

*“Who am I trying to impress?”*

she asks, laughing.



common (except for Chagrin Falls) is a lack of commercial districts. A big-box retailer would be unthinkable horrid. A chain restaurant would be terrible. Some even questioned Sara's Place. Restaurants and stores draw people. Some of those people—like me—will be outsiders; outsiders up to no good (the spotlight is never good, I am told at every turn).

My first mistake was calling the restaurant Sara's Place—more than once. Each time, I was corrected. It's pronounced Saaahra's Place.

A lot of care went into making this restaurant Gates Mills worthy. The floors are made of 100-year-old reclaimed barn wood. The exterior is covered with the ubiquitous white clapboard. (Take a look around your 'burb and see if you can find a single new commercial building covered in wood, not vinyl.)

Although the restaurant is casual, on this day at least, no one is wearing jeans. Louis Vuitton, designer sunglasses and a fine-gauge cardigan will do nicely for a brunch featuring a smoked-salmon plate and a smoked-salmon pizza,

as well as comfort food such as stuffed cabbage and chicken potpie. What sells best, though, is the California Benedict, with its avocado and artichokes.

I'm the only person wearing flip-flops, but nobody shoots me any looks. The place actually feels pretty comfortable. I'm starting to think that, as one real estate agent told me, "old money isn't what it used to be." Younger generations don't feel the same need to "belong." Thus, there is not the same sense that others are excluded. What's more, technology is generating money today—a

business landscape where breaking the rules is more important than following them. Entrepreneurs in Northeast Ohio don't need the Hunt Club to get ahead.

I run this theory by a resident, but she assures me that old money—at least in some circles—is going strong. And it's still tough to become a part of it.

"Sometimes you can. Sometimes you can't," she says. "It all depends." She is terrified that her name will appear in print, so I agree to identify her only by her ties to Gates Mills. Still, she can't say exactly what it is that enables some

people to happily mingle over drinks at the Hunt Club, while others remain outsiders. She can only say what not to do. "The showier you are, the less chance you have," she says. "Cars, houses, jewelry—they are all ways of letting people know what you have."

I cross the Chagrin River on a footbridge. A path leads along the side of the white-steepled Episcopalian church, where the carillon bells (one of only 200 sets in North America) ring after services on Sunday. Across the street is the legendary Hunt Club, which was launched

in 1908 with the purchase of several hounds in England whose bloodlines are still carried on today.

I continue on down Old Mill Road, every house is achingly charming with its white clapboard and "Gates Mills green" shutters.

"You're just in time to help me weed my yard," a man calls out from underneath his sun hat.

I get the sense that he wonders what I'm doing here and has struck up this conversation as bait. I should probably stay to chat. After all, that's what I'm