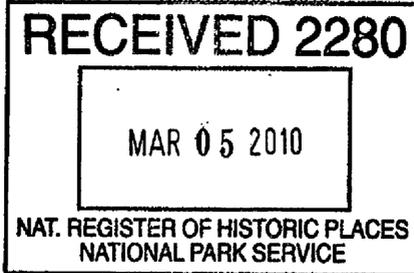


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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Mount Airy Forest  
Other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number Main Entrance - 5083 Colerain Ave. n/a  not for publication  
city or town Cincinnati  vicinity  
state Ohio code OH county Hamilton code 061 zip code 43223

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Barbara Owen Department Head, Inventory & Registration January 27, 2010  
Signature of certifying official Date

Ohio Historic Preservation Office, Ohio Historical Society  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.  
 determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.

- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Edson H. Beall Signature of Keeper 4-13-10 Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Enter as many boxes as apply)
[ ] private
x [ ] public-local
[ ] public-State
[ ] public-Federal

Category of Property
(Enter only one box)
[ ] building(s)
x [ ] district
[ ] site
[ ] structure
[ ] object

Table with 3 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing, and Total. Rows for buildings, sites, structures, objects, and Total.

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

The Historic Resources of the Cincinnati Park and Parkway System, 1817-1959

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)
Recreation/Culture - outdoor recreation
Landscape - park, garden, forest, natural feature, street furniture/object

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)
Recreation - outdoor recreation
Landscape - park, garden, forest, natural feature, street furniture/object

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)
Other - Rustic park style

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)
Foundation: stone
roof: wood shingle, metal
walls: stone
other: heavy timber

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- X A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
X C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or a grave.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property.
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Landscape Architecture

Social History

Recreation/culture

Period of Significance

1911-1959

Significant Dates

1911

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

R. Carl Freund, architect; H. Brunke, architect; E.L. Gill, architect; Joseph Stith, architect; George Kessler, landscape architect; Edmund Secrest, State Forester

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
previously listed in the National Register
previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data

- X State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
X Local government
University
Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 1,471 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing	Zone Easting Northing	
1 16 <u>709737 4340015</u>	3 16 <u>711234 4337537</u>	5 16 <u>707224 4337316</u>
2 16 <u>711340 4339860</u>	4 16 <u>708329 4336229</u>	
	<input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

see continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

see continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title organization Nancy Recchie, consultant, Benjamin D. Rickey & Co. date 5/08  
 street & number 595 South Fifth St. telephone 614-221-0358  
 city or town Columbus state OH zip code 43206

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white** photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Cincinnati Park Board  
 street & number 950 Eden Park Drive telephone 513-352-4080  
 city or town Cincinnati state OH zip code 45202

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

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Mount Airy Forest, at 1,471 acres, is by far the largest park in the Cincinnati Park System. Established by the Cincinnati Park Board in 1911, the first purchase of land included 168 acres “lying west of Colerain Avenue near the top of Colerain Hill, thus starting the first municipal reforestation project in the nation.” (George W. Kase, *Mount Airy Forest*, unpublished paper, 1969) The initial land purchases included several farms that “suffered from indiscriminate clearing of trees, unrestricted cattle grazing and poor agricultural practices.” (Kase, 1969) The Cincinnati Park Board continued to purchase land to add to Mount Airy Forest and by 1929, the park consisted of approximately 1,300 acres, nearly its current size. Reforestation efforts began immediately. “What was once scarred, eroded and nearly treeless ridges and slopes has become today’s lush forest which includes 700 acres reforested in hardwoods, 200 acres in evergreens, 270 acres in native woodland, 170 acres in open meadow and 120 acres in arboretum development.” (Kase, 1969)

Most of the physical development and construction that occurred in Mount Airy Forest took place between 1931 and 1959 – during the Depression and the post World War II period. Included were construction of paved roads, trails, picnic areas, stone walls, open shelters, comfort stations, concession building, lodges, the arboretum, and service facilities.

Mount Airy is located approximately four miles northwest of downtown Cincinnati and consists of varied topography and landscapes, including ridges, wooded hillsides, ravines, creeks, a lake, and open meadows. Originally comprised of contiguous property, the park was bisected by the construction of Interstate 74 (non-contributing #29). West Fork Road runs parallel to the east side of I-74; the two sections of the park are connected by Shepherd Creek Road and Montana Avenue, both of which pass under the interstate. The hillsides bordering the interstate are heavily-forested, which minimizes the visual impact from inside the park. Approximately two thirds of the parkland and most of the recreational buildings and facilities are located east of the interstate. The western section of Mt. Airy is the location of Maple Ridge Lodge and the former CCC camp.

