

Progress 2000

CLEVELAND POST



Inside...

As Cleveland grows, the community is confronted with a growing identity crisis. **...Page 2**

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Just what in the world is Cleveland?

The answer seems obvious, but in actuality it is not. There are many different answers to the question. Defining what Cleveland is, and giving it a permanent name, happen to be one of many things that must be addressed if the community is to ever gain a distinct identity of its own.

The Cleveland Post, the only newspaper devoted to exclusive coverage of the Cleveland area, defines Cleveland to be the areas comprised by the Cleveland and Pleasant Grove townships, plus the portion of southern Wake County on the Garner Post Office's delivery route into the 40/42 area.

The Greater Cleveland Chamber of Commerce defines Cleveland to be the area of Johnston County comprising the Cleveland and Pleasant Grove townships.

The Johnston County Board of Education's definition of Cleveland is more vague, but it generally regards Cleveland as the area comprising the Cleveland Township.

Many residents of the area surrounding Cleveland School consider their area alone to constitute Cleveland, and refer to the 40/42 area of the Cleveland Township as "Old Drug Store".

The State of North Carolina does not recognize the area by the name Cleveland at all; for there is an incorporated town in Rowan County, near Salisbury, that bears the name Cleveland.

New Cleveland?

Polenta?

Old Drug Store?

What's in a name?

Cleveland Heights?

North Cleveland?

Cleveland School?

Johnston County's fastest-growing community facing identity crisis

By John Cate
Editor

If Cleveland were an incorporated town, it would rival Cary as the state's fastest-growing city in the upcoming 2000 U.S. Census.

Johnston County's number one 'boom town' may yet earn that distinction, but as Cleveland moves through its adolescence as a community, it is doing so with a major identity crisis.

The area referred to as Cleveland by many newcomers to the area, as well as the Cleveland Post, actually carries many names, has no set boundaries, and while its future

becomes clearer by the day, it is still murky and nothing is set in stone.

"Clearly, the area around 40/42 needs an identity," said Deirdre Jersey, the president of the Greater Cleveland Chamber of Commerce since its inception in September 1998. "I'd like to see the area maintain its heritage, but with one other word so we can get our own postal delivery."

For those familiar with the area, Jersey's statement speaks volumes. The Cleveland community — in this case defined as the Cleveland and Pleasant Grove townships of Johnston County —

is served by seven different post offices, all with different ZIP codes and with the names of the towns attached. Not a single resident of the two townships officially has a community to call their own. In the eyes of the U.S. Postal Service, citizens of this area live in Clayton, Garner, Willow Spring, Angier, Benson, Smithfield or Raleigh.

Even the reference to "the area around 40/42" reiterates the problem. This phrase, commonly used to describe Cleveland's burgeoning business district at Exit 312 on Interstate 40 (where I-40 intersects NC 42, hence the name), is one of many names and descriptions used for the area we know as "Cleveland." Others

See IDENTITY, Page 2

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CLEVELAND POST Progress 2000

All editorial copy and photography by John Cate and Amanda B. Smith. Layout and design by John Cate.

On the cover:

A series of photographs of a day in the life of the greater Cleveland area, starting at the top with a view of the Cleveland skyline on a recent evening. Depicted in the photos are (clockwise from left to right): Greater Cleveland Chamber of Commerce president Deirdre Jersey, clerk Diana Rogers and customer Eugene Ballard at Becky's Country Corner on Cornwallis Road; the logo of the Cleveland Chamber, a night of bingo at Cleveland Bingo and Grill, a construction site at the 40/42 intersection, Maddison Motley (age 5) and her brother Jacob (4) of Willow Spring, a map of the Cleveland area, County Commissioner Cookie Pope, who is a Clevelander, and the McGee's Crossroads Manta Rays swim team in one of its summer meets on the way to a third consecutive league title. The two shots of the *Cleveland Post* feature significant stories run in the *Post* in the past several months.

