

<b>Code</b>	517038
<b>Subject</b>	Bob Hunker
<b>Date</b>	7/2/2008
<b>Interviewer</b>	Karen Grindall
<b>Special Notes</b>	Robert Hunker, Peninsula Valley Historic and Education Foundation, Hale Farm, Bronson Church, Cuyahoga Valley National Park, Stan Hewyitt, Seiberling Family, Roush Foundation (GAR), National Trust,

**minutes:**

- 0 introduction and explanation of process
- 1 cont intro

Hunker born City Hospital W. Market St. Akron in 1927 attended Lockwood grade school 1-8 grades, high school at Coventry High School, Western Reserve

- 2 University, drafted in WWII, but considered 4F due to childhood illness  
University courses at Western Reserve, lived in Ohio, but has residence in
- 3 Greenwich Village in New York  
started Peninsula group instrumental in preserving valley, Portage Lakes, Long Lakes and Turkey Foot Island, degree in economics, but also studied architectural
- 4 design
- 5 work in departments stores as continuing education

design department in Oneil Department Stores, restored old house on W. Market Street to open own design business, moved to old barn in Peninsula in 1962,

- 6 partners, one licensed architect since Hunker did not complete license,  
drive along Riverview Road for work, attracted to barn in Peninsula, purchased and turned into office at 303 and Riverview, paid no attention to village at that
- 7 time, wanted to be close to turnpike, and 271  
his father took over renovation of barn, Lily Fleder approached Hunker to help save Bronson church in Peninsula, which was losing historical buildings, many being
- 8 torn down or used for fire practice  
Bronson church which was earmarked for Hale Farm Fleder wanted to keep it intact on original land, she joined with women who wanted to save Hudson Bank building, Helen DePuis Bullock from National Trust advised them to start a heritage
- 9 association, Hunker

- 10 Heritage Association of Hudson and Peninsula, creation of by-laws, first meeting recognition of importance of canal, logo with mule pulling canal boat, differences in architecture of Hudson and Peninsula, Bob Warner, Peninsula had been called seaport of Western Reserve, split of Hudson and Peninsula groups, Peninsula

- 11 focus on valley  
Peninsula Valley Heritage Association, artists after WWII had started colony in Peninsula area, Association approached artists for support in preserving valley, changed name to Cuyahoga Valley Association, John Seiberling involved, Hunker

- 12 first President  
influential members included T. Spencer, Lily Fleder, Galen Raush, Benders,
- 13 GAR, approached state for funds to preserve
- 14 national park idea, John Seiberling ran for congress to have influence for park
- 15 cont intro  
Blossom Music Center, congressmen invited to Blossom to enlist their support for
- 16 park,

