

# Our Roots in Review: Tracking CNC's Rich Cultural History

When researching history, one begins with a known endpoint and seeks relevant facts from the past.

Sooner or later, events begin to line up like links in a chain, allowing us to track a path from past to present. Along with the challenges and fun of the search comes an ever-growing appreciation for what has gone before. The links in CNC history begin below with each one being important in the final outcome. Had there been any significant deviation, CNC as we know it today would not exist.

## 1783

The Treaty of Paris is signed following the Revolutionary War. Britain relinquishes control of lands in the Northwest Territory.

## 1784

4.2 million acres in what is now southwest Ohio are reserved by Virginia to use for land grant payments to its Revolutionary War veterans. All CNC land today was within this Virginia Military District.



Country boy Carl Krippendorf visiting the Spence Farm, ca.1892.

## 1794

John O'Bannon and his survey crew plot 666 acres on the East Fork of the Little Miami River for Lieutenant Samuel Seldon of Henrico County, Virginia. Today, 481 of those acres are the core of CNC.

Federal troops defeat a confederacy of Native American tribes at the Battle of Fallen Timbers. The subsequent Treaty of Greenville removes these tribes from southern Ohio.

## 1794-1801

The Joseph Avey and Jacob Teal families travel from Maryland and ultimately settle on high ground near the Seldon Survey. They consider the banks of the East Fork "unhealthy with too many mosquitoes." Some of the Avey and Teal lands are now part of CNC.

## 1814

Samuel Perin, a millwright, purchases 14 acres on the East Fork. Beginning with a sawmill, he eventually becomes a very successful business man and land owner. Flat boats routinely travel from Perin's Mills to New Orleans with market goods.

## 1830

Perin purchases the entire Seldon Survey land as an investment for \$3.75 per acre. The land is undisturbed and remains so during Perin ownership.

## 1840

Dr. Colin Spence moves from Warren County to establish a medical practice in Perin's Mills. Between 1849 and 1860, he purchases 163 acres of farmland adjoining the Seldon Survey. CNC's Far Ridge Trail and Fox Rock were part of his farm.

## 1852

Perin sells his Seldon Survey land for \$42 per acre to Cohoon & Perin, a Cincinnati business partnership between Robert Cohoon and Sam's son, Oliver Perin.

## 1855

Robert Cohoon dies. In 1856 his heirs and Oliver Perin divide the Survey land based on its suitability for farming.

## 1867

Charles H. Krippendorf, a 31-year-old German immigrant, arrives in Cincinnati with his shoe-making tools and little else.



Carl's niece, Marie Louise Kupferschmid, on Comet beside the porch.

## 1873

Robert Cohoon's son, Lewis, begins to farm 191 acres at the crest of the hill bisected by what is now Tealtown Road. He and his wife, Olive Spence Cohoon, a daughter of Dr. Spence, name their land Edge Hill Farm. The present entry road to Rowe Woods was a lane to fields on this farm. The farm buildings opposite the RW entry date to Edge Hill ownership.

## 1875

Carl H. Krippendorf is born in Cincinnati, the third child and first son of Charles and Mary Breuer Krippendorf.

## 1883

Carl, eight years old and recovering slowly from typhoid fever, begins to spend several summers on the Spence and Cohoon farms to regain his health. The freedom of country life, "running the woods," and endless

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opportunities to discover the natural world would help heal his body and shape his life.

### 1885

After a series of jobs and partnerships and increasing success, Charles Krippendorf joins with George W. Dittman to form the Krippendorf-Dittman Company, manufacturers of fine women's and children's shoes. The business becomes the largest of its kind in the U.S., making 25,000 pairs annually and employing 1,300 workers.

### 1889

At age 14, Carl leaves school and begins working in his father's business, but still maintains contact with his Perintown friends. He also spends time growing daffodils in the greenhouse and yard at the family home.

### 1898

When Carl learns that the Cohoons plan to remove



Good friends Grace Groesbeck and Mary Krippendorf, ca. 1903.

more trees from their farm to grow tobacco, he buys 75 of their acres on the southwest side of Tealtown Road. He also adds 22 adjoining, undisturbed wooded acres from Perin heirs.

### 1899

A country home is constructed as a wedding present for Carl and Mary Rosan Greene. Carl is reportedly already planting daffodils on the property during this time.



Beginnings of the Krippendorf gardens ca. 1902

### 1900

Carl and Mary Rosan marry and spend their honeymoon in their new home, marking the beginning of their lifetime of land stewardship.

### 1901

Michael and Katherine Kappel, German immigrants in 1891, begin working for Carl and Mary. Other employees to follow

had last names of Bach, Davis, Foster, Peterson, Schmidt, and Young. Imprints of their work remain today.

### 1900-1905

Formal gardens and mass daffodil plantings in the woods are well underway during this period. Originally named Karlsruhe Gardens, meaning "Karl's place of peace," the name is changed to Lob's Wood after World War I.

