A Dissertation

Entitled

Citizens for Metroparks:
A History of the Metropolitan Park District of the Toledo Area

By

Janet Kennedy Rozick

Submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirement for

The Doctor of Philosophy in History

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Advisor: Diane F. Britton

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College of Graduate Studies

The University of Toledo

December 2009
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An Abstract of
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This dissertation examines the changing definition of conservation and preservation throughout the twentieth century and how this is reflected in the institutional history of the Metroparks of the Toledo Area. Metroparks has broadened its concentration on the conservation and preservation of the natural environment to include the care, maintenance, restoration, and interpretation of the historical sites within the park boundaries. The overlapping of natural and historical environments permits Metroparks to interpret the cultural landscape of Northwest Ohio, better connecting people to their sense of place.

The conservation movement, a subcategory of the environmental movement, provides a framework for the institutional history of Metroparks. The American conservation movement is divided into three periods. The first period typically referred to as the conservation movement, placed emphasis on the wise use of natural resources. In Toledo, the creation of a metropolitan park district helped city planners and activists to achieve goals identified by the city efficient and city beautiful movements. Metroparks
participated in the second period of the conservation movement, characterized by the public work relief projects of President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal, and developed the initial parks of the district. The management decisions made during the formative years of the park district emphasized conservation rather than preservation. In the final period, the environmental movement which highlighted quality of life issues, Metroparks introduces preservation management philosophies through interpretative programming for the natural and cultural resources throughout the Metropolitan Park District of the Toledo Area.
This dissertation is dedicated to

The Memories of Chriss and Rebecca Kennedy
Acknowledgements

Through the writing of this dissertation and the completion of this degree, I owe a tremendous gratitude to several individuals for their support and encouragement. First, Dr. Diane Britton, my advisor, was always at hand with guidance and the extra push always at the right time to keep me on track. Your helpful insights and questions continually gave the project direction and focus as well as kept me focused.

Dr. Timothy Messer-Kruse, Dr. Thomas Barden, and Dr. J.D. Britton served on the dissertation committee. Your careful reading and comments further focused my interpretation. Yet before this project was even submitted to the committee, two dedicated readers, Dr. Sarah Miller and Sarah C. Liwo, combed through several versions commenting on style and grammar as well as challenging me.

The project was financially supported through teaching assistantships from the History Department of the University of Toledo and a research scholarship from the Colonial Dames of the State of Ohio. This funding was supplemented with employment from the Metropolitan Park District of the Toledo Area. I would be remiss to not specifically mention my immediate supervisors – Don Rettig, Rebecca Finch, and Denise Johnson – for their support, encouragement, and flexibility throughout the duration of the project.

Finally, so much support for a project of this undertaking comes from friends and family. Thank you to my fellow graduate students particularly Dr. Sarah Miller and Dr.
Debbie Marinski. My colleagues at Metroparks traded shifts and offered constant encouragement through their genuine excitement about the information my research was finding. Unknowingly, they kept me motivated.

Finally, I am not sure words exist to thank my family. Ron and Sarah Liwo, thank you for babysitting, for cooking dinner, and for Black Forest sundaes. Ron, as the fellow historian in the family, our conversations about my research and interpretation helped to get the project started. Brian, Avery, and Ethan Rozick, thank you for all of your sacrifices. I love you.
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Introduction

It is time to reintroduce wilderness into civilization. Every city should have its inner woodlands and green belts, convenient to all. The environment surrounding people as they follow their daily rounds profoundly affects the quality of their existence. The restoration of a habitable environment for all people… is where the battle for wilderness begins. Michael Fromme, *Battle for Wilderness* (1974)

Since the early twentieth century, citizens throughout Lucas County in Northwest Ohio have actively sought to preserve natural areas. Building on the Progressive Era’s city beautiful and city efficient movements, Toledo residents created city parks, and in the 1920s, Lucas County residents established regional parks. The processes of land preservation, site development, and interpretive programming involved in the creation of Metropolitan Park District of the Toledo Area (Metroparks)\(^1\) continually reflected changing cultural views toward the natural and built environments that occurred nationally throughout the twentieth century.

What does it mean that twentieth century Toledo residents preserved the land? Preservation – defined as protection of nature from use; to keep in a natural state; unaltered – does not accurately describe the actions taken to create either the city or regional parks. The construction and manipulation of planned natural areas into public parks throughout Lucas County tremendously altered the natural environment. Even though setting aside public lands protected these areas from development and twentieth century residents freely used the word preservation to describe the creation of

\(^1\) In 1971, the Metropolitan Park Board officially adopted the nickname Metroparks for the organization.
parks, the word does not accurately define these actions since the result was the
construction and manipulation of natural areas. A better word is conservation, defined as
management to avoid neglect; the maintenance of environmental quality and a balance of
a particular area between physical, biological and cultural characteristics. To conserve an
area implies limiting the public’s use and access to the natural and cultural resources for
their protection. However, conservation as demonstrated throughout the history of
Metroparks does not equal preservation.

The institutional history of Metroparks is part of the story of the conservation
movement, a subcategory of environmental history. Historians have divided the
American conservation movement into three periods. The first took place from 1890-
1920; the second from 1933-1943; and the last period started in the 1960s. The first
period typically referred to as the conservation movement, placed emphasis on the
development and prudent use of natural resources. The second period developed out of
the public works projects of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s New Deal. The final
period, the environmental movement, encouraged the protection of natural resources to
improve quality of life and biodiversity and emphasized restoration of the natural
environment rather than careful resource management.²

Initially land was not viewed as a national asset to be saved, but as a commodity
to be exploited. Westward expansion exposed the complexity and diversity of America’s
natural resources.³ Writers – such as John James Audubon, Henry David Thoreau, and
George Perkins Marsh – and artists – such as George Catlin, Albert Bierstadt, and

³ Kuzmiak, 268 – 269.
William Henry Jackson – captured picturesque landscapes that celebrated America’s natural beauty. These figures, who were viewed as early conservationists, espoused messages sent to the public through their crafts that generally supported preservation interests. The writers and artists in the mid-nineteenth century, although referred to as conservationists, actually promoted preservation through their work. In the late nineteenth century, other interested parties promoted conservation by setting aside large tracts of public land so that the use of the natural resources found in the area could be controlled to ensure their availability for the longest amount of time.

The conservation movement emerged as part of the social reforms of the Progressive Era. Frederick Jackson Turner, in 1893, proclaimed the closing of the American frontier and the disappearance of the American wilderness. Turner’s frontier thesis emphasized the importance of protecting the remaining unsettled lands throughout America. He argued that the distinctive qualities of the American character developed as a result of conquering the wilderness. It is during this early period that the confusion between the terms conservation and preservation began to emerge. With the disappearance of the wilderness, the question became should the land be managed or protected.

Conservationists argued for efficient management of the nation’s natural resources. Like other Progressive reform movements, conservation was nonpartisan and gained grassroots support as well as the endorsement of professionals including scientists, politicians, and other experts. At the national level, Republican President Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot led the movement. At this time, the conservation
movement included reclaiming arid lands, establishing forest preserves, creating wildlife refuges, and establishing national parks.4

Conservationist goals seemed attainable with U. S. Statute 39 (1916) creating national parks “to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein.” A result of this law was the creation of the National Park Service (NPS) to manage these sites. Yet from its inception, NPS managers, employees, and patrons defined conservation differently and sought different goals. Special interest groups lobbied the administration for conservation and preservation management philosophies. For example, railroads encouraged and financed the development of parklands for the convenience of the tourists and to profit from their travels. On the other hand, the National Parks and Conservation Association argued for the preservation of natural landscapes. Although each side had opposing viewpoints, the arguments represented important philosophies to be balanced. The higher number of people in the parks not only boosted local economies, but also exposed the landscapes to greater human use. From the beginning, NPS employees struggled to provide public access while protecting parklands. The precarious balance that the park service still strives for has resulted in a conservation of the American wilderness rather than in its preservation.5

Conservationists and preservationists argued that setting aside natural areas preserved the foundation of the American character and balanced the increasingly

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industrialized society. At the local level, activists argued for the establishment of parks as breathing holes in cities. Proponents of parks were social reformers who built upon the city beautiful and city efficient movements fostering social-spatial changes to cities to solve social vices like poor health, poverty, crime, and political corruptness. Park advocates argued that societal ills resulted from city residents’ detachment from nature. Large open areas within walking distance of city neighborhoods provided natural locations that combated air and water pollution, and provided safe, natural environments for exercise and play.\(^6\)

The second period of the conservation movement emerged as a result of the Great Depression. The development and maintenance of parks halted as the government struggled to provide core services to residents. In the early twentieth century, a separation existed between where people lived, worked, and played. National parks had become tourist attractions. People flocked to parks in numbers that overburdened the resources. Due to this threat, NPS officials developed land management practices to control the public impact to the natural environment. The federal work relief programs of the New Deal during the Great Depression implemented these practices and shaped parks at the national, state, and municipal levels. The Civilian Conservation Corps, the Work Progress Administration, and the National Youth Administration with the oversight of the Department of the Interior provided jobs to the unemployed to build and improve the infrastructures of parks as well as to conserve natural resources. Bridges, fish hatcheries, skating rinks, playgrounds, pine forests, roads, and trails were built across the nation. The

first parks of the Metroparks of the Toledo Area, created in 1928, were developed as a result of these federal relief programs.\(^7\)

The economic strains of the Great Depression coupled with the home front efforts during World War II slowed tourism rates. During the 1950s, President Dwight Eisenhower implemented Mission 66 to revitalize tourism in the National Parks by focusing on accessibility. The program built roads and service infrastructures, including trails, parking lots, campgrounds, picnic areas, amphitheaters, comfort stations, visitor centers, and interpretative exhibits, throughout the parks in order to meet a wide range of public demands.\(^8\) The principles of the Mission 66 program strived to balance preservation of the natural resources and public access to the parks. By controlling where people were permitted in the parks and designing the infrastructures to prevent overuse and damage, the heart of the national wilderness areas remained undeveloped.

At this point in time, Metroparks of the Toledo Area differed from national trends. The 1950s were not a period of development for the metropolitan park district. The board focused mainly on maintenance of the current parks; however, Metroparks did start interpretative services. The board hired a naturalist in 1955 to head an educational program specifically targeting school children. Through the publication of a quarterly newsletter public awareness increased and Metroparks positioned themselves as a leading conservation organization in Lucas County.

During the 1960s, the conservation movement entered its third period, the environmental movement. The conservation movement had recognized the long-term importance of conserving and preserving land, wildlife, water, soil, and forests.

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7 Conard, 6 – 7.
Environmentalists broadened the movement to include pollution, population growth, and urban decay. While rooted in the conservation movement, the environmental movement focused on reversing the damage to the natural world. New concerns emerged like global warming and ozone depletion. In 1970, villages, towns, and cities throughout the United States celebrated Earth Day signifying that the conservation and environmental movement were part of mainstream America. Since then, the environmental movement has extended beyond local and national boundaries. The phrase “think globally, act locally” has become a household phrase.

A seminal work of the environmental movement was Rachel Carson’s, *Silent Spring* (1962). Following World War II, Carson, a scientist and ecologist, studied the prolific use of synthetic chemical pesticides, particularly DDT. *Silent Spring* warned readers against the long term effects of the use of chemicals. Carson challenged agricultural practices and encouraged all to view that humans were a part of nature. Unique to humans’ role in nature was their power to alter it. To define ecology, Carson wrote:

> This is a problem of ecology, of interrelationships, of interdependence. We poison the caddis flies in a stream and the salmon runs dwindle and die. We poison the gnats in a lake and the poison travels from link to link of the food chain and soon the birds of the lake margins become its victims. We spray our elms and the following springs are silent of robin song, not because we sprayed the robins directly but because the poison traveled, step by step, through the now familiar elm leaf-earthworm-robin cycle. These are matters of record, observable, part of the visible world around us. They reflect the web of life – or death – that scientists know as ecology.

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Ecology became a household word that created a conscientious focus for the environmental movement.

Another decisive work for the environmental movement was Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall’s, *The Quiet Crisis* (1963). It stressed the importance of making the conservation movement viable for the needs of the time. Udall, defined *The Quiet Crisis* as America standing posed “on a pinnacle of wealth and power, yet we live in a land of vanishing beauty, of increasing ugliness, of shrinking open space, and of an overall environment that is diminished daily by pollution and noise and blight.” Udall encouraged careful planning for the development of parks to ensure their existence for future generations. Steps needed to be taken to recover the balance between man and nature to ensure a healthy environment and this balance is conservation.13

Federal laws were established throughout the 1960s and 1970s to achieve a healthy, balanced environment. The Advisory Board on Wildlife Management established in 1963 in the national parks set forth management principles that changed the direction of parks. The board promoted the wildlife management philosophy of Aldo Leopold which promoted an ecological approach that emphasized the interdependencies of an ecosystem. The Leopold Report supported the need throughout national parks for a universal management plan that addressed not only parks, but monuments and recreational areas as well. It defined management as any activity directed at achieving or maintaining a given condition in plant and/or animal populations and/or habitats in accordance with a conservation plan and involved in any active manipulation of the resources. The management plan for a park took into account scientific research and

intended human use. “It seems incongruous that there should exist in the national parks mass recreation[al] facilities such as golf courses, ski lifts, motorboat marinas, and other extraneous developments which completely contradict[ed] the management goals.” This marked a return to the transcendentalist ideal that wilderness should be devoid of all evidence of humans and the urban environment.¹⁴

The Wilderness Act of 1964 (Public Law 88-577) set aside 9.1 million acres from development by creating the National Wilderness Preservation System. The act created a legal definition for wilderness in the United States. “A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.” Overall influencing management practices, the federal definition of wilderness consequently divided the natural environment and the built environment. Again, a return to transcendentalists’ views, therefore, any evidence of the built environment needed to be eradicated or separated to fit the term wilderness and to restore the environment.

Four years later, in 1968, Congress passed the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (Public Law 90-542). This required that all streams and their adjacent lands be designated either as a wild river, scenic river, or recreational river areas. Wild rivers were defined as free of impediments and generally inaccessible and representative of primitive America. Scenic rivers remained largely undeveloped and yet were accessible by roads. The last classification, recreational, defined areas as accessible by road and/or railroad

and contained some development along the shoreline. The act purposefully balanced development and protection by prohibiting any new construction that would interfere with the river’s free flowing condition and water quality.

In 1970, the National Environmental Policy Act mandated Congress to drastically change the national process in developing natural resources by incorporating public decision making. In response to this, the government created the Environmental Protection Agency to address water and air pollution, insecticides, waste management, and radiation. The environmental movement addressed not only the visible problems of the environment, but the unseen monsters as well. Because of the new federal regulations stemming from the environmental movement, the primary focus of park systems, including Metroparks of the Toledo Area, dictated specific management requirements following all federal guidelines for the restoration and protection of natural resources.15

In the past twenty-five years, since the passage of the National Environmental Policy Act, environmental history emerged as a field of study in response to the growing concerns of the effects of urbanization, population, technologies, and pesticides on our natural surroundings. Carolyn Merchant, in *The Columbia Guide to American Environmental History* (2002), defines environmental history as including nature as part of the story. Human systems, like agriculture and industrialization, transformed nature and influenced ideas of nature. The transformation of nature and the evolution of how humans think about and define nature evolved as major themes of environmental history.16

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In 1977, Donald Worster, a leading historian in environmental history, published *Nature’s Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas*. His work traced the origins of the field of ecology and sought to understand the historical perspective of humans’ perception of nature. Worster in *The Wealth of Nature* (1993) defined environmental history as an interdisciplinary study of the relations of culture, technology, and nature through time. He outlined three major areas for environmental historians to concentrate their efforts. First, historians should illustrate the changes in nature over time. Second, the socio-economic realm that interacts with the environment needs to be highlighted. Finally, research should explain the impact of human intellectual and cultural perceptions of the environment. Environmental history is the study of how humans adjusted to and transformed the natural world.  


Other works analyzed how Americans have thought about the natural world. Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (1982), explored American ideas
about wilderness. Nash argued that preservation advocates defined wilderness as a determining characteristic of American civilization. The evolution of the wilderness from a wasteland to a valuable sanctuary constituted one of the most profound changes in American thought stemming from the “closing of the American frontier.”¹⁹

Neil Evernden, *The Social Creation of Nature* (1992), examined the development of our understanding of nature from ancient times to the recent past. Key to this understanding is the human desire to control; Evernden quoted Gifford Pinchot that this is “the first duty of the human race.” This desire to dominate one’s surroundings drove human interactions with their natural surroundings. Evernden argued that “to contemplate actually *letting something be* is very nearly beyond our ability.” And, each decision we make for how to manipulate our surroundings, no matter how well-intentioned, leaves a visible mark on nature.²⁰ Conscious scientific decisions are made to determine what is natural and how best to maintain it and enjoy it.

Other works examined how seminal American thinkers, Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, and Aldo Leopold, for example, influenced ideas about nature. Stephen Fox provided a biography of the preservationist, John Muir, and examined how twentieth century views have been shaped by the conservationist-preservationist debate of the Progressive Era in his work *John Muir and His Legacy: The American Conservation Movement* (1981). Unlike the ideas of conservationist Gifford Pinchot in the early

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twentieth century, John Muir abhorred the idea of utilizing natural resources and advocated setting aside natural areas for aesthetic purposes.²¹

Fox paid close attention to government policies and attitudes toward conservation. He identified the Progressive Era, the New Deal, and the 1960s as watershed periods. The history of the Metropolitan Park District of the Toledo Area mirrored these national watersheds. State legislation for the creation of metro parks throughout Ohio passed during the Progressive era; Lucas County taxpayers built their park system throughout the Great Depression; and the 1960s served as a turning point in interpretation and management throughout Metroparks.

Kirkpatrick Sale in *The Green Revolution: The American Environmental Movement, 1962 – 1992* (1993) detailed the work of the major organizations, events, and legislation of the environmental movement. *The Green Revolution* illustrated how the idea of nature could be manipulated to serve the goals of individuals or interest groups. Sale argued that the 1960s environmental movement grew out of the postwar affluent society. People traveled to the wilderness for vacations; yet, many of these areas were threatened by industrialization, mining, logging, and technology thus spurring activists to action to save the remaining natural areas.²²

Rebecca Conard, *Spading Common Ground: Reconciling the Built and Natural Environments* (2000), argued that a built environment could be defined in broader terms than categories identified by the National Register of Historic Places - buildings, structures, sites, objects, and artifacts. Historians have worked to expand the definition to

include human-made modifications to the landscape or the humanized landscape. With this broader definition, environmental areas like an agricultural field, designed gardens, commemorative forests, and parks can be included as part of a built environment. However, an underlying conflict remained between historic preservation and natural resource conservation. “A dichotomy exists between protecting the “natural” environment and the “built” environment.” Metroparks of the Toledo Area represents the continued struggle to balance conservation and preservation. All of the parklands are built environments in which exist historic buildings creating an overlap of conservation and preservation management philosophies.

Historians, interpreters, preservationists, and managers need to utilize the natural and built environments to communicate to the public the cultural layering of the environments around them illustrating how humans have interacted and manipulated their surroundings. Parks, a blending of natural and cultural resources, provide that perfect avenue for cultural landscape interpretation which is the merging of the natural and social history found in the Metroparks. Historians are then able to analyze the history of the parks’ creation and continued management, as well as expand the Metroparks’ vocabulary within the field of cultural resources management to include the phrases landscape preservation and landscape stewardship. This is a result of the worldwide efforts initiated by UNESCO World Heritage Committee, in 1972, to include landscapes for protection of biological and cultural diversity.

Arnold R. Alanen and Robert Z. Melnick, editors of Preserving Cultural Landscapes in America (2000), defined cultural landscape preservation as “preserving

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23 Conard, 3 – 7.
places where landscapes – designed or natural – intersect with built forms and social life.” The scholarship has provided us with a broader interdisciplinary approach to preservation. The field emerged through the interest of preservationists in environmental, urban, and social questions. No longer was the social history movement of the 1960s “history from the ground up” question of whose history is being preserved adequate, scholars were now asking what history is being preserved.25

Cultural landscape by definition is unique; a combination of natural landforms and buildings that define a particular place or region. Preserved and interpreted for the public, the cultural landscape tells us who we are, as Americans, far more effectively than most individual works of architecture or exhibits in museums ever can because ordinary citizens have more access and can relate to this large public space on an individual basis.26 The lands and cultural resources within Metroparks tell the story of Toledo, Ohio and how humans interacted and shaped the environment.

Martin Melosi and Philip Scarpino, editors of Public History and the Environment (2004), argued that environmental history should not be a field of study, but a mode of thinking, a tool for studying human interaction with the physical environment. As a field of study, like social history or urban history, environmental history addresses the relationship between humans and their built and natural environments over time. Public history, defined by Melosi and Scarpino, is a way of thinking about history that emphasizes the skills of the trade: research, analysis, interpretation, and communication. Both public and environmental histories emerged in the 1960s and are relatively new fields of study. Since this time, environmental history has matured to be an

25 Alanen and Melnick, vii – viii.
26 Ibid., ix.
interdisciplinary study which defines nature as a social construct and analyzes the role of the physical environment in our daily lives.27

The preservation of cultural landscape sites proves to be a huge challenge. Cultural landscapes tell the story of how humans have used nature over time. In historical landscapes, professionals strive for authenticity, originality, and appropriateness. To a naturalist, an abandoned farm field may appear as a misused or even abused landscape that begs for restoration, if not to its original condition, at least to a more natural state. To a historian, the same field provides limited evidence to how the family members that farmed the area in the nineteenth century lived their daily lives. “A proponent of cultural landscape preservation, on the other hand, may very well deem the same site worthy of protection and interpretation because of evidence of human forces that have shaped it over time.” Landscapes are dynamic environments that constantly change due to natural forces – erosion, tornadoes, or earthquakes – and due to alterations that we control. Change, natural and mandated, is the key concept and challenge of cultural landscape preservation. Nature and culture simply provide the analytical constructs for these landscapes.28 The institutional history of Metroparks, when viewed as a cultural landscape, serves as a local case study of how humans have shaped and viewed their environment over time.

Focused primarily on an interdisciplinary approach, the research in this study is supported by the following: a careful analysis of Metroparks’ board minutes and files, government documents, personal scrapbooks, and newspaper articles. The collected evidence addresses why Lucas County taxpayers set aside land for a metropolitan park

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27 Melosi and Scarpino, viii – x.
district beyond land designated for parks by municipalities. Documents provide explanations for how Metroparks identified and chose the natural and historical areas to be preserved within park boundaries, and how Metroparks staff balances the conservation and preservation of the cultural resources.

Three distinct groups – the public, taxpayers, and special interest groups or volunteers – make up the customer base as well as a motivational voice for Metroparks. The largest group, the public, is defined as anyone who visits or utilizes the park district. Taxpayers are people who live in Lucas County and pay property taxes, which through levies provide the majority of the general operating funds for Metroparks. The last segment is comprised of special interest groups run by volunteers with a specific focus. A variety of concentrations emerged; conservation efforts of the Great Black Swamp and Oak Openings as well as preservation efforts of the 1794 Battle of Fallen Timbers battlefield and the Lathrop House – presumably an Underground Railroad station – became some of the points of interest. Public involvement as a whole from all three groups worked to influence how Metroparks identified and chose areas of interest through requests, recommendations, and donations. The combined contributions of these groups created the Metroparks system, passed taxes that provided the operating fund, and influenced board decisions about conservation and preservation of natural and historical resources.

Chapter one provides details about why the Metropolitan Park District of the Toledo Area came into existence. After three years of being petitioned by taxpayers, Toledo City Council completed the application for the creation of a metropolitan park district within the limits of Lucas County. Support for council’s efforts to create a
regional park system reflected the city beautiful and city efficient movements and national trends to conserve natural areas. Municipal parks that highlighted recreation stemming from the play movement of the Progressive Era threatened natural environments; the goals to conserve natural resources within the Metroparks system further perpetuated the belief that vital areas that had no viable use needed to be conserved for the greater good of the general public. The shift away from manicured lawns to the preservation of the natural environment celebrated the American wilderness as recognition of cultural identity. Metroparks was created because there existed a need to conserve natural areas of the metropolitan region of Toledo.  

Initial efforts to create a defined park system began in the late 1920s; Fred DeFrees, a local engineer, cultivated the first grassroots campaign as the foundation of creating Metroparks. He petitioned civic groups and political entities throughout the county to support the creation of a park system and managing board that would focus on conservation. The successful campaign resulted in the creation of the Toledo Metropolitan Park District. However, timing could not have been worse for the fledgling metropolitan park district. Toledo, Ohio was one of the cities hardest hit in the country by the Great Depression, beginning in 1929, leaving little money for the development of the parks. Board members, park employees, and special interest groups busied themselves throughout the Great Depression and World War II by identifying areas to be designated as parklands, and worked with federal work relief programs to develop the parks.

29 Probate Court, Lucas County, Ohio. (vol. 112, page 70 and 80) Misc. No. 9811; Fred B. DeFrees Scrapbook: Lucas County Metropolitan Park Board; Miami and Erie Canal Boulevard, 1923 – 1936, Administrative Offices, Metropolitan Park District of the Toledo Area. A collection of newspaper clippings and letters collected by Fred. B. DeFrees, an engineer who worked in the grassroots movement to create the metropolitan park district and build the Anthony Wayne Trail (U.S. Route 24) in Toledo, Ohio. Under the Ohio Revised Code the law is Title 15: Conservation of Natural Resources, Section 1545.
Chapter two illustrates how Metroparks acquired land holdings and gathered resources that further developed the creation of a regional park system. Metroparks inadvertently relied on Lucas County residents; frequently, the recommendations and expressed wishes of the public influenced the park board. Primary examples of motivating public voices came through the work of George Pearson and Lou Campbell. Although working independently, they had similar work efforts in Oregon and Swanton; combined with the active support of special interest groups, Pearson and Campbell convinced the board to broaden land holdings beyond the abandoned canal lands and county watersheds to include the last remaining remnants of the Great Black Swamp forest and the Oak Openings.

Chapter three examines the development of the park system during the Great Depression with the assistance of federal work programs and special interest groups. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s and into the 1960s Metroparks growth and development slowed. Because of a change in board members, the visionary direction was halted for a thirty-year time span by a conservative view that expansion was not needed. Therefore the Metroparks board maintained services, but did not pursue additional lands. An increased public desire for additional parklands stemmed from the changing national trends of the environmental movement sparked by Rachel Carson’s 1962 publication of *Silent Spring*.