act passed in 1975 for Cuyahoga Valley National Park, all due to grass roots  
17 involvement, Hunker on advisory board for 10 years  
how park boundaries were defined, Hunker knew valley well due to horseback  
18 rides  
19 cont on valley boundaries  
meetings on West Market to study maps, use of 999 on topographical maps as  
20 definition  
21 when Miletti began Coliseum, tried to get land east of 271 as commercial,  
22 changed description of park boundary to thwart plans for commercialism  
Hale Farm cemetery, "Black sheep" of Hale family buried outside of cemetery,  
23 Hunker and others bought cemetery land at Hale Farm  
24 cont  
25 death of members who purchased cemetery plots  
26 Bath township rules regarding cemeteries  
motivation of people to become involved in preservation of valley, Bronson, settler  
of area who encouraged settlement, land had been considered undesirable in  
27 Peninsula  
first sawmill started by Bronson, close connection of Boston Township and  
28 Peninsula,  
main thing is the river and the canal, Paige Palmer as advocate got publicity on  
29 TV, dream to open up canal again  
television appearances by Hunker to promote park as "central park" of Cleveland  
30 and Akron  
31 Blossom brought people to valley that would not have been here otherwise,  
Hunker does not have "favorite" part of park, he considers it all important, enjoys  
32 riding south of Peninsula  
community of Peninsula, within the park, terrible conditions of Peninsula before  
33 preservation activities  
34 cont, plan for fixing up Peninsula  
sketch showing use of old RR station as "town square", Peninsula first strip  
35 development due to no town square, early days as gathering place for families  
36 memories in written letter in 1963, from woman then 92 years  
dream of Hunker to restore Peninsula area around old RR station, access to old  
37 river bed, Velma Conger came to work for Hunker,  
Conger had connections with older residents, Hunker bought a lot of old buildings  
38 to preserve them with his own money  
Hunker is single, no children or nieces and nephews, put money instead into  
projects, influence of Father who had visited Yellowstone and took Hunker to all  
39 state and National parks out west  
40 Hunker had history instilled in him by parents with books and trips  
Peninsula as "living village", with residents living in them, influence of  
41 Williamsburg as example,  
control of tourism, balance between development and preservation, current critical  
42 point in time,  
43 lack of direction in council, Hunker's plans for collection of buildings  
44 Stan Hewyitt beginnings as museum,  
45 cont, miliner netting as protection for furniture at Stan Hewyitt  
46 estate planning,  
Peninsula buildings to remain there, Robert L. Hunker Historic Preservation  
Foundation, now called Peninsula Valley Historic and Education Foundation, to  
47 preserve architecture, fine arts and other aspects of Peninsula and area  
48 Hunker's and sister's estates will all go to Foundation, tax aspects

49 cont.

50 deed restrictions to regulate land use of buildings,  
Bronson church, Paul Castro house and 5 lots on 303 by church, Foundation

51 polices,

52 extra church buildings needed, original church set up

53 cont

54

location of Hunker buildings in Peninsula now protected by deed (being shown on  
55 map to interviewer)

sawmill sold by Bronson to Conger whose widow married Jackson, house known  
56 as Erastus Jackson house,

57 archeological dig suggested

Peninsula General Store, Bronson Church, Center Street, Canal Street, Hunker

58 owns land from Canal to River, used to own Peninsula Night Club,

both sides of river controlled by Hunker, park controls rest, Bullis property behind  
59 Village Hall, Foundation bought Bullis property to avoid it becoming parking lot

Foundation buys buildings restores and puts restrictions on it then sells to private

60 buyers,

owns RR station,

Hunker gives land to Foundation as tax needs allow, McDonald's will not be in  
Peninsula

Peninsula is Hunker's legacy

involvement of younger people in restoration movement, houses being restored by  
young couples, not all large houses, but good for families

preservation of modern houses, buildings compatible with original lots, canal  
workers homes, with living village young people will live there

bike rides along canal,

efforts to keep trucks off 303 by giving them free tolls on turnpike, controversy over  
land control

cont, overdevelopment and strip malls

cont

challenges to Hunker's plan to preserve Peninsula, include mayor and council who  
object, original resistance to Park,

publicity driven objections by people who like to have name in paper

individuals don't realize havoc created by one generation for another, farm land  
being taken up by development

interviewer asked about relationship of park visitors and environment

rules and regulations needed to keep park and to stop subdivision

cont

tension between buildings and nature, need to hide parking for living village

cont with comparison to Williamsburg

towpath development, hopes for railroad to Columbus

card cars, other alternatives to private cars

cont

worst mistake park made was contract with corps of engineers who Hunker feels  
removed too many structures which could have been used for various fundraising

John Demo's influence on park, bring back farms,

battle of belfry (Bronson church) Helen Bullock fought Hale Farm for building,

cont. debate over which eras to keep when preserving building, whether or not to  
remove additions to original buildings

cont, civil War influence on buildings,  
Siegfried, director of Hale Farm, removal of contemporary houses for park, could  
have been used as real estate income for village, and could have been opened to  
visitors  
Hunker's offers newspaper article to Grindall documenting his involvement in  
Peninsula  
conclusion