

Kasandra Fager:

Hi. So today, I wanted to focus on the notion of progress and how the American Midwest change in the 18th, 19th, and 20th century America. I actually wrote this paper for a class in my senior year of undergrad, so this has been a really fun topic for me for a while.

Kasandra Fager:

So to accomplish this look at the progress, I decided to study Bowling Green, Ohio to analyze exactly how the land was impacted by the elements like colonization, farming, industrialization, and urbanization. This scope is quite large, so I decided to track the growth of one-mile sections, in this case, Section 13 of Plain Township.

Kasandra Fager:

My article evaluates the original copy of Samuel Holmes and James Worthington's land survey from 1820, his historical atlases, agricultural census records and aerial photographs, and I saw how the growth of crop yards and the use of animals across different decades and provided data that related to food and national events, like the market revolution, the growth of roads and railroads, and the discovery of gas and oil transformed the prairie lands into commercial and private farms on the edge of the city.

Kasandra Fager:

Here I introduced how new avenues of trade increased of farms value and use to change the landscape of Section 13 into an urban center following the Great Depression and World War II. To understand how this landscape evolved, I decided to track Bowling Green, Ohio's growth from 1820 to 2020. Just so you know where I'm referring to, I actually included a map here of where Section 13 is included today.

Kasandra Fager:

For those of you from the Bowling Green area, we have West Poe Road and Bowling Green Middle School in the Bowling Green High School and the Wood County Fairgrounds in the south here. We have Haskins Road coming in from the west. We have Factories and West Newton Road in the north, and we have North Main Street over here in the east. So, this is where I actually began in the 1820s.

Kasandra Fager:

So in 1820, Northwest Ohio was not settled. At this time, it was still Native American territory and the Black Swamp made the area almost inhabitable. I was able to find a few descriptions of what the land actually looked like during that time. Land Surveyor Samuel Williams described the land as having rolling plains, scattered rows of trees and timber and rivers for miles.

Kasandra Fager:

It is likely that this vision of abundance describes the springtime as explorer Deswick Evan described the wintertime as a trackless wild. Snow and ice covered the river and

land crossings and the bushes and trees were impassable, and regardless the land would not stay wild for long. As Surveyors Samuel Holmes and James Worthington began to mark the land borders and soft division lines and farmers started to move in.

Kasandra Fager:

Here is an example of how they marked the border marks and the natural landmarks are marked in the chart. Each natural landscape and grove of trees is accounted for, but it is quite difficult to read. So I actually took the time to make myself and all of you a map to better understand what they found. So as you can see, Section 13 mainly features scattered oak and hickory trees and a blend of sandy and plains environments typically found in the Black Swamp area at the time.

Kasandra Fager:

It is interesting to see that Section 13 is so uniform as you have trees marking every beginning and halfway point of the border. That normally didn't happen, so I really liked that. So also if you look in the corner, [inaudible 00:04:40] Road, you can see how that is exactly where today's Haskins Road runs through, so use this as a guide to keep track of Section 13 as we continue through the other photos.

Kasandra Fager:

Although the land was surveyed in 1820, it remained unchanged until the mid-19th century when Europeans and settlers expanded West and to find new land for commerce and settlement. Actually, the new settlers had embraced the idea of private land holdings to privatize the ship building, the fur, the fish, the farming, and the forestry industries. Seeing as how Ohio shipping and fur trade was booming during this time in Ohio was the first Northwest territory to earn its statehood in 1803.

Kasandra Fager:

The farmers started to move in. Section 13's transformation was slow, but it started to pick up the pace. As farmers and agriculture started to actually change the land in the 19th century to who would track this change, I used historical atlases between 1850 and 1920 and agricultural census records to track this portion of this section's natural and cultural evolution.

Kasandra Fager:

Since the Atlases were difficult to read, I decided to create my own version of each map, so excuse the rough appearance of them. In 1858, the land was one large block of prairie with three farmers, Skinner, Brown and Mansfield, as they claimed the land as their own. Here on the maps, each name and number of acre owned coincides with a farmer listed in the atlas. Unfortunately, the Atlases do not provide a first name or explain whether the men bought the land or freely settled here.

Kasandra Fager:

During this time, the farmers had the difficult task of turning the thick prairie into farmland so the three men would not be seen again in the study. I could not find this

section in the agricultural census, so it is hard to say whether they were still in the area or whether their pages of that census were actually torn out or destroyed. I was able to find a census records for Wilson here in Section 14, a mile up the road, to see what life was like at that time for the farmers of the area.

Kasandra Fager:

In 1850, for Wilson had a \$334 livestock value with horses, dairy cows, oxen, cattle, and he actually only produced corn, oats and tobacco. [inaudible 00:07:39] farm for 1850 is not ideal, but we could see that farmers in the mid-18th century needed animals that would be a valuable source of food and labor. They would remain self-sufficient until the market revolution finally took hold and more farmers settled in the area.