Due to financial restraints, Metroparks acquired large tracts of land through private donations. The park board recognized the need for further monetary resources and the need to supplement the allowance from the County Commissioners, Metroparks struggled to pass an operating levy. After an aggressive marketing campaign and the
organization of a volunteer group, finally in 1971 voters approved Metroparks’ levy: 0.5 mils for ten years. This was the first successful levy since 1930. The following year (1972) the park board approved development plans for Swan Creek Preserve – 410 acres within Toledo city limits that were purchased with grant monies from the Federal Home and Finance Committee as well as Lucas County and the City of Toledo. The immediate future of the park district involved the development of Swan Creek and nature interpretative programs; through the guidance of the Land Acquisition Committee, under the leadership of Lou Campbell and Harold Mayfield, Metroparks also planned to purchase more lands with the Oak Openings region.

With developmental goals in mind, Chapter four continues to reveal how the citizens of Lucas County directly influenced Metroparks expansion through a grassroots movement that supported the purchase and development of land for Wildwood Preserve. After the deaths of Robert and Page Stranahan the future of their estate nestled along the banks of Ten Mile Creek on Central Avenue was questionable. While the Stranahan heirs wanted to build a luxury complex of homes, neighbors banded together to stop the former home and outbuildings from becoming a private clubhouse. In October 1973, veterinarian William Mewborn petitioned the Metroparks board to purchase the estate. Although members expressed deep desire to do so, the board was hampered by financial constraints. The sale price for the remaining 410 acres of the Stranahan estate drastically exceeded its current operating budget. John Lusk, an insurance agent, volunteered to lead the campaign efforts for a 0.5-mil levy, for ten years, designated to the purchase and development of the Stranahan estate.
An injunction placed on the sale of the property gave the Metroparks one chance to pass the levy. If it failed, the property would be sold to the developer. Volunteers delivered leaflets that outlined the benefits of parks to approximately eighty percent of the homes in Lucas County. The grassroots campaign succeeded, even though the levy was not endorsed by the *Toledo Blade* or any of the major television stations. Voters approved the levy: 64,490 to 58,577. The following summer, Metroparks hosted a contest to name its newest park. In May 1975, over 360 ideas were submitted. A committee selected the name, “Wildwood,” as suggested by Eleanor Maddy, of Sylvania, and Jennifer Winslow, a Whitmer High School student.

The growth of Metroparks, in the 1970s, was not characterized solely by the acquisition and development of Wildwood Preserve. In 1971 Cleo Ludwig purchased the Heising Mill, his great-grandfather’s business situated adjacent to the town of Providence and donated it to Metroparks. From 1972 to 1973, Heising leased the mill and auctioned off much of the equipment. The following year, Metroparks restored the mill and, in 1975, opened it to the public naming it after Isaac Ludwig, Cleo’s single request for the donation. After forty-five years of conserving natural resources throughout Lucas County, the restoration of the Isaac Ludwig Mill marked the beginning of the interest of Metroparks into historic preservation and a different management philosophy.30

Chapter five examines how local history advocates worked with Metroparks to incorporate historical sites into the park district and its interpretative programs. Following the opening of the Ludwig Mill, Metroparks took steps toward restoring the section of the Miami and Erie Canal that ran through Providence. In 1994, Metroparks opened the

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Canal Experience, a forty-five minute journey along the canal in *The Volunteer* and a mill tour.

Another historical site piqued the interest of the Metroparks for interpretive programs. In the late 1990s, Dr. G. Michael Pratt, archaeologist at Heidelberg College, discovered the true location of the 1794 Battle of Fallen Timbers. Like the Stranahan estate, this area was threatened by development. For the creation of the Fallen Timbers and Fort Miamis National Historic Site, Metroparks worked with Native tribes and other volunteers to save the 125 acres from development. Metroparks purchased the battlefield in two sections; the first segment attained in 2000 and then additional acreage procured in 2001. Following the successful lobbying of special interest groups, the United States Congress aided the preservation of land by dubbing the battlefield a National Historic Landmark. In 2000, Metroparks director Jean T. Ward represented the citizens before a congressional committee that later designated the site and its satellite areas – the Fallen Timbers monument and the 1793 Fort Miamis site – as a National Historic Site and an Affiliated Unit of the National Park Service to be developed and managed by Metroparks.

At the same time, Metroparks continued local preservation efforts with its involvement in the educational programming of the Lathrop House. Oral traditions indicated that Lucian and Miles Lathrop, who owned the home from 1845 through the Civil War, were abolitionists who operated a stop on the Underground Railroad. In 2001, local historians and preservationists became alarmed about the future of the home located on South Main Street in Sylvania, Ohio when the owner, Marie Vogt, put the property up for sale. Saint Joseph’s Catholic Church, located across the street, bought the property with the intent to raze the structure and expand its elementary school facilities.
Upon hearing of news of the demolition of the house, the citizens of Sylvania became divided over the issue of saving the Lathrop House. A grassroots special interest group formed, the Friends of the Lathrop House, and began raising funds for the preservation of the home. They petitioned others throughout the county to support their cause. Ultimately, the Lathrop House was moved 200 yards to Harroun Park to avoid its destruction. Still overlooking the ravine, central to the Lathrop’s involvement in Underground Railroad, the house is owned by the City of Sylvania and in 2003, Metroparks agreed to oversee its restoration and the educational programming that will take place once the site is open to the public.

In the last eighty years, the Metropolitan Park District of the Toledo Area has grown to encompass approximately 10,000 acres of land throughout Lucas County. During this time, its growth has been dependent upon the citizens of Lucas County not only for revenue, but for guidance and direction of future development and procurement of lands. In 2009, Metroparks stated its mission “to enhance quality of life and inspire preservation efforts in this and future generations by providing a regional system of premier natural, historical and cultural parklands maintained and operated to the highest professional standards.” The mission statement reflects the persistent confusion between conservation and preservation. Throughout Metroparks’ history, the management philosophy has been one of conservation, the control of the environment to avoid neglect. This control expanded in the 1970s to include not only the natural environment, but the built environment as well.
Chapter One

Why Metroparks?

It has been an obvious trend within our ecological system that a movement existed to conserve resources in an ecology that has been dubbed as suffering. The ideas rooted in the new ‘green’ catchphrase evolved out of a much larger public perception that viable resources should be conserved and preserved. The conservation movement developed during the Progressive Era reflected national trends to keep natural areas for the greater good of all. The initial response of the play movement produced city parks for the recreational betterment of urban dwellers; however, with a nation losing an iconic wilderness, activism became the very building bricks of an organization that followed national trends to protect the American wilderness.

The changing relationship between humanity and the environment evolved from differing forces within Romanticism, Transcendentalism, the closing of the Western frontier, industrialization, and urbanization. These events shaped the conservation and preservation movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the term “wilderness” described areas of land that were “uninhabited,” “dissolute,” or “deserted” and later changed to being considered an area of value.

The negative connotation of the word – wilderness – can be traced to the Bible. The story of Adam and Eve’s expulsion from the Garden of Eden into the wilderness
exemplified God’s punishment on the human race for questioning His authority. Moses
and the Israelites wandered in exile in the wilderness for forty years, searching for the
Promised Land and tempted to worship a golden god. After accepting the Ten
Commandments, the Israelites renewed their relationship with God, and Joshua marched
them into the City of Canaan. Jesus, newly baptized in the faith by John the Baptist,
wandered into the wilderness led by the Holy Spirit for forty days to be tempted by
Satan.¹ In all these examples the wilderness represented a place away from God.

Wilderness could be dominated, controlled, and utilized to advance civilized
society. Americans identified the wilderness and its resources as assets to build cities and
support the needs of the growing nation in manufacturing, industry, and infrastructure.
The conquering and elimination of the wilderness was a necessary tragedy for the greater
good and the advancement of the American civilization. The grueling task of
transforming the wilderness into agricultural fields, towns, and villages was Americans
crowning achievement and its manifest destiny.²

In 1831 Alexis de Tocqueville, a French nobleman and political scientist,
travelled throughout America to study democracy. Curious about the wilderness, he
travelled to the Michigan Territory. Frontiersmen that he encountered struggled to
understand Tocqueville’s desire to tour the wilderness for pleasure rather than for land
speculation. Tocqueville recorded in his diary that Americans, “living in the wilds only
prizes the works of man.” Tocqueville summarized his thoughts in Democracy in
America:

¹ William Cronon, ed Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature, (New York: W. W.
In Europe people talk a great deal of the wilds of America, but the Americans themselves never think about them; they are insensible to the wonders of inanimate nature and they may be said not to perceive the mighty forests that surround them till they fall beneath the hatchet. Their eyes are fixed upon another sight. The... march across these wilds, draining swamps, turning the course of rivers, peopling solitudes, and subduing nature.\(^3\)

Tocqueville’s observation of the little appreciation placed on the wilderness by Americans but the value and curiosity placed by Europeans hinted towards the changing views of nature in the nineteenth century.

Romanticism, a transatlantic movement in the early nineteenth century, placed wilderness into a new intellectual context. The doctrine of the sublime, defining wilderness as a rare place or moment on earth when one could experience the work of God, valued wilderness for its awe inspiring landscapes. Romantics had an appreciation for the remote, the solitary, and the mysterious. Wilderness had all of these characteristics and illustrated an exact counterpoint to the formal gardens of the governor’s mansion in Williamsburg, Virginia or the gardens at the palace of Versailles. The sublime landscapes provided the basis for appreciation because a closeness to God had been identified with wilderness.\(^4\)

In America, nationalists (1750 – 1800) looked for the unique features of the American wilderness as a way to distinguish the young nation from European ones. Philip Freneau, the Father of American Literature, described the Mississippi River as “this prince of rivers in comparison of whom the Nile is but a small rivulet, and the Danube a ditch.” Thomas Jefferson commented that Virginia’s Natural Bridge and the location in the gorge where the Potomac River cuts through the Allegheny Mountains

\(^3\) Nash, 23. Quoting Alexis deTocqueville.

\(^4\) Nash, 47 and 56.
near Harper’s Ferry, Virginia is “worth a voyage across the Atlantic.” Americans realized that European countries had awe inspiring landscapes: the Alps, the French Riviera, and the white cliffs of Dover and continued to look for something uniquely American. Nationalists argued that unmatched anywhere in the world, America’s wilderness proved to be a cultural and moral resource so much more than a wasteland to be developed.

Romanticism (1800 – 1850) supported nationalist ideals. It had four main characteristics: interest in distant times and places; interest in the supernatural; interest in escaping from reality; and a love of nature, defined as a place where God is found. Romantics viewed the universe as ever growing and changing. Hierarchies did not exist and anyone could be anything if they made an effort. Governments should no longer be authoritative, but balanced for everyone. It was important for society and individuals to be free and independent. Romantics believed in deism. A belief that God was present in everything and anything natural and by getting in touch with nature, they became closer to God. Romantics were divided into three branches: classical, dark, and transcendentalists. Classical Romantics expressed a strong interest in exploring their love of nature. Typically nature served as a tool to find God and learn more about Him. Dark Romantics were fascinated by the mysterious and how intuition can go awry. Typically, writings explored the theme of madness and how the mind lost touch with reality. Transcendentalists were philosophical. They expressed the belief that every person could

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reach the ultimate truth through spiritual intuition with exceeded reason and sensory experience.

Placing greater importance on wilderness as a moral resource, American Transcendentalists argued that individuals could not conform to the dictates of the material world or to the dogmas of a formal religion. Rather a parallelism existed between the physical and spiritual realms. Transcendentalists, like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, argued that natural objects reflected universal spiritual truths. The wilderness provided respite from the hustle and bustle of life and a balance to the mechanical urban life. Therefore, only in the wilderness could one experience the spiritual truths and transcend the material world.7

Ralph Waldo Emerson, a Unitarian minister, poet, and philosopher in 1836 published *Nature*. The essay, viewed as the foundation of Transcendentalism, stated nature not only had a basic material value, but another value of higher means to satisfy human spiritualism. Emerson argued that man had an essential, ongoing, creative role in the world. The ideal world existed beyond material illusions as a continuing collective creation of the human imagination. Emerson encouraged his readers to “build therefore your own world” giving coherence and meaning to natural chaos.8 Emerson believed and preached individualism, non-conformity, and harmony between man and nature.

Henry David Thoreau lived with Emerson for two years and became a devoted disciple. He simplified his life and devoted it to exploring and writing about the spiritual relationship between nature and humanity. He wrote, in *Walking* (1861), that hope was

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found in “the impervious and quaking swamps.” Thoreau argued that individuals should simplify their lives in order to live free and uncommitted. Progress distracted individuals from self betterment. Thoreau, like other Transcendentalist writers, questioned contemporary society for its conformity and progression into a technological society. His writing emphasized that humans’ spiritual connection to nature was a way to avoid corruption imposed by society.

George Perkins Marsh, an early advocate for the wise use of land, warned against overuse of the land’s resources. In his book *Man and Nature* (1864), Marsh argued that man must live in harmony with the world around him. People needed to “reconstruct the damaged fabric” of the earth. The wilderness came to be considered a threatened national asset. It was to be cherished, not whittled away. Some saw in nature God’s awesome power; others viewed nature as a haven from the pressures of city life.

The census of 1890 highlighted the conditions of American settlement patterns: “Up to and including 1880, the country had a frontier of settlement, but at present [1890] the unsettled area had been so broken into by isolated bodies of settlement that there can hardly be said to be a frontier line.” Interpreting the 1890 census data, Frederick Jackson Turner, historian, argued that uniquely defining American characteristics came from the frontier. He further debated the loss of the American frontier due to settlement marked a point when “never again will such gifts of free land offer themselves.” The bountiful lands of America had been gobbled up by civilization.

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11 Ibid., 127.
Roderick Nash, in *Wilderness and the American Mind* (1967), argued that Frederick Jackson Turner’s 1893 announcement of the closing of the frontier served as a turning point in Americans’ perception of the wilderness. Lines were drawn by pioneers comparing controlled, domesticated, and owned areas to the wild frontier. Wilderness became a defining American characteristic and “a base to build a legacy of limitation and sustainability.” However, the disappearance of the wilderness caused Americans to develop a greater appreciation for nature. 13 Focus on the importance of wilderness began to shift as the public realized the threat of loss.

With this growing momentum on the importance and the impending scarcity of nature, conservationists and preservationists championed causes to protect nature and stressed its importance. Following the announcement of Turner’s frontier thesis, Americans no longer needed to approach the wilderness as a conqueror, but rather as a vacationer. Wilderness was the root of sacred American values, and it was important to retain its influence. Nash argued that American values were upheld through progressive programs like the Boy Scout movement, the park movement, the conservation movement, and the outdoor movement. 14

Following the Civil War and through the mid-twentieth century, Americans experienced an urbanization, industrialization, and suburbanization that transformed the landscape. The natural environment became hidden and masked by the built environment. Originally, the urban system had been devoted mainly to trade, from wharves and warehouses of the Atlantic ports, to the wholesale merchandising houses of the interior towns along major transportation routes, and to the country stores of the rural villages.

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13 Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, xi - xiv
14 Ibid., 143, 155 – 157, and 188-189.
Interspersed among all of these were skilled artisans at work in their home shops. The introduction of large, mechanized factories created an unskilled wage labor force, disparities of wealth, and segregated areas for work, play, and home.\(^\text{15}\)

At the turn of the century, cities could not be less appealing. Popular writers of the time period – Robert Woods, Upton Sinclair, and Booth Tarkington – described the cities as dark, dismal, and depressing places. Cities were dirtier and smellier than ever; they were the homes of the extreme classes of society – either the very rich or the very poor. Cities were governed by corrupt boss regimes resistant to reform efforts and divided into small communities characterized by ethnic backgrounds. The polluted and dismal environment of the cities was counterbalanced by the clean fresh air of the wilderness.\(^\text{16}\)

In the 1890s and at the turn of the century architects, including Frederick Law Olmsted and Charles Eliot, built islands of wildernesses in the form of parks throughout the nation, like Central Park, New York City and Fairmont Park, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania for those who could not travel to the country. These preserves of nature provided an opportunity for future generations “to acquire the characteristics of pioneers and to acquaint themselves firsthand with the conditions that shaped their culture.”\(^\text{17}\)

Frederick Law Olmstead promoted the idea of wilderness as well as bringing nature to the cities. He visited California’s Yosemite Valley in 1863 – 1864 as a commissioner appointed to manage the grant of Yosemite Valley to the state of California. His report argued that exposure to the wilderness was an important

\(^{15}\) Merchant, 100 and 103.


compliment to city life. Olmstead was especially adamant that those unable to afford vacation to the mountains should have access to city parks through public transportation. Central Park reflects this vision by rejecting formal landscape design.\(^{18}\)

The rapid destruction of the giant redwoods in California heightened interest in wilderness preservation. In 1900, women in San Francisco – members of the California Federation of Women’s Club – began the campaign to save the trees. The group successfully lobbied Congress to pass a bill curtailing tree cutting and followed by an exchange of land for equal value. In 1918, the club became the “Save the Redwoods League,” which spearheaded the creation of state and national parks for the preservation of the trees.\(^{19}\)

During the Progressive Era, America moved away from the idea of \textit{laissez-faire} government that promoted unregulated development and use of natural resources towards a policy of \textit{faire-marcher}, meaning “to make it work.” This change resulted in greater regulation of businesses and resources. Based on the philosophical ideas that value is measured by “the greatest good for the greatest number of people,” Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill developed the utilitarian conservation ethic. ‘Utility’ meant putting the land to work to promote people’s happiness. The conservation ethic of the early twentieth century added the idea of time – to have the resources available for the longest duration.\(^{20}\)

At the close of the nineteenth century, Toledo, Ohio, mirrored the development of cities throughout America. Toledo underwent rapid urbanization and industrialization.

\(^{18}\) Merchant, 133.
\(^{19}\) Ibid., 134. Preservation groups included: General Federation of Women’s Club; Women’s National Rivers and Harbors Congress; Daughters of the American Revolution Committee on Conservation; American Civic Association; National Audubon Society and the railroads supported the efforts to encourage tourism.
\(^{20}\) Ibid., 128.
Edward Drummond Libbey and Edward Ford, leaders in the glass industry, started their companies in Toledo, Libbey Glass Company and the Edward Ford Plate Glass Company respectively. The DeVilbiss family founded two businesses: the DeVilbiss Company and the DeVilbiss Manufacturing Company. Industrialization was further shaped by Toledo’s oldest industry through businesses like Craig Ship Building Company and the Toledo Ship Building Company, which led the nation in building ships. The jobs brought people to Toledo, and in twenty years, from 1880 to 1900, Toledo’s population more than doubled from 50,137 in 1880 to 131,822 in 1900, including the foreign born population. In response to population growth, developers built subdivisions within walking distance of the factories and along street car lines for easy transportation.21

By 1910, Toledo’s population grew to 168,497, including many foreign born populations. Subdivisions continued to be built. E. H. Close said, “The day of the cramped, crowded city lot is passing and the movement toward the suburbs is more pronounced,” when he described a new subdivision, Homewood Park, near the Willys Overland Company. In her study of Toledo, Tana Mosier Porter illustrated that even the names of the subdivisions, in the early twentieth century sounded more rural: Fairlawn Heights, Glendale, Friendship Park, Pleasant Place, Case Farm Beach, and Silver Creek Hills. Toledo experienced not only growth in the subdivisions, but the downtown district as well. In the early twentieth century, Toledo’s cultural institutions kept pace with its economic advance; the Toledo Zoological Society, Toledo Museum of Art, and the Metropolitan Park District of the Toledo Area were all organized.22

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22 Ibid., 63-64 and 80. Quote found on page 63.
Toledo city administrators, swept up in the wave of the progressive movement, set into motion studies and plans to reorganize the city. In the first quarter of the twentieth century, Toledo’s population growth exceeded the growth of urban services, which were particularly hampered by the fact that the center of government power rested with the state. The representatives in the state legislature were primarily from agrarian areas throughout the state and were unsympathetic to the needs of the urban population. Progressive mayors Samuel “Golden Rule” Jones and Brand Whitlock worked to improve the quality of urban life and raise the standards of beauty and order.23

In the 1890s, progressives encouraged the need for open spaces throughout the city for beauty and recreation. Nature served the public as a “teacher,” “civilizer,” and “humanizer.” Open spaces created wholesome retreats within city limits and were believed to keep the social evils of urbanization and industrialization in check.24

Progressive reformers relied on an informed citizenry with greater participation in civic affairs, and they placed a greater role on experts, technicians, and professionals. Like national conservationist in the first period of the conservation movement, 1890 – 1920, Toledo professionals led by Sylvanus P. Jermain and Fred B. DeFrees identified the importance of the natural environment. These local activists established city parks and metropolitan parks to set aside natural areas for the benefit of Toledo and Lucas County residents.25

23 Ibid., 65.
24 Sylvanus Pierson Jermain, The Playgrounds of the People: Containing also some Facts from other Cities, showing why Toledo should Improve her Park Lands as Rapidly as Public Fund will Permit, Jermain papers, Local History Room, Toledo Lucas County Public Library (TLCPL), 6, 9-10 (hereafter cited as Jermain Papers).
In 1935, local newspapers paid tribute to Jermian’s life accomplishments. They heralded him as the “Father of Public Golf in America” and the “Father of Toledo’s Parks.” Jermain had championed the development of Toledo’s city park system in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Sylvanus P. Jermain grew up in Toledo, worked twenty-five years as an officer and treasurer of the Woolson Spice Company, and lived the life of “an unbeatable soul.” He defined this life to Bobby Jones, a golfer, as a personal philosophy to “lose and lose and lose again. Learn to lose and come back fighting. There is no such thing as an unbeatable soul.” Jermain’s campaign for the creation of city parks exemplifies his unbeatable philosophy.26

In 1890, Ohio Governor James Campbell signed the Commissioners of Park Bill written by Toledo resident, Thomas Walbridge. This permitted third class cities, a ranking based on population, the right to issue bonds up to one-half million dollars for park expansion and maintenance. Toledo City Council then passed an ordinance to purchase land for parks in areas where citizens were willing to bear the cost. Jermain, frustrated with Toledo City Council took matters into his own hands. Along Summit Street, across from his home, Jermain planted flowers, plotted a bicycle path, and placed benches and built Toledo’s first park, Riverside. Residents throughout the downtown district enjoyed their new park. Despite this success, city council still hesitated implementing a bond issue for parks. Yet, the continued success of Toledo’s downtown park forced city council to post a bond issue for the 1891 November election. Jermain

began an active campaign of public lectures, brochures, and petitions for the creation of Toledo City Parks.27

After visiting Fairmont Park, Philadelphia, and Central Park, New York City, Jermain argued for the need of public parklands to offset Toledo’s rapid increase in population as well as the disappearance of open space to warehouses, factories, railroads, subdivisions, and slum districts. Due to this rapid growth and development, he argued that citizens needed to consider the necessity for “air holes for cities or open spaces for breathing.” Jermain fought an uphill battle because Toledo as a comparatively small city contrary to Philadelphia and New York City had wide open spaces within easy walking distance of the downtown district.28

Jermain posed questions to the taxpayers like: “What, in the way of the best urban condition, are we, as a municipality, to give to our people hereafter for the direct and indirect taxes they pay?” “What line of public policy must we adopt and adhere faithfully to in order to best promote the real prosperity of our city and the health and happiness of the people?” He argued that public services offered by the city were equally important and vitally necessary. He included public parks in his service requirements in addition to sanitation, pure water, and departments of public service.29

Parks served as “a great and positive necessity.” Open spaces throughout a city promoted health, happiness, and common welfare. Jermain wrote, “Parks are sanitariums; they are priceless boons to the weak, to the poor, who may go from dark and dingy rooms into verdure and sunlight free from cost. Parks and boulevards bring the country to city people where wearied energies may be recuperated.” Parks provided retreats from

27 Leckie, 62-63; Jermain, Toledo Biography Scrapbook, TLCPL.
28 Leckie, 61-62; Jermain, Toledo Biography Scrapbook, TLCPL; Jermain Papers, TLCPL, 9-10.
29 Jermain Papers, TLCPL, 3.
grueling dirty city life, instilled people with the importance of clean fresh air, and inspired civic pride.\textsuperscript{30}

Jermain echoed progressive refrains of civic duty. “We stand at the threshold of the Greater Toledo and there is work for every man to do; work which in the future he will look back to with pride.”\textsuperscript{31} He argued that parks represented the common ownership of land and built a sense of community. He cited E. L. Holden, a member of the Cleveland Metropolitan Park Board, on the importance of parks as an economic necessity and great humanizer. Building upon the romanticists’ connection to nature, Holden said about Cleveland parks:

The parks themselves are great civilizers; they are great equalizers; they equalize up, not down. They lift people to a higher life; they are educational; they are full of inspiration and make life worth more to every man, woman, and child who comes to enjoy them. Whichever way you turn, whether from an economical standpoint or from that of health or pleasure, the hand of every citizen should be lifted in favor of the parks. They are to be the people’s heritage for all time to come.\textsuperscript{32}

Parks symbolized Americans’ commitment to democracy and were lasting monuments of civic loyalty and pride.

Jermain, in Toledo, and Holden, in Cleveland, were influenced by leading park theorists: Andrew Jackson Downing, Frederick Law Olmstead, H. W. S. Cleveland, and George E. Kessler. First, parks advanced democracy. Second, parks were vital to the health and well being of cities. Third, parks were practical. Parks increased property taxes thereby raising tax revenue, so they paid for themselves.\textsuperscript{33} Parks satisfied the need for enjoyment and kept people away from saloons. In all, they were a secure investment

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 6, 9-10.  
\textsuperscript{31} Jermain Papers, 4-5.  
\textsuperscript{32} Jermain Papers, 14-15.  
\textsuperscript{33} Porter, 63; Jermain Papers, 8.
making the city safer, cleaner, healthier, and more attractive to new industry, commerce, and people.  

The 1891 bond issue for Toledo parks passed and in December 1891, city officials appointed a bipartisan Board of Park Commissioners. The board members – Emory D. Potter, Thomas Walbridge, L. C. Schenck, B. F. Ward, and William Beatty – sought expert advice for the development of the city parks. H. W. S. Cleveland, landscape architect, strongly suggested that the park board work to acquire land outside of the populated areas. Due to the poor design of the city, only small areas within city limits remained available for parks. The Board of Park Commissioners enlarged Riverside Park with the purchase of the Old House of Refuge and changed the name to Walbridge Park and purchased Ketcham’s farm which became Ottawa Park. These laid the foundation for Toledo’s city park system. By the turn of the twentieth century, Toledo’s parks included: Guoin Park, later named Bay View, Navarre Park, Lenk Park, later named City Park (See Figure I). 