### 1905-1908

The Krippendorfs buy four additional parcels of land. This brings their total holdings to 175 acres and further conserves mature forest.

### 1908

Charles Krippendorf retires, and Carl takes over management of the Krippendorf-Dittman Company. He will retire in

1955 after 65 years in the business.

### 1914

Grace and Glendinning Groesbeck, friends of the Krippendorfs, purchase 11 acres on Salt Run Road. Groesbeck land will increase to 391 contiguous acres by 1948.

### 1919

"Daffodil Days at the Krippendorf Farm at Perintown" invites the public to see blooms on the property. The fundraising event makes \$2,700 (about \$34,000 in today's dollars) over four days for World War I-devastated France. Fifteen thousand cut daffodils are sold in one afternoon.

### 1938

Carl faithfully reads Karl Maslowski's column, *Naturalist Afield*, in the *Sunday Enquirer* and invites him to a natural history program at the University of Cincinnati. This invitation begins a life-long friendship and plants the seed that becomes CNC 27 years later.



Cover from shoe salesman's catalog, ca. 1912.

### 1949

Carl receives the Buckley Medal of Merit for Horticultural Achievement, a national award presented by the Garden Club of America. More than any other action, Carl was best known and is remembered today for giving away plants and cut flowers to visitors and those whom he visited, as well as schools, civic organizations and garden clubs.



Plantings in the Krippendorf's drystone wall, 1940s; in the area known today as the Herb Wall.



**1957**

Grace Groesbeck dies and her property passes to the Greater Cincinnati Girl Scout Council.

would be perfect for a nature center."

On December 8, Rowe and Maslowski take Rosan Krippendorf Adams to lunch at the Mariemont Inn, and she agrees to sell her parents' property. Rowe later writes on his calendar, "This was the beginning of the Cincinnati Nature Center."

**1960**

The Scouts sell their property to the Presbytery of Cincinnati, which becomes known as Camp Wildwood. In 1970, Stanley M. Rowe, Sr., who had long been envisioning



*Karl H. Maslowski*

a nature center for Cincinnati, establishes a "right of first refusal" with the Presbytery should they ever wish to sell.

**1964**

At age 91, Mary Krippendorf dies in April at home; Carl Krippendorf dies in May at home, age 89. Both are buried at Spring Grove Cemetery.

Karl Maslowski calls Stanley Rowe and tells him of the Krippendorfs' deaths and adds, "We can't let the Krippendorf property get away. It

**1965**  
Rowe asks the Nature Center Division of the National Audubon Society to visit the property and assess its suitability for a nature center. Their comprehensive report concludes, "Here is the opportunity to establish on the Krippendorf estate the basis for bringing outdoor education to the people of the Cincinnati area. You must not miss this chance." Within a few months the non-profit Cincinnati Nature Center Association is established.

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**1966**

The beauty of the Krippendorf property, the existence of adaptable structures, the favorable



*Early CNC entry sign ca.1967*

Audubon Report, and the fund-raising skills of Stanley M. Rowe quickly result in the necessary dollars for purchase of the land. In addition to major donors, about 300 founding members pledge at least \$100 in dues per year.

**1966 – 1974**

Rowe continues to raise funds to purchase 583 additional acres to secure the future integrity of the Krippendorf property.

**1967**

In April, CNC officially opens and welcomes the first school groups, members and visitors. Thousands of blooming daffodils undoubtedly were part of the welcoming committee and continue in this role today. The first floor of Krippendorf Lodge is the Interpretive/Visitors Center; the second floor becomes living quarters for the director and his family.

Twenty trustees including seven officers - Stanley M. Rowe, Sr., Karl H. Maslowski, Mrs. Robert L. Black, Jr., William J. Whittaker, Mrs. John W. Becker, William J. Graham, Jr., and H. Rowe Hoffman - as well as a director and six other staff employees begin to guide the young organization into the future.

**1967-1968**

Crosley Lake, named for donor Powell Crosley, is excavated following an Audubon recommendation to create more surface water on the property to attract wildlife. The island in the lake is named Wallace Island in memory of Wallace Espy, nephew of Grace Groesbeck.

**1971**

The Rowe Interpretive Building is constructed near Crosley Lake. Later additions to the building are made in 1974 and 1981.

**1973**

Neil and Camilla McElroy donate their 582-acre plot of land, now Long Branch Farm & Trails, to CNC.

**2004**

Aided by the foresight of Stanley M. Rowe 44 years earlier, CNC purchases Wildwood from the Presbytery, thereby adding 235 acres of prime adjoining land and bringing total holdings to 1025 acres.



*Stanley M. Rowe, Sr.*

History is not just about yesterday; it is also about today and tomorrow. On your next visit to Rowe Woods, take time to reflect on the many historical reminders that surround you. A self-guided history hike brochure is available in the Rowe Visitor Center to get you started. Consider what has gone before that is making your experience meaningful and possible. In time, as your knowledge increases, a sense of appreciation and pride of place is sure to follow.

Jane Stotts  
Honorary Trustee  
& CNC Volunteer