The park contains an integrated system of winding paved roads leading to all of the park’s facilities. The roads pass through both wooded and open areas, often with a mowed margin on either side of the road, then meadow and the woods beyond. In addition, there are 14 miles of hiking trails, which comprises nearly 1/3 of the trails in all of the city’s parks, and 16 miles of bridle paths. The trails pass through varied terrain and frequently incorporate small wooden bridges over streams. (photos #1-2)

Nearly every element of design in Mount Airy Forest – from the layout of roads and trails, the forest, gardens, structures and buildings – is considered contributing to the character and significance of the park. The park structures are generally “rustic park” design and are constructed of stone and heavy timber. While most are individually unique they constitute to a unified whole. The buildings were carefully sited and integrated into the landscape, as are other landscape elements such as stone walls, stone steps and fences. A number of the buildings were designed by R. Carl Freund, who worked for the Cincinnati Park Board between 1930 and his death in 1959. During that period he designed at least 37 buildings for the park system. Twelve are located in Mount Airy Forest. In addition to the one shelter of recent construction, I-74 is considered a non-contributing

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structure within the historic district. The portion of the highway cutting through the park is elevated and passes through mostly forested sections of the park.

### **Buildings and Structures**

#### **A. Shelters**

Mount Airy Forest has eight open shelters constructed between 1931 and 1950, with seven constructed during the Depression. They share a common design vocabulary with native stone and heavy timber construction in a rustic style. They are typically open on all sides and were designed for seasonal use. In addition, the Oak Lodge open shelter was added in 2000.

**Rail Fence and Hidden Ridge Open Shelters**, are the smallest shelters in the park and among the earliest, with two dating from 1931. The buildings are simple rectangular structures with metal-covered hip roofs supported on four square stone corner piers. Rail Fence Shelter has a poured concrete floor, while Hidden Ridge Shelter has a natural stone floor. Rail Fence Shelter has been attributed to Cincinnati park architect R. Carl Freund and it appears that his design was used for both buildings. Rail Fence Shelter is located in an open area with a play area nearby. Hidden Ridge Shelter is located along a trail, which begins on Trail Ridge Road, and is not visible from the road. (photo # 3)

**Oval Open Shelter** was also completed in 1931 and is one of the more unusual buildings of this type in the Cincinnati park system. It is a large rectangular structure with a hipped roofline covered with wood shingles and supported by massive stone corner piers. The shelter is enclosed with a cedar log balustrade giving it a distinctive rustic character. The rustic style is also reflected in the stone flooring and exposed timber roof structure. This shelter was built with WPA funding. It occupies a prominent location in the Oval, a clearing near the center of the park, with a road that surrounds it. The Oval Comfort Station and Concession are located nearby. (photos #4 –6)

**Furnas Hill Open Shelter** was completed in 1932 and was constructed with federal funds. The rectangular, gable-roofed structure is supported on stone corner piers and cedar log posts and framing. The roof is covered with wood shingles and has overhanging eaves with exposed cedar rafter ends. The floor is stone. Like the Oval Shelter, this building retains the natural character of the cedar logs, which skillfully integrates materials of the forest and architecture. It is located in a clearing on Furnas Ridge. (photos #7,8)

**Ponderosa Open Shelter**, completed in 1934, is located on the edge of a clearing and incorporates a semi-circular open overlook as part of the structure. The square shelter features a metal-covered roof hip roof supported by stone corner piers and has a natural stone floor, covered with asphalt. Built-in benches provide a resting place for visitors to enjoy the view. (photos # 9,10)

**Blue Spruce Open Shelter** was designed by architect E. L. Gill and completed in 1937 utilizing labor from the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp located in Mount Airy Forest. The small rectangular building features stone corner piers supporting heavy timber framing and a metal-covered hip roof. The building is enclosed on

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three sides with a low stone wall and a projecting semi-circular open terrace. The stone flooring has been covered with asphalt. It is located in an open area of the park. (photo # 11).

**McFarlan Open Shelter** was designed by architect H. Brunke and completed in 1937 with labor from the CCC camp. (photo #12) The large rectangular building has partially enclosed stone end walls with massive stone fireplaces flanked by built-in seating. The structure features heavy timber framing, a metal-covered gable roofline with wide overhanging eaves and exposed rafter ends. The shelter is located in an open area on McFarlan Ridge, with a play area and McFarlan Comfort Station nearby.

**Stone Steps Shelter** was designed by R. Carl Freund and completed in 1950. It combined a comfort station in the center of the building with open loggias at either end. It was constructed of stone and heavy timber framing like the earlier shelters, although this one