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34 Porter, 68-70.  
35 Ibid., 49, 58, and 69 – 70.
Figure I: Toledo City Parks, 2009.
The larger circles denote parks dating to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Toledo City Parks include not only playgrounds, but open spaces throughout the city, cemeteries, and historical landmarks. In comparison to the current land holdings, the park district at the turn of the twentieth century certainly was meager to say the least. The legend for the map follows. Courtesy of the Division of Parks and Forestry, Toledo, Ohio.
Figure Ia: Legend for Toledo City Parks Map

Park development proved difficult to achieve. In the 1890s, city wide improvement won popular support and subdivisions developed parks in areas, like Ottawa Hills, as they were plotted and billed as community centers. These parks promoted acculturation by creating natural surroundings that reconnected urban dwellers with wilderness like institutions providing a new opportunity to explore and discover the

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unique American environment. Many were operated by private groups and organizations, not by city government. This gave residents living within these secluded neighborhoods control of their immediate surroundings.

The recent development of city parks and suburbs challenged Toledo to follow state regulations. Governor George Nash (Republican) opposed the Progressive platform of home rule and worked to keep control of the state legislature. In the fall of 1902, the Board of Public Safety, Public Services, and Health replaced the Board of Park Commissioners. However, under this management at the state level city parks were minimally developed. On May 9, 1908, House Bill 750 became law. Introduced by Toledo representative Louis Paine, it permitted Ohio cities, with voter approval, to appoint a three member board of park commissioners. The new Toledo park board met December 4, 1908 with Mayor Brand Whitlock.

Mayor Whitlock strongly encouraged the progressive reform program of civic beautification. This program supported civic centers, parks, and broad thoroughfares. Robert Lubove defined the movement as an “ideal that embodied the city as a deliberate work of art.” Whitlock saw the city as natural not artificial. The city served as a microcosm. All problems were reflected as this level. Any problems with democracy should first be fixed within the city. After the implementation of home rule, a 1913 amendment to the state constitution, Toledo became a free city – no longer controlled by a rural dominated legislature.

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36 Ibid., 246-247.
37 The Toledo Biography Scrapbook documented that Jermain authored the Ohio Park Law, 1907.
38 Porter, 104-106.
39 Leckie, 107.
Whitlock argued that without “city sense,” the city’s goals were simply commercial prosperity, not a place to live but only to work. “The city beautiful movement emphasized construction on monumental civic structures designed to harmonize architecturally as part of a comprehensive plan.” 40 For Toledo, city beautification equaled a re-evaluation and improvement of city planning.

In the News Bee, April 26, 1912, Brand Whitlock said:

Toledo, like most American cities had developed without a plan, according to the exigencies of its situation and the various impulses that have marked its growth. As a result one cannot come into the city, or go out of it, without being subjected to danger at grade crossings, and, furthermore, sections are separated by natural conditions, which our ingenuity must overcome, if the city is to be a homogenous thing.41

The Whitlock administration shifted focus from the city beautiful movement to the city efficient movement. City planning should no longer center specifically on aesthetic improvements, but on practicality.42 Cities needed to be workable, efficient, inexpensive, and speedy. Beauty was considered a convenience. The primary goal of developers and planners should be to achieve order, determine predictable development patterns, and property values needed protection through planning and zoning.43

In the early twentieth century, a statewide movement started to create metropolitan parks in all major cities. Promoters of regional park systems argued that parks would promote tourism, capitalizing on the increased leisure time and greater mobility of most Americans following the popularity of the automobile. Second, the park movement built on the progressive ideals to promote beauty and cleanliness arguing for the need of statewide beautification.

40Ibid., 108-122.
41 Reprint, Leckie, 153.
42 Leckie, 159.
43 Ibid., 169.
In Toledo, the ideals of the civic beautification and city efficient movements could not be achieved by the city alone. The problems of sewage, public water, roads, parklands and others were regional issues. In 1919, the city planning commission formed the Ohio State Conference on City Planning to discuss the necessity of a metropolitan view toward planning. The group successfully convinced the state legislature, in 1923, to pass a regional planning bill.\(^4^4\)

Toledo City Plan Commission reacted the following year implementing a comprehensive analysis of Toledo’s municipal problems. The final report, “Recreation Report,” in 1925, focused on the recreational concerns of the city. The study surveyed the impact of the park and playground movement and the growing community interests in conservation.\(^4^5\)

One of the major findings of the Recreation Report was that Toledo did not have a single large park. The report stressed the imperative need to conserve the pleasure spots throughout the county for citizens to find “as complete relief as possible from the oppressiveness, artificiality and boredom of the city.” Only one-tenth of the total city area was designated for pleasure. The existing parks were inaccessible and poorly managed.\(^4^6\) Toledo could not solve this problem by itself because no open space existed within the city. Toledo had to work together with its neighbors to acquire quiet reflective natural areas.

Fred B. DeFrees championed the ideals of the city beautification, city efficient, and park movements as well as regional planning with the ideas of a super highway from Toledo to Cincinnati and a metropolitan park district for Toledo. DeFrees worked for the

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\(^{44}\) Ibid., 178-179.  
\(^{45}\) Ibid., 201 and 240  
\(^{46}\) Ibid., 242-245 and 253.
Lucas County engineers until 1920; when, at that time, he quit his job to work for private citizens interested in county wide improvements. The Toledo Chapter of the American Association of Engineers initially pushed for the abandonment of the Miami and Erie Canal for the construction of a super highway from Cincinnati to Toledo. In Toledo, DeFrees purposed the construction of a great boulevard to be two thirty-six foot wide strips, separated by a forty foot grassy parkway from downtown Toledo to Copeland Avenue and continuing on to Waterville, Ohio. The super highway would be built over the canal, towpath, and the right of way of the Clover Leaf Railroad tracks. After two years, in 1922, the state sold the canal bed to Toledo for $300,000 subject to water rights. Immediately, the Maumee Valley Light and Power Company filed lawsuit to prevent the abandonment of the canal on the grounds that it would destroy the company. In 1929, the Ohio Supreme Court upheld Toledo’s purchase and its proposed plans for the abandoned Miami and Erie Canal. On July 4, Mayor W. T. Jackson and others opened the locks in Grand Rapids to drain the canal and start construction on the super highway (See Figure II).\(^47\)

\[^{47} Toledo News Bee, October 5, 1933.\]
Figure II: Proposed Highways
Compiled by Bartholomew and Associates, City Plan and Landscape Engineers in 1928, the map illustrates the master plan for future development for Lucas County. It includes parks lands and highways. Harland Bartholomew and Associates, *A System of Major Highways and Parkway, Lucas County Ohio* (1928) Plate 1.
While working on the canal boulevard project, DeFrees remained active in the Toledo Chapter of the American Association of Engineers serving as chairman of the planning committee. The Toledo Chapter “realizing the importance of anticipating the orderly growth of the services of this community,” sent a letter to all business and civic organizations calling “attention to the lack of constructive policy in the development of a park and boulevard system.” Under a 1917 state law, park districts could be created by an application filed with a probate judge with a petition signed by the majority of the electors or authorized by resolutions adopted by any board of township, village or city. The American Association of Engineers implored business, civic, and municipal organizations throughout Lucas County to fill out an enclosed resolution or write their own in support of a regional park system. The sample resolution read:

Recognizing the necessity of anticipating the future development of our Park and Boulevard Systems and the extensions of those systems to the territory outside the present City to provide the best practicable means of healthful recreation and civic embellishment this organization hereby requests (Township Trustees of __________ township, Lucas Co. O.) (The Council of the City of __________ Ohio) to authorize by resolution adopted, an application to the Probate Court of Lucas County for the creation of a Lucas Metropolitan Park District to include all the Cities, Villages, and Township as outlined on a map accompanying.48

Requests for support were mailed to sixty-eight organizations including: the Board of Education, the Catholic Women’s Association, the Council of Jewish Women, the

48 Fred B. DeFrees Scrapbook: Lucas County Metropolitan Park Board; Miami and Erie Canal Boulevard, 1923 – 1936, Administrative Offices, Metropolitan Park District of the Toledo Area, 1 and 3. A collection of newspaper clippings and letters collected by Fred. B. DeFrees, an engineer that worked in the grassroots movement to create the metropolitan park district and build the Anthony Wayne Trail (U.S. Route 24) in Toledo, Ohio. (Hereafter referred to as DeFrees Scrapbook). No accompanying map could be found.
Federation of Parent-Teacher Club, the National Association of Color People, and the Toledo Negro Civic League.\textsuperscript{49}

In the past, Toledo had been hampered to develop parks because available lands existed outside the city limits. Under the 1917 state law, park districts could be created for the encouragement of forestry and the conservation of natural resources of the state. The boundary lines for these districts could not divide any township or municipality within the county. The application had to be filed with a probate judge with the proposed district, a map of the park district, and the petitions supporting its creation. Notification had to be posted in two newspapers and a hearing must follow within forty days of the application. The hearing included arguments for and against the park district. If the probate judge decided in favor of the park district, he then appointed three commissioners whose alternating three year terms started the following January. Each commissioner took an oath of office and posted a $5,000 bond for “the faithful performance of his duties of his office.”\textsuperscript{50}

Throughout 1925, DeFrees and the Toledo Chapter of the American Association of Engineers campaigned for the creation of a metropolitan park district argued that the portions of the Miami and Erie Canal not being utilized for the super highway would be ideal parklands along the Maumee River. Several newspapers – the \textit{Toledo Blade}, \textit{Toledo Times}, \textit{Toledo Journal}, and the \textit{News Bee} – supported the campaign. On May 12, DeFrees addressed the Stickney Avenue Booster Club to support a metropolitan park area. Obviously, city parks were inadequate due to the recent closing of Toledo’s two public bathing beaches because of water pollution. Parks were a necessary health

\textsuperscript{49} \textit{DeFrees Scrapbook}, 5.  
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 1.
measure. Toledo lagged behind other cities in average population per park acre: Toledo, 450; Philadelphia, 264; and Rochester, 167. The city was unable to address the needs due to budget appropriations for maintenance of existing parks, not their extension.⁵¹

The Lucas County Plan Commission addressed these regional problems. Taking direction from the Toledo City Plan Commission, the county hired Harland Bartholomew and Associates to complete a regional analysis.⁵²

A regional plan provides the means for a study of the relationships between urban, suburban and rural districts. The aim of such a plan is to guide officials to a proper solution of the many physical problems resulting from a continued concentration of population. A city plan promotes an orderly and scientific urban development; a regional plan correlates the development of urban and suburban centers, prepares the groundwork for future growth and ties city and county together for most advantageous community life.⁵³

The survey highlighted and proposed plans for problems faced by the rapid and unmonitored growth of not only Toledo, but of Lucas County. “But there was no regional planning in 1890, no county planning and no city planning. It is realized by nearly everyone that many things could have been done better.” Topics addressed in the report included highways, park development, zoning, and railroad improvements. It was not too late. The goal was to “uncover the assets of the region to find what is of both social and economic value, to prevent waste in any form and to prepare a plan which offer[ed] fair assurance that all public money spent [would] produce full returns.”⁵⁴

Bartholomew and Associates stressed that parklands were a public necessity and the land preserved for park use would be of great value to future generations and have

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⁵¹ Ibid., 3.
⁵² Leckie, 258-259.
⁵⁴ Ibid.
little use or value for private means. Lucas County needed to adopt an official plan identifying parklands. It should be carried out in stages and provide a framework for future park development.

Nature has created parks for Toledo and Lucas County. They are easily recognized. They are, generally speaking, areas having limited values for other uses. There is the Maumee Valley, full of scenic resources, having great potential usefulness for water supply and drainage if kept and protected under public ownership. There is the Swan Creek Valley, one of nature’s masterpieces coming right into a populous city.55

The regional survey recommended a regional park board to preserve parklands along Swan Creek, Ten Mile Creek, and the Maumee River mirroring the national trends of the conservation movement Toledo focused on clean waterways (See Figure III).

DeFrees and local newspapers continued to argue for support of the creation of a metropolitan park district. The creation of parks prepared for the future growth and development of the city and county. Father Toledo spoke up and supported the regional park plan:

Dear Citizens: Perhaps some of you are wondering why there is need for an additional governing unit, a metropolitan park board, for our people. The big reason is because there is no power under the law for either the city authorities or the county authorities to secure or maintain public ground outside the city. Every day the congestion becomes greater in this county. Soon parks and recreation grounds will be an absolute necessity. The time to secure them is now before prices become prohibitive or conditions render them impossible. The law does provide that such provision may be made by a metropolitan board in communities that decide to create such a board. FATHER TOLEDO56

55 Harland Bartholomew and Associates, 63.
56 DeFrees Scrapbook. Father Toledo was an anonymous writer in the Toledo News Bee and wrote from 1922 through 1926 promoting Progressive ideals. Often the letters are addressed to city officials congratulating them on achievements or criticizing when they fall short of their goals.
Figure III: Proposed Park and Parkway Plan
Compiled by Bartholomew and Associates, City Plan and Landscape Engineers in 1928, the map illustrates the larger city parks in Toledo as well as suggested areas for future park lands. Planners delineate between areas of immediate importance for protection and areas that attention should be drawn to in the future. The hashed marked area identified of immediate importance include Swan Creek and the Oak Openings. Harland Bartholomew and Associates, *A System of Major Highways and Parkway, Lucas County Ohio* (1928) Plate 21.
Several arguments for parks cited that the land to be preserved was of no commercial value, but rather picturesque and beautiful. Even those who grumbled about the creation of city parks, now considered these to be jewels of the city. One article provided economic advantages of parks: “But Nature had been generous to this northern part of the Black Swamp, and the foundation of beauty and culture was set deep in the rich soil. Today, with highways that are of the best, with scenery that pleases the eye and soothes the soul the Maumee Valley beckons to the tourist.” Toledo Mayor William T. Jackson and State Senator David Johnson, from Wauseon, stressed the importance of parks and preserving natural beauty spots for generations to come at the Maumee Scenic Highway Group Outing. To address these concerns, on June 4, 1928 Toledo City Council adopted a resolution petitioning the courts for the creation of a park district. On July 27 and 28, 1928, public notice was posted in the Toledo Blade and the Toledo News Bee in accordance with the state law. On August 1, 1928, Probate Judge O’Brian O’Donnell approved city council’s application to create the Toledo Metropolitan Park District in accordance with Section 2976-2 of the General Code of Ohio.57

Environmental historians have divided the conservation movement into three periods and state that 1920 marks the end of the first period. It is evident in Toledo’s history that the progressive ideals of the conservation movement were still driving city and regional planning in Toledo and were realized first in 1908 with the creation of the Toledo park board and again in 1929 with the creation of the Toledo metropolitan Park District. The growth of the city at the turn of the twentieth century caused alarm for city

57 Probate Court, Lucas County, Ohio. (vol. 112, page 70 and 80) Misc. No. 9811. No record of opposing or supporting arguments could be found in the court records. DeFrees Scrapbook. Section 1545 of the Ohio Revised Code.
administrators and progressive reformers who were concerned about community life. The limited green space threatened the vitality of the city and the physical and mental health of the residents. Action was needed to ensure that efficient planning took place for the conservation of land at the regional level before it was developed and gone.
Chapter Two

Phase One: Acquiring Land

The establishment of Metroparks was a direct result of curbing encroachment and creating breathing holes in an increasingly industrialized center. Toledo, a leader in local industrialization, needed a large scale regional park system that conserved resources. Beautification of the natural environment helped create awareness with Toledo residents that equated to national trends. With national support stemming from changing cultural views that incorporated land management, and local support growing through recognized voices within the community, the newly created Metropolitan Park Board began to attain the necessary land and monetary resources needed to harbor success.

Metroparks board evaluated the information gathered from the Toledo City Plan Commission, the Lucas County Plan Commission, the Recreation Report, and the Harland Bartholomew and Associates report to identify land to acquire. Next, board members needed to find financial means to purchase the land. The research completed during the 1920s and special interest groups provided direction for the development of the regional park system; money to purchase these lands proved more problematic with the onset of the Great Depression.

The Progressive movement in the first two decades of the twentieth century reacted to urbanization, industrialization, and immigration by proposing reforms to address the deplorable conditions of the cities – one such reaction was a return to nature
giving a ground swell to the conservation movement. Stephen Fox, environmental historian, argued that the conservation movement could be traced in concentric circles with urban environments in the center. In the cities, the conservation movement resulted in the growth of landscaped parks, playgrounds, zoos, and habitat groups in natural history museums and nature study programs in schools. The suburbs, themselves a sign of the trend, implied a geographical separation of home and workplace and a flight to green lawns and trees. Changes as a result of the conservation movement in the country included the advancement of agricultural schools, summer camps, and country homes. The wilderness, protected in national parks, attracted the attention of thousands as a respite from city life. All of these pieces fit together for a complex picture of a nature craze that implied a nostalgic turning back to recover an idealized, imaged past. Wilderness represented courage, self-reliance, physical strength, and dexterity.¹

Conservation began as a hobby and then became a profession. The first public alarms about endangered wildlife, trees, rivers, and wilderness were raised by enthusiasts like John Muir. Lecturing on the importance of forests for regulation of rainfall and erosion prevention, Muir felt passionate about the preservation of natural resources. Outraged with the destruction of sequoias that predated the Christian era, he was forced to action. Furthermore the hobby of conservation found support through the Audubon Society; protected various birds not for their usefulness in controlling insects, but for the aesthetic beauty witnessed in the birdsong and flash of color on the wing. Like everything

else in the Progressive Era, these hobbies evolved into careers and aimed to become more professional and scientific.  

In the early years of the twentieth century, the amateur approach of big game hunters toward the goals of conservation yielded to the trends of professionalism and bureaucratization. Yet the times demanded more, and conservation mirrored broader trends towards expertise, scientific management, planning, and ideals of economy, efficiency, and stability.

Conservation moved in lockstep with the larger context of the Progressive movement. The avocational phase in its tone and class aspects duplicated the origins of progressivism: moralistic, evangelical, ethnically nativist if not racist, wealthy, and offended by the corruptions of politics. Antimodern and skeptical of technological progress, it invoked visions of the preindustrial community when people lived closer to the land and the natural rhythms of life.

Professional conservationists embraced the urban world and argued for a utilitarian approach toward nature.

Pioneers of the conservation movement argued for the preservation of the environment. The final goal of the movement was the absolute exclusion of nature from human use. Fox argued that “by contrast, ‘conservation’ as applied to forests as early as 1875 and to rivers by 1890 suggested only a more prudent, more efficient use by humans of nature. After 1907, ‘conservation’ was applied to everything that needed environmental protection. In this broader sense, the word passed into everyday language and the original distinction lost.” Conservation and preservation had become synonymous and professionals worked to create a distinction between the two.

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2 Ibid., 107.
3 Ibid., 108.
Congress created the forestry division in the Agricultural Department with limited financial resources. Forest protection was achieved through the amateurs working outside of the government. Charles Sprague Sargent, a botanist, was the leading figure. Inspired by George Perkins Marsh’s work, *Man and Nature* (1864), Sargent, in 1880, undertook a survey of forests. His findings convinced him of the need for reform. The American Forestry Association, a group of horticulturist endorsed his plan for the protection of federally owned timber following a complete study. 5

In March 1891, an amendment to a general land law, section 24, permitted the President to create forest reserves by withdrawing federal land from the public domain. Within two years, President Benjamin Harrison, at the request of John W. Noble, Secretary of the Interior, created fifteen forest reserves equaling four million acres without permission of the taxpayers and bypassing Congress. While permitting the creation of the reserves, the law provided no direction for management. 6

As a recent graduate from West Point, Gifford Pinchot suggested the creation of a forest service for the necessary scientific management of the reserves. He studied forestry in France and Germany and was anxious to apply the theory that trees could not only be protected but managed for sustained yields. “Pinchot embodied the transition from amateur protection to scientific management. Not an originator of ideas, he excelled as a synthesizer, publicist, and self-advertiser.” Fox argued that Pinchot was not the pioneer of the conservation movement, but rather expanded upon the work of George Bird Grinnell, Robert Underwood Johnson, and Charles Sprague Sargent. 7

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5 Ibid., 109.
6 Ibid., 110.
7 Ibid., 111.
After a thorough study of the forest reserves by a commission differences between Muir, Pinchot, and Sargent surfaced. Muir and H. L. Abbott, a member of the Army Engineers, purposed the continued land management by the Army. This plan permitted ranchers to continue to graze their animals in open fields and provided industrialists access to natural resources like timber and minerals. Pinchot and Arnold Hague of the Geological Survey worked for the creation of a professional forest service. Sargent argued to keep the reserves inviolate and pristine. The final report favored Army patrols and banned grazing while compromising to allow lumbering and mineral mining supporting a utilitarian use of the land rather than preservation. Mounting opposition to the forest reserves broke when President Grover Cleveland approved the commission’s request for thirteen more forest reserves totaling 21.4 million acres.8

In the late nineteenth century, national representatives from the West and the Northwest spoke against no grazing and the limitations on lumber. Muir, Johnson, and Sargent lobbied the new administration, President William McKinley to heighten preservation efforts on natural resources. These efforts were to no avail; Congress passed, in June 1897, the Forest Management Act. This suspended all of President Cleveland’s forest reserves pending further study and opened the existing reserves to mining and grazing. In the following weeks, Secretary of the Interior Cornelius Bliss appointed Pinchot to manage the investigation. Pinchot encouraged the careful use and management of resources. With this appointment and Pinchot’s policies, the conservation movement was split into two factions: conservationists and preservationists.9 Conservationists argued for land management which would provide the current generation limited access

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8 Ibid., 112 – 113.
9 Ibid., 113 – 115.
to the resources while ensuring that the resources would be available for future
generations. Conservationists were better organized and more intent, with money and
livelihoods at stake. Preservationists strove to sustain the condition of the resource to
safeguard it for future generations. Preservationists, although more numerous, were slow
to action and unorganized.  

President Theodore Roosevelt and Pinchot befriended each other in the 1890s in
New York. Once he became President, Roosevelt recognized Pinchot as one of his
favored advisors and conservation became a national focus. In 1905, Roosevelt and
Pinchot created the U. S. Forest Service, a bureau of the Agriculture Department with
Pinchot as the head. Pinchot proved successful which in turn spread his view of
conservation, a utilitarian approach to natural resources, throughout the government and
nation. In 1908, Pinchot and President Roosevelt promoted the concept of conservation at
the White House Conference on Conservation. The conference unified the three separate
movements of resource conservation – forests, water, and rangelands.  

The movement to preserve areas for their aesthetic and recreational benefit led to
the establishment of state and national parks. Between the creation of Yellowstone in
1872 and the passage of the National Park Service Act of 1916, thirteen tracts of land
were set aside to “conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the
wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such a manner and by
such a means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”  

Both arguments of the conservation movement are present in the National Park Service

10 Fox, 121.
11 Ibid., 129 – 130; Carolyn Merchant, The Columbia Guide to American Environmental History (New
Act and combined together. The conservation of the land and cultural resources was not enough. The federal legislation called for management practices that ensured these resourced for future generations. Yet how these management practices were determined and implemented to leave the resource unimpaired for future generations was left to park administrators to determine.

Two national examples of the didactic struggle between conservation and preservation were the battles for Yosemite and the Hetch-Hetchy Valley. Volunteers led the defense against the enemy, whose involvement stemmed from their jobs and/or an interest in the economic impact of the project. In particular reference to the struggle for Yosemite, commercial interests of local entrepreneurs collided with the local ranchers and these interests collided with railroaders. To John Muir, the battle for Yosemite was fought between the popular will and private business interests.13

Yosemite was created by a sequence of acts. In 1864, President Abraham Lincoln ceded Yosemite Valley to California for the purpose of its preservation. California congressman, William Vandever, introduced a bill for the creation of the Yosemite reserve protecting 288 square miles of land. According to Muir, the property was useless for anything other than its beauty. Landscape architect Frederick Law Olmstead supported the creation of the national park. The bill was pushed through Congress in September, once the Southern Pacific Railroad Company supported it. In 1890, the mountains around the reserve became a national park, and in 1905, California re-ceded

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13 Fox, 103 – 104.
Yosemite Valley to the federal government in order to include it as part of the national park.\textsuperscript{14}

The preservation of Yosemite became a source of national controversy over the proposal to dam the Toulomne River in the Hetch-Hetchy Valley. After the 1906 earthquake, San Francisco needed a reliable supply of water. While Cherry Lake or Lake Eleanor were acceptable alternatives, San Francisco Mayor James Phelan was set on Hetch-Hetchy. The issue came into the national spotlight when Muir split with Gifford Pinchot after he advocated for the dam for public power. The dam achieved Pinchot’s goal of conservation for the greatest good for the greatest number. Muir opposed this and approached the debate with a theocentric argument. Muir lost the battle with the passage of the Raker Act, 1913 which permitted the building of O’Shaughnessy Dam to flood the Hetch-Hetchy Valley.\textsuperscript{15} The Raker Act set the national tone that land could be preserved for utilitarian purposes.

Professional conservation took over at a national level dominating conservation affairs in Washington; however, the older traditions of zealous amateurs still survived. The larger story included not only national figures but local Toledo advocates as well, like Sylvanus Jermain, Fred DeFrees, George Pearson, and Louis Campbell. Fox argued that it was the local level that carried out the work of Muir, Grinnell, Johnson, and Sargent and nurtured the alternative to the mainstream conservation – the preservation of natural resources rather than the utilitarian measured use of resources.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 105 – 107; Merchant, 135. Herders were illegal in the national park. The Yosemite campaign led to the permanent creation of its volunteers and the founding of the Sierra Club.
\textsuperscript{15} Merchant, 136.
\textsuperscript{16} Fox, 130.
Like at the national level, the first tasks for Metroparks board members entailed identifying and securing land for the park district that conserved and preserved the unique natural features of Northwest Ohio and opened parks. Guided by the Recreation Report and the Bartholomew and Associates Plan, the board focused on the canal lands along the river as suggested by Fred DeFrees. Two years after the creation of the park district, the board leased the canal lands in 1931 along the Maumee side cut of the Miami and Erie Canal from the state. The parklands, including Lock 1 to Lock 6 of the Maumee side cut, became Side Cut Metropark. The following year, the park board leased the canal lands from Waterville to Grand Rapids, and these became Waterville and Providence Metropark. The board renamed Waterville Metropark, in 1937 to honor Metroparks director-secretary, W. W. Farnsworth. In 1935, Bend View Metropark, upriver from Indianola Island, became the sixth Metropark and the last of the river parks.

