



CLEVELAND METROPARKS



Historical and Cultural Resources Management Plan

Executive Summary

September 2024

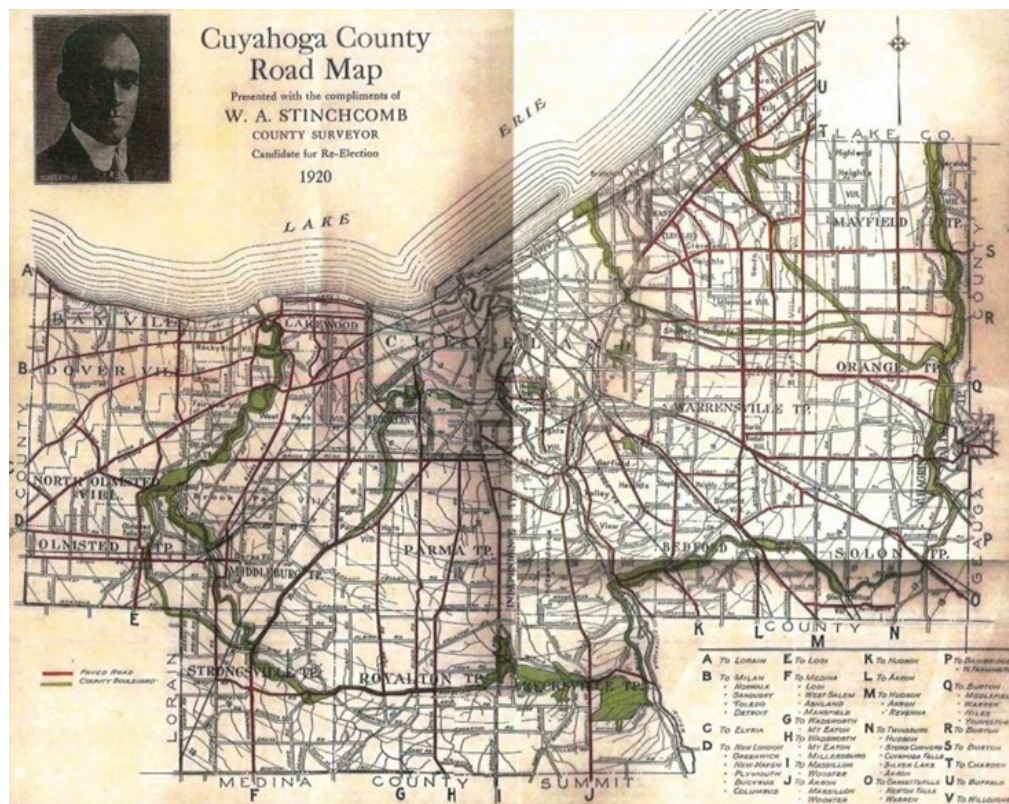
Prepared by Lawhon & Associates, Inc.

Cover Image: Proposed Cuyahoga County Park and Boulevard System, June 1916 (Cleveland Metroparks)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Cleveland Metroparks is an integral part of Cleveland and Northeast Ohio's regional identity, with 25,000 acres of land preserved for the enjoyment of the residents of northeast Ohio. Founded in 1917, Cleveland Metroparks was the first natural-area park district in Ohio. The system was at the forefront of the national movement to preserve areas of natural beauty for conservation, recreation, and public enjoyment.



1920 Map Depicting the Emerald Necklace Concept for the Cleveland Metropolitan Park District (Cleveland Metroparks)

William Stinchcomb led the initiative to protect the “Emerald Necklace” of streams and open spaces connected by a scenic parkway. Stinchcomb became the first Director of the Cleveland Metropolitan Parks (now Cleveland Metroparks). His vision was to improve quality of life for the residents of Cuyahoga County and provide respite from the stresses of urbanization.

Today Cleveland Metroparks manages 25,000 acres of parks and open space, including the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo. These parks, known as reservations, form today’s Emerald Necklace around Cuyahoga County, and offer outdoor recreational opportunities and

educational experiences to 19.3 million visitors annually. The reservations range from parks focused on scenic rivers (North Chagrin) to those interpreting the industrial history of Ohio (Ohio & Erie Canal), while the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo protects a sample of the planet's biodiversity for Cuyahoga County residents and visitors.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

The Cleveland Metroparks Historic and Cultural Resources Management Plan (hereafter, the Plan) will help Park District staff incorporate cultural resources into park-wide planning processes and assist in avoiding or minimizing effects of park actions on said resources. The Plan will allow staff to identify cultural resources that will be helpful to enhancing the educational programming of Cleveland Metroparks. Finally, the Plan is intended to help Cleveland Metroparks maintain its accreditation by the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) through fulfilling the requirements for *CAPRA Standard 2.8, Historical and Cultural Resource Management Plans*.

