

multiple layers. There were everyday tasks, small and private activities for which a shop, a house, or a garden was occupied. And there were public actions, shared with more people doing the same things at the same time.

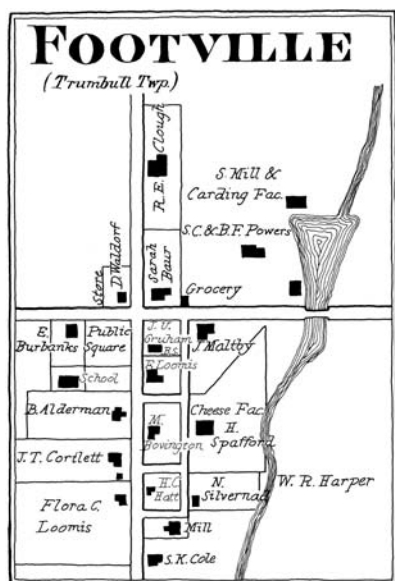
Most days in the village were sluggish but the pace regularly picked up when farm families arrived for the excitement of market days, for livestock auctions, or, on Sundays, for church and socializing. There were even celebrations such as the Fourth of July, with fireworks, foot races for the children, baking contests for the women, that both energized and exhausted people. Afterward, they were glad to fall back to a slower tempo.

The village could appear as timeless in the landscape as a farm. One could see all or most of its parts just by standing in place and turning around. There were only a few basic components, but villages could include different kinds and different numbers. Still, the rhythms of life remained familiar, easily recognized from year to year.*

Houses, more than land, were essential to the village, although behind most houses there was a vestigial farm, smaller and less perfectly developed than its rural counterpart. There was a barn and a well. Beekeeping was customary; sometimes there was a cow or a few goats. And there was a garden that furnished vegetables, fruit, and, for festive occasions, flowers. A garden did not provide all the necessary sustenance, so most villagers worked at some additional task. They occupied a village as well as a private household and took responsibility for maintaining both.

Settlers from New England brought the idea of a “village green”

*For this discussion, as for that of a farm, the parts are exemplary, not necessarily chosen from the same village.



Plan of Typical Village,
Ashtabula County, Ohio.
Drawing by Lauren Chattigré.
(Redrawn from *Atlas of
Ashtabula County, Ohio*,
Titus, Simmons and Titus,
1874.)

to the Midwest. A public place, usually in the village center, was often reserved for common use, undivided and owned by all. Sometimes it was only an expanded crossroads; more often it was made distinctive in some way. Trees were planted for ornament and shade. Under the trees, pathways crisscrossed a flat lawn and came out at streets on all sides. At the edges of the park, statues or cut stones carried inscriptions of dedication, remembrance, and inspiration. Across the streets and surrounding the park were the few other unique items in the village, buildings that focused the collective attentions of people on education, worship, or trade: the school, the church, and the general store.



Village Green: Kingsville,
Ashtabula County.

Universal education was highly valued in 18th century America, and the schoolhouse was often the first public building in a village. The early schoolhouse was a one-room affair where the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic were taught to all grades. One teacher and, perhaps, a young assistant made sure their wards arrived and had a midday meal. Beyond that, they were also expected to instill temperance and respect for authority, all that was considered essential for building a young nation.

Churches were the second most common public buildings and were given a central place in most villages. Often built on the same basic pattern as the school, they were generally sited at the cross-