Figure IV: 2009 Land Holdings for Metroparks, First Six Parks
The circled parks mark the initial six parks of the District: Pearson, Side Cut, Farnsworth, Bend View, Providence, and Oak Openings.
Formed in 1822, the Ohio Canal Commission had planned the routes for the Miami and Erie and the Ohio and Erie Canals. In February 1825, the State legislature passed the Canal Bill and later that summer construction started. The canals connected the Ohio River to Lake Erie and ended the pioneer period for Ohio.\(^{17}\)

The Miami and Erie Canal started in Cincinnati, and its terminus was at the mouth of the Maumee River. Due to the increased economic activity promised by the canals, the northern cities of Port Lawrence, Vistula, Manhattan, Maumee City, and Perrysburg all wanted control of the terminus of the canal. However, Michigan Territory claimed ownership to the mouth of the Maumee River. Michigan and Ohio fought a political war over who rightfully owned a strip of land approximately 800 miles long. Initially, Congress supported the Michigan Territory which claimed ownership of the land based on the wording of the Northwest Ordinance. President Andrew Jackson wanted the issue to be resolved because of the 1836 presidential election and stressed the importance of the Electoral College. The citizens of Ohio could vote and those residing in Michigan could not. Congress awarded Ohio control of the mouth of the Maumee, and as a trade off, Michigan became a state with control of the Upper Peninsula.\(^{18}\)

The terminus of the canal was awarded to Manhattan, Ohio, which Toledo later incorporated. In 1840, the first section of the Wabash and Erie Canal, between Toledo and Providence, was completed. Within three years, one could travel to Fort Wayne,

\(^{17}\) George Knepper, *Ohio and Its People* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1997), 151 – 152.

\(^{18}\) Ibid., 163 – 165.
Indiana on the canal. In 1845, the Miami Extension was completed between Cincinnati and Junction and opened the Miami and Erie Canal from Cincinnati to Toledo, Ohio.\(^{19}\)

Maumee City was granted a side cut, a feeder canal built to connect the main canal to the river, after Manhattan gained control of the terminus of the Miami and Erie Canal. In 1842, the side cut at Maumee was completed. One and seven-tenths of a mile long, the six locks accounted for the sixty-three foot change in elevation to the river. The Maumee side cut was never economically successful. The river proved to be too shallow during the summer months for river crafts to travel that far upstream from Toledo for business. In 1850, the Maumee Side Cut was abandoned.\(^{20}\)


\(^{20}\) Ibid.
Illustration 1: An Abandoned portion of the Miami and Erie Canal. The individual is standing in the bed of the abandoned Miami and Erie Canal. Large sections of the canal were drained as the above picture illustrates. These became areas for local residents to dump refuge and during high water times, the abandoned canal would collect and hold stagnant water. Courtesy of Metropolitan Park Board of the Toledo Area and The Toledo Blade.

Illustration 2: Wash out along the towpath of the Miami and Erie Canal. The towpath was the trail that ran parallel to the canal for the mules to walk in order to power canal boats. This section washed out reflects the disinterest of the State to maintain the canal lands. Courtesy of Metropolitan Park Board of the Toledo Area and the Toledo Blade.
Illustration 3: Abandoned Lock
Looking northwest at abandoned Lock #3 of the Maumee Side Cut along the Miami and Erie Canal. The overgrowth and decaying lock door illustrate the neglect of the state. Courtesy of Metroparks of the Toledo Area and The Toledo Blade.

Construction of the Miami and Erie Canal combined with state ownership of the lands protected the area from development. Following the 1913 flood and the closure of Ohio’s canals, the lands along the Maumee River sat awaiting their future. Because of the creation of the Metropolitan Park District, in 1929, the emphasis on regional planning promoted by Fred DeFrees, and the popularity of the conservation movement, these lands were destined for parks. Metroparks leased the property from the State of Ohio for Providence, Bend View, Waterville (later renamed Farnsworth), and Side Cut Metroparks. Unlike the river parks, the lands that would become Pearson and Oak
Openings were not already set aside. The board’s attention was drawn to preserve these lands for future generations through efforts of local residents. The argument to remove the lands from public domain rested in the unique natural features of Pearson and Oak Openings Metroparks. Pearson Metropark would preserve the last remaining remnant of the Great Black Swamp Forest in Lucas County, and for Oak Openings Preserve, the organization would preserve one of seven rare ecosystems left in the world.

The natural vegetation of Ohio had been almost completely altered due to settlement and agricultural purposes. The Great Black Swamp originally stretched across northwestern Ohio from Paulding and Van Wert Counties to Lake Erie. It proved to be a tremendous hindrance to the settlement of this region of the state. Settlers fought against the dense swamp forest and between 1860 – 1885 slowly drained, cleared, and cultivated the swamplands. 21 Due to settlement patterns and the need to control the water tables within the swamp to produce desirable farmland, virgin swamp forest became an endangered species. George W. Pearson, East Side, Toledo, Ohio reporter for The Toledo Blade, led the campaign to save the last remaining remnant of Great Black Swamp forest.

Since his childhood Pearson had found nature to be a source of comfort and inspiration; therefore, raising a small family in Curtice, Ohio, a town east of Toledo, Pearson admired the “Banklands” everyday on his commute into the city on the Port Clinton and Lakeside Interurban. Residents of the east side of Toledo referred to the vacant lot as the “Banklands” because it became the holding of various banks carrying mortgage claims on the property. As long as no development seemed imminent, the

community appeared complacent about the property and enjoyed the vacant lot as a community park.

In 1924, the Starrland Company, a conglomerate of businessmen, purchased the southern section of the land and development of the property became a real possibility. The Starrland Company mortgaged the property to the Toledo Trust Company for $179,197.90 which would be paid in seven promissory notes. The Toledo Trust Company planned to divide and develop the property. Two years later, 1926, the Toledo Park Commission attempted to pass a bond allowing for the partial purchase of the “Banklands” for a park; however, this issue failed.  

The initial proposal was to save 640 acres for parkland; however, in 1925, the City Plan Commission considered the scenario to sell about 400 acres for farming and to retain the remainder of the property for a park. Pearson wrote an editorial stressing the importance for retaining all 640 acres for a park:

This suggestion is made in good faith as an economical plan for providing for the future water supply of Toledo and at the same time preserve for future generations the beautiful wooded tract that is needed for park purposes. Here are some reasons why this would be a practical idea looking to the future of Toledo and its vicinity.

1 – Toledo must soon turn to the lake for a water supply and there is no place where an inexhaustible supply of good water may be obtained so easily as by a water main to a crib in the lake beyond Cedar Point either at Reno Beach, Bono, or Locust Point…

2 – Toledo is considering the plan of a filtration plant on the East Side to utilize the lake water and then tie it up with the present filtration plant with large mains. The tract of 640 acres, known as the Bank Land, would be an ideal location for a filtration plant, and by taking the entire

22 “Lands in Lucas County: Range 8 Town 10 Section 2,” microfilmed at the Lucas County Auditor’s Office; Certificate of Title, April 20, 1934, No. 144327, Administrative Office, Metroparks of the Toledo Area.
tract and making the wooded tract into a park, two ends of inestimable value to the future of Toledo would be attained.

3 – This tract can be procured now at a price never available in the future and has the advantage of affording ample room for development more economically than would be possible to acquire elsewhere in the farming district east of Toledo.

4 – Here is a practical plan looking to the future of Toledo as a whole and not merely the East Side. Have Toledoans the vision to grasp this opportunity? 23

 Pearson and other east Toledo business leaders never entertained the idea of failure; the property would become a park. As evident in this editorial, Pearson positioned his argument for the preservation of the Banklands into two major themes of the first period of the conservation movement: clean water and city and regional planning. The grassroots campaign for the land focused on when and how best to achieve the creation and development of the park.

In October 1930, during the celebration of the opening of the eastward route of State Route 2, State Representative Fred Meyers announced the possibility of the state taking control over the Banklands. Pearson’s editorial, published the same day, focused on the aesthetic value of the park. Recalling memories of boyhood days of “the rustling of the leaves, the chattering of the squirrels as they leaped from limb to limb gathering hickory nuts… the trees aflame with color in all hues from green to brilliant scarlet,” Pearson lamented the idea that “the last real forest left near Toledo” might be developed. He dreamt of the possibility for the preservation of this woodland. Pearson argued,

“There is nothing selfish in the project, for it will never be of special service to those who are urging its preservation most.”

It became apparent that Toledo was not in a position to purchase the property, so attention turned to a state funded solution. However, hopes were renewed when the Toledo Metropolitan Park District placed a bond issue on the November 1930 ballot for operating costs. The tax levy would provide the newly formed park district with the revenue to purchase land and build parks. Park board members, W. W. Knight and Senator W. W. Farnsworth, and secretary-engineer, Gabriel Harmon, announced that the bond proposal was for the purpose of the extension of parks in Lucas County. The purpose of the newly created Metropolitan Park Board was to acquire the natural beauty spots of the county for future generations. At a public meeting, Senator Farnsworth reiterated the importance of wholesome relaxation spots and the board’s interest in acquiring the Banklands. Despite public support for the levy, it failed.

In 1931, all east Toledo civic organizations were working as one to find a way to save the big woods as parkland. The Metropolitan Park Board was behind them, but lacked the funding to do anything about it. In July, the board of commissioners requested the East Side civic organizations to submit a proposition in order to cooperate with the preservation efforts of the Banklands. Six months later, the property was offered for sale at $50 per acre; however, no funds were allocated for its purchase. The drive for the parklands continued for the next two years; George Pearson led the campaign with the

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24 Breymaier, 153 – 154, reprinted from Blade, October 17, 1930.
25 Breymaier, 155, reprinted from Blade, October 24, 1930.
support of East Side organizations such as the Oregonian Club and the East Toledo Club.26

In March 1933, the preservation of the woods on the Banklands became threatened. Oregon Township Civic Club President, Anton Munding, described as a tree expert and leader in the preservation movement for the Bank Lands, realized that Oregon residents were logging trees for firewood. The city of Toledo had gained permission from the owners of the Bank Lands to permit the removal of dead trees from the property for firewood. Munding frequently walked the property evaluating the natural resources in preparation for the day when it would become a park, when he discovered the removal of not only the dead trees, but live trees as well.27

Immediately, Pearson launched a newspaper campaign to stop the illegal logging of live trees. Concerned conservationists and preservationists “confirmed the stories of ruthless destruction of giant oaks, graceful elms and white beech trees, and said that some of the timber was sold for wood.” Neighbors of the property and local experts “estimated that one of the trees destroyed was 150 or 200 years old, and many others 75 to 100 years old.” Upon further investigation, the destruction of the property was far worse than Munding’s initial assessment. It was estimated that 1,200 live trees were illegally logged from the property and sacrificed for firewood.28

While east Toledo civic organizations evaluated and notified the public of the situation, Pearson discovered from research that the bank holding the Starrland Corporation mortgage on 280 acres of the property had closed its doors. The liquidation of the Starrland Company did not affect the transfer of the property since it was

26 Breymaier, 155 – 156.
27 Ibid., 156 – 157.
28 Ibid., 158 – 159.
mortgaged. The bank owned the land. According to procedure, to pay the bank’s debts, the Court of Common Pleas, Judge James Martin, auctioned the bank’s assets, including the 280 acres owned by Starrland. Pearson published an editorial in support of Metroparks purchasing the property:

… Toledoans who have or give a thought to the future and all lovers of nature are deeply concerned that the property fall into friendly hands so that it may become a future park and small game preserve under the care of the Metropolitan Park Board of Toledo…

This woodland should and must be considered above private greed and private ownership, and must not be allowed to fall into the hands of those who, if they would not destroy the timber, would attempt to exploit the price of this property.

It can now be acquired at a reasonable figure and friendly bidders should receive consideration above timber butchers and land exploiters…

Sam Campbell, chairman of the committee representing all civic clubs of the East Side and Oregon township, and President George Lumm of the East Toledo Club and other civic leaders have worked earnestly to get favorable action, explaining to Mayor Thatcher, Judge Martin and others, including W. W. Knight, William Booker and other members of the Metropolitan Park Board the importance of holding this tract for the future.

Successful in their campaign, George Lumm represented the Metropolitan Park Board, the Ohio Savings Bank and Trust, and the Starrland Company at the public auction. Pearson described the scene:

Toledo and Lucas County gain [ed] a new park of virgin forest land and depositors of the Ohio Savings Bank and Trust Co. double the amount they would have received on this particular claim, through purchase of the 280-acre bank land tract east of the city by public-spirited Toledoans led by George W. Lumm, president of the East Toledo club.

Following public sale of the property late Thursday to satisfy a mortgage held by the Ohio bank, Mr. Lumm announced that the property would be

29 Breymaier, 158 – 165.
offered to the county commissioners as a gift for park purposes, and the commissioners probably [would] turn it over to the Metropolitan Park board for development. It is planned to take the conservation army of 240 now up the river about Waterville to the new park property to clean it up and make necessary improvements if the co-operation of the government can be obtained.

The property was owned by the Starland Co. It was to satisfy this company’s mortgage of more than $35,000 that liquidators of the bank recently asked Common Pleas Judge James Martin to approve sale of the property to George Myers, Port Clinton bankers, for $40,200 in Ohio bank deposit claims.

Judge Martin did not believe this price sufficient and refused to confirm the sale. S. S. Burtsfield representing another group and Mr. Lumm representing citizens asked the privilege of bidding. After Mr. Burtsfield learned that it was planned to donate the property to the county as a gift, he retired after his first few bids. But Mr. Myers remained until the figure went to $4,735.30 cash, which consist[ed] of the 10 claims and $61,100 additional in deposit claims. This cash and claims bid made by Mr. Lumm and accepted is double the original amount offered the court.

An entry confirming the sale was signed Friday by Judge Martin.

Acquisition of the property by interests friendly to the park board and East Side civic bodies mark[ed] the beginning of the end of a struggle of 20 years to protect this woodland and to assure its use for public park purposes and as a forest and small game preserve.

Co-operation of civic leaders was an important factor in the final days of efforts to procure this woodland.

East Side civic bodies had been working since early in the spring and Governor White, Mayor Thacher, and others had shown an interest in the project, but the actual acquisition of the property was placed in the hands of President Lumm of the East Toledo club, who bid in the property. Conferences had been held with W. W. Knight, William Booker and others of the park board, with Judge James Martin, Judge O’Brien O’Donnel, David Goodwillie and others and co-operation in the plan to save the woodland for the city was given by these men who recognized the trees of 75 and 100 years old as a priceless civic asset.

While strong public sentiment supported the creation of a public park from the Banklands property, the funding proved difficult to achieve in the midst of the Great Depression.
What changed? In the park dedication program, it noted the purchase of the property was made possible, “through the generosity of a donor whose name is withheld by request.”

In a public statement the Metropolitan Park Board acknowledged the gift in 1935:

Now that Pearson Park is being enjoyed by an ever increasing number of Toledoans and plans have been approved by the Government for its further development, it seems an appropriate time to publicly thank the Company which made this splendid park possible.

The Metropolitan Park Board therefore wishes to publicly express its deep appreciation of the help given by the Libbey-Owens-Ford Glass Company, for through it generosity the original 280 acres were acquired for park purposes. A great many of the Libbey-Owens-Ford employees live on the East Side of the River, therefore the Company was deeply interested in this park project because such a recreation center would help to contribute to the health and happiness of the entire East Side and many other Toledoans as well.

The Directors of the company assigned a substantial block of Ohio Bank Claims to the Metropolitan Park Board in order that it might use them in acquiring this undeveloped property, which already seems destined to play an important part in the recreational life of Toledo.

Once the park district secured the land, federal grants were awarded for labor, supplies, and materials toward the development of the park. Ohio established a state park conservation camp through the Civilian Conservation Corps and work began in October on shelter houses, trails, baseball and softball diamonds, football and soccer fields, tennis courts, running track, and picnic grounds. While development started on the 280 acres, Pearson and other civic-minded leaders campaigned to purchase the remaining forty acres of the southern half of the section from the Blodgett family, where the majority of the virgin forest was located.

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31 Breymaier, 160 – 162.  
32 Ibid., 163 – 164; “Public Statement from the Metropolitan Park Board, April 7, 1935” Local History Room, Toledo Public Library, Metropolitan Park Board Minutes.  
33 Connections between New Deal programs and conservation movement will be discussed at greater length in Chapter Three: Establishing Foundations.
In February 1934, the first meeting of the general committee for the Bank Land Park campaign met. Representatives of supporting organizations from all over the city spoke in favor of purchasing the additional parkland. These organizations in favor of Metroparks included the Zonta Club, Toledo Women’s Business and Professional Club, Toledo Heights Citizens’ League, Rotary Club, Toledo Women’s Club, Toledo Federation of Women’s Clubs, South Side Chamber of Commerce, West Bancroft Civic Association, American Legion, Oregon Township Civic Club, Southeast Civic Association, and Oregon Township Civic Club. The executive committee, primarily comprised of East Toledo Club members, prepared “the Living Memorial” campaign to raise $6,000 for the purchase of the property. “Five groves will be available where persons may mark tress with tablets in ‘the living memorial’ to friends, or relatives, living or dead. Trees will be marked for those making contributions of $10 to $100, and there will be a tablet and scroll for others giving less than $10.”

The campaign took off despite the Depression. Pearson continued to print editorials and subscription coupons in the newspapers. The following month, November 1934, the campaign closed with a list of 130 donors giving $10 to $100 and countless gifts of less than $10. Throughout the entire campaign, Pearson stressed that the park and its annexation benefited all of Toledo and the gifts for its procurement came from all over the city.

Thanks to these gifts, Metroparks purchased the adjacent forty acres and worked with the Civilian Conservation Corps to develop the new park. On August 30, 1934, Metroparks dedicated the park, naming it in honor of George Pearson, with a historical

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34 Breymaier, 167 – 172.
pageant dramatizing Ohio’s history. W. W. Knight announced the official name, Pearson Metropark, at a banquet dinner earlier in June. He commented:

It seemed to the Metropolitan Park board that service such as Mr. Pearson has given, unselfish, and for the public interest and welfare, should be properly and publicly recognized. Such recognition, too, should be given during his lifetime, we felt, not only to honor him, but that it also might be an inspiration to others to give similar unselfish service.

At the dedication, a plaque was unveiled with the following inscription:

This virgin forest and beautiful playground bears the name inscribed above because a grateful community appreciates the life time devotion of a great citizen of Toledo to its welfare. For more than 40 years George W. Pearson, unselfishly and without stint, in gentleness, tolerance and sweetness of spirit, has given the best of himself in a continuing effort to make his home community a finer place in which to live. His work has been ceaseless. His influence for civic betterment will continue into the years.36

Illustration 4: Souvenirs
The cover of the program for the opening celebration for Pearson Metroparks, August 30, 1934 and wooden nickels passed out during the event. Courtesy of Metropolitan Park District of the Toledo Area.

Pearson publicized several civic improvement programs in the *Toledo Blade*. He worked as a community activist and a key player in all manners of civic reform. Eugene Pearson, George’s son, recalled that his father’s involvement in local affairs extended beyond community groups. “His ultimate effort in this regard was his campaign resulting in the acquisition of the Bank Lands by the Metropolitan Park Authority and the establishment of Pearson Park, which was dedicated in 1934.”37

Pearson used his position as a reporter to effect change from a positive stance. Born in 1870 Pearson like early park activists Sylvanus Jermain and Fred DeFrees lived and worked during the heart of the Progressive Era. Pearson exemplified progressivism by advocating for the public good. He defined good citizenship as being politically informed and involved in the community. Pearson exemplified this in his professional career and personal life.38

Pearson’s writings reflected that news media had a definite role to play in looking out for the interest of the people. He is credited with the following newspaper campaigns: the paving of Front Street in East Toledo, construction of Waite High School and the Hi-Level and Cherry Street Bridge, formation of the East Side YMCA, widening of streets throughout Toledo, and the preservation of the last remnant, in Lucas County, of Black Swamp forest that became Pearson Metropark.39

Robert Waldrop, producer of *The Ohio Story’s* radio episode about George Pearson described east Toledo before Pearson’s arrival:

37 Ibid., 16 and 158 – 165.
38 Ibid., 1- 2, 81 and 96 - 97.
39 Ibid., 1 – 2.

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In 1900, East Toledo was a forgotten village of 17,000 inhabitants on the far side of the Cherry Street Bridge. There were actually two settlements… Birmingham and Ironville, separated by three miles of mud, called Front Street. Before George Pearson came nobody ever heard of the East Side except when there was an explosion or a fire or a murder. But from the very day he arrive[d] all that was changed.

There’s hardly a man in East Toledo who doesn’t remember the whistling reporter of Main Street as they called him, stepping briskly along the sidewalks, his semi-official-looking yachting cap perched jauntily over one eye, greeting friends and acquaintances and noting newsworthy items for his newspaper within a newspaper.

Pearson’s years as a reporter coincided with a period of growth for the East Side. Pearson’s articles focused not only on economic development, but character development as well. East Toledo was physically separated from the rest of the city by the Maumee River. It proved important that advances on the East Side had to benefit not only the immediate area but the rest of Toledo as well.40

Pearson’s writings trace the evolution of his thoughts on local events from the Progressive Era through the Great Depression. Throughout the years, Pearson remained consistent in his conviction that the best government governed with the welfare of all humankind in mind. This reflected Progressive Era philosophy. Progressives “believed that modern civilization had reached a point at which most of the ills that had plagued society for millennia could be eradicated, provided, of course, everyone put his or her shoulder to the wheel and pushed together.” Progressive reformers were certain of a brighter future.41

The Social Gospel movement of the Progressive era particularly influenced George Pearson, leading him to turn his faith into action. From the movement’s leaders,

40 Ibid., 112, 124, and 120.
41 Breymaier, 77 and 108; Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, ed. Historians At Work: Who were the Progressives? (Boston: St. Martin’s, 2002) 4.
Pearson learned “that religion should be more than a theory or creed,” but a way of life. Pearson wrote, “I learned that this idea of doing nothing to improve conditions on earth but merely waiting to ‘have pie in the sky’ after death…was not following the Jesus way of Life.”

Pearson loved his country, valued democracy, and lauded the existence of a strong middle class that protected democratic institutions. But, he was never afraid to criticize the actions of the United States government when he saw it lacking in principle, or to take society to task when he saw it lacking in character. He viewed participation in the democratic process as a privilege not to be forsaken. Pearson, himself admired by so many people in his community, in turn found people of character and high ideals that he admired.

Toledo’s Progressive Mayor Samuel “Golden Rule” Jones was one of these people and a fellow devotee of the Social Gospel movement. Meeting in 1893, Pearson befriended Samuel “Golden Rule” Jones after working together on church and YMCA functions, when Pearson covered a series of lectures titled, “Applied Christianity.” Samuel Jones, a wealthy industrialist, sponsored the series. Pearson and Jones instantly recognized their shared commitment to the social gospel movement. Jones started the Acme Sucker Rod Company in 1894 in the middle of a depression. Jones’s commitment to the ideals of the progressive movement was exemplified in his unusual labor practices like paid vacations; company insurance plans; and profit sharing plans. He sold hot lunches at cost in the company cafeteria and built a park, playground, and workers’ hall next door to the factory. The most notable employment policy was the replacement of the

usual comprehensive list of rules for workers with one rule – the golden rule – earning
Jones his nickname. The friendship and political alliance with Mayor Jones shaped
Pearson’s views of the government.

Simultaneously, as George Pearson pushed for the creation of Pearson Metropark,
Louis Campbell, a naturalist, petitioned the board for the preservation of land in the Oak
Openings region. Just west of Toledo, an extensive tract of land existed of mostly sandy
soils and lower swamp land which upon first glance appeared as unproductive as the
Great Black Swamp. Avoided during the early settlement patterns of the twentieth
century, the state sold much of the land in the late nineteenth century. Dr. Edwin
Moseley, Professor of Biology, visited the area in 1897 and became enamored with it. In
1914, Dr. Moseley began his career at Bowling Green State Normal School and renewed
his interest in the Oak Openings region. Working with close friends, Charles Holloway
and Elmer Irwin, Dr. Moseley explored the territory. No settlements, except Crissey,
Ohio, existed in the interior portions of the Oak Openings.

The rare ecosystem of the Oak Openings was tremendously altered due to the
settlement of the region. In the fall of 1871 ditches were dug that lowered the water table
throughout the region for farming. Fires, due to the low water table, raged in Michigan
and throughout northwest Ohio creating large potholes throughout the dried-up marshes.
Moseley argued that the depth of the water table had accounted for the rare flora of the
region.

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43 Ibid., 20 – 21, 85.
44 Art Weber, “What are the Oak Openings?: A History of the Oak Openings Preserve Metropark.” in
Nathan William Easterly, The Vascular Plants of the Oak Openings, (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State
University, 1976) 3; Easterly, 5.
45 Easterly, 5.

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In 1928, Dr. Moseley studied the rare plants of the Oak Openings region which he identified as a 130 square mile area of sandy habitats that ran diagonally across Henry, Fulton, and Lucas Counties. With the introduction of exotic species and the gradual settlement of the area, northwestern Ohio’s Oak Openings habitat, one of seven in the world, was only preserved along ditches, in cemeteries, and along railroad tracks. Soon after the publication of Moseley’s work “Flora of the Oak Openings” by the Ohio Academy of Science, local citizens concerned with nature conservation turned their attention to the region. In 1936, the yearly report from the conservation committee of the Toledo Naturalists’ Association supported Moseley’s argument of the low water table threatening the decline of the unique natural features of the Oak Openings.

Toledo Naturalists’ Association, founded in 1930, was a conglomeration of smaller nature groups that dated back to 1915: Burroughs Nature Club, Toledo Nature Study Society, and the Toledo Field Naturalists’ Association. The groups joined together to be a leader in natural history in Northwest Ohio and strived for education of conservation and the promotion of recreation. The interests of the group were not limited to natural history but included the study of plants, snakes, birds, and astronomy due to the unique ecological condition of Northwest Ohio. The leaders of the Toledo Naturalists’ Association Louis Campbell, Anton Munding, Dr. Edwin Moseley, and J. Max Shepherst worked with the Metropolitan Park Board to conserve the Oak Openings region.

