A HIKE THROUGH HISTORY AT CNC

The History Hike takes visitors back in time for a different view of Rowe Woods. While visitors are welcome to hike the entire “trail” end to end, we recommend taking this brochure along as you hike the Geology, Fernwood, Lookout and Upland Trails for insights into the structures you’ll see. Follow along with the map to enjoy the scenery and learn the history of the property in the process.

Cincinnati Nature Center was founded in 1965 through the efforts of Stanley Rowe Sr. and 12 dedicated environmentalists; however its legacy began decades earlier.

In the late 1800s, a boy named Carl Krippendorf took ill and was sent to the country for fresh air and sunshine. He stayed with the daughter of a local doctor, Olive Spencer Cohoon at Edge Hill Farm and enjoyed exploring the nearby woods. Carl later went to work in his father’s shoe factory in downtown Cincinnati, OH, while keeping in touch with the country doctor and visiting to hike. When Carl learned the beech woods were up for sale, he purchased 75 acres in 1898 and later additional wooded tracts totaling 175 acres. This land became Cincinnati Nature Center soon after Carl’s death in 1964.
Over the years, CNC acquired adjacent land bringing the current acreage to 1,025.

**Farmhouse and Barn**

Opposite the Rowe Woods entrance sits a farmhouse built in the early 1890s as a replacement for one destroyed by fire. The original house was the one where Carl stayed for several summers as a boy to regain his health.

Adjacent to the farmhouse is a bank barn with hand-hewn framing built around 1860. The upper level was used for storing hay and machinery and the lower level was used for livestock.

In 1873, the parcel where the farmhouse and bank barn sit was known as Edge Hill Farm. The farm included 175 acres on the opposite side of Tealtown Road—the acreage purchased by Carl Krippendorf in 1898.

**Oak Allee**

Oaks planted in the early 1920s lined the drive from Tealtown Road to the home built between 1898 and 1900 for newlyweds Carl and Mary Krippendorf.

**Daffodils**

The beautiful daffodils draw the attention of CNC visitors every April. Daffodils were Carl Krippendorf’s favorite flower; he planted millions on the property during his lifetime. He experimented with thousands of cultivars to find those that were hardy and would “naturalize” in his woods. Many still bloom today, making the daffodil the signature plant of CNC. Large collections of daffodils can be found throughout the property, the most spectacular of which are located along the front driveway and around Oak Allee.

**Stone Pump House**

The pump house on the east fork of Avey’s Run was built around 1911. This structure contained a water collection reservoir and pump which delivered water uphill to the water tower and later directly to Krippendorf Lodge. A small dam was built across the creek to divert water into the reservoir. Gasoline (and later, electricity) powered the pump. The dam often washed out with heavy rains and had to be reconstructed. Construction of the swimming pool near the lodge and difficulty getting sufficient water to fill it were likely factors in the Krippendorf’s decision to purchase land on Avey’s Run and construct the pump house soon thereafter.

**Stone Bridges and Steps**

Lewis Bach, a long-time employee of the Krippendorfs and excellent stone mason, was the chief builder of the terrace in front of Krippendorf Lodge and the stone bridges and steps nearby. Stones were transported from Avey’s Run and Shaylor Run.
The water tower, was constructed between 1900 and 1905. Water was pumped from a cistern until 1911 and then from Avey’s Run into a large tank in the top of the tower. It was then gravity-fed to the house for cooking and laundry, and to faucets. Garden tools were stored in the base of this tower. In 1936, two 500-gallon water tanks were placed in the basement of the lodge. Water was pumped directly into these tanks, bypassing the tower, making it obsolete.

The cottage was constructed around 1910. Laundry facilities were built below and household maids’ rooms were upstairs. The one-story maintenance building was attached in the early 1930s. Today it can be used as an apartment-style residence.

This building, was originally an ice house built before 1905 to store ice cut from East Fork River or purchased in Milford, OH. After refrigeration was added to the lodge in the early 1930s, the building was used for bulb storage and gardening equipment and is now used for general storage.

The square concrete block in the center of the circular drive marks the approximate location of the cistern, an underground tank for collecting rainwater from the lodge roof. Gutters and underground pipes sent water to the cistern. Water was then pumped to the water tower.

Cold frames were used to start plants from seeds or cuttings and were located behind the water tower and below the rock wall. Those behind the water tower had electric cables beneath and glass tops above to protect young plants from frost. Frames below the present Herb Wall were built in 1938; canvas covers ran on metal tracks to protect these plants from cold temperatures.
A kitchen garden (with asparagus, beans, peas, raspberries, sweet corn, and tomatoes) and a cutting garden (with flowers for display in the house or to give to guests) were located where Krippendorf Lodge parking lot is today.

Swimming Pool
The swimming pool was built before 1910 and was likely the first in Clermont County. Guests from Cincinnati often came to visit the Krippendorfs and especially enjoyed the outdoor pool, which was a rarity in the early 1900s. Eventually, the pool developed a serious leak and was abandoned as a place to swim. It later became a collection place for leaves and soil to use for potting plants—an early compost bin!

Reservoir Pond
In the 1950s, the Krippendorfs had Reservoir Pond dug as an auxiliary source of water near their home in case of fire. Today, school children and visitors pause to look, listen, and use it to study pond life.

Abner Hollow Pioneer Cabin
Abner Hollow Pioneer Cabin was originally built by pioneer settlers in Adams County, OH in the early 1800s. The owners of the property where the cabin stood are long-time members and benefactors of CNC. They donated the cabin as a centerpiece for education about pioneer life. The cabin was dismantled for transport and reassembled on this site in 1997.

Stone Lodge
This impressive stone lodge was built around 1918 and was the home of Grace and Glendening Groesbeck, friends of the Krippendorfs. The graduated sizes of the pieces of slate on the roof make the building both beautiful and unique.

The Groesbecks divorced in 1930, and Grace continued to live here until her death in 1957. CNC purchased the property in 2004 from the Presbytery of Cincinnati, who operated the land as Wildwood Camp and Conference Center.

Garden Remains
The Groesbecks purchased their first parcel of land on Salt Run Road in 1914. In that same year they asked Gertrude Jekyll, famous British landscape designer, to prepare a garden plan for the site. This was one of only three designs Miss Jekyll drew for clients in the United States. Although the specific plan for the Groesbeck gardens was not implemented, the beautiful gardens that were established had Jekyll elements. The features that remain are the pillars of the rose garden, a central pathway, a few stone borders, a greenhouse and a garden shed.

White Barn and Other Building Remnants
A house and several farm buildings were constructed by the Groesbecks near what is now the Fernwood Trail for John Rosenberger and his family. John farmed nearly 100 acres for the Groesbecks from 1921—1946.

The frame of the white barn is the most conspicuous remnant today. It had a corn crib on one side and storage on the other. The site of a spring (a circular brick structure with a metal lid) can be seen uphill, with a spring house just below. West of the white barn are the remains of an animal barn that was burned by vandals; the dairy cattle stanchions and raised concrete floor remain. The house that faced Tealtown Road was destroyed by fire in 1946, yet a walk around this area will reveal the remaining foundation.