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Identity Continued from Page 2

include Old Drug Store, Polenta, Leachburg, Cleveland School and of course, 40/42. Also included in the coverage area of the Cleveland Post and the aforementioned chamber of commerce is the area around exit 318, known as McGee's Crossroads.

For a number of years now, Jersey and many others with an interest in the Cleveland area have pushed for Cleveland — in this case referring to the Cleveland Township — to gain a discrete identity of its own and perhaps even push for incorporation. A bill was introduced in the state House of Representatives early in 1999 that would have formed the business district at Exit 312 as the Town of North Cleveland, but it died in committee after being described as unworkable.

Cleveland is out, so what's our name?

In choosing the name "North Cleveland," another identity problem of Cleveland was addressed.

Though "Cleveland" has been the most commonly used name for the area for as long as anyone can remember, it is not a name that the community can use if it ever wants its own postal delivery or to incorporate as a town.

There is another town known as Cleveland, incorporated in 1965, in Rowan County near Salisbury in south-central North Carolina. Because of the existence of this town, any other community is prohibited from choosing "Cleveland" as its name. Under North Carolina law, only one city or town in the state may bear a particular name.

"It's a big problem for us," Jersey said. "The Chamber is always getting mail intended for the Cleveland in Rowan County, and we get a lot of phone calls intended for that Cleveland. Apparently, when people call information, our name confuses the directory assistance operators and instead of sending them to Salisbury, they send them to us."

Because of this, some debate has arisen over a permanent name for Cleveland. In addition to "North Cleveland," the names "New Cleveland," "Cleveland School," and "Cleveland Heights" have been offered. Most proposals retain the name Cleveland, but with an extra word so as to have a name permissible under state and postal

regulations.

"New Cleveland" is favored by a number of local businesses and by the Chamber, but so far, no name has gained a consensus.

"To me, it's pretty simple," Jersey said. "I think we should be New Cleveland because it is easy to remember, and the area is new, compared to some of the others in the county."

On the other hand, another Cleveland businesswoman sees it just the opposite of Jersey.

See IDENTITY, Page 3



CP photos by John Cate

In the photo above, Melinda Tanner of Cleveland Bingo and Grill serves two customers during the busy lunch hour at the Cornwallis Road establishment, located in the historic old Coats and Coats Grill building. At left, Hampton Inn of Cleveland was one of the first new businesses in the rapid expansion of the 40/42 corridor. At the hotel's right is the Cleveland water tower, which will at some point be repainted with the community's chosen name.



From left to right: Gail Massengill, RN; Shelley Thompson, RN; Melissa McChargue, Office Receptionist; Charles E. Williams, M.D.; Beverly Stevenson, Office Assistant; Brian K. Harris, M.D.

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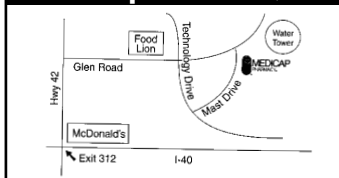
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Identity Continued from Page 3

"I kind of like Old Cleveland myself," said Tanna Fiske, a seven-year Cleveland resident and owner of Cleveland Bingo and Grill on Cornwallis Road, "because anytime I hear it spoken of, it seems it's always being called the 'old Cleveland area.'"

Going postal

Cleveland's growth is quite remarkable in light of the fact that the area's mail delivery structure is borderline disastrous.

As mentioned before, the greater Cleveland area — in this case defined as both the Cleveland and Pleasant Grove townships — is served by seven different post offices. There are several problems that arise from this, none of which are particularly appealing to Clevelanders.

In 1997, the Cleveland branch of First Citizens Bank — which like most 40/42 businesses has a Garner address and phone number — was robbed. A call was placed to the police, but 25 minutes later, the bank received a call from police who had gone to the bank's branch in Garner itself — eight miles away — and wanted to know where assistance was required.

"We called 911, and half an hour later they called and asked us where we were located," said bank manager Jackie Anderson. "They had gone to the branch in the town of Garner."