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46 Easterly, 5 – 6.
47 Weber, 3.
49 Edwin R. Sloan, President. Forward (Toledo Naturalists Association, 1936) 1.
In December 1931, Metroparks acquired a sixty-nine acre parcel at Monclova Road and State Route 64. Already utilized unofficially as a favorite picnic spot for area families, Metroparks continued use of the name Springbrook for the park. Within five years, the facilities did not meet the needs of the public, and Metroparks explored the possibilities of expanding the park. Plans for a new Metropark, called Oak Openings, were released to the public.51

Toledo citizens were not the only residents in Ohio organizing and advocating conservation efforts of the Oak Openings. A statewide organization representing the various conservation groups throughout the state, The League of Ohio Nature Clubs, worked to achieve the following goals: “to secure unity of action in the conservation of the natural resources of the state, especially the wildlife resources, both plant and animal; to encourage appreciation and to disseminate knowledge of outdoor Ohio; and to promote fellowship among the field naturalists of the state.” The League lobbied the state assembly to take the following steps toward a stronger statewide conservation program; the group supported the creation of wildlife sanctuaries, state forests, historical sites, and/or state parks, the publication of educational booklets on geology, flora, and fauna of the state and the history of state parks, the construction of more nature trails within these areas to raise the public’s interest and curiosity in these areas as well as to deliver an educational message to Ohio’s citizens. The League of Nature Clubs specifically mentioned key natural resources needing protection that included the Oak Openings region in Lucas County and state-owned canal lands as well as the protection of the bob-white quail, owls, and hawks and the elimination of pest hunts. The organization worked

51 Weber, 3. Louis W. Campbell. *The Oak Openings of Northwestern Ohio*, states that Springbrook opened, in 1929, as one of the first acts of the new Metropolitan Park Board and that additional acreage was purchased in 1936 (page 26).
to facilitate a partnership between the State Division of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Department of Education to create a program for schools to teach the principles of conservation. To promote and ensure the best conservation practices throughout the state, the League of Nature Clubs encourages cooperation among various state agencies: the Archaeological and Historical Society, the Agricultural Experiment Station, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and the Department of Education.\textsuperscript{52}

The Toledo Naturalist Association standing alone on conservation and preservation issues remained handicapped to influence state decisions. Its affiliation with other organizations like the Garden Forum, League of Ohio Nature Clubs, and Lucas County Natural Resources Council made the group more effective. For example, successful lobbying retained the bob-white quail as a song bird in Ohio. The group was not successful in efforts to convince Ohio legislators of the need of the Oak Openings State Park. Yet, the Toledo Naturalist Association 1939 Record boldly stated, “The need for conservation of such tracts of land is very imperative.”\textsuperscript{53}

Even though the bulk of the lobbying from the League of Ohio Nature Clubs argued for the creation of a state forest and the Toledo Naturalists’ Association worked to conserve the Oak Openings region either as a park or a state forest, the educational campaigns of both organizations worked in favor of the Metropolitan Park Board and its acquisition of more public lands for recreational benefits. An article, by Robert K. Lampton, published in the \textit{Toledo Naturalists Association Yearly Bulletin} (1936) studied\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{52} The League of Ohio Nature Clubs, TNA 1939, 19 – 21.
\textsuperscript{53} Lillian Kreuger, \textit{The 1939 Record}, TNA 1939, 11.
the rare orchids in the Oak Openings; the work illustrated the organization’s stance in regards to conservation and the need for parklands. According to the article:

For this reason should we not enjoy our wild orchids in the field, when we find a mature, healthy, blooming plant, jealously guarding its identity and location from those who would tear it up by the roots. Only in this way, and by trying to actually PRACTICE the BEST CONSERVATION METHODS, may we be reasonably sure of preserving our native citizens.54

Preservation of the natural environment served as the primary motive for groups working toward the expansion of Oak Openings Preserve. But preservation of the Oak Openings region could only be achieved through conservation and careful resource management. Yet who would determine the management philosophies to conserve and then preserve the land?

By December 1938, the park board acquired a 272 acre tract at Reed and Wilkins Roads. Plans were made for this area to become the nucleus for one of the largest parks in northwestern Ohio. Citizens and organizations throughout Lucas County overwhelmingly supported the plan. Officials from the Toledo Zoological Society supported the development of the park by stocking lakes, man-made and natural, with fish, and by releasing deer, pheasant, and beaver in the park. The Toledo Garden Forum established conservation and wildflower plots. Metroparks accomplished park development through WPA workers that constructed shelters, grills, tables, trails, dams, and lakes, and was further advanced with completed reforestation projects.55 While preserving the land, Metroparks managed the property well into the 1960s as an attractive area for visitors rather than a nature preserve. Particularly, throughout the Great Depression, the CCC and

55 Weber, 3. Connections between the New Deal programs and conservation movement will be discussed at greater length in Chapter Three: Establishing Foundations.
WPA workers covered the wispy, sand blown look of the Oak Openings landscape beneath pine forests.⁵⁶ These early park developments reflect acts of conservation rather than preservation.

Like other cities, beginning around 1890, East Toledo’s growth was exponential, and by 1920, the growth ended. The Great Depression brought many of these advancements to a screeching halt. Yet, with the election of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the implementation of the New Deal, many local projects received federal funding to offer aid to the unemployed. The board members of Metropolitan Park Board found several development projects throughout the park district that met the standards for federal aid and helped not only to pull Toledo through the Great Depression, but establish the first parks of the Metropolitan Park District of the Toledo Area.

Since 1890 amateurs and volunteers were the driving force in conservation history. Even though the movement further depended on professional conservationists and government agencies for expertise, staying power, organization, and money, the amateurs provided high standards, independence, and integrity serving as the movement’s conscience. No matter what the challenge, business interests, bureaucrats, or professional conservationists, the amateurs’ passion became the heart and soul of the movement that found the wilderness to be representative of courage, self-reliance, physical strength, and dexterity.⁵⁷

The river parks – Side Cut, Farnsworth, Bend View, and Providence – were a prefect fit for the foundations of the new Metropolitan Park District. The board’s attention to the work completed by the planning commission in the early twentieth

⁵⁷ Fox, 333 – 334.
century during the first period of the conservation movement. The converting of the abandon canal lands to parklands addressed eyesores throughout the county building on the city beautiful movement. A majority of the abandon canal lands were converted into a super highway, State Route 24, as part of the federal work relief projects during the Great Depression. The remaining canal lands not needed for the highway and not viable for farming or other economic developments were turned into parks. This built on the foundations of the city efficient movement – the wise use of all resource for the benefit of all.

While the river parks attracted the board’s attention for practical purposes, private citizens drew attention to two natural areas threatened by development. The support found within the community almost guaranteed the success of Metroparks. With land secured to cement the Metroparks in the Toledo area, the board was burdened by the need to develop land holdings and create parks. Jeopardized by the financial difficulties of the Great Depression, the board needed to analyze how to combat the financial burden of future development and balance the management philosophies of conservation and preservation. The federal government reacting to the problem of unemployment created federal work relief programs overseen by the Department of the Interior. Metroparks of the Toledo Area capitalized on the opportunity to provide work for local residents, develop land, and implement national conservation standards.
Chapter Three

Phase Two: A New Deal for the Parks

The purchase of Pearson Metropark and Oak Openings completed the work of George Pearson and Lou Campbell. Combined with the leasing of the state canal lands, these parks made the dream of a regional park district a reality. In the years between the Great Depression and the emergence of the environmental movement in the 1960s, the conservation movement shifted focus from resource efficiency to quality of life.

Conservation policies in the earlier twentieth century centered on forests, rangelands, and water.¹ The development of the early Metroparks mirrored this national trend. The board focused on property along the Miami and Erie Canal, the Maumee River, Ten Mile Creek, and Swan Creek. The property at Pearson Metroparks had drawn the attention of local conservationists once people started to harvest trees from the woods for firewood and at Oak Openings, the rare ecosystem disappeared beneath homes and farmlands.

During this time period, the initial parks were developed and opened. Introducing nature interpretation changed the philosophical approach to how the parks would be used and viewed by the public. Through educational efforts Metroparks examined the quality of life it was providing to its constituents. Recreational resources were no longer embedded in the simple pleasure derived from nature; now the parks were establishing a clear perception on the importance of conserving land and its unique natural features.

Parklands evolved into more than blunt natural and recreational resources; ecosystems were at work filtering the earth and keeping cities and residents healthy and clean. One idea still prevalent today is a holistic approach encompassing a multi-genre center including recreation, conservation, education, and escapism-relaxation. The tools provided through interpretation created a transition from the establishment of foundational parklands to the broadening concepts of what role Metroparks should take in conservation and preservation through interpretation of natural resources.

By the time of the Great Depression, the umbrella of conservation spread to include grasses, soils, and wildlife which resulted in federal laws: the Taylor Grazing Act (1934), Soil Conservation Act (1935), and Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act (1937). Conservation became aligned with the business-minded Republican Party. The 1924 Clarke-McNary Act illustrated this. The act codified the new alliance of conservation and business by offering cooperation and incentives for the improvement of privately owned timber. The American Forestry Association (AFA) was divided on this issue. Many, like Robert Underwood Johnson, an advocate for Yosemite National Park, resigned from the AFA, but many members supported the act.2

Joint efforts of businessmen and conservationists fit perfectly with the progressive programs of professional management and efficiency. It avoided wasteful political battles by conferring the power of decision to the experts. But, it was an unequal partnership controlled by business. Businessmen and engineers began leading the conservation movement, ultimately creating a business not a political issue.3

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3 Ibid.
To tackle the Great Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt launched the New Deal. It incorporated the goals to reform business and financial practices and to provide jobs for the unemployed. Like President Theodore Roosevelt, President Franklin D. Roosevelt took a personal interest in the details of the nation’s conservation policy. The history of New Deal conservation reflected in large measure Roosevelt’s own priorities of “the gospel of conservation.” During the 1930s and 1940s, the federal government promoted conservation in ways that benefited the jobless through the creation of programs like the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). At the time of President Roosevelt’s election, the Republican Party controlled the organized conservation movement with business interests in mind. Conscious of this, Roosevelt appointed Republicans Harold Ickes to the position of Secretary of the Interior and Henry Wallace to the position of Head of the Department of Agriculture; although, by 1932, Ickes and Wallace supported the Democratic platform for public benefit. These appointments did not go unnoticed by leaders in the conservation movement. Roosevelt took steps towards untwining business interests and conservation by defining the use of land. Conservation and preservation of natural resources became components of federal policy that integrated innovations in social welfare launching the second period of the conservation movement.4

Wise management of natural resources became a hallmark of the New Deal era through conservation programs. One particular program, the Emergency Conservation Work (ECW) operated from 1933 through 1937 as an independent organization by Executive Order 6101 to relieve unemployment and restore the country’s natural resources through public works. The work accomplished through the ECW continued

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4 Fox, 183 – 184, 188; Merchant, 175.
under the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), established in 1937 and operated through 1942. These New Deal programs employed an army of young men to do work that did not interfere with common labor employment. The CCC was confined to forestry, the prevention of soil erosion, flood control, and other similar projects. Typical jobs completed by the CCC included planting trees, digging reservoirs, and building dams and fire towers. The young men worked throughout the National Parks as well as state and county parks. The program employed 2.5 million men throughout the nation. They were required to live at the CCC camps and earned $30 a month which $25 had to be sent home.5

To further mitigate the problems of the Great Depression, Congress passed the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act in 1935. This legislation created the Works Progress Administration (WPA), renamed in 1939 to the Works Projects Administration, one of the largest New Deal agencies and operated until 1943. The projects completed by the CCC and WPA manipulated the natural landscape for human use. Roosevelt worked to bridge the gap between Pinchot’s conservation and Muir’s preservation. He said, “A forest is an integral part of our natural land covering, and the most potent factor in maintaining nature’s delicate balance… The preservation of the forests must be lifted above mere dollars and cents considerations.”6

After visiting Glacier National Park, in 1934, Roosevelt made nationalistic appeals to his ideas of conservation. He said, “There is nothing so American as our

national parks. The scenery and wildlife are native and the fundamental idea behind the parks is native. It is, in brief, that the country belongs to the people.” Parks were considered a vital source for spiritual rejuvenation, and through New Deal programs, parks became more accessible. Roadways, shelter houses, baseball and softball fields, skating rinks, and picnic areas were built. The New Deal brought about a political realignment of the conservation movement, linking it with the Democratic Party. The national parks and Metroparks grew significantly due to the New Deal programs. But did it achieve a balance between conservation and preservation? Muir would certainly argue against the destruction of the natural area for the construction of visitor services. Metroparks benefitted from the federal relief programs and worked to balance conservation and preservation.

Toledo, Ohio enjoyed a period of three decades of growth, from 1890 to 1920. This development gradually slowed, and in 1929, undercurrents throughout the city’s economy hinted toward trouble. The city experienced a decline in construction projects, real estate transfers, jobs, and six of the largest companies reported stock declines. During the summer of 1931, the state liquidated and closed five Toledo banks. Assets equaled over $125 million. While not the only city to experience this, “no other city in the nation fell as far or as fast.” Coupled with layoffs in the automobile industry, Toledo was unable to provide poor relief and meet its operating budget. In 1932, city officials asked for federal relief.

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7 Fox, 201.
8 Ibid., 217.
Toledo civic groups and the *Toledo Blade* frustrated by the inability of city administrators to identify definite projects called for improvements to roads, parks, and other civic services.\(^{10}\) In April 1933, Director Secretary for Metroparks W. W. Farnsworth worked with other state organizations to secure a portion of the gas tax in Ohio for unemployment relief funds and started to research the possibility of aid from the federal government for reforestation projects. Early that summer, Farnsworth utilized local relief funds available through Waterville and Monclova Townships to furnish unemployed men to work in the parks.\(^{11}\)

Metroparks received a letter June 5, 1933, from the federal Director of the Emergency Conservation Work, announcing the establishment of a state conservation camp on June 1 under the Department of Interior’s National Park Service. Referred to as Ohio State Park No. 1, Metroparks rented eight acres of property from Dr. B. B. Buck in Waterville, Ohio for the camp and started to interview candidates for thirteen positions provided for by the New Deal program. Later that August, Mr. D. B. Alexander, Inspector of State Parks with the ECW, toured the area. Impressed with the camp and the work completed, he recommended the establishment of two more camps. The first stationed in Swanton, Ohio and the other at Pearson Metropark in Oregon, Ohio.\(^{12}\)

The Civilian Conservation Corps worked throughout the park district tearing down private cottages and stopping erosion along the banks of the Maumee River; furthermore, the CCC worked on reforestation projects, particularly at Springbrook and Pearson Metroparks and building trails. In September 1934, the Washington representative of the State Park ECW, impressed by the work completed throughout

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\(^{10}\) Dorn, 64.

\(^{11}\) Metroparks Board Minutes, April 5 and June 7, 1933, TLCPL.

\(^{12}\) Metroparks Board Minutes, June, July, and August 1933, TLCPL.
Metroparks, suggested continuing development of the park district under the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), particularly the Works Progress Administration. The following month, the CCC camps closed and the board recommended the same supervisors to FERA. This provided consistency as Metroparks shifted between the two federal programs.\textsuperscript{13}

The Toledo Metropolitan Park Board received a letter, February 1935, from State Engineer L. A. Bouley representing the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works. It reflected that the bulk of its expenditures were to be spent on wages for small scale construction projects. Bouley wrote:

\begin{quote}
The State planning Board of your State, with the assistance of the State Planning Consultant of the National Resources Board of the Engineer of the Public Works Administration, is cooperating with the President of the United States in outlining a National Program for reemployment and development of natural resources.

To secure inventory of needed and useful work projects as a partial basis for this program, a survey is being undertaken to determine the need for public projects which will provide opportunities for employment of the maximum practicable amount of direct labor.\textsuperscript{14}
\end{quote}

Throughout the nation, the WPA employed nine million people and built 125,000 public buildings and 8,000 parks.\textsuperscript{15}

Under the auspices of the WPA program, projects had to be approved by the state and federal government and a sponsoring agency paid for a portion of the materials. Metroparks received notification in August 1935 that all projects submitted were approved. The following month, Farnsworth reported to the board:

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\textsuperscript{13} Metroparks Board Minutes, November 1933 – October 1934, TLCPL.
\textsuperscript{14} Metropolitan Park Board of the Toledo Area Meeting Minutes, February 4, 1935, MS 38, Local History Room, Toledo Lucas County Public Library.
\textsuperscript{15} Goldfield,802.
\end{flushright}
At Pearson Park, the completion of the cinder roads and parking spaces with their guard rails; the construction of tennis courts, athletic fields and recreational areas; the completion of foot trails, general landscaping, elimination of poison ivy, moving of trees, planting seedlings, etc. At Maumee, the grading of the Carney piece [of property] and completion of parking space thereon; the moving of the old toilet from the hollow to the Carney piece [of property], the protection of exposed tree roots with stone riprapping and fill, the completion of planting, landscaping, etc. At Waterville, the filling of parts of the old canal bed, the grading and stoning of parking spaces, the construction of an erosion wall, the riprapping of gullies, the completion of finished grading, planting, landscaping, etc. At Bend View, the construction of a roadway down the canal bed, the filling in of about 200 feet of the canal by cutting down the towpath and thus providing parking space for cars, and access to this area from the River Road. At Providence, the completion of the roads and parking spaces, the building of a dam, a wing wall and bridges, the general landscaping, cleaning up, and planting of the entire area including the islands; the building of tables and ovens for all of the areas.

Throughout the parks, about 500 men were employed through WPA. Metroparks relied not only on federal relief programs but partnered with local agencies to complete park design plans. The park district worked with the City of Toledo and other partnering organizations to further projects. The City of Toledo provided stone from the quarry located at the minimum security jail for trails and parking lots. The Toledo Naturalists Association (TNA) sponsored the construction of Macomber Lodge at Pearson Metropark and worked with the Toledo Zoo and the City of Oregon for construction materials from razed buildings. After completing Macomber Lodge, the Toledo Naturalists Association took on the responsibility of building maintenance and public programming. Metroparks worked with the County Engineering Department to excavate two lakes at Pearson. The County needed the dirt to fill outlying ditches. 16

Metroparks employed boys for routine maintenance work through the National Youth Administration (NYA), part of the Works Progress Administration. The NYA

16 Metroparks Board minutes, January – December 1936, TLCPL.
performed two functions. First, it provided grants for students to stay enrolled in high school and college courses. Second, the NYA provided vocational training to students that dropped out of school due to financial problems.\textsuperscript{17}

Each year, Metroparks sponsored WPA projects throughout the park district. In 1937, proposed plans included stone entrances, tennis courts, Adirondack shelters, dams, and landscaping. Starting in 1938, the Metroparks felt increased financial constraints as a result of the Great Depression. At a meeting on April 5, 1938 with Mr. D. C. Riblet, Project Engineer of the local WPA, Metroparks could commit to only $3,000 cash for supplies and an additional $5,000 for in-kind donations, which included trees and shrubs from the nurseries at Pearson and Springbrook Metroparks. Throughout 1938, the board, very conscientious of the $3,000 pledge to WPA projects, had difficulty paying bills. In November 1938, if the funds were not released from the County Commissioners to pay bills all work would come to a halt. The county released the funds and the following year supported the development of Metropark’s newest park, Oak Openings, through the assistance of the WPA.

In 1939 and 1940, projects throughout the park district slowed. Metroparks experienced difficulty receiving approval from the state. Administrators were unsure as to the life of the program. The number of eligible men tapered off as a result of more profitable jobs available in factories as well as military service. In December 1940, WPA work resumed in all the Metroparks, but only with the intention to complete projects already started. The change in work force reflected the end of the Great Depression.

\textsuperscript{17} Roger Biles, \textit{A New Deal for the American People} (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1991) 108.
Illustration 5: Construction at Side Cut
Workers installing water pipe at Side Cut Metropark during the Great Depression. Courtesy of Metropolitan Park District of Toledo Area and the Toledo Blade.

Illustration 6: WPA workers at Side Cut
The frame of the Lamb Center at Side Cut Metropark built by federal workers during the Great Depression. Courtesy of Metropolitan Park District of the Toledo Area and the Toledo Blade.
Illustration 7: Lamb Center Porch
WPA workers finish the porch at the Lamb Center at Side Cut Metropark. Courtesy of Metropolitan Park District of Toledo Area and the Toledo Blade.

Illustration 8: Lamb Center
The Lamb Center completed by WPA workers during the Great Depression. Courtesy of Metropolitan Park District of Toledo Area and the Toledo Blade.
Illustration 9: Lock #3
Lock #3 of the Maumee Side Cut of the Miami and Erie Canal after WPA workers replaced the whaler doors as well as missing and damaged lock stones. Courtesy of Metropolitan Park District of the Toledo Area and the Toledo Blade.

Illustration 10: Overlook
The completed overlook at Side Cut Metropark. Courtesy of Metropolitan Park District of the Toledo Area and the Toledo Blade.
Illustration 11: Side Cut Metropark
Distant picture of Side Cut Metropark showing WPA improvements that included the construction of the Lamb Center, Silver Lake, and Lock #3. This picture reveals that the park environment was “built” by the Metroparks. The lands along the banks of the Maumee River while proving picturesque needed to be managed by the Park District. Courtesy of Metropolitan Park District of Toledo Area and the Toledo Blade.

Illustration 12: Indianola Shelter
WPA constructing Indianola Shelter at Farnsworth Metropark. Courtesy of Metropolitan Park District of Toledo Area and the Toledo Blade.
Illustration 13: Bend View Metropark
WPA construction at Bend View Metropark. Courtesy of Metropolitan Park District of the Toledo Area and the Toledo Blade.

Illustration 14: Manager’s House
Manager’s House at Oak Openings Preserve. Courtesy of Metropolitan Park District of the Toledo Area and the Toledo Blade.
Illustration 15: Construction at Pearson Metropark
Work starting at Pearson Metropark, boys starting to plant trees to reforest the park property. Courtesy of Metropolitan Park District of Toledo Area and the Toledo Blade.

Illustration 16: Planting Trees at Pearson
Courtesy of Metropolitan Park District of the Toledo Area and the Toledo Blade.
Illustration 17: Cinder piles
Piles of cinders along the proposed trail through Pearson Metropark. Courtesy of Metropolitan Park District of Toledo Ohio and the Toledo Blade.

Illustration 18: CCC Worker
CCC workers poses with tree stump at Pearson Metropark. The illegal harvest of virgin Black Swamp Forest launched the preservation campaign for the lasting remaining remnant of Black Swamp forest in Lucas County. Courtesy of Metropolitan Park District of Toledo Ohio and the Toledo Blade.
Illustration 19: Moving Trees
CCC workers moving a tree at Pearson Metropark in preparation to build a shelter house rather than cut it down. Courtesy of Metropolitan Park District of Toledo Ohio and the Toledo Blade.

Illustration 20: WPA Men at Work
Construction of the Macomber Lodge at Pearson Metroparks was a WPA project funded by the Toledo Naturalists Association. Courtesy of Metropolitan Park District of Toledo Ohio and the Toledo Blade.
Illustration 21: Skating Rink
Three different photos of workers constructing the skating rink at Pearson Metropark. Courtesy of Metropolitan Park District of Toledo Ohio and the Toledo Blade.
The ponds at Pearson Metropark were dug by the County Engineers during the Great Depression. WPA workers put finishing touches around the pond by building bridges and docks. Courtesy of Metropolitan Park District of Toledo Ohio and the Toledo Blade.

In 1942, the WPA completed all projects in Metroparks and growth within the park district slowed as a result of the Second World War. Manpower and resources were scarce. Attendance declined as a result of gasoline and tire rationing. Finances permitted the park district to operate and maintain, but not grow. Following the war, Metroparks responded to citizens frequently expressed concerns for more open space to accommodate the recreational needs for future citizens; their response was centered on enhancing its land acquisition program. This was made possible through a private donation. In 1941, Arthur J. Secor bequeathed to Metroparks property at Jefferson and Huron Streets to be sold and the proceeds used for park development in memory of his
parents. Thanks to the proceeds from this downtown parking lot, Metroparks purchased 225 acres in 1949 and started to develop Secor Metropark.\textsuperscript{18}

Part of the development plans for Secor included a formalization of the interpretative programs offered throughout Metroparks. In March 1955, Director-Secretary J. Max Shepherst requested the board to explore the possibility to employ the services of a high school teacher qualified to conduct nature programs throughout the park system during the summer months. Shepherst envisioned arrangements with public schools whereby the naturalist could be jointly employed by both agencies so that nature education programs conducted during the school term could be carried over into an outdoor program in the parks during the summer. He pointed out that a gap existed between natural science education in the classroom and first-hand observation in the field. Shepherst argued that the gap should be bridged in order to give more meaning to what children learn from a textbook.\textsuperscript{19}

The board granted Shepherst permission, and he worked to implement his plan by building on the twenty-year partnership with the Toledo Naturalists’ Association (TNA). A special meeting of the Conservation Committee of the TNA was held on April 24 to discuss ways of expanding the practical interpretative program of conservation and nature education in the public schools, particularly at the elementary level. The committee decided to submit a letter to Toledo Public School officials recommending that a full-time naturalist be employed by the Board of Education, with the suggestion that a working arrangement be made with the Park Board whereby the naturalists would be

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Toledo Board Minutes, September 9, 1941, TLCPL; Scott Carpenter, ed. \textit{Forever: Celebrating 75 Years} (Toledo: Metropolitan Park District of the Toledo Area, 2003) 18.
\item Metroparks Board Minutes, March 4, 1955, TLCPL.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
employed in the summer months and on weekends during the spring and fall to carry out a nature program in the park.  

Nothing came to fruition for partnering with local schools to hire a naturalist, but Shepherst’s proposal planted a seed. The following year, May 1956, George D. Welles, Jr., editor of the monthly publication for the Toledo Zoo and author of nature articles for local newspapers, offered to edit a monthly news bulletin for the park. The board directed staff to construct cost estimates and a tentative mailing list. In August, it was decided to publish a quarterly newsletter.

The first newsletter, *The Toledo Metropolitan Park News*, published Spring 1957, printed the intent “to acquaint the people of the Toledo Area with the Recreational Features and Facilities of their County Parks.” The quarterly newsletter served as an interpretative tool to publicize the park system. The mission statement for the park appeared across the bottom of the first page “to preserve forever for the Toledo Area the beauty and history of the Maumee valley.” Here the board identified the goal to preserve natural and historical areas. By acquiring land and managing it, Metroparks protected it from commercial development.

While “hundreds of thousands” of visitors enjoyed Metroparks in a dozen different ways – hiking, picnicking, studying nature, fishing, boating, mushrooming, skating, or playing baseball, few “inquire[d] into the reason behind such blessings.”

“Before [the] parks were given physical impetus during the Great Depression, as a way to provide jobs and a living for thousands when there was no other work available, Toledo’s Metropolitan Park System started out as a dream” of civic-minded reformers “to preserve

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20 Metroparks Board minutes, May 6, 1955, TLCPL.
21 Metroparks Board Minutes, May 4 and August 6, 1956, TLCPL.
forever, for all the people, some of the best natural beauty spots, some of the most
historical sites in an area where beauty and history are so familiar as to almost breed
contempt.”22 As an organization, Metroparks’ focus primarily, according to the first
newsletter, fell to nature.