This document is a reference and guidance for park staff going forward into the second century of existence for Cleveland Metroparks. The Plan is meant to serve as both a reference document and as planning guidance, and includes a brief history of Cleveland Metroparks, an explanation of the categorization system used to inventory and classify historical and cultural resources in the park system, individual reservation overviews with historical discussions and summaries of historic resource inventories, and guidance on plan implementation.



May Day at Music Mound, 1944 (Cleveland Metroparks)

The Plan presents an overview of the historical context for each reservation in the Cleveland Metroparks system, identifies management priorities, and provides an inventory of known resources within each reservation. To assist in managing the historical and cultural resources, the plan preparers developed a categorization system to sort the

resources into logical categories. These categories consist of archaeological sites, buildings, structures, objects, landscape features, cultural landscapes, and cemeteries. Using information provided by Cleveland Metroparks and from the Ohio Historic Preservation Office, the plan preparers prepared preliminary resource inventories and reviewed them in meetings with staff from each reservation. The review allowed for revision of the preliminary inventories and the plan preparers added resources that were not previously identified in Metroparks inventories or recorded by the Ohio Historic Preservation Office. This version of the Plan is an update to the original document completed by Lawhon & Associates, Inc., in 2017.

INVENTORY

The Lawhon & Associates team visited each identified resource in the field, photographed it, assessed its condition (where applicable), and assigned it to a management priority classification of high, medium, or low priority. The plan preparers inventoried 384 individual historical and cultural resources across the Park District. The inventory is meant to serve in assisting cultural resources management planning going forward at each reservation and across the Park District as a whole. Note: the number of existing resources enumerated in this document is less than the total number of inventoried resources due to periodic building demolitions or other actions that have removed them from the landscape.

A few observations can be made about cultural resources in Cleveland Metroparks based on the following summary table. Cultural resources are present at all but two of the reservations, with Acacia and West Creek Reservations lacking any known resources (perhaps not coincidentally, these two reservations are also among the newest in the Park District). Acacia Reservation is a former golf course and as such was landscaped extensively, removing much of its potential for having resources such as archaeological sites. No buildings are present at Acacia, as well. While lacking historical buildings like Acacia, West Creek, conversely, likely has undiscovered archaeological sites; most of the reservation has simply never been surveyed for the presence of sites.

On the opposite side of the spectrum, there are eight reservations containing over 20 known cultural resources (Bedford, Brecksville, Hinckley, Huntington, Mill Stream Run, North Chagrin, Rocky River, and South Chagrin). These reservations also happen to have larger land areas and are also all Legacy Parks (or in the case of Mill Stream Run, were formed from part of a Legacy Park). Many of the cultural resources at these reservations include park infrastructure and buildings built by CCC and WPA work crews during the Great Depression, as well as archaeological sites and cultural landscapes such as golf courses.



*Quarry Picnic Area Bridge built by CCC, Euclid Creek Reservation 1935
(Cleveland State University Library Special Collection)*

Four reservations have less than 10 known resources (Big Creek, Bradley Woods, Ohio & Erie Canal, and Washington), while Brookside Reservation/Cleveland Metroparks Zoo, Euclid Creek, Garfield Park, and Lakefront each have between 10 and 20 known resources. While it may seem that cultural resources are more common at the largest parks, known resources occur at about the same frequency across all reservations, no matter the size of the park. Rocky River, with 2,572 acres and 48 resources, has the same frequency of occurrence as Washington Reservation, with 278 acres and two resources: less than 1 resource per acre of park property.

Overall, buildings are the most common resource type in the inventory ($n=136$), followed by structures ($n=84$) and archaeological sites ($n=81$). Cemeteries are the rarest resource, with only two recorded cemeteries – both being graves of single individuals. As more reservation area is subjected to cultural resources survey in the future, the archaeological site category will become more populated, with the potential to become the most common resource type. Archaeological sites in the Park District range from prehistoric earthworks erected long ago by Native American inhabitants of the Cleveland region to historic mill sites and houses built by Cuyahoga County's first European-American settlers in the nineteenth century. There are even potential archaeological sites related to twentieth century use of the parks, such as the former locations of summer camps and CCC camps.



Stone Quarry building ruins, Bradley Woods Reservation (Lawhon & Associates, Inc.)

Most of the historical buildings owned or managed by Cleveland Metroparks are park-related, such as picnic shelters. Several of these shelters are excellent examples of the work of CCC and WPA crews in the Park District during the Great Depression. Indeed, two CCC camps were in the Park District, one at Euclid Creek and the other at Brecksville. Crews from these camps would range throughout the parks, building shelters, nature centers, roads, bridges, and retaining walls. These CCC and WPA features of the Park District helped to create a distinctive character common to the original nine reservations, known as the “Legacy Parks”: Bedford, Brecksville, Big Creek, Euclid Creek, Rocky River (including part of modern-day Mill Stream Run), Hinckley, Huntington, North Chagrin, and South Chagrin.