Almost within sight of the First Citizens branch are two businesses that have opened up since then — a Lowe's home improvement warehouse and a Cracker Barrel Restaurant. Since there is no town for either of them to call "home," each identifies itself with a nearby town. The Cracker Barrel bills itself as a Garner business; however, since there is a Lowe's in the town of Garner, that business claims to be in Clayton. In actuality, each is more than six miles from the city

they claim to be in — and the two businesses are less than the length of a football field apart.

In a meeting held with USPS officials a week before Christmas, the Postal Service agreed to look into remedies for the mail delivery problems. In the years to come, it is likely that Cleveland locales will have an address using whatever name the community settles on, plus a Clayton ZIP code and mail delivery by the Clayton post office. Residents of the McGee's Crossroads area hope to also use their own name, along with a Benson ZIP code and mail delivery.

The future

Most Cleveland area business and political leaders regard the eventual incorporation of at least the 40/42 corridor and surrounding areas as inevitable — though they agree that the time and form of this incorporation must be agreeable to the people of Cleveland.

"That is strictly left to the citizens of the Cleveland area," said Johnston County Commissioner and Cleveland resident Cookie Pope. "That (incorporation) is not for me to decide. I'm going to listen to what the citizens want; their pleasure is my pleasure."

In mid-1998, Jersey's office estimated the population of the Cleveland Township at 12,500 and that of the Pleasant Grove Township at 13,500 — each outstripping the populations of a number of incorporated towns in the area. With both areas growing at almost a 20 percent clip, the current population of each township probably exceeds 15,000.

Economically, Cleveland is building a substantial tax base. A rough estimate of the average daily retail sales in Cleveland Township would be between \$137,500 and \$175,000, it has

See IDENTITY, Page 7

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Residents have mixed feelings about Cleveland's rapid growth

By Amanda B. Smith
Staff Writer

Few people would disagree that growth along the 40/42 corridor has offered more jobs, shopping opportunities and convenience for Cleveland area residents.

But growth can be a two-edged sword. Along with a growing business sector, Cleveland has a growing population, leading to a housing development boom that is changing Cleveland's landscape from rural to suburban. Schools are becoming overcrowded, and traffic is becoming increasingly heavier.

Cleveland area residents' views on this growth are as varied as the new businesses that have opened shop in the community.

For Chris and Kathy Plate, who moved into the Sunridge Farm development off of 42 last year, the amount of growth in the last year and the loss of the rural landscape are disquieting.

"It's incredible," said Kathy. "Just where we're at it's incredible. None of that was here when we moved. We liked it because it was quieter. We find ourselves buying more trees to put around the house for privacy."

"Farms are turning into com-

"It's given our children jobs and it's close to home. We used to live out in the country here, but now it's grown up, and I still like it out here."

-- Frances Collins
Cleveland resident



"We had a hard time getting (my son) placed because the schools are full...I don't know how they (schools) are going to handle all these kids."

-- Susan Mims
Cleveland resident



mercial real estate," Chris said. "When you see all the houses and see all the trees crackling and falling..."

For others, like Susan Mims of Cleveland, schools have become a major issue.

"We had a hard time getting him placed because the schools are full," said Mims of her 8-year-old son Andrew, who is currently attending West Clayton Elementary School because there was not an open space for him at Cleveland Elementary.

"I don't know how they [schools] are going to handle all these kids," said Mims, who moved from Garner to Johnson's Pond development off of Cornwallis Road in February. "One reason we moved out here was to have a little more land and get away from it, but it's probably

not going to be that way for long."

"We're in trailers already and it's a brand new school," said Gina Barbour, a kindergarten teacher at McGee's Crossroads Elementary School.

"Hopefully the [limit] will stop some growth," Barbour said, referring to the limit on building permits recently enacted by the Johnston County Board of

See GROWTH, Page 5

CP photo by Amanda B. Smith

Katelyn Viers, 4, takes a ride on a shopping cart at the Clayton area Lowe's located at 40/42. Lowe's opened up late last year and is one of Cleveland's largest retailers. Katelyn is the daughter of Pat Viers of Willow Spring.