So far, our Metropolitan Parks have spoken for themselves. But their
voice has been a quiet one – the very voice has been a quiet one – the
very voice of Nature, if you will. The song of the wind through the pines,
the golden voice of the warbler, the trill of the toad, the stealthy tread of
the deer, the happy laughter of the children – these long have seemed
enough.

But the Metropolitan Park Board realizes that in this modern day of noisy
distractions, Nature’s voice sometimes is unheard, forgotten in our frantic
search for more comfort, more speed, more recognition, more physical
gain. It may be too late to let some of the grown-ups who have lost it, -
hear it, feel it again. But it is never too late for a child, if he or she is
given the right impetus. And in today’s children lies the future of our
Metropolitan Parks.

Perhaps this quarterly bulletin from the Toledo Metropolitan Park System
can add further to that impetus, already provided in our elementary
schools and by the Boy and Girl Scouts and other youth organizations.
And, perhaps, through their children and this miniature loud-speaker for
Nature’s voice, many parents who have lost touch with the out-of-doors
will regain it through visiting their parks more frequently – WITH
THEIR CHILDREN.23

To advance the preservation goal, Metroparks identified children as its primary
audience to inspire preservation and instill a love for nature to ensure the future of
the organization.

In 1929 when Metroparks was created, the board and citizens throughout
Lucas County proceeded in acquiring lands as cost effectively as possible and
were guided by the Bartholomew and Associates Plan. Little discussion transpired
as to what would take place in the parklands. George Pearson and Louis Campbell

22 The Toledo Metropolitan Park News vol. 1 no. 1 (Spring 1957): 1.
23 Ibid., 4.
emphasized preserving the unique natural features of the Great Black Swamp and Oak Openings. As a result of the Great Depression and New Deal programs, Metroparks balanced conservation, preservation, and recreational goals. Conservation practices included reforestation of the land at Pearson, Springbrook, and Oak Openings. Preservation of natural resources included responding to the request of east Toledo organizations and nature lovers to purchase land to save the last remaining remnant of Great Black Swamp forest and lands in the Oak Openings region. For Pearson conservation practices equaled preservation. At Pearson planning of trees attempted to restore the natural environment of the Great Black Swamp forest. At Springbrook and Oak Openings, management planted pine plantations for soil conservation in response to the Dust Bowl problems on the Great Plains. These pine plantations however buried the unique ecosystem of the Oak Openings beneath their boughs. Recreational plans included camps for workers, Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts, and the development of trails, tennis courts, baseball diamonds, and soccer fields. The balance between conservation, preservation, and recreation was a necessary game to play for the Metropolitan Park Board. Supported by tax monies, public access to the parks and public support were integral to Metroparks.

In 1957 the Board continued to engage the public in meetings to gather feedback on plans for a Nature Education building at Secor Metropark. An advisory committee formed to help plan for the Nature Education Building. It consisted of members from organizations throughout Toledo with an interest in conservation and nature education. The first meeting held November 18, 1957 consisted of representatives from the Toledo
Women’s Club, Toledo Naturalists Association, Men’s Garden Club, Toledo Garden Forum, Toledo Horticultural Society, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Lucas County Board of Education, Toledo Public Schools, and Toledo Chamber of Commerce. The proposed nature center would fill a void in the area by conducting nature programs primarily for school children and provide a venue for nature hobbyists. That year Metroparks employed their first naturalist to head the nature interpretative program.24

The development of the interpretative program mirrored national trends and served as “the guiding hand and professional communicator [for] environmental awareness and understanding.”25 In Interpreting Our Heritage (1957) Freeman Tilden, a pioneer of interpretative philosophy and the “father of modern park interpretation,” defined interpretation as an educational activity which aimed to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects through firsthand experience and illustrative media, rather than to simply communicate factual information. Interpretation revealed the larger truth behind any statement of fact and capitalized on the mere curiosity of the audience.26

For Metroparks, interpretation was an important tool to transition between the second period and third period of the conservation movement. The second period during the Great Depression put men to work throughout the nation. In Metroparks these federal work relief programs developed the infrastructure needed to meet public demands for use of the parklands. The third period, known as the environmental movement, started in the

26 Tilden, 8 – 9.
1960s and emphasized the restoration of the natural environment, biodiversity, and protection of natural resources.

Tilden offered six principles of interpretation. First, connect with the audience – make the subject matter relevant to them. Second, interpretation is not an endless list of facts, but revelation based on information. Third, interpretation is an interdisciplinary art that tells a story. Fourth, the main goal of interpretation is to provoke the audience. Fifth, an interpreter must tell the whole story, not just a part because the complexities of a story interest the audience and entice them to learn more. The final principle is that interpretation for children and adults should utilize a fundamentally different approach. Most importantly, Tilden summarized that through interpretation, demonstrations, and hands-on programs audiences learned that items are not frozen in time. Ultimately, interpretation brought the subject to life.  

An updated assessment of interpretation techniques building upon Tilden’s work can be found in Larry Beck and Ted Cable’s book Interpretation for the 21st Century (2002). Beck and Cable identified fifteen principles of interpretation. These included the importance of developing a complete thesis, incorporating technology, the importance of a well researched program over duration, and, most importantly, passion.

The goal of an interpretative program is to widen horizons – to reach a great understanding. Through the work of interpretation, Metroparks stressed that few natural areas remained throughout Lucas County. These lands needed to be preserved for the future and through interpretative programming Metroparks could instill the message into the future generation ensuring their permanence.

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27 Tilden, 9.
Yet while set aside for preservation, the lands protected by Metroparks and national parklands were threatened through built environments. The various activities enjoyed by thousands altered the delicate balance found in the natural environment. “All wild things, plant and animal, are in delicate adjustment to many other things around them. When we alter any factor, we set in motion a chain of events that may shake the very earth on which we stand.” 28 Land management practices – mowing fields, planting trees, building roads, and constructing trails – disrupted the balance of nature. Interpretation yielded deeper understanding and allowed for greater appreciation of these areas. Knowledge led to protection of the sites. The education imparted by Metroparks was instrumental to the success of the 1971 operating levy. Through strong marketing techniques and campaigning, Lucas County residents were beginning to understand the large schemata of the entire park system. Residents would no longer associate with individual parks based on proximity; they recognized ownership of the regional system, and through that knowledge Metroparks progressed into something bigger and more unique; they became a district. 29

29 Tilden, 38.
Chapter Four
Phase Three: Citizens for Metroparks

The third period of the conservation movement started in the 1960s and is referred to as the environmental movement. The movement broadened its focus to include pollution, population growth, and urban decay. Rather than simply conservation land, the environmental movement focused on the restoration of the natural world. For the Metroparks, the environmental movement manifested itself in an immense public support for the district and public interest in the future of the parks.

Citizen activism thrived in the 1970s as the campaigning and marketing efforts of Metroparks found new success. Grassroots social activism dominated the campaign trails of the 1971 operating levy. Without any support from local media avenues, Metroparks successfully passed a levy for one park even though they historically failed to rally support for the entire system. Local residential support reflected the importance of the park, the need for conserving natural resources, and hinted toward an interest in local history.

Since the inception of Metroparks, the organization had been financially supported through annual allocations from the county commissioners and private donations. Due to the economic strains of the 1960s, rising inflation and decreased annual income from the county, Metroparks struggled with financial problems. Without appropriate funding, Metroparks was forced to curtail operations, land acquisition, and
permanent park improvements. Development at Swan Creek, the newest park, had already stopped. The Local Government Fund money could only be used for maintenance and operations and did not replace the money from the Lucas County Commissioners. For Metroparks to continue its maintenance and care of the lands within the park district, it needed to solve its financial problems.

In preparation for the third attempt at the levy, in November 1971, Metroparks mailed a survey to determine whether or not a public group could be created to rally behind Metroparks. Although the survey asked simple hypothetical questions, over 300 people responded positively. The volunteer group, Citizens for Metro Parks, organized May 1971 with the purpose to “conduct an impartial, outside review of the Park District’s current financial resources; and of its financial needs in terms of present and foreseeable responsibilities to the community…” and to help win the November 1971 election requesting a half mil property tax.¹

Robert Metz, director-secretary of Metroparks, argued that the first two levies failed due to product identification problems. Residents throughout Lucas County aligned themselves with one park: Pearson, Side Cut, or Oak Openings rather than with Metroparks as an organization. Furthermore, the name of the organization confused many. Initially called the Toledo Metropolitan Park District, many concluded that the organization was a function of the city and taxpayers living outside the city limits refused to pay taxes for city playgrounds.²

Several steps were taken during the third campaign to correct public perceptions of the organization. First, the official name changed to Metropolitan Park District of the Toledo Area; "… a taxing effort,” 23.

¹ Minutes of the Operating Committee, Citizens for Metro Parks, August 19, 1971, Administrative Offices, Metropolitan Park District of the Toledo Area; “… a taxing effort,” 23.
² “… a taxing effort,” 23.
Toledo Area. Second, neither individual parks nor the organization were any longer
generically described as “parks,” but referred to by official park names or the nickname
for the organization, “metroparks.” The third step included the direct involvement of
interested local people through the creation of Citizens for Metro Parks and other
volunteer groups to assist with the levy and care of the parks. Citizens for Metro Parks
hosted programs and special events, like canoe races and a driving tour, leading up to the
election and familiarizing the public with Metroparks. Finally through campaign
literature, the board and volunteers communicated the main message for the levy to the
public. It focused on the ecological impact of parks: “The importance of saving the
natural parklands in growing metropolitan areas so that you and your children will be
able to know nature, enjoy outdoor recreation close to home, and have, in the final
analysis, the environment necessary to sustain life.”

Professional organizations throughout the county supported the request for funds
by Metroparks. These included the Toledo Area Chamber of Commerce, the Naturalists
Association, and the Northwest Ohio Natural Resources Association. The United Auto
Workers union at plants, local grocery stores, soft drink distributors, beer distributors,
and the Food Dealers Association circulated fliers to inform voters throughout the county
on the benefits of parklands. Campaign literature centered on the following message: “to
preserve forever for the Toledo area the beauty, natural history, and dramatic past of the
Maumee Valley.” Metroparks and their volunteers were influenced by the leaders of the
environmental movement. Natural areas were quickly vanishing and established
parklands needed to be maintained through a management plan that balanced the natural

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3 Ibid., 23, 53 - 54.
4 Ibid., 54.
environment with intended human use. Individual support of the levy allowed participation in the large environmental movement to save the loss of land due to urbanization which resulted in increased air and water pollution. Metz argued that the cause of green space and regional parks created a tremendous amount of active participation that led to the success of the November 1971 levy which passed by fifty-three percent.

The success of the levy generated a million dollars for Metroparks’ operating budget. This permitted Metroparks in October 1972 to reopen Bend View Metropark after its closure for ten years. Located in Waterville along the remains of the Miami and Erie Canal, access to Bend View was limited to pedestrian and/or water traffic. The public and members of the Buckeye Trail Association celebrated with a “walk-in” to the park. Additionally, the successful levy campaign permitted Metroparks to complete the development of and open Swan Creek Preserve in October 1973.

The same month, Dr. William Mewborn, a local veterinarian, presented a slide show to the park board on the estate of Robert A. Stranahan. The property totaled approximately 754 acres and was nestled among Sylvania Road on the north, Central Road on the south, Holland-Sylvania Road on the west, and Corey Road on the east. Ten Mile Creek, a tributary of the Ottawa River, flowed through the property and it was part of the rare Oak Openings region (See Figure V). Mewborn argued that the Stranahan estate would be a welcome addition to Metroparks. The property had no rival that matched its beauty. Its uniqueness required that it be protected from development.

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5 “You are Needed to Save the Parks!” *Cardinal XV*, no. 1 (Winter 1971) 1.
6 “...a taxing effort,” 54.
The topography of deep, wooded ravines created by Ten Mile Creek and its tributaries stands out as an exception to most of flat, treeless Northwest Ohio. The floodplain and watershed of Ten Mile Creek in this vicinity is largely undisturbed. The estate is the natural habitat for many kinds of wildlife and plant life. There are deer and fox, many species of uncommon birds, unusual forest vegetation, and wildflowers, and extensive forestation.\(^8\)

Mewborn pointed to the need for open space in Lucas County and for the preservation of natural areas that were diminishing at an alarming rate as a result of urban sprawl building upon the same arguments Metroparks used to pass its first operating levy in 1971.

Figure V: Wildwood Preserve, 2009

\(^8\) “It’s Your Choice: Park or Development?” The Citizens Campaign to Save the Stranahan Estate (1974) 1 & 4.
Beyond the natural features of the property, the Estate was the home of Robert A. Stranahan and his second wife, Page. Robert Stranahan was the co-founder of Champion Spark Plug. Prior to the company’s formation and Stranahan’s move to Toledo, Albert Champion had developed an inexpensive replaceable spark plug eliminating the need to repair damaged ones. This did not solve all the complaints associated with early spark plugs. Stranahan continued to tweak the spark plug and in 1909 completed a new design that included a gasket between the ceramic and metal portion of a spark plug. This limited the possibilities of the ceramic breaking and prevented gas leakage creating a more efficient product.⁹

Stranahan made sales trips throughout the United States. Rather than focusing solely on distributing to hardware stores, he made his sales pitch to automobile manufacturers as well. In 1910, Stranahan traveled to Toledo, a developing automotive center, to deliver his sales pitch to John North Willys, the new owner of the Pope Motor Company. Willys informed Stranahan that he preferred to support local companies so that the city continued to grow. Returning to Boston, Robert Stranahan, with his brother Frank, and their mother Elizabeth, organized the Champion Spark Plug Company and relocated to Toledo, Ohio. The first year Champion produced an average of 4,000 spark plugs every month. In 1911, Robert Stranahan completed negotiations with Henry Ford making Champion the sole supplier of spark plugs to the Ford Motor Company and within two years, seventy-five percent of automobiles throughout the United States operated with Champion spark plugs.¹⁰

¹⁰ Ibid., 21 – 23.
Robert married Page Ellyson Lewis in 1920 and made plans for the construction of their home. As leading citizens in social, political, and business affairs throughout Toledo, the Stranahans required an estate to meet their needs for entertaining Champion clients as well as family and friends. The Stranahans purchased several parcels of land creating a country estate and in 1938 they completed construction of their home.\(^{11}\)

To achieve this task, the Stranahans hired the local architectural firm Mills, Rhines, Bellman and Nordhoff with Karl Hoke as associate architect and Ellen Biddle Shipman, one of the first female landscape architects in the nation. The home, a modern example of Georgian Colonial style equaled 32,000 square feet and was 188 feet long and 86 feet at its widest point. Constructed during the Great Depression, the project employed over one-hundred men and was likely inexpensive in terms of both labor and materials because of the timing.\(^ {12}\)

The Stranahans purchased the property from Thomas A. DeVilbiss and a local farm family, the Albons. The grounds required detailed attention to meet the demands of the family and the design style of Ellen Biddle Shipman. The family constructed equestrian trails throughout the property, built a pool and tennis court, planted fruit orchards, and maintained a working farm. Two common exterior features of Georgian Colonial architecture included formal gardens and bodies of water. During construction of the estate, ground crews built an elliptical manicured front lawn flanked with tree covered knolls hiding the home from Central Avenue, manipulated Ten Mile Creek for proximity, and worked with Ellen Biddle Shipman to design the formal gardens.\(^ {13}\)

\(^{11}\) Ibid., 28.
\(^{12}\) Ibid., 28 – 30.
\(^{13}\) Ibid., 31 – 32, 35, 42, and 48.
During the planning phase, it was decided that Ten Mile Creek would pass through the backyard, in closer proximity to the home. The natural course for the waterway passed a half-mile distance away from the back of the home. Workers manipulated about a half-mile stretch of the creek by constructing a dam that created an oxbow to bring the flow of the creek closer to the home. Not content, the Stranahans instructed the crew to strategically place large rocks throughout the streambed in order to hear the babbling creek.\textsuperscript{14}

The Stranahans hired Shipman, a leading American landscape designer, to landscape the property. In 1920, she had opened an office in New York City and hired an all female staff. Throughout her career, she designed over 600 gardens for America’s wealthy, including the Rockefellers, Vanderbilts, and Fords. Today, only four of her gardens are still in existence. The formal gardens at Stranleigh, the Stranahan estate, reflected many of Shipman’s key features including gazebos, pergolas, fountains, statuary, stone walls, and garden gates.\textsuperscript{15}

Stranahan lived at the residence until his death in 1962, and Page lived there until her death in 1968. At that time, the property transferred into the family trust and sat vacant. It quickly fell into disrepair. Mewborn, endeared to the property having ridden horses there in his youth, strove to turn the property into a nature sanctuary. His board presentation, in October 1973, not only emphasized the historical importance of the Stranahans to Toledo, but identified the uniqueness of the property covered with lush forests, deep ravines, and wildflowers as well as the rare flora and fauna of the Oak Openings region. The Metropolitan Park Board could not afford to purchase the property,

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 31.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 34.
yet leading officials of the park district did not discourage the proposal. The monies to purchase the property would have to come from means beyond the operating budget. Mewborn’s preservation goal became imperative in 1974 when the development company owned by Robert Cavalear approached the family to purchase the estate to build an upscale subdivision.\textsuperscript{16}

Citizens for Metroparks, the volunteer group that worked to help pass the 1971 levy, through Mewborn’s suggestion, formed a subcommittee for the preservation of Stranleigh. Mewborn convinced John Lusk, a partner at Savage and Associates who had many strong political and business connections throughout the county, to chair the committee. As news of the impending sale and development reached the public, many were spurred into action to save the Stranahan estate.\textsuperscript{17} Citizens for Metroparks, under the leadership of Mewborn and Lusk, organized naturalists, historians, park officials, and neighbors, as well as over eighty local organizations into a grassroots movement for the conservation of the property. Professional groups that joined the fight included the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, the Nature Conservancy, the Maumee Valley Historical Society, Sierra Club, and the Sylvania, Maumee, Oregon, and Whitehouse city councils.\textsuperscript{18}

Mewborn placed his career on hold so that he could travel the county giving his presentation and build public support for the initiative. Volunteers manned street corners with signs, and school children delivered fliers throughout Lucas County to gather


\textsuperscript{17} “Citizens Speak Up,” \textit{The Citizens Campaign to Save the Stranahan Estate} (1974) 4; Welter, 10a – 10c.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
support for the cause. Campaign literature painted the battle as a struggle between the average citizens verses the interests of big developers. The following quotes were a few examples of the classic good against evil struggles rooted in the Progressive era’s conservation movement that were utilized during the campaign:

- Shame on all of us if we allow such self serving groups to obstruct the conservation of a real treasure of a wilderness area. Such a park, if we insure its creation, will be a joy to Toledo area residents for years to come. It may become a necessary element in their survival. – Dorothy G. Clement, Toledo.

- Please, please consider the future. What we do now can’t be undone. If we cut down those lovely trees and put buildings in, it will never be the same. – Ellen Shirey, Sylvania Township.

- There is much needed natural therapy – mental, emotional, and physical – in parks, and we do, indeed, need much more than we now have… the Stranahan Estate is ideally located for park land in an area of densely mushrooming population. – Louise Heberling, Whitehouse.

- It is my opinion that the Stranahan property is of a size and character best suited for utilization as a Metropolitan Park facility. – William Nye, Director, Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

- The R. A. Stranahan, Sr., Estate is of value to Toledo as a total entity, an environment. The estate can be adapted to public park use… All new development on the Estate shouldn’t simply copy the existing design, but it should maintain and enhance the existing environment because it is the spirit and understanding of environment that makes Mr. Stranahan’s estate an important landmark. – Landmarks Committee, Maumee Valley Historical Society.

- The availability of a large tract of undamaged forests within an urban environment is unique in this part of the country. – Jonathan Ela, Midwest Representative, Sierra Club.

These testimonials from citizens and experts alike reflect the widespread interest for the preservation of land. These comments utilized in campaign literature stress the

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19 “Toledo Stories: Metroparks of the Toledo Area” and “It’s Your Choice: Park or Development?”, The Citizens Campaign to Save the Stranahan Estate (1974) 1 & 4.
importance of open space to balance the ever expanding city and the value of public parks for individuals’ health. These are reflective of the national sentiments of the environmental movement. In response to growing support, Metroparks placed a request for a 10 mil levy over ten years for the purchase, improvement, and operation of the Stranahan estate as a Metropark.

Citizens for Metroparks delivered campaign fliers to over eighty percent of the homes in Lucas County that illustrated the eternal opposition of the interests of private corporations against the public. The decision to be made on November 5, 1974 at the voting booth would be whether or not to share the beauty of the Stranahan Estate with everyone verses a chosen few. To do so, one simply needed to vote for the support of the levy for Metroparks to preserve the land. On the other hand, one could oppose the levy and purchase a luxury residential condominium.21 The Citizens for Metroparks capitalized on the importance of one vote to determine the future, to have a lasting impact, and to change the course of history. “The citizens of Lucas County are clearly presented with a choice – a choice that will have lasting importance for years to come.” More than determining political leaders, this vote directly affected an individual’s backyard.

The flier stressed the urgency behind the issue. Without the passage of the levy, Metroparks would not be able to purchase the estate. Due to Toledo’s growth and urban sprawl, the estate was the last large natural area in Lucas County. This land, should it become a metropark, was within twenty minutes from the center of urban population and accessible by TARTA bus. The preservation of the property would make the land available to all reflecting the Progressive philosophy “the greatest good for the greatest

21 “It’s Your Choice: Park or Development?” 1 & 4.
number of people” yet with an environmental twist. Private development of the land would only create opportunity for individuals.\textsuperscript{22} The creations of a public park would benefit the community and all individuals that visited the park. “It is no secret that the Toledo Metropolitan Area is vastly deficient in the amount of open space recommended for a community of this size. The Stranahan Estate conforms to the goals of the Regional Open Space Plan for 1990 and presents a unique opportunity to purchase needed parcels of land to meet our open space goal,” commented a representative spokeswoman from the League of Women Voters of Toledo-Lucas County.\textsuperscript{23}

Attendance at existing Metroparks served as a good indicator of the need for additional open space. Metroparks managed 5,400 acres utilized by 1.4 million annual visitors. Throughout the country, the need for parklands increased at an unprecedented rate and at a degree much higher than the growth of population. This was directly influenced by the sheer number of people needing refuge from the pressures of urban life. Yet as urban development consumed more and more land, the demand for the remaining land became more competitive, costs soared, and the possibility of retaining additional natural areas as parkland became increasingly difficult.\textsuperscript{24}

In four years from 1970 to 1974, an estimated 5,580 acres in the Toledo regional area were consumed for urban development, including residential, commercial, industrial, and highway purposes. At the time, this totaled more than the acreage accrued by Metroparks. In 1970, the Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments commissioned a report entitled \textit{The Open Space Plan for 1990}. The report called for the

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.} \\ \textsuperscript{23} “Does the Toledo Area Need More Open Space?” \textit{The Citizens Campaign to Save the Stranahan Estate} (1974) 3 & 4. \textsuperscript{24} Ibid.}
acquisition of 11,700 acres of open space by 1980 to avoid land being gobbled up by urban sprawl.\textsuperscript{25}

Natural areas, the sort of open space that must be preserved, provided more than just acreage for recreational purposes. It provided heavy forestation filters that cleaned the air and water, reduced city noise levels, controlled soil erosion, and reduced temperatures. Remaining intact surrounded by urbanization, shopping centers, highways, and suburban communities was the Stranahan estate, as an environmental resource, rare in major metropolitan areas. The Stranahan estate presented an opportunity to the citizens of Lucas County to preserve in one decisive action a great part of their natural heritage as well as their history. Metroparks’ preliminary concept for the Stranahan estate included the retention of at least 300 acres of untouched natural areas and plans for pedestrian only traffic. No cars were to be permitted in the park. Individuals could park at the shopping centers about one half mile down Central Avenue and take a bus to the park. Development plans included hiking trails and areas designated for recreation and picnicking. Cavalear purposed a development plan that called for over 1,000 housing units, mostly condominiums and utilized the home as a private club house. The development plans envisioned a small subdivision. Many referred to the proposed Cavalear development plan as the next Ottawa Hills. The only remaining natural area left untouched according to this plan was the ninety-eight acres of the Ten Mile Creek floodplain.\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.
Illustration 23: Metroparks development plan for the Stranahan Estate
Student reviewing the proposed development plan for the Stranahan Estate during the campaign by Citizens for Metroparks. The circles on the map designate intended use for certain areas throughout the park that vary from open meadows to reservable space to protected natural areas. Courtesy of Metropolitan Park District of Toledo Area.

Despite the grassroots support for the Metroparks to purchase and develop the property, opposition from various sources mounted. It was no surprise that Cavalear, the chief developer, opposed the levy. Adding to the opposing forces, the Lucas County Democratic Party supported the development of the property for a park, but opposed the levy. Party officials argued that the voters did not want an increase in taxation no matter what the issue. Another detractor was the popular Toledo television broadcaster for WSPD TV, David Drury, who vocally opposed the levy and other media like the local Sylvania newspaper. Uncertainty swirled around the Stranahan family and their views on
the issue. While no one in the family publicly came out in support or opposition of the levy, the family indicated that they supported the voters’ decision. Because of heavy opposition by strong public entities most pollsters predicted that the levy would fail.27

On November 5, 1974, voters went to the polls. The levy passed by a narrow margin of 64,490 to 58,577 votes for $10 million dollars over ten years for the purchase and development of the Stranahan estate as a Metropark. The family, however, required full payment, $4.2 million, upfront rather than spread out over the time span of the ten year levy. Since Metroparks could not meet their demand, the Nature Conservancy, a nonprofit organization headquartered in Washington D. C., financed the project. On April 24, 1975, the Lawyers Title Insurance Corporation finalized the sale of the property to Metroparks.28

Illustration 24: Wildwood Preserve
John Lusk and Bob Metz, Executive Director of Metroparks, standing in front of the Manor House at Wildwood Preserve.

28Welter, 10c; Interpretative Manual, 54.
With the passage of the levy, Metroparks made plans for the management of the Stranahan estate as a nature preserve. Entrusting the land to the governing body of the Metroparks protected the property because the board managed all parklands, park facilities, and public access to be in harmony with the natural environment.\textsuperscript{29} After 1965, the conservation movement underwent a transformation into environmentalism. The new movement attracted a broader group of people not rooted in conservationism but rather placed man in the center of the debate and focused on the concern of pollution and other quality-of-life issues. Conservation, at last, belonged to everyone.\textsuperscript{30} In Toledo’s history, this is reflected through the passage of Metroparks first operating levy and the ground swelling support for the preservation of the Stranahan estate.