Kasandra Fager:

In less than 20 years, in 1875, 3 new families took over the land. William Walter and George Brim were English farmers that came over in 1855 and had 160 acres in the western block. Frank and Cornelius Van Camp were New York farmers with an unknown arrival date and they held 60 acres in the north, and AM McKenzie came to the area in 1865 and had 80 acres in the center.

Kasandra Fager:

There were some mistakes in the atlas though. The Brim family is listed in the reference as farming in section 12 when they were actually Section 13, and a farmer, Thomas Rudder, is listed in the reference list in the back as farming in Section 13, but he never shows up anywhere, so I have no idea who he is. The atlases were not foolproof, but it is a good start in the discovery of what life was like during that time.

Kasandra Fager:

Anyways, this map certainly looks more like farmland than the 1858 atlas. There are two main roads in the center. They are not named, but they will eventually become today's Brim Road here and Van Camp here in the center, which is named after the farmers that actually lived here during this time.

Kasandra Fager:

Also, there is a ditch. You can see the lines here where the ditch is outlined under McKinsey's land, this ditch here, you don't see it on any other map besides this one, but it is most likely the way of the farmers and/or the government to actually drain the swamp to farm said land.

Kasandra Fager:

The untamed wilderness and prairie lands were slowly modernizing. They were utilizing a new railroad running through Section 24, 1 mile south of this section, and there is a church and a school located in Section 12, a mile north. So Section 13 is well-placed to actually experience and embrace the cultural social advances of the area at the time. But this would not actually be around for long as in 1886 the growth of farming and the discovery of gas and oil began to bring wealth and settlement to the area.

Kassandra Fager:

In 1886, there were six men and two women. I say women, but they could have been feminine names. I don't know their gender, but I would like to assume that they were women, so that way we have a place in history at that point.

Kassandra Fager:

The largest landowners were of course the Brim family with 240 acres and the smallest was Juan/McKinsey and Adonley L. Carlo with 20 acres each. You can see how Section 13 was finally being settled, but just in time for the gas and oil boom to take hold. But there were still elements of the past playing at hand with how it's structured.

Kassandra Fager:

In 1872, the section was all prairie. But in 1888, the topography atlas was entirely shaded, meaning the area was likely producing petroleum and gas. The high coincidence, it seems, Section 24's railroad happens to run right past the gas well, and Section 13 would soon be placed to take advantage of these resources and transportation that section 24 provided, but this would soon change on its own.

Kassandra Fager:

In 1901, the Bowling Green topography shows an oil well near the internal intersection of Section 13's two major roads, Brim and Van Camp. This oil production may not have had a direct effect on the farming itself on the surface, but its very existence certainly would've brought some more wealth and interest to the area. The smaller picture of large farming, railroad trade and discovery of an oil well expands well into the larger conversation of the consequences of quick regional growth, that includes the introduction of artificial pesticides, the removal of trees, and the man-made drainage system that altered the origins of the land.

Kassandra Fager:

Instead of the untamed and abundant wilderness, the landscape was now a gray work of flat fields and farms intersected by railroads and buildings like schools and churches. The schoolhouse in Section 12 and the market revolutions, canals and railroads force the landscape to evolve from Native American land to individual farms and finally to one of collective privatization over a 30-year period.

Kassandra Fager:

The discovery of gas and oil did affect the area, but the market revolutions, advances of education and trade, really represent why the area transformed so quickly between 1850 and 1920. The evolution of the steamboat, the canal and the railroad worked quickly to transform the American Midwest. Using steamboats in the early 18th century, trade along the interior rivers expanded in America.

Kassandra Fager:

Having a way to actually transport goods up the Mississippi River and into the other major rivers, farmers were no longer isolated and family [inaudible 00:13:30] expanded, now capable of managing many more acres of land than they were before without a fear of a loss of funds. Farmers were no longer needed for the individual, the necessity alone.

Kassandra Fager:

The commercialization of farms was pushed even further by the building of the Erie Canal in the Ohio-Erie Canal connecting the oceans, The Great Lakes and the rivers. Now, they still need to figure out how to travel between these bodies of water. So that is where the railroad came in. As they began to link the nation, small towns like Bowling Green were now able to increase the adoption and sharing of their natural resources.

Kassandra Fager:

The national economy and the farmers of Ohio were now connected by both land and water. As evolution of trade and the commercial market was seen in the agricultural census records of 1850, 1870 and 1850, Wilson may have had four horses, some cows, some oxen, and some bushels of grains. But farmers like BP van Camp and the Birch family had a wider variety of animals and crops to use.

Kassandra Fager:

So here, you can see how all three farms evolved over the three decades, with a crop potential of hundred 45 bushels of crops per yield. Van Camp's holdings represent a high-yield field farm at the time. He has a hundred acres of land, a \$3800 cash value and \$30 paid in wages, and along with the usual houses and horses and cows, he also had pigs and grew oats.