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At left, Courtney Simpson, 17, who works at the Cleveland Dairy Queen, gets her nails done at NailTek by Nina Ngo, a Raleigh resident who works at the nail salon, which opened last October in Swift Creek Plaza.

CP photo by Amanda B. Smith

Growth Continued from Page 4

Commissioners.

But ask Frances Collins, a 26-year Cleveland resident who works at the newly opened Lowe's, what she thinks of the growth.

"It's given our children jobs and it's close to home," she said. "We used to live in the country out here but now it's grown up, but I still like it out here."

Lifelong residents Judy Morris and Dwayne Braswell agree.

"I think it's wonderful," said Morris, who is excited about getting county water for the first time in her life. "You can't stand in the way of progress."

"I've lived here all my life and I've seen a lot of growth up here," said Braswell. "It's good. It's more convenient. You don't have to go to Smithfield or Raleigh if you need anything."

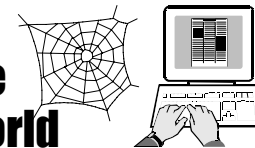
Even those who are affected by the negative aspects of growth admit the benefits.

According to Mims, she has been in Lowe's at least once a week since moving and she hopes Wal-Mart will locate in the area.

Kristi Motley of Willow Spring noted the overcrowding at McGee's Crossroads Elementary, where her 5-year-old daughter Maddison attends kindergarten, but also sees the positives of growth.

"It's probably bad for the school system, but it's good for people who like to shop," she said. "There are more stores and more restaurants. I like that."

Cleveland on the World Wide Web



Exit 312:

<http://www.exit312.com> The catchall Web site for the Cleveland area, exit312.com includes links to several Johnston County business and government organizations, including most on this list, plus advertising by a number of local businesses. The site is maintained by Cleveland residents Jeff and Kathy Delbusso as a public service.

Johnston County Schools, <http://fswad-min.wadmin.johnston.k12.nc.us/index.html> The Johnston County Schools website includes information about curriculum, e-mail addresses of teachers, administrators and school board members, school lunch menus, event calendars and "Quality Quips," a weekly newsletter of school employees.

Cleveland Athletic Association, <http://www.countrysoftware.com/caa> This site is hosted by Country Software, and includes information on soccer, softball, baseball and basketball. The site lists standings, calendars and registration information, and includes information on sponsors.

Johnston Community College, <http://www.johnston.cc.nc.us/> This site has an academic calendar, an e-mail directory of staff, information on continuing education, and a comprehensive listing of links for the serious web surfer.

Johnston County Sheriff's Department, <http://jcso.org/> The official website of the Johnston County Sheriff's office, including links to other law enforcement agencies in the area and press releases on major actions undertaken by the JCso in recent weeks.

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How did Cleveland come to be?

Compiled by Aaron B. Pryor, former Cleveland Post editor, and John Cate, Cleveland Post editor, with thanks to the Johnston County Heritage Center.

The area called the Cleveland community was largely formed from two communities that took root in the mid-1800s, Leachburg and Polenta. In 1887, the state legislature created Cleveland Township from these communities. The township was named for President Grover Cleveland.

Polenta was located in the Cleveland School area along Cleveland Road, also known as 1010 Highway.

In 1858, Oakland Presbyterian Church, Johnston County's oldest Presbyterian church, was dedicated. In 1882, the Polenta post office was established. Polenta had two churches, Oakland and Willow Springs Church, which was an African-American congregation.

At that time, Polenta had a two-story farm and mercantile store with a second-story furniture showroom, several cotton gins, Barber Mill, which ground corn and wheat, a Masonic lodge, a country doctor and two schools, one run by Oakland Presbyterian Church and the other a private academy.

Polenta grew up around the Polenta Academy, a wooden building that served as private school to prepare students for college or to go to the Turlington Institute in Smithfield.

In 1900, the Polenta post office closed and mail began to be routed through Smithfield.