Few buildings dating to before the establishment of the Metroparks are present in the Park District, with several representing buildings brought to a reservation from elsewhere (the Frostville Museum buildings at Rocky River and at the BayARTS campus at Huntington, for example). Reservations that currently have Pre-Metroparks buildings include Brecksville, Brookside/Zoo, Garfield Park, Hinckley, Huntington, Lakefront, North Chagrin, Rocky River, South Chagrin, and Washington. Some of these buildings are nineteenth century farmhouses (the Prechtel House at Rocky River, the McFarland House and Riding Club House at South Chagrin, and the Worden Homestead at Hinckley are examples), while others are remnants of the estates of wealthy Clevelanders who sold or bequeathed their property to the Metroparks, such as the Huntington Water Tower, the Manakiki Golf Course Club House, and Squire’s Castle.



Brecksville Reservation Trailside Museum (now Brecksville Nature Center), 1940s (Cleveland Metroparks)

Historical structures include such things as bridges and stone walls and are especially common at reservations where there was WPA/CCC activity. Most, if not all, the stonework structures in the Park District were built with labor supplied by crews working under the CCC, WPA, or other federal relief programs during the Great Depression, including structures found at reservations that were former city parks, like Garfield Park and Edgewater Park. The CCC and WPA crews worked under the direct management of the Park District. Landscape features, cultural landscapes, and objects are all relatively uncommon resources in the Park District, and include natural features, golf courses, historic districts, and memorials.

EVALUATION AND CLASSIFICATION

The plan preparers evaluated each resource for its priority for attention in planning, and assigned each resource a management priority, using the categories of High, Medium, and Low Priority. The management priority identifies the level of attention that is recommended to be paid to a resource. The management priority does not place a historical value or significance on a resource, although that does play a part in assigning the priority for each resource. High Priority resources include resources considered most important to the identity of the parks; those that are significant to local and national history (including some resources listed in the National Register of Historic Places); and potentially significant resources that could be impacted in the future by Metroparks projects. Medium Priority resources are those that are important to park history but are not

otherwise locally or nationally significant; and are not likely to be affected by near-future development, but still require an ongoing level of management and planning. Low Priority resources are those that require little to no further planning. Some Low Priority resources are simply not considered historically significant, while others (especially archaeological sites) are in locations that are not likely to be developed and can simply be left alone. Some resources may be significant archaeological or historically but because there is little chance of any project impacts to them due to location or other factors, they may be classified lower in priority than may be expected.

The plan preparers classified most of the inventoried resources as Medium and Low Priority resources. The preparers largely reserved High Priority designation for resources considered to be key features of reservations, such as particularly fine examples of WPA-constructed buildings and structures, resources listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and resources that represent important people or events related to the Metroparks (such as the Harriet Keeler Memorial). In general, cultural and historical resources are currently well-managed within the park system. The plan preparers found few areas where improvement could be identified, and no practices appeared to be of pressing need of adjustment in terms of impacting cultural resources. Perhaps the most important thing that park managers can do is to continue to raise awareness of the importance of the stewardship of historical and cultural resources among both park staff and park visitors.



High Priority Resource Example: Look About Lodge, South Chagrin Reservation (Cleveland Metroparks)

Summary of Cleveland Metroparks Historical and Cultural Resources
Counts do not include previously inventoried resources that no longer exist

Reservation	Archaeological Sites	Buildings	Structures	Objects	Landscape Features	Cultural Landscapes	Cemeteries	Total
Acacia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bedford	27	5	8	2	8	1	1	52
Big Creek	4	1	2	1	0	0	0	8
Bradley Woods	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	4
Brecksville	14	20	13	3	4	3	1	58
Brookside/Zoo	0	7	6	1	3	1	0	18
Euclid Creek	3	2	3	0	4	0	0	12
Garfield Park	0	3	8	1	3	0	0	15
Hinckley	2	10	2	0	6	0	0	20
Huntington	0	11	7	2	1	0	0	21
Lakefront	1	3	2	3	4	1	0	14
Mill Stream Run	8	25	7	0	3	1	0	44
North Chagrin	1	12	3	1	4	4	0	25
Ohio & Erie Canal	3	0	4	0	1	1	0	9
Rocky River	9	20	9	3	5	3	0	49
South Chagrin	8	10	9	0	3	0	0	30
Washington	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
West Creek	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	81	132	83	18	50	15	2	381

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Plan identifies best practices and priority lists of Park District actions in relation to improving management of historical and cultural resources. In general, park staff involved with maintenance and upkeep of historical resources should focus on preserving the historical characteristics that make such resources significant. Specific recommendations of the Plan include creating a Cultural Resources Specialist position, who would serve as a single point-of-contact for both internal and external communications regarding Metroparks cultural and historical resources and have the expertise to advise about cultural resources regarding future development projects for the park. The Cultural Resources Specialist would be able to identify what possible effects on cultural resources might occur from future park projects and outline any necessary steps needed to address project impacts on cultural resources. The Cultural Resources Specialist would also oversee management of the park's inventory and data management practices related to cultural resources.