The acquisition of the Stranahan estate marked a change in Metroparks history from the conservation of natural areas to the preservation of cultural landscapes. In the first eight Metroparks – Pearson, Sidecut, Farnsworth, Bend View, Providence, Oak Openings, Secor, and Swan Creek – lands were set aside for recreational purposes and to conserve natural resources. While pleas were made for protection of these natural resources, land management practices during the Great Depression and afterwards focused on making the natural areas more accessible to the public. During the Great Depression, this accessibility was defined as providing free open spaces for the public for picnicking and recreation as well as working with the federal government to relieve the economic stress of the Great Depression. The jobs completed within the parks during the

\textsuperscript{29}“It’s Your Choice: Park or Development?” 1 & 4.

Great Depression followed conservation management philosophies. It was enough protection to set aside the land for public use. However the park district, under the leadership of professionals, could wisely develop and manage these natural areas for the greater good for this and future generations.

The newest park opened with the name, Wildwood Preserve, in December 1975 and Metroparks renamed the Stranahan home, Manor House. The park name in itself denotes a shift in philosophy. By incorporating preserve in the name, Metroparks proclaims its intention to protect the property. But what does that mean? Does Metroparks preserve the property for its natural environment or for its historic value?

Along with being the country estate of Robert Stranahan, Sr., Wildwood Preserve housed rare archeological remains and natural features. Dr. David Stothers, Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of Toledo, located twelve sites of human habitation dating 6,000 to 10,000 years ago and two of the sites dated to the late Woodland period. The natural features varied with sandy prairies, steep ravines, forests, and swamps. Dr. Elliot J. Tramer, Associate Professor of Biology at the University of Toledo, identified rare flora and fauna on the property including the pileated woodpeckers and the hoary pucoon, a small yellow flower. The hoary pucoon was found on dry or sandy soils in prairies, open woods, or oak savannas and occasionally in high quality habitats, like virgin prairie remnants.31

Emphasis for preservation fell to the natural environment. In a letter dated June 5, 1975 addressed to Metroparks from the Northwest Ohio Bank of Wood County, Cleon Wright, Vice-President of the bank sent a letter and donation expressing, “We were very pleased to be able to see some of the progress being made with the former Stranahan

Estate last Sunday. We are so glad that this wonderful property was not lost to
development and glad it is being saved for park purposes. We hope it will be restored and
preserved and kept, as much as possible, in its natural beauty and unmolested state.”
Citizens for Metroparks worked with the organization through the planning phase for
Wildwood Preserve and meeting minutes record their goal for “planning for the best
public enjoyment of the land and buildings within the stated goal of preserving the
natural environment.”32 This still left the question of what to do with the buildings from
the Stranahan estate. In the past Metroparks razed all structures that were not needed for
park maintenance, but with the huge amount of public involvement in saving of the
property needed to find a balance in the preservation of the natural and built environment.

It was decided that the stables would be utilized as a visitor center and trailhead,
the limousine garage provided indoor programming space, and other outbuildings would
be used as park manager homes. Metroparks would need to build a maintenance yard, but
also had to decide how to use the main house. Immediately, the decision was made for
adaptive reuse of the home. It would become the administrative offices for the
Metroparks rather than renting office space downtown. The administrative offices only
occupied half of the house so Metroparks grappled with the decision of what to do with
the rest of the house. Rather than making the home a historic house museum, plans were
drawn up for it to be a nature center. Art Weber, Metroparks Public Information Officer,
commented in 1981:

I don’t think people want to especially see where the Stranahans once
lived, but to see a house of that period. We look for the certain quality in
restoring it to that period.

32 “Citizens for Metroparks, 1975,” Administrative Office, Metroparks of the Toledo Area, March 7 and
June 5, 1975.
Secondly, by bringing in nature art as a theme for the house. This is evident in the paintings and furnishings. A good example or key of what we are trying to do is the reading room, which is the original library. This is a spot where people can see the house and come in to read selected material on nature and the outdoors.

Another way to tie in nature is from the variety of nature-oriented programs the Manor House has to offer.

Pat Brunner, Manor House Supervisor 1980 – 1997, commented that people were interested in the house because of its beautiful natural surroundings and because once inside, despite the spaciousness of the home, it felt cozy.33

The volunteers that worked so hard to help pass the levy formed a group called the Manor House volunteers. This non-profit organization held fundraisers and purchased furnishings for the home. With little oversight from Metroparks, the furnishing plan developed into a hodge-podge of high quality antiques and replicas that reflected a variety of time periods ranging from Jacobean to Pillar and Scroll. The furniture plan was designed to avoid discussing the Stranahans and their role in Toledo history at all cost. The home opened to tours in December 1975 and gave a typical furniture inventory tour with little to no interpretation.

Metroparks changed the family bridle trails into walking paths; destroyed the fruit orchards and built the picnic grounds and playground area; and several pasture areas were planted with trees. Metroparks’ interpretation of the natural and built environment left only the faintest hint that the Stranahans had owned, built, and lived at the property yet their adaptive reuse of the property proved to be an effective conservation and preservation technique. The change in management philosophy that struggled to balance natural and historical characteristics of the landscape first exhibited with the acquisition

and development of the Stranahan estate spread throughout the district especially with the acquisition of additional properties with prominent historical features.
Cultural landscape preservation can be traced to the 1920s with geographer, Carl Sauer. In 1925 he wrote, “Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, the cultural landscape the result.” John Brinkerhoff Jackson edited and published *Landscape* to provide an avenue for scholars to publish. More than anyone else, Jackson expanded the awareness of cultural landscapes. He argued that landscapes serves as infrastructures or backgrounds for our collective existence. He found beauty in ordinary landscapes, “the
image of our common humanity: hard work, stubborn hope, and mutual forbearance striving to be loved.” Yet, few who studied cultural landscapes focused on conservation or preservation issues.¹

It was not until the late 1970s or early 1980s that preservationists began to address issues surrounding cultural landscapes. At this time, the American Society of Landscape Architects formed as well as a small group from the Association of Preservation Technology created the Alliance for Historic Landscape Preservation, as an interdisciplinary organization interested in designed and vernacular landscapes. The National Park Service (NPS) has provided the most significant direction to the field of cultural landscape preservation. In 1984, NPS published it report, Cultural Landscapes: Rural Historic Districts in the National Park System. This spelled out its criteria for identifying and defining cultural landscapes. Defined as “a geographic area…associated with a historic event, activity, or person or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values,” cultural landscapes could be divided into four general categories:

1. **Historic Site:** A landscape significant for its association with a historic event, activity, or person.

2. **Historic Designed Landscape:** A landscape that was consciously designed or laid out by a landscape architect, master gardener, architect, or horticulturist according to design principles, or an amateur gardener working in a recognized design style or tradition.

3. **Historic Vernacular Landscape:** A landscape that evolved through use by the people whose activities or occupancy shaped that landscape.

4. **Ethnographic Landscape:** A landscape containing a variety of national and cultural resources that associated people defined as heritage resources.

Other nations throughout the world have identified cultural landscapes. The United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization categorized these landscapes, in 1994, into three categories:

1. *Clearly Defined Landscape*: A landscape designed and created intentionally by man, including garden and parkland landscapes constructed for aesthetic reasons that are often (but not always) associated with religious or other monumental buildings and ensembles.

2. *Organically Evolved Landscape*: A landscape that results from an initial social, economic, administrative, or religious imperative and has developed its present form by association with and in response to the natural environment. Such landscapes reflect that process of evolution in their form and component features.

3. *Associative Cultural Landscape*: A landscape that reflects powerful religious, artistic, or cultural associations of natural elements rather than material cultural evidence, which may be insignificant or even absent.

These definitions of cultural landscapes blended the natural and built environments and provided an avenue conserving, preserving, and interpreting both. In the National Parks, this provided an opportunity for historians to challenge the ecology-based mindset of the administration and stress the value of historic resources. This takes place at the local level as well throughout the Metroparks as evident in the preservation of the Stranahan estate and other historic sites at Providence Metropark, Fallen Timbers and Fort Miamis National Historic Site, and the Lathrop House. Yet as evident in Metroparks’ past, the push for attention to historical resources comes from the public not from staff.

During the development of the initial park system, Metroparks leased state canal lands from Grand Rapids to Maumee, Ohio. Providence Metropark, developed by
workers through the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Works Progress Administration, consisted of the abandoned towpath trail connecting it to Bendview and Farnsworth Metroparks, as well as a shelter house and restrooms built next to Providence Dam. In 1974, the park developed eastwardly along State Route 24 with the donation of the Heising Mill to the Metroparks. The Heising Mill has an intricate history linked with the Miami and Erie Canal. Peter Manor, founder of Providence, Ohio, built the saw-grist mill in 1822 along the Maumee River. Manor’s mill struggled to meet the demands of the town due to the frequent shallowness of the water which often prohibited daily operation. In 1838, the state demolished the mill for the construction of the Wabash and Erie Canal. As a result of the state of Ohio’s encroachment, Manor secured a deal that entitled him to perpetual water rights on the canal.

On September 4, 1847, Manor entered into agreement with Adolph G. Foster to build a new saw-gristmill. Business prospered with the completion of the canal. The canal not only made it economically feasible for the mill to transport grain and flour long distances, but it opened new markets for commerce. However, that same month, Peter Manor passed away during a cholera epidemic. His estate became tied up in the courts because of the large amount of debt that Manor had acquired. In 1866 and 1867, Isaac

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2 In 1835, Manor platted Providence. It soon boomed, because river traffic had to portage the Maumee from the head of the rapids to the foot of the rapids. Stores, hotels, warehouses, and saloons quickly opened. Although the town has a short-lived history, in 1846, a fire destroyed the main business district. All that remains of the boomtown, today, are Peter Manor’s house, St. Patrick’s Catholic Church, the mill, and the hotel. Michael J. Emmons, Jr., “Grinding Through Time:” The Story of the Historic Isaac Ludwig Mill (Metroparks of the Toledo Area, photocopy, December 28, 2001)
3 In 1840, the first section of the Wabash and Erie Canal, between Toledo and Providence, Ohio was completed. Within three years, one could travel to Fort Wayne, Indiana. In 1845, the Miami Extension was completed between Cincinnati and Toledo, Ohio. Three years later, 1848, the State of Ohio officially changed the name of the canal to the Miami and Erie Canal. Interpreter’s Manual, Providence Metropark, Metropolitan Park District of the Toledo Area.
4 Emmons, Jr.,1 – 5.
5 Ibid.
Ludwig purchased the foundation of the mill from Peter Manor’s heirs and completed the construction of the saw mill. Powered by water from the Miami and Erie Canal with a wooden waterwheel, it opened in 1868 for business. About five years after its construction, Ludwig added the gristmill.\textsuperscript{6}

In 1886, Augustine Pilliod, Jr. purchased the mill from Ludwig and modernized the milling operations. He replaced the old grindstones with new roller mills, the wooden waterwheel with three turbines and added twenty-four feet to the east side of the mill structure and an office to the west end. A boiler house was added, and the mill soon had the capability of steam power to supplement the water power. Pilliod expanded mill services, when he contracted with the Toledo, Delphos & Burlington Railroad to pump water for their water tower that stood near the mill. In 1902, he installed a generator, alternator, and a 48” Trump turbine in the mill for electricity. Within five years, he provided electricity to the entire Grand Rapids area. He provided this service until 1918, when a utility company purchased the electric plant rights.\textsuperscript{7}

In 1919, after his return from service in World War I, Pilliod retired and sold the business to his long-time employee, Frank Heising. Heising remodeled by tearing out the east end of the mill in order to enter the feed and fertilizer business. He added a hammermill, new elevators, a large feed mixture, and five feed baggers.\textsuperscript{8}

The Great Depression struck with devastating effects on business at the mill. Heising had a large amount of stored wheat, which he had purchased for $3.50 per bushel. He was forced to sell the stock for seventy-five cents per bushel, a loss of $2.75

\textsuperscript{6} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., 14 – 17.
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.
per bushel. Many farmers stopped using the mill in order to save money. Frank Heising passed away in February 1931, and his son Cleo returned home to take over the family business. Cleo Heising continued the milling business throughout the Great Depression determined to beat the economic conditions. His most successful product was the self-rising pancake flour, invented by his father, because it was low-priced and a wholesome food.  

After surviving the Depression, catastrophe struck the mill. On March 25, 1940, the mill caught fire, and it engulfed the entire second and third floors. Unable to tame the fire, the Grand Rapids fire department called for assistance from the Whitehouse and Swanton departments. After the fire was extinguished, the top two floors and all of the flouring equipment were almost completely destroyed. Damages were estimated at ten thousand dollars. Heising rebuilt the two floors and continued only the feed business. In 1949, Heising built a new office, supply room, a head house, and larger feed mixers. He replaced the old turbine with another 30” Leffel turbine. He opened a new farm supply store to offer “one-stop” shopping for customers. No longer milling on a regular basis, Cleo changed the name to Heising Feed and Farm Supply. The business prospered throughout the 1950s but in the 1960s, Cleo Heising’s business declined. As agribusiness became the norm and small family farms were bought out, it became profitable to buy feed at wholesale prices. By the end of the decade, Heising retired, and sold the mill structure and feed business to Cleo Ludwig, the great-grandson of Isaac Ludwig.  

Ludwig donated the mill to Metroparks, and it was renamed in his great-grandfather’s honor. Metroparks began renovation of the mill in 1974. The machinery,

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9 Ibid., 17 – 19.
10 Ibid.
from the Rupp Mill near Brownstown, Pennsylvania, included a horizontal millstone, five French buhrstones, and seven roller mills. An 1896 middlings purifier, an 1898 dust collector, centrifugal reel, and additional roller mills were obtained from the Toledo Nabisco Flour Mill. Two original items left in the building: the large water turbine and gear head and the fanning mill were installed by Augustine Pilliod. In May 1975, Metroparks opened the Isaac Ludwig Mill periodically to the public.

The mill’s continual operation from 1868 to 1974 secured its preservation by the very fact that the business remained viable and that the building was never abandoned. The perpetual water rights secured by Peter Manor in 1843 ensured the operations at the mill. When the state closed the Miami and Erie Canal following the Great 1913 Flood, it still had to honor the Manor water rights agreement. The mill race drew water from the canal. The state buried Lock Number 44 creating an earthen dam which permitted water into the canal west of the lock and abandoned the eastern portion from Grand Rapids to Toledo.

Metroparks restored a 1.7 mile stretch of the Miami and Erie Canal through Providence Metropark. After digging out the lock and installing new lock doors, Metroparks built a sixty foot canal boat to transport visitors through time to the days of the Miami and Erie Canal. The Canal Experience opened in September 1994 inviting visitors on a forty-five minute boat trip and a tour through the Isaac Ludwig Mill. Visitors exit their cars, walk across a bridge and purchase their tickets to board The Volunteer, the canal boat. The first half of the trip, the crew delivers a first person interpretation detailing what life must have been like on a canal boat. The Volunteer pulled by a tandem

\[11\] Ibid., 21 – 24.
team of mules, glides through the water to Lock Number 44 where the elevation changes three feet. The boat crew maneuvers through the limestone lock and continues on their journey. Suddenly, the crew realizes some forgotten cargo and must risk an illegal turn around in the canal. On guard for the canal walker, a state employee that enforced state laws, the crew returns to the Isaac Ludwig Mill. At this point in the first person interpretation ends as the crew member visiting with the passengers exits to the tiller deck to find out more about the inconvenience. When the crew member returns to the passenger deck, he/she has returned to the current year and finishes the boat ride with a third person interpretation. In the Isaac Ludwig Mill, a visitor tours two floors to learn about the industry. Through signs, third person interpretation, and demonstrations, visitors learn about grist and saw milling. Demonstrations include grinding grain, operating the saw, and blacksmithing.

The Canal Experience served as the starting point for historical interpretation within Metroparks. In 1995, one year after opening the Canal Experience, Metroparks joined in a partnership with Heidelberg College, the National Park Service, the Intertribal Association of American Indians, federally recognized tribes, the Ohio Historical Society, and the Battle of Fallen Timbers Preservation Commission to locate and preserve the site of the 1794 Battle of Fallen Timbers. This site became the second focal point for historical interpretation within the park district.

In 1935, the State of Ohio commemorated the 1794 Battle of Fallen Timbers by constructing a monument in a small park overlooking the battlefield. The monument, a statue of a Kentucky militiaman, an Indian warrior, and a United States settler, overlooks the flood plain and the rapids of the Maumee River. Two smaller markers, added in 1994
in commemoration of the two hundredth anniversary of the battle, honor the U.S. and Native American casualties. The large rock known as "Turkeyfoot Rock" was moved to this location from the flood plain near the foot of Jerome Road to the state park. The monument site was built as a memorial to the individuals who participated in the Battle of Fallen Timbers “near this spot;” therefore, this piece of land “was not indicative of the battle itself.”

Dr. G. Michael Pratt, an archaeologist and professor at Heidelberg College, argued in 1995 that “although no fortifications or earthworks were established, the location and extent of the Fallen Timbers Battlefield may be determined by contemporary descriptions of the terrain and an examination of the tactical maneuvers involved.” Pratt’s research relied on primary accounts from officers and men of the Legion of the United States, the Kentucky Militia, the British Department of Indian Affairs, the Fort Miamis garrison, and Native Americans who were on or near the field of action. Pratt’s analysis of these primary documents indicated that the 1794 Battle of Fallen Timbers took place on the high bluffs overlooking the Maumee River rather than on the flood plain as it had been interpreted since the early twentieth century.

Pratt identified the ravine system mentioned in Brigadier General James Wilkinson’s account. Only one ravine system existed that narrowed to a point over which troops were deployed as well as extend behind Wilkinson’s line. It crossed U.S. 24 at about 1,000 feet downstream from the Fallen Timbers Monument. At approximately

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1,600 yards long and perpendicular to the river, the Legion extended across present U.S. 24 beyond the intersection of Jerome and Monclova Roads. By assuming this position, other battlefield positions could by determined:

1. During the time it took the Legion to form, its advanced skirmish line came under fire from groups of warriors concealed in the "fallen timber." The initial exchange took place over a distance of 160 yards. As the skirmishers were forced back towards the battle line the Indians advanced and fired from positions at 100 and then 80 yards distant. These Indian positions and therefore the fallen timbers area itself, lie about 80-100-160 yards east of the battle line, on the City of Toledo parcel.

2. Although it is more difficult to calculate the position of the original ambush set up by the warriors, the area appears to be at least six or seven hundred yards in advance of the Legion's battle line. This would place the center of the ambush line in or near the I-475/US24 interchange. This line is described as extending nearly a mile from the river with its right (inland) flank advanced. Such a line would extend through the City of Toledo parcel to north of the Monclova/Jerome road intersection.

3. In his counterattack, Wayne's charge carried his line one to two miles downstream. One mile in the direction of such a charge would have carried his line beyond the present St. Luke's Hospital, just east of I-475. A two mile charge would have halted in the area of Ford St. or Kingsbury St. within the City of Maumee.14

Two of the three primary maps of the Battle of Fallen Timbers support Pratt’s interpretation. The one published in Richard Knopf's *Anthony Wayne: A Name in Arms* (1960), a reprinting of the map published in *The New York Magazine; or, Literary Repository* in October 1794, most closely conformed to the descriptions of the geography and disposition of forces. The topography and vegetation patterns on this map matched the description found in the primary accounts and the nineteenth century land survey

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records. The depiction of the unfinished Fort Miamis closely matches British accounts of the state of that post at the time of the battle. The location for the post-battle U.S. camp also coincided with the contemporary British and American descriptions of the site and the scale of this map is quite accurate in terms of the distances between the fort and Wayne’s encampment.\textsuperscript{15}

Governor John G. Simcoe’s map, reprinted in E. A. Cruikshank’s \textit{The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe}, drawn during his visit to the field about a month after the battle depicts it as occurring in the forested upland area, rather than along the floodplain. Although it is at odds with the other primary accounts concerning the position of the U.S. encampment prior to the battle and the direction and orientation of the battle the first draft of the map was sketched by Thomas Duggan from the first accounts of the battle delivered to the Detroit Indian department offices from runners. These maps, the draft and the one published at a later date, contributed to the interpretation of the Battle of Fallen Timbers taking place on the floodplains of the Maumee River (See Figure VII).\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 5.  
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 5 – 6.
The purpose of the 1995 archaeological dig was to identify the location of the 1794 Battle of Fallen Timbers. Metroparks had investigated four sites from 1986 – 1988 through a public archaeology program along the floodplain of the Maumee River, the commonly thought site to be the location of the battle. One test site produced nineteenth century features of a house cellar and drainage ditch; the subsequent three digs exhibited evidence of prehistoric living. “The prehistoric sites in the area represent components relating to PaleoIndian, Archaic, and Western Basin Late Woodland cultures.” The
archaeological surveys of the floodplain, where it was generally believed for the Battle of Fallen Timbers to have transpired, produced no materials relating to the battle.17

Pratt and project supervisors Richard Green and Larry Hamilton of Historic Archaeological Resources, Inc., and Brett Ruby and Bill Anderson from the National Park Service’s Hopewell Culture National Historic Park, designed the archaeological project to utilize volunteers. Many had previous experience, particularly those that were members of the Toledo Area Aboriginal Research Society. A reconnaissance survey designed to effectively locate and record the location of pertinent artifacts was proposed. In the event that battle artifacts were recovered, a secondary goal to determine the extent of the site and to locate the battle lines and/or positions within the project area was identified. The dig utilized standard metal detectors to identify artifacts and plotted locations through global positioning systems.18

Twenty thousand square meters were surveyed and ninety-six artifacts were uncovered by the end of the first day. Among these artifacts, two uncovered buttons displayed the frog-legged eagle motif of the Legion of the United States of America. This proved without a doubt that the farm field located within the boundaries of I-475, U.S. 24, North Jerome Road, and the Norfolk Southern Railroad was part of the 1794 battlefield. Upon completion of the archaeological dig, 406 artifacts were recovered and eighty-five percent were associated or possibly associated with the Battle of Fallen Timbers. The site “produced undisputable evidence of [the] battle in the form of buttons from the uniforms of The Legion of the United States; buttons common to late 18th century sites and previously recovered from other federal sites of the period; a French

17 Ibid., 7 – 8.
18 Ibid., 9.
manufactured bayonet of the type issued to the Legion; canister shot; and quantities of spent or fired rifle, musket and buck shot. Clearly, the project area was the site of a large fire fight involving the Legion of the United States.”\(^9\) However, the battlefield was threatened by development.

In 1987, Toledo purchased 1,200 acres of land in Monclova Township which included the battlefield with the plans to annex the property to the city for development. The following year a court ruling blocked this plan and much of the land, including the battlefield, became part of Maumee, Ohio. Toledo started to sell the remainder of the land

\(^9\) Ibid., 10 – 11, and 15 and quote, 21.
in small parcels. In 1995, General Growth Properties, Inc. purchased 130 acres next to the site that in June Pratt concluded was the location of the Battle of Fallen Timbers. General Growth Properties announced plans to build the area’s largest shopping mall; the plans described a two-story, 1.2 million square foot mall. Residents and local historians opposed the mall due to the encroachment of the battlefield.\textsuperscript{20}

Local volunteers, preservationists, and historians fought to curb the threat of corporate development. Their efforts helped create and pass Public Law 106-164, December 9, 1999 which established the Fallen Timbers Battlefield and Fort Miamis National Historic Site as an affiliate unit of the National Park Service. The park was comprised of three sites: the 187 acre battlefield, the monument, and Fort Miamis. Metroparks named the managing entity of the three sites had to administer the historical site in a manner consistent with the National Park Service Organic Act (August 25, 1916), the Historic Sites, Buildings, and Antiquities Act (August 21, 1935), and the general management plan in accordance with the National Park System General Authorities Act (Public Law 91-383), as well as the National Environmental Protection and Historic Protection Acts.\textsuperscript{21} The first challenge to preserving the land was securing ownership.

Aware of the historical importance of the land and the purposed General Growth development, the City of Toledo had the battlefield appraised for $7.3 million. Mayor Carty Finkbeiner stood his ground on the asking price for the property. Local citizens, the


Fallen Timbers Battlefield Preservation Commission, a volunteer organization dedicated to the preservation of the battlefield, Heidelberg College, the American Indian Intertribal Association, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, the City of Maumee, and others worked together to advocate for a lower price. The asking price from the City of Toledo was simply cost prohibitive for Metroparks. Arguing that the land was worth at least $6 million, Finkbeiner rejected Metroparks $5 million offer on the property. Tensions heightened when Mayor Finkbeiner threatened Lucas County commissioners to contribute the $1 million for the procurement of the battlefield. His ultimatum was to withhold city funding on infrastructure improvements for the new Mud Hens stadium.22

Local political officials and activists pointed out that the state appraised the land at $3.9 million. Since the power to sell the land did not rest with Mayor Finkbeiner but with city council, both Peter Ujvagi and Sandy Isenberg, president of the county commissioners, commented that $5.3 million would be a fair price for the property.23 Ujvagi and Isenberg were supported by other county commissioners as this being an “appropriate and fair conclusion.” The mayor had the authority to commit to contracts independently from council unless the value exceeded $10,000. Toledo City Council accepted Metroparks $5.3 million offer on the land despite Finkbeiner’s strong objection.24 The project received funding from the City of Maumee, Lucas County Commissioners, Wood County Commissioners, and from the State of Ohio. Metroparks purchased the battlefield in two phases. In phase I, Metroparks purchased sixty-six acres

23 Ibid.
24 “Vote likely Soon on Sale of Battle Site” The Blade 18 May 2000 and “$5M offer for Fallen Timbers is Rejected” The Blade, 9 May 2000.
from the City of Toledo in 2000, and the following year, Metroparks implemented Phase II purchasing the remainder of the battlefield.25

With the security of the battlefield safely tucked into Metroparks land holdings, the managing entity now could finish meeting the requirements of the federal law by acquiring Fort Miamis, a British fort used during the 1794 campaign and again in the War of 1812 located in a Maumee residential area approximately five miles east of the battlefield and memorial.26 The British, to support the Western Confederacy, also known as the Miami Confederacy, constructed Fort Miamis in the spring months of 1794 to hold the Maumee River Valley and stop the possible advance by Wayne’s Legion toward Detroit. The fort served an additional purpose by affording the British the means to further solidify Indian support against U.S. settlers moving into the Northwest Territory.27 Archaeological investigations at Fort Miamis from 1981 to 1984 revealed intact fabric including footing trenches, sill logs, log wall fragments, and wooden flooring in undisturbed contexts. Thus, not only portions of the visible earthworks remain, but remnants of the fort’s barracks and other structures.28

Despite these historical features, Fort Miamis has a long history of recreational use by the citizens of Maumee which included picnicking, sledding, and all-terrain bicycling. The earthwork remains have eroded down to mineral soil as a result of these activities. Trying to avoid negative publicity from either ending these past times or preventing the development of a national historic site located within the heart of

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26 General Management Plan
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
Maumee, the City of Maumee agreed in 1995 to donate the fort property to Metroparks who saw an immediate need to stop the abuse. Yet in December 2008, the appropriate steps had yet to be taken to complete the donation of land to Metroparks.