Leachburg was located at the commercial corridor along N.C. 42, where it intersects with I-40. The community was named for Dr. James Thomas Leach, the third chairman of the Johnston County Commissioners and the first congressman from Johnston County, in the Confederate Congress from 1864-1865.

This community grew up around The Old Drug Store, established at N.C. 42 and 1010 Highway in its first incarnation in 1887 by Dr. H.C. Williams. Williams leased a half-acre of land in 1886 from Mr. and Mrs. S.H. Gower. Williams built the store as a place to practice medicine and as living quarters.

In 1934, Langdon began construction of a two story brick building 500 yards from the old store site. He simply called it "Old Drug Store," and it and the road with its name still stand. Langdon traded the land for a tract of land at Middle Creek, and the store had a succession of owners.

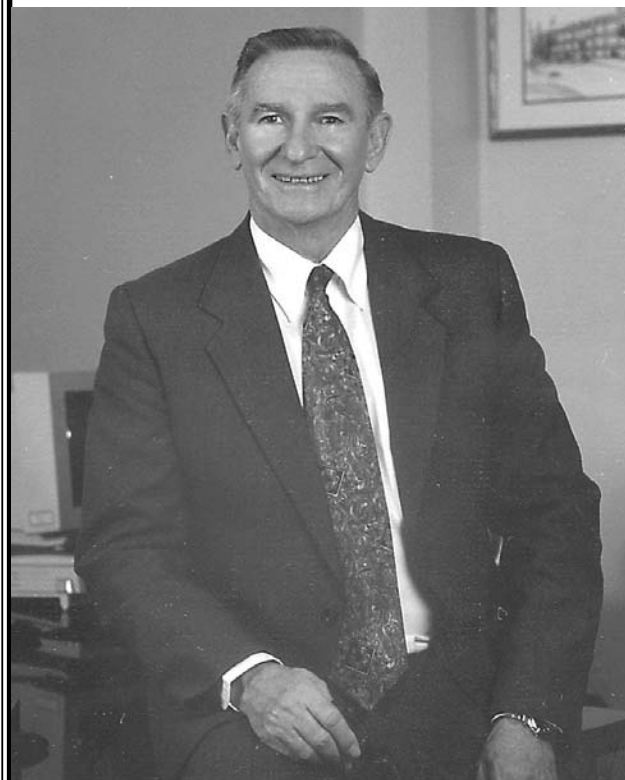


CP photos by John Cate

The Always in Motion dance studio is one of the first businesses to locate in the Swift Creek Village. Here at the end of a session, instructor Janet Bacon speaks with students Alexander Kuppler, Mary Sutherland, Bridget Newman, Jessica Newman and Amber West shortly before closing time.

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Identity

Continued from Page 4

been estimated. If Wal-Mart chooses to locate in the 40/42 corridor, as it has an option to do, that number would rise even higher.

"When I first moved here in late 1994, the only things at 40/42 were the Cleveland Commons, Texaco, maybe the Citgo, and McDonald's," said Jersey. "I remember I would be driving home on Old Drug Store Road and not see a car for miles. Now, it's full of traffic."

There is considerable resistance to a possible incorporation of Cleveland, however. Most of the local farmers and many property owners do not want an incorporated Cleveland that would charge town property taxes. For them, the benefits a town would offer — police protection, regulation of growth and an organized local governing body — do not presently outweigh the lower expenses of county life.

"Right now, the League of Municipalities is not pushing for incorporation, but in time, I think it's inevitable," Pope said. "People will see the need for more police protection and other services, but it will take time."

John Cate can be contacted at 772-1166 or via email at ClevelandPost@aol.com.



CP photos by John Cate

Once a sleepy intersection along the final completed stretch of Interstate 40 in the early part of the 1990s, I-40's Exit 312 is now one of the busiest interchanges between Raleigh and Wilmington. Here on a recent evening rush hour, traffic was backed up almost to the exit ramp as people tried to find their way onto NC 42.

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