As a student in a class on the history of Stark County, Jill Schott was asked to imagine herself as the director of a project for the Stark County Chamber of Commerce. In her role as Director, Schott’s main task was to prepare a brochure of no more than five pages describing the benefits of living in Stark County. Looking to “sell” the place, Schott covers all the areas in an effort to find something of interest for each of her readers. After all, according to Schott, “something for everyone may say it best about Stark County.”

Stark County, A Rare Jewel

Is relocation in your future? Are you desirous of new opportunities for growth? Would you like to be a partner in progress? If so, Stark County, Ohio, is the place to be.

Stark County is a treasure trove of varied assets. This county, the eighth largest in the state, is a region of great diversity economically, culturally, religiously, and historically. From football to fine arts, Stark County satisfies every taste. Allow me to present a panoramic view of the countless possibilities and opportunities available in this area of northeastern Ohio.

Stark County has an excellent location; large cities such as Akron and Cleveland are within an hour’s drive or commuting distance. Yet, a much more affordable lifestyle is within reach for Stark County residents. According to Merele Kinsey, coordinator of research and evaluation services at Kent State University Stark Campus, “the cost of living in Stark County is below the national average, and among the lowest in Ohio.”1 For this reason, families and individuals receive more value for their dollar, and the quality of life is enhanced.

Education in Stark County is a priority. The city of Massillon boasts a beautiful new high school that, with Paul Brown Tiger Stadium, resembles a college campus. Jackson Township’s high school and middle school both sport newly completed additions to accommodate the phenomenal growth of this once rural township. Vocational and private schools also serve the varied needs of students. Academic opportunities abound as higher education is readily available on the campuses of Kent State Stark, Mt. Union, Walsh, Malone, Stark State College, and a branch of Ashland University located near Massillon. Residents of Stark County are well aware that education is an important key in unlocking future success and satisfaction and strongly support the learning experience.

Complementing the education system of Stark County is a wealth of libraries and museums. A total of twenty libraries and branches serve the needs
of residents. The McKinley Museum and Discover World in Canton, the Canal Days Museum in Canal Fulton, the Massillon Museum, the Ohio Society of Military History honoring Ohio veterans, and the Canton Classic Car Museum featuring over thirty-five special interest automobiles all provide fascinating opportunities to discover and learn.

For those preferring the great outdoors, park systems with walking paths and “green space” are close to home. Quail Hollow State Park is a great natural retreat just a short drive away. Hikers or bikers will soon be able to explore nature along the canal corridor which is being re-discovered and preserved. Sippo Lake, Meyers Lake, and numerous private lakes offer fishing and boating, popular pastimes for anglers of all ages. Canton and Stark County have been dubbed “America’s Playing Field.” Here one may enjoy year-round sports activities: the Canton Crocodiles baseball team, Little League teams, soccer and t-ball for the youngest athletes, and nationally renowned high school football rivalries. The Canton-Massillon region is the cradle of professional football, as well. Several legendary sports figures had roots in the Stark County area, including Paul Brown and Lou Groza. The Professional Football Hall of Fame, honoring football’s greats, is Canton’s leading tourist attraction. Many golf courses are available across Stark County, both public and private, including Glenmoor, a signature golf course designed by Jack Nicklaus. Yes, this county is truly a sports mecca for fans of every game.

Here in Stark County, churches of all faiths are at hand, both denominational and non-denominational. Many are beautiful structures architecturally: St. Mary’s Church in Massillon and St. John the Baptist Church in Canton are two impressive Catholic edifices. People of diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds practice their religious traditions and live side by side in Stark County: St. Haralambos and Temple Israel in Canton are two examples of this cooperative effort.

Historically, we are fortunate to live in this county which is rich with priceless gems from the past. In Canton, President William McKinley’s National Memorial, the restored Saxton House and the Palace Theater reveal much about life in the early twentieth century. Glamorgan Castle and the Mabel Hartzell Home, both in Alliance, are listed on the National Historic Register. Massillon’s rustic Spring Hill Historic Home and the Romanesque mansion, Five Oaks, allow an accurate look into the origins of this city, which grew up along the canal corridor. The little village of Navarre prides itself on preserving pieces of the past within its boundaries with the J.D. Define Building and the Matthews House. Canal Fulton, home to the St. Helena III Canal Boat, is a quaint town that has excelled in preservation of landmarks. In each of these locations, many examples of unique architecture remain to help relate the story of the past.
Cultural opportunities abound in the area. The Canton Ballet, the Canton Museum of Art, The Canton Players Guild, the Canton Symphony and the Youth Symphony all provide exposure to the arts. With numerous plays, concerts, and theaters to choose from, one may always find an event to suit one’s taste.

Economically, Stark County is a viable, growing region. It is the home of diversified industry and commercial business. The production of steel, bearings, rubber gloves, medical supplies, bank vaults, and food products helps to keep the economy moving and many people employed. According to Mr. Moe Kessler, a Republic Engineered Steels executive, one of the most valuable resources Stark County possesses is its skilled and industrious work force.3 This thought is reinforced by Mrs. Lynne Dragomier, a Hoover Company vice-president, who believes the workers of this area have a strong sense of community and caring.4 While the needs of industry have changed, and continue to do so, Stark County remains a great place to work.

Along with industry comes agriculture. Thanks to the recession of the last glacial ice 14,000 years ago, Stark County was left impressive deposits of outwash providing fertile farmland. Evident in northern and western Stark County is some of the richest, most productive ground in Ohio. Vegetables and dairy farming are valuable economic assets here; Stark County is one of the major producers in the state. A temperate climate and ample growing season aid production.

As class discussion pointed out, other important resources come from the earth, as well. Clay deposits allow the manufacture of brick, stoneware, and tile. Coal is also found in significant amounts in the hills of southern Ohio. Stark County’s plentiful underground reserves of natural gas and crude oil are being tapped continuously for commercial and private use. Our county is fortunate to have these local energy sources from which industry obtains fuels and economic gain. My family benefits directly from this energy supply, as our home is heated by natural gas harvested from a well drilled on our property.

Stark County is a jewel with many facets. It sparkles economically, culturally, historically, and agriculturally. A population from many different cultures and backgrounds provides interest and diversity, both valuable assets. A wonderful place to put down roots and rear families, this area is rich with heritage and opportunity. “Something for everyone” may say it best about Stark County. Why not join us?
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