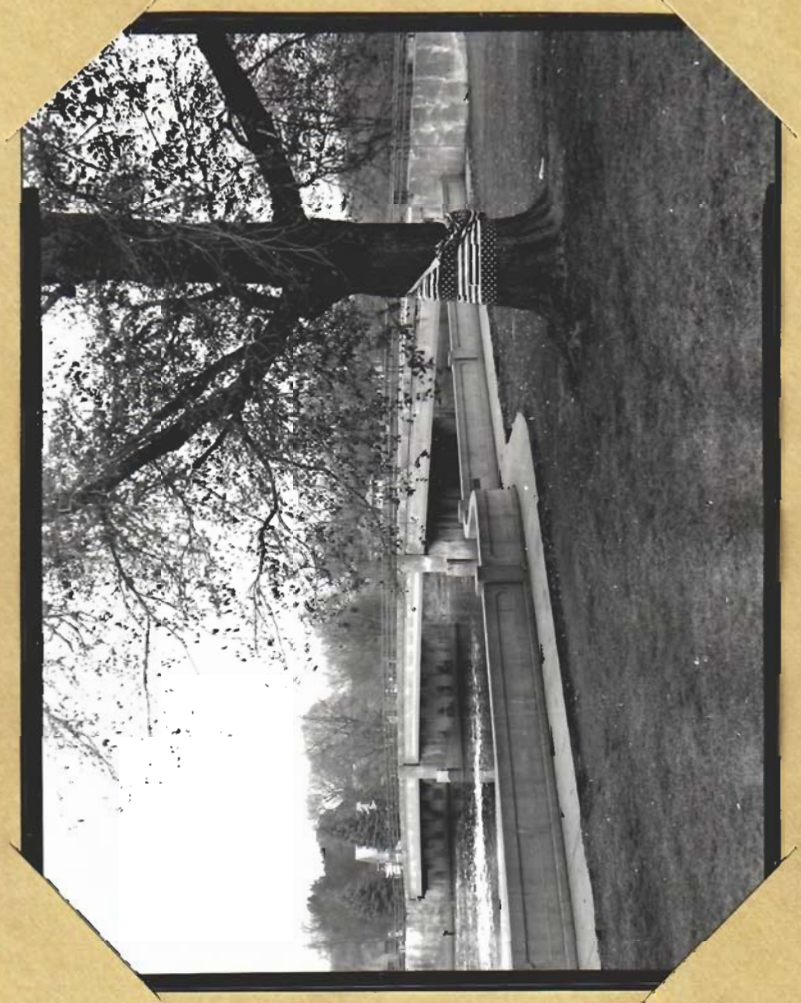

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