Maumee City Council and Metroparks signed a transfer agreement on February 22, 2006 for the fort property. According to Ohio Revised Code, all property donated to Metroparks must be approved through the Probate Court. For approval, Metroparks must submit a signed transfer agreement, signed deed, and completed survey. In May 2006, the land survey results were returned to Metroparks and revealed that the donated property did not include the public parking lot or the paved trail along the boundary of the property. Metroparks requested an easement to the property. The City of Maumee and Metroparks could not agree on two points outlined in the easement agreement: the city retained the right to build or use the easement property so long as they did not interfere with or prevent use by Metroparks and the easement could be terminated. Metroparks argued that to maintain the historical integrity of the fort site the city and Metroparks needed to work more as partners with care of the easement. But the real sticking point was the termination clause. Metroparks argued that the agreement should not ever be terminated since the fort property would continue to be managed by Metroparks. The bickering surrounding the easement property extended well into the following year voiding the original transfer agreement signed by both parties.

In October 2006, Metroparks decided to accept the donation of the fort property and address the issues surrounding the easement rights separately. Metroparks supplied the City of Maumee with another copy of the transfer agreement which remained unsigned by city officials. This oversight prevented Metroparks in further development of
the site. Throughout 2008, Metroparks sent reminders to the city requesting a completed signed copy of the transfer agreement; these requests went without a response. In December 2008, Metroparks started the process for having the site removed from the National Historic Site because it was unable to manage the site and ensure the preservation of the resources. National Park Service supported Metroparks’ decision. All parties remained hopeful that throughout the long process the City of Maumee would step forward with the completed donation paperwork. Metroparks once again asked local citizens and volunteers to advocate for the donation. Working with the National Park Service and Representative Marcy Kaptur’s office, Metroparks and the Fallen Timbers Battlefield Preservation Commission successfully transferred the fort property to Metroparks’ ownership.

With all land acquisitions pertaining to the Fallen Timbers and Fort Miamis National Historic Site completed, Metroparks, in 2009, could start to implement the *Final General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement* completed in 2004. The document presented four alternatives for Fallen Timbers Battlefield and Fort Miamis National Historic Site for the future management and use of the site and established guidelines for park management for the next fifteen to twenty years regarding conservation of natural resources, preservation of cultural resources, and interpretive programming. The no-action alternative, Alternative A, described the existing conditions and served as a baseline for comparing the other alternatives. The next, Alternative B, identified as the preferred alternative, proposed an emphasis on the preservation of the cultural resources and the interpretation of the historic events. Visitor experiences would be geared to learning about the history of the sites. Alternative C proposed a balanced
presentation of resource preservation and visitor experience. While still protecting the resources, visitors would have more free access to the sites in order to experience an immersion into history. The last, Alternative D, would establish an interpretive network of sites that would not be limited to the three units of the National Historic Site, but include other local sites. The purpose of the general management plan was to outline the resource conditions and visitor experiences desired for the park in accordance with the established legislation. The plan clearly defined a management philosophy and directives for resource preservation, interpretation, linkages, and visitor experiences.

The Fallen Timbers Battlefield and Fort Miamis National Historic Site was to preserve the battlefield and the fort and to interpret United States military history and Native American culture during the period from 1794 through 1813. National Park Service (NPS) significance statements identified site resources and educational values. The Western Confederacy that took a stand at the Battle of Fallen Timbers was the longest lasting confederacy formed to combat Euro-American encroachment and viewed Wayne’s campaign as an invasion of their homelands. The Battle of Fallen Timbers was the first successful federal military campaign following the Revolutionary War. This national historic site was where change in control of the Northwest Territory occurred that led to statehood for Ohio, Indiana, Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, and Minnesota and displacement of Native Americans.

The following (NPS) interpretative themes were constructed with public input, but were structured by the purpose and significance statements:

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29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
1. Events associated with the Battle of Fallen Timbers illustrate American’s domineering approach to other cultures and ethnic groups.

2. The United States’ direction of the Wayne campaign and its aftermath represent a foundation of U.S. foreign policy and the stimulus for “Manifest Destiny” and the expansion of the central government.

3. Commemoration of the Battle of Fallen Timbers illustrates changing and differing views and approaches to collective memory, symbols, and myths from generation to generation.

4. The geography of the Maumee Valley formed a portal for transportation, trade, and settlement. The valley’s importance led to conflicts between cultures and nations.

5. Land use and the living patterns of various cultures in the Old Northwest stimulated the Battle of Fallen Timbers conflict.

6. The Battle of Fallen Timbers resulted in the disruption and displacement of the Native Confederacy and the eradication of some tribes. Those that survived continue to persevere and strive to preserve their culture and religious beliefs.

7. Racial, economic, religious, ethnic, and cultural conflict between the United States and Native Americans in the Ohio Country escalated into a total “no quarter” cultural war, where both sides attacked non-combatants and destroyed homes in order to drive the larger populations out of the Ohio Country.

8. The alliances and confederations present at the Battle of Fallen Timbers illustrate how such allegiances most often arise out of self-interest and how they continually change.

9. The Battle of Fallen Timbers represented a focal point in the expansion or decline of clashing rival powers in the Old Northwest.

10. Leadership at the Battle of Fallen Timbers and Fort Miamis demonstrated how individual personalities and the interests of generations had shifted national focus and priorities to the West.

11. The Wayne campaign served as a foundation for a common U.S. response to a national crisis – a progression from catastrophe, to panic, to assessment, to a collective and sustained response.

The desired future conditions were identified as part of the general management plan for the site as well. The cultural resources were defined as archaeological, ethnographic,
historic resources, cultural landscapes, and collections. These were to be preserved, protected, and maintained according to their existing conditions, in good condition with the cultural context typical of 1794 to 1813, as well as the natural resources maintained to the highest professional standards. These broad ambiguous goals provided much room for interpretation and management practices for Metroparks.

Acquiring Fallen Timbers Battlefield and Fort Miamis National Historic Site in the middle of a ten year operating levy hampered Metroparks as far as opening the park. In November 2008, Lucas County residents renewed the operating levy and Metroparks identified the development of Fallen Timbers and opening of the national historic site as a top priority over the next ten years.

Following the acquisition of the Fallen Timbers and Fort Miamis National Historic Site Metroparks, in 2002, created a History Department within the Programming Division. Metroparks hired historical interpreters to oversee the day to day operations at the Canal Experience and to develop the site of Fallen Timbers. In July 2002, Metroparks board adopted Resolution 44-2002 authorizing a partnership with the City of Sylvania to relocate and renovate the Lathrop House. The responsibility to develop interpretive programming immediately fell to the newly created History Department.31

The Lathrop House originally located along South Main Street, in Sylvania, Ohio, had architectural and historical significance. The home one of the oldest documented structures in Sylvania exhibits details of the Greek Revival architectural style. The wide frieze boards at its roofline, the classically inspired entablature, and the original windows

in the rear of the structure clearly portray its architectural style. Local preservationists placed more importance on the historical significance of the house. Many argued that the home served as a station on the Underground Railroad.32

Elkanah Briggs, in 1835, built the original portion of the home, a one and one half story upright. After his death in 1847, Lucian Lathrop purchased the property and constructed a two story Greek Revival home on the site. In 1860, Lucian’s son, Miles Lathrop, owned the home. Between 1873 and 1875, the Lathrop family joined the two structures into a one family home. The Lathrop family lived on the property through the 1870s and since that time the home has had several owners.33

Metroparks utilized the research prepared by Gaye Gindy, local historic preservation activist, as a basis for its interpretation. Gindy concluded that the Lathrop House served as a station on the Underground Railroad, a secret informal network to assist fugitive slaves. The network stretched throughout America and into Canada. Fugitive slave laws returned all escaped property to the owner once captured; therefore, escaped African-Americans were not safe until they settled beyond the reaches of American laws. Many chose the risk of being returned, but many settled in Canada. Underground Railroad routes zigzagged across the country. Escaped slaves that reached Sylvania, Ohio were typically escorted to Detroit, Michigan and crossed the Detroit River to freedom in Canada.34

Gindy’s research relied on oral histories and secondary sources. Many of her conclusions were broad generalizations of Lathrop’s involvement in the Underground

33 Gindy, vi-vii.
34 Ibid., viii.
Railroad. Gindy’s work linked Lucian Lathrop to the Harroun family. David Harroun operated a farm on the outskirts of Sylvania about half a mile from the Lathrop House. Family records documented the Harrouns’ involvement in the Underground Railroad. David Harroun secretly escorted slaves from Maumee to Sylvania, Ohio. The slaves hid in the bottom of wagons and stayed in the hay loft of Harroun’s barn.35

According to oral histories, slaves traveled between the two properties along Ten Mile Creek in a steep ravine that ran through the Harroun and Lathrop properties. The oral history linking the families is traced to Maynard G. Cosgrove’s *A History of Sylvania for the First Hundred Years* (1933). Cosgrove wrote: “In the years preceding the Civil War, Sylvania was on the line of one of the ‘Underground Railroads,’ helping runaway slaves to escape to Canada. The old white house, set back from the street, opposite the Catholic Church on South Main, served as a ‘station.’” Ernest B. Comstock’s *The History of the Harroun Family in America – Seven Generations: Descendants of Alexander Harround of Colerain, Mass.* (1940) documented the memories of Mrs. Alice Harroun Shaw, great granddaughter of David, of family stories working on the Underground Railroad. She commented, “The fugitives were hidden either at the Harroun house in the attic or in the loft of the barn. They were also hidden in the Old Lathrop place, which is now owned by Linton Fallis. The Old Lathrop place was directly west across fields from the Harroun home.”36

Once at the Lathrop House, slaves hid in a basement room. Lucian Lathrop designed the basement so that the double oven doors concealed the entrance into the

36 Gindy, 34 and 53. Quotes reprinted. Cosgrove’s father, Dr. Thomas Cosgrove served with Lucian and Miles Lathrop, in 1883, on the village council.
room and access could only be gained by crawling through the oven chamber. A 1939 article found in the *Quarterly Bulletin of the Historical Society of Northwestern Ohio* documented the secret room in the Lathrop House. Linton Fallis, the home owner at the time, working on restoration of the home uncovered “a concealed room in [the] cellar (formerly reached by an outside stairway)... with the beds still in it, where the slaves were hidden until an opportune time came for sending them on to the next station.”

Having evidence on the physical possibility of the home as a station, Gindy researched Lathrop’s involvement in the community. Gindy deduced that since Lathrop served as a Universalist minister, belonged to the Free Soil Party, and served as a Democratic representative in the Ohio State Legislature (1850) that he supported the antislavery stance of these organizations enough to break federal law to assist runaway slaves. The Universalist Church believed that God accepts everyone regardless of race, sex, or class. The Free Soil Party opposed the extension of slavery in the territories and the admission of new slave states into the Union. According to Clark Waggoner’s *History of the City of Toledo and Lucas County* (1888), the 1849 Democratic platform adopted at the county convention was identical to the Free Democratic platform that declared slavery to be “a moral, social and political evil and asserted that without the slightest interference with the independence and sovereignty of the several States, Congress ought to use its constitutional power to prevent the increase, to mitigate, and finally eradicate the evils of slavery.” The evidence presented by Gindy proved nothing more than Lathrop’s anti-slavery sentiments.38

37 Gindy, 43. Quote reprinted.
38 Gindy, 49 – 51; Oberlin, 206 – 207; and Clark Waggoner, *History of Toledo and Lucas County, Ohio* (New York; Toledo: Munsell, 1888) 343.
Lucian and Miles Lathrop lived in the home until 1884. From that time until its last owner Marie Vogt put the property up for sale, in 2001, the subsequent owners encouraged the public memory of the home as a station on the Underground Railroad. Each owner told the story of the secret room in the basement used to hide runaway slaves. Theodore and Marie Vogt lived in the home from 1954 to 2001 and hosted local school groups teaching them of the role the home and community played in the Underground Railroad. 39

Unable to care for the home, Marie Vogt approached Sylvania City Council in 2001 and requested seven hundred thousand dollars for the property. Council rejected the offer because it would be too difficult to relocate the historical structure down the street to the city’s historical village. “The cost of property, renovation, preservation, and operation of the home as a historical landmark was not sound financial management.” Vogt put the property up for sale. She received two offers. Neil and Nan Buehrer placed a bid for $330,000 planning to turn the home into a bed and breakfast, and St. Joseph’s Catholic Church bid $350,000 for the property. The church planned on razing the home in order to expand the school campus. Vogt accepted the church’s offer without giving the Buehrer’s an opportunity to counteroffer.

After hearing of the church’s demolition plans, preservationists picketed the church. Parishioners and residents of Sylvania became divided over the issue.40 The church proceeded with its plans for demolition and filed for a permit. All of a sudden, city council was prepared to buy the ravine acreage of the Vogt property to expand Harroun Park, as an emergency measure to stop the church’s development plans. Citizen

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39 Oberlin, 207
40 Ibid., 212 – 213.

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organizations rallied to prevent the demolition of the house. Sylvania City Council passed Resolutions Nos. 28.2001 and 8.2002 requesting the preservation of the home at its original location and created a Blue Ribbon Committee to research preservation uses and funding sources for the home.\(^{41}\)

Representatives for the church accepted the historical significance of the home. Yet, this did not alleviate the fact of the matter that the parochial school had grown beyond the walls of its current building and needed to expand. St. Joseph’s Catholic Church, local preservationists, and members of the Friends of Lathrop, a volunteer organization to “save” the Lathrop House, worked toward an agreeable compromise. In November 2003, the City’s final attempt to preserve the home in its original location through eminent domain was thwarted by voters. It became evident that the only viable option for the preservation of the home was to relocate it. The Friends of Lathrop started to raise funds even though a new location had yet to be identified.\(^{42}\)

Finally, it was agreed that the Lathrop House would be moved 100 feet to Harroun Park resting along the edge of the same ravine as its original location. As part of the move, Dr. G. Michael Pratt conducted an archaeological dig of the home site. Due to a limited amount of primary source evidence pertaining to involvement in the Underground Railroad, the National Park Service stressed that oral histories should be supplemented with archaeological evidence, memoirs, local histories, scholarly secondary sources, town records, and other historical documents for National Registry

\(^{41}\) Ibid.
\(^{42}\) Oberlin, 215; Gindy, 227.
nomination. Pratt’s research supported some of the legends of the Lathrop House and disproved others.\textsuperscript{43}

In removing the remnants of the garage and a large enclosed porch from the north façade of the 1835 home, the team uncovered a large concrete slab. Its removal exposed the perimeter wall of a cellar stairwell filled with rubble. An exterior entrance and stairs were built into the 1835 crawl space in 1850 when the main portion of the home was constructed. In the early twentieth century, the stairwell was improved with poured concrete and divided by a concrete support wall for the overhanging porch. Beyond the concrete wall, a crawl space probably used as a cellar was located. On the east side of the home, the archaeological survey found no proof of a hidden room and the crawl space was too small to hold beds mentioned in the oral histories of the Lathrop House. The dig uncovered brick foundations in the basement that may have been mistaken for ovens; however, they could not be traced to the period of the Underground Railroad. While no conclusions could be drawn from the archaeological evidence to support the oral histories of the Lathrop House, the fact the escaped slaves were hidden in the basement and escorted out of the home through an outside entrance could not be disproven.\textsuperscript{44}

Metroparks formed a partnership with the Friends of Lathrop and the City of Sylvania for the preservation of the home and educational services at the site. Programs stress the dangers posed to any individual – white or black, free or slave – for participating in the Underground Railroad.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{43} Oberlin 207 – 208, 210 – 211.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 208 – 209.
\textsuperscript{45} Oberlin, 217 and Gindy, 235
Metroparks’ involvement in historic preservation at the Canal Experience, the Fallen Timbers and Fort Miamis National Historic Site, and the Lathrop House reflected national trends regarding historic preservation. Typically, sites were either preserved in times of prosperity and focused on significant individuals, events, or architectural details, or when the sites have become threatened. Metroparks restored the Canal Experience during a period of growing prosperity for the organization. In the 1970s, Metroparks had just passed its first operating levy, developed and opened Swan Creek Metroparks, and worked with citizens to pass a levy to purchase and develop Wildwood Metropark. The renovation of the Isaac Ludwig Mill in the early 1970s and the restoration of the Miami and Erie Canal in the early 1990s were part of this continued growth and popularity of Metroparks. Fallen Timbers and the Lathrop House were properties that became threatened by development. Local citizens approached Metroparks to take on these sites in order to not lose a part of their heritage, much like those that worked to create the Metropolitan Park District of the Toledo Area by setting aside natural areas within park boundaries to protect the ever decreasing natural environment and loss for future generations the connection to the land that built the American character.

Yet, Metroparks has been short-sighted in their interpretation of these sites. They limit the story to the history rather than tracing how nature and culture have interacted throughout the years. Focusing on this interaction would reveal how people have shaped the land, used it, gave it meaning, and what it means in a contemporary environment. The first step is to analyze the natural setting – how nature has given shape to the environment. The next is how humans have manipulated and controlled that environment.

\[46\] Oberlin, 198 – 199.
This type of interpretation reveals the convergence of social, economic, and political forces that shaped a particular place. To preserve landscapes, we strive not to separate the natural from the historical features, but to preserve the relationship between the two.
Figure IX: Metropolitan Park District of the Toledo Area, 2009.
Courtesy of Metropolitan Park District of the Toledo Area.
Conclusion

American conservationism is divided into three periods: the conservation movement, the New Deal, and the environmental movement. From the idea of the scarcity of the land introduced by Frederick Jackson Turner in his frontier thesis, in 1893, conservation emerged with the goal to protect natural resources for the greatest number of people for the greatest good for the longest amount of time. This transformed through the twentieth century to a quest for aesthetic beauty, good health, and quality of life issues that emerged in the 1970s as the environmental movement.

The story of the development of the Metropolitan Park District of the Toledo Area reflects at a local level the changing public perceptions of the natural environment. One way Progressive era reformers addressed the ills of industrialization and urbanization was through the conservation and preservation of open space with the development of national, regional, state, and local parks. In Toledo, Ohio, the conservation movement was as aggressive as the national trend. Throughout the twentieth century, social activism reflected the region’s developing views toward natural and built environments. Initially focused on the conservation of natural areas, the shift encompassed the preservation of historical sites. The cultural landscapes within Metroparks tell the story of how humans have used and manipulated their environment since settlement of the region. Although nature and historical interpretation developed as two separate threads in the organization’s history, the intertwining of these stories provides a richer understanding of
the past and the environment. This understanding propels Metroparks to not only preserve the land but its history as well.

As open areas disappeared due to settlement patterns and urbanization, more Americans lost their personal connection to the natural world. Parks functioned to help citizens maintain their defining American characteristics with connection to wild areas. The parks created in the Toledo area were primarily city parks, which developed out of the play movement throughout the 1890s and early 1900s. The necessity of breathing holes for city dwellers culminated in a small scale recreational vision of why parks needed to exist. However, Metroparks emerged because of a demand for a large scale regional system that incorporated national trends. Outlying areas served to conserve unique natural features governed by a managing body with multi-faceted purposes of land utilization; recreation at the Metroparks was important, but it was a secondary role of the park system.

Conservation of unique natural features evolved out of land being developed into urban areas. Metroparks strove to meet Progressive ideals by beautifying abandoned land like the area surrounding the Miami and Erie Canal. Furthermore, environmental destruction stemmed from urbanization and industrialization. City sprawl threatened natural environments, and Toledo activists responded by developing a board to address national concerns in the Toledo area. At first, Metroparks was an abstract idea with an operating board, but in reality it did not possess land and had no financial backing.

The original goals and concepts of the Metroparks’ board reflected the public opinion that there needed to be a fundamental difference between city parks and metropolitan parks. The “sandpaper finish and rolled lawns” of city parks did not reflect
the wilds of America’s beauty spots. Nor, did city parks truly allow the public to find
connection to defining American ideals that had echoed continually throughout
Romantic, Transcendentalist, and now Progressive movements. Concepts included a
will to create locations to conserve wild, beautiful areas benefiting the public through
social, economic, and recreational facilities uniting cities, villages, and townships. Civic
embellishment in urban districts allowed the board to address eye-sores by capitalizing on
existing lands that had no viable use.1

With state law backing the primary goals of Metroparks, its board started
developing resources and local support grew exponentially. Special interest groups, while
operating independently with paralleled purpose requesting the conservation of regional
land propelled the board into action. The conservation of Oak Openings lands, Great
Black Swamp forest, and the abandoned canal lands became the original park system
which embodied the abstract concepts proposed by the original board.

The acquisition of land was the first step in bringing the board’s goals to fruition.
However, once the land was attained, the development to meet practical means of
healthful recreation and civic beautification was threatened by the Great Depression. In
order to continue to compete with national trends embedded in the Progressive principles,
Metroparks utilized federal programs to curb lulls in park development. Federal work
relief programs like the Works Progress Administration, Civilian Conservation Corps,
and National Youth Administration provided brawn for the construction of sites like

1 Fred B. DeFrees Scrapbook: Lucas County Metropolitan Park Board; Miami and Erie Canal Boulevard,
1923 – 1936, Administrative Office, Metropolitan Park District of the Toledo Area. A collection of
newspaper clippings and letters collected by Fred B. DeFrees, an engineer that worked in the grassroots
movement to create the metropolitan park district and build the Anthony Wayne Trail (U.S. Route 24) in
Toledo, Ohio.
Sidecut, Farnsworth, Bendview, Providence, Oak Openings, and Pearson. The construction of the earliest park system was accomplished through federal aid.

Once the development of the first land holdings was under way, the park district did not acquire additional land for ten-plus years. The next phase in land acquisition emerged in the 1950s and was accomplished by generous donations from local citizens. Now that Metroparks had foreseeable growth in property development, the board created interpretation programs to parallel the progress in land development. The primary focus of nature interpretation spotlighted education and conservation. Interpretive park programs mirrored national trends to create educational opportunities that stressed awareness and understanding to widen horizons and reach a greater appreciation for the world around us. The defining attributes of programs such as this were first voiced in Freeman Tilden’s 1957 publication of *Interpreting Our Heritage.*

Metroparks’ success was marked by the recognition that land was a viable commodity that needed to be conserved for the greater good. Public benefit was immeasurable. In order to maintain the success that the parks have previously experienced, the board recognized the need for further growth. Recognizing that they could not continue to function on the meager county allowance and needed further public support for operating funds, the board placed a third operating levy on the 1971 ballot. Because of the failure of two previous levies, the board implemented an aggressive approach to rally public support through marketing and campaigning; they worked to educate the voters on the value of parklands, importance of conserving natural resources,

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and the organization of Metroparks. In 1971, Metroparks experienced its first successful levy which secured its future.

Levy strategies affected the public and created a voice and awareness that did not previously exist among the general population. The public now perceived the Metroparks as a leading organization for land stewardship. Conservation education motivated the public to become proactive in naming natural environments for Metroparks interest. Public requests for land acquisition was reflected in the motion to conserve the Stranahan estate. Efforts to save the estate from urban development highlight the parks’ focus on the conservation of the built natural environment surrounding the home. Despite being the home of Toledo’s greatest auto baron, Metroparks opted to minimize the historical relevance of the home for the time being in order to focus on creating a wilderness retreat. The success stemming from board efforts and public voice followed the national trend; established in literature like *Silent Spring* and the creation of Earth Day, civic activism propelled conservation efforts in the 1970s.

Conservation has always been a key focus of the Metroparks board; however, with successful programming that focused on educating the public, the parks were able to begin shifting focus to include historical sites. Since the park has been able to acquire land and develop property holdings, the final stage for conserving cultural landscapes brought the conservation of natural environments full circle with the execution of interpretive programming. The donation of the Isaac Ludwig Mill and the restoration of the Miami and Erie Canal brought historical interpretation into the limelight through the Canal Experience. Historical relevance further materialized through the involvement at Fallen Timbers. As a national historic site, Metroparks was able to emanate the National
Park Systems’ goals of balancing natural, historical, and cultural interest. The Lathrop house further rooted efforts to incorporate a historical perspective into the parks.

How Americans have defined, cared for, and related to their natural environment since 1900 is evident in the history of Metroparks of the Toledo Area. The parklands tell the story of the settlement of Northwest Ohio through the interpretation of events such as the Battle of Fallen Timbers, the development of the canals, and the Underground Railroad. Interpretation in the Manor House changed to include the history of the Stranahan family and the role of Champion Spark Plug in Toledo, Ohio. And through this historical interpretation Metroparks preserves history, but does it preserve the natural landscapes where this history took place? Is it possible to preserve nature?

Utilizing the definition presented in the introduction that preservation protects nature from use and keeps it in an unaltered state, the answer to the above questions is no. Metroparks is unable to preserve the natural landscapes within their care. Throughout Metroparks’ history, the institution has manipulated and changed these natural environments. The initial parklands along the Maumee River were heavily altered with the construction of the Miami and Erie Canal when Metroparks leased them from the state of Ohio. In Oak Openings and Pearson Metroparks, the unique natural features of the oak savannahs and Great Black Swamp had almost vanished due to settlement patterns. These lands already heavily altered from their native state posed an immediate preservation challenge. Should Metroparks preserve the land in its existing condition or restore the land? Regardless, the public demand access to these areas. Throughout the Great Depression, Metroparks worked with federal work relief programs to develop these
lands into premier parks. Projects included the construction of trails, picnic areas, and playgrounds all designed for convenient public use.

This idea of the use of these natural areas eliminates the possibility of an overall mission for Metroparks of preservation. Even though designating the lands as parks protected these natural areas from urban development, Metroparks has been unable to preserve the lands or completely restore the native habitats. The management practices put in place by Metroparks that balance the use of natural and historical areas with recreational goals of local residents is better defined as conservation.

The historical relevance steeped in a rich American culture is embedded in the natural and built environments of the Northwest Ohio region. The acquisition, development, and interpretation of these sites throughout its history have allowed the Metroparks to conserve land and preserve history, further developing the Toledo culture. Supported by social activism, Metroparks has continually worked to conserve and preserve Toledo’s cultural landscapes.


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Chapter 6101: Ohio Conservancy District. Ohio Revised Code.


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