Kassandra Fager:

The Van Camp Farm of 1870s was then taken over by Wellington Birch in 1880. The progress continued and in 1880 this land had no land that wasn't being used. They had a \$5,100 cash value, \$500 worth of tools and \$330 labor pavement and a profit of a \$1000. It is unclear whether the other two farms made a profit as the census records did not dictate this number, but it is easy to say that with all three decades the growth continued for each farm.

Kassandra Fager:

Of course, some self-sufficiency remained as each farm had horses, cows, pigs, and grains like corn and oats. But the farms were more likely now to be high-yield profit farms. Looking at the chart, the farm value increased each year and buildings and paid labor were added to take care of the higher number of animals and crops found during those decades. The similarity of crops and the diversity of animals represented growth here, the prairie lands and the farm lands that knew modes of trade and uses of the environment created in the 20th century.

Kassandra Fager:

The 19th century landscape may have been affected by the trade and settlement growth, but the 20th century landscape was changed on a social and a political and national level during the Great Depression and World War II. President Franklin D. Roosevelt started to grow the economy on the back of the military production and introduced the New Deal to create several social and conservation programs like Social Security, Medicaid and the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Kasandra Fager:

America's relationship with the land began to change as President Roosevelt also created the National Park system and the land became more like a haven than a resource. The Americans were no longer looking at farms or land as general, I say no longer but mostly, were no longer looking at farms as land as just a resource, but also a site for recreation and growth.

Kasandra Fager:

And then also in the 1960s and 1980s, these thoughts continued as Congress would pass environmental acts, like the Clean Air Act, the Water Quality Act, and the Wild and Scenic River acts. The increase in public engagement and the desire to have a break from the never-ending industrial war environment set the stage for Bowling Green's new development towards urbanization.

Kasandra Fager:

The 1920 and 1920 atlases are where we really see this expansion of the area begin. The southern part of each block of Section 13 now belongs to Bowling Green, having 12 farmers split the land. Three to four farmers settled on Brim's original western block, two in the top and seven in the center. Section 13 was not only two miles north of the city, so that taking the land was indeed going to happen as the city's population expanded and more people wanted to become farmers and have a piece of land for the own.

Kasandra Fager:

On the screen here are three aerial photographs from 1939, 1950, and 1980 and 2018. Just like the roads, the trees and the buildings can connect the past to the present. In the south, you have, there are two hickory trees and an oak tree and a elm tree in the northwest corner that has been around since 1820. And as for the main roads, you still Brim Road and Van Camp, but they are named so more people are starting to actually use these roads and really want to know how to travel in the area. There are also five buildings that have been around since 1939.

Kasandra Fager:

For creative or social and gatherings, bowling Green residents would require that their social needs be met as the city expanded. You have the Wood County Fairground in the west, the Bellard Business Center in the north, the high school, the Bowling Green City Performing Arts Center in the south, and the Eagles 2180, a home for a non-profit in the east.

Kasandra Fager:

From 1939 to 2018, the addition of roads and buildings in the loss of farmland and tree coverage marked the city's expansion into Section 13. The land is no longer farmland and more so a part of the city center. Parking lots for the fairgrounds now line the western border and southeast corner. Larger buildings sit on Van Camp Road and the Village, a housing district that's been around since 1939, extends past its original parameters as more housing, roads and ponds were actually built for that people in the area.

Kasandra Fager:

The high school now has a football stadium and a baseball field, and there are less farmlands than before. As you can see here, the edge of the city is now expanding farther beyond just the southern block, but into the center and up North Street and end at West Poe Road. The only farmland in the area that has been around since 1820 til now is right here, slightly in the center, but mostly just up here, right in the corner.

Kasandra Fager:

Though this may not be used as farmland, because it's not shown here on the map, but driving around in this corner, this is where the mobile Bowling Green Water Tower sits, so they may not actually be farms anymore. It may just be prairie land and grasslands that are there.

Kasandra Fager:

So tracking evolution of Section 13, a plain township from 1820 to 2020, allows researchers to get a closer look at how national politics and into the industrial improvements affected Ohioans over the centuries. The 18th century saw Native Americans living on the edge of the Black Swamp and the drastic effect that the encroachment of European settlers had on the land. The 19th century saw farmers expanding their agricultural outputs and maximizing their profits in the midst of the market revolutions expanding trade network, and the 20th century was a time of industrial revolution, urbanization, and changing environmental philosophy.

Kasandra Fager:

In the end, Americans fought to keep the land for public recreation or corporate industry by changing the way the land worked for them, whether by accentuating its beauty or controlling its utility. Section 13, a plain township, accurately reflects the common farmers experience during the market revolution, World War II and the growth of Bowling Green, Ohio. Thank you so much for coming.