

Lake County: *Walking in Awe*

Have you heard about flaneuring? It is a French word for “a stroll that has no specific purpose other than to enjoy the experience.” I learned about this word while on vacation in Quebec City last August. It is a mindful saunter often targeted for older seniors that seems to be gaining traction Up North. Simply put, it is a daily “Awe Walk,” focused on being immersed in what your senses experience. As winter’s mild grip comes to an end and you look for the magnificence in the mundane, let me offer these Lake Metroparks as both a bit of history and sense-based flaneur - a mindful relaxed outing. It is most definitely a strolling adventure with no bounds or age restrictions.



Blair Ridge:

One of Lake Metroparks newer acquisitions (2012) is Blair Ridge. Located in Leroy Township, the park overlooks the Grand River, and its 63 acres date back to 1818. W.A. Blair once owned the property on both sides of the Grand River. A chance observation in

1824 of an ore-like substance by Blair made all the difference. The Geauga Iron Company was founded in 1825 and the Seeley & Morley Furnace and Blair Furnace era soon followed. By 1850, the Lake Shore Railroad had a footprint on the property. The Blair family history resides there. Additionally, Lake County’s last public covered bridge was located there through 1952. James P. Storer acquired the property in 1967, totaling 180 acres. Storer, who was blinded at age 6 in a childhood accident, built his home there in 1970. He was the owner of Storer Communications and was the prime supporter of the Cleveland Sight Center. A clock tower, cabins for blind campers, a pond, pool, hot tub, sauna, sika deer and pet cemetery for seeing-eye dogs existed through 2012. The Metroparks had an interest in the site as early as 1993 before acquiring the current property about a decade ago.



Jordan Creek / Camp Klein:

233 acres welcome any trekker to this Lake Metropark. While a creek hike to Chair Factory Falls or a visit to the scenic hiking trails near the Yurt are certainly worth the trip, it is the Environmental Learning Center itself that is steeped in Concord Township history. From 1952-1998, it was known as Camp Klein. It was a continuation of the original Epworth “fresh air camps” of the early 1900s located on nearby Fay Road. This United Methodist Camp, named after newspaperman and majority owner & founder George Klein, was one of six major

sites in Ohio for educational, religious, and physical enrichment. Ed Hozdik and his family were caretakers of the 170 acres plus from 1954-1981. "Then and Now" displays found inside the original building, coupled with an outdoor walking map, guide visitors thru a walk into yesteryear.



Lakeshore Reservation:

In North Perry Village on Lockwood Road, one will find this 84-acre hidden gem. Once owned by ten individuals who had summer or permanent residences on Lake Erie, the largest plot was owned by Charles Irish, a notable arborist. His rhododendrons and non-native ornamentals and shrubs still dot the current eastern landscape. Between 1967-1973, parcels were acquired thru several land and water conservation efforts for a park. This site was one of the first in the state to offer a paved trail for all people – an accessible trail for handicapped, elderly, visually-impaired or mobility challenged visitors. Don Strock, the park's first naturalist, had a memorial dedicated in October 1978 to his wife Luanna. Included in the Strock Memorial was a cable bridge, sculpted sundial, and bronze area cast. Eleven sculptures, some reaching a height of 14 feet or weight of 8-10 tons can be viewed by all who venture there. In June 1980, the Lake County branch of the American Cancer Society dedicated a memorial sanctuary of plantings near the east parking lot.



Pete's Pond Preserve:

Sitting just behind Wickliffe High School, visitors will find a strolling loop of a bit over a mile that is steeped in local lore and Cleveland history. From 1947-1951 Peter Berezonsky dug out the current pond to sell topsoil. Documents indicate the area was 300' by 2100' and 40' deep. Aerial views even show remnants of the original truck bridge now submerged. Local newspapers documented Pete's presence and his business exploits from 1951-1959. Originally totaling more than 160 acres, this property was the estate known as the Lakeland Farm. Built in the late 1860s into the 1870s, it was the summer home of Franklin Rockefeller by 1889 (estranged brother of Standard Oil's John D. Rockefeller). A three-story yellow house



with a porch on three sides faced Rt. 84 (Ridge Road). The estate featured vineyards to the northwest, a pool with stone walls, and a racetrack. A private branch of the interurban served the site. All that remains of this summer estate footprint today are the original carriage house and some decorative stone walls. In 1958, the property became the present Wickliffe High School. However, the current 69 acres that comprise the Lake Metroparks portion opened in 2012.



Lace up those walking shoes...

These are just four county parks worthy of your springtime flaneuring. You may even call it an active outing. Aw, heck...just call it a walk.



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