

Stewardship/Conservation and Advocay
at
The Cleveland Museum of Natural History

James K. Bissell

In 1956, when Museum staff became involved in natural area acquisition they realized that further conservation of the best remaining examples of Ohio's natural heritage and stewardship of those already protected would require accurate knowledge about the distribution and abundance of native species, the kind of knowledge contained within up-to-date collections. In order to amass that conservation data, twenty years ago The Cleveland Museum of Natural History began a regional plant and natural area inventory program. The Museum was an appropriate center for establishing the program because a high quality regional plant collection, predominantly from the nineteenth century, already existed at the Museum. The collection now contains 60,000 specimens.

The collection provides a reference for plant identification and reflects the natural variability found within regional species. Data from the herbarium also facilitates tracking the responses of natural communities to environmental changes such as encroachment of exotic species, human use, natural succession and fluctuations of Lake Erie.

Annual field work for collection of herbarium specimens is based upon regional conservation needs. The collection allows those who work with it to develop general expertise on the region's flora and natural communities. This knowledge has been passed on to public and private landowners and conservation organizations in the region, allowing these organizations and the Museum to establish land protection priorities for the region and set stewardship priorities for thousands of acres of natural lands.

Summary Statement

Siegfried F. Buerling
Director of Properties
The Western Reserve Historical Society

Clara Bell Ritchie's bequest brought Hale Farm and Village under the stewardship of The Western Reserve Historical Society. I will discuss how this came about and why The Western Reserve Historical Society decided to develop Hale Farm and Village by relocating buildings that otherwise would have been destroyed. The justification for preservation through relocation.

My presentation will then explain the difference between restoring buildings on site versus relocated ones. I will talk about the differences between Shandy Hall and Loghurst, which were restored on site and Hale Farm where moved buildings are restored. I will discuss the problems an organization faces when it cannot afford to maintain a historic building or site once it has taken over the responsibility to do so, but does not have the means to maintain it to the standards it deserves. I will use Lawnfield as an example, why The Western Reserve Historical Society decided to give it to the United States Government (National Park Service) and the positive and negative consequences of the gift.

Finally I will talk about historic sites as a whole, the importance of preserving, not only buildings and objects, but to include human resources such as crafts and domestic activities as well as the animal smells and sounds in our preservation efforts of the past.

Stewardship/Conservation/Advocacy: The Issues
How the Actions of the Early Settlers
Impact the Conservation Decisions of Today

Thomas W. Stanley
Chief of Natural Resources
Cleveland Metroparks

The early settlers to the Western Reserve territory found nearly unbroken forest as they viewed the area now known as Ohio for the first time. In order to begin new lives, trees were cut to build homes and towns; land was cleared for farming and livestock pasturing. These actions taken nearly two hundred years ago not only changed the landscape then, but are still today the major influence on the remaining open space and natural areas of Ohio.

Much of the natural resource management program of Cleveland Metroparks reflects the realities of these dramatic changes generated by our forefathers. As the landscape changed, different plant communities supporting different species of wildlife developed, some directly as in a planted pasture, others indirectly as, for example, when a farm became abandoned. Arrivals of new species when occurring through range expansion from nearby populations was generally positive and a logical corollary to the natural "crossroads" role of Northeast Ohio where north meets south and east meets west in terms of biological diversity. However, the intentional or accidental introduction of totally alien species to the area usually resulted in biological problems that have only increased over the years. Adding the species that were lost because of the dramatic changes to the land, it is evident why the actions of these early pioneers have greatly influenced the natural resource management opportunities and decisions of today.

Cleveland Metroparks now owns approximately 19,000 acres of land, much of which was non-forested at the time of acquisition dating back, in some cases, to the 1920s. While most of these acres have and are being managed to return to native hardwood forests, a portion (10-15%) however are managed to conserve these additional habitat types. This program ensures that the biological diversity, always a part of Northeast Ohio and increased by the "land management" practices of the early settlers, will be protected.

As natural areas shrink throughout the continent, these "managed" alternative habitats are often critical to the survival of plant and animal species.