The Plan identifies best management practices for the treatment of historical and cultural resources. For the most part, park managers can treat archaeological sites through avoidance and preservation in place. The plan preparers categorized many of the sites in the resource inventory as low management priority precisely because they are in out-of-the-way, low-traffic areas with no immediate development planned for the areas. In general, park managers should maintain significant historic buildings, structures, and objects using the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The standards were developed for preservation of historic properties that are listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register and serve as a recognized set of standard guidelines for maintaining and restoring historical buildings. The Plan recommends that Cleveland Metroparks adopt these guidelines as they represent a nationally recognized standard of treatment for historical resources.

Finally, the Plan presents a priority list of actions that are recommended for Cleveland Metroparks to consider in relation to future management of cultural resources. The list includes:

1. Establish the position of Cultural Resources Specialist for Cleveland Metroparks.
2. Identify key staff to serve as the point person for immediate and low-level cultural resources issues/questions.
3. Identify overarching historical themes that are common to all or most of the reservations in Cleveland Metroparks.
4. Analyze Parkway System for inclusion in National Scenic Byways program.

Appendices to the Plan include detailed maps and inventory tables for each reservation, a glossary of terms, a prehistoric cultural context for northeastern Ohio, a list of known Cleveland Metroparks affiliates relevant to historical and cultural resources management, an overview of relevant cultural resources laws and guidelines, and a list of references

cited in the document. In addition to the Plan, Lawhon & Associates created and submitted a cultural resources Geographic Information Systems (GIS) geodatabase containing the locations of every resource inventoried in the plan, along with all the information presented in the resource inventory tables in the appendices. The geodatabase is integrated into the existing Cleveland Metroparks GIS and used in planning future park improvements.



*Chagrin State Scenic River and Henry Church Rock, South Chagrin Reservation
(Lawhon & Associates, Inc.)*

ONGOING STEWARDSHIP

The Plan is a “living document” in that it is not meant to be a static document, and it should be revisited at regular intervals and updated to reflect newly identified priorities, note successful completion of previous prioritized tasks, and update the resource inventory. Particularly, Park GIS staff should update and add to the GIS geodatabase as previously undocumented cultural resources are identified in the park system. The 2023 version of the plan should be updated by 2028 and at five-year intervals afterwards.

The Plan was prepared by Lawhon & Associates, Inc., in close coordination with Cleveland Metroparks staff. The cooperation of Park District personnel at the individual reservation review meetings in 2016 was vital in securing information, research material, and access to resources. Similar reviews of the status of known resources and identification of recently identified resources since the last update are key to ensuring the Plan remains a useful resource for Park staff.

CLEVELAND METROPARK ARCHIVES

Cleveland Metroparks began a project to collect, catalog and store historical documents, reports, photographs, and other historical items in 2010. Up until that time there had been no concerted effort to gather these items. Administrative offices had moved several times and individual departments and divisions had charge of their historic documentation with no park wide standard practice put in place. Unfortunately, many items had been lost or discarded over the years. The Park District created a part-time archivist position in 2010, which expanded to a full-time position in 2015.

The archivist spent several years documenting items of historical significance found at locations throughout the park district, including nature centers, management centers and administrative offices. A centralized archive was created in 2014 at the Outdoor Experiences administrative offices at 8701 Lakeshore Blvd. The archives collection consists of reports, correspondence, photographs, publications, newspaper clippings, and other items documenting the creation, development, and activities of the Cleveland Metroparks since its creation in 1917. The collection is strongest in items pertaining to the first seventy years of the park's existence. There is a dearth of documentation in the 1980s, and many records since the 1990s were born digital.

The archives were moved to the Ohio and Erie Canal Reservation at 6101 West Canal Rd. in 2023. This move allowed for more space for storage and workspace. Approximately 32 linear feet of materials are housed in archival-safe folders and boxes and housed on enamel-coated steel shelving. Newly acquired materials are still being collected, sent to the archives from various offices throughout the parks, as well as occasional donations of materials by park visitors or family members of prior employees. These items are stored in the back room of the archives as they await processing.

A cataloging software management system (CMS) from Re:Discovery Software, called Proficio Elements, was utilized beginning in 2023. The software is designed specifically for archives and libraries. This tool will allow for the creation of finding aids for the collection, with the goal of making these finding aids available to Cleveland Metroparks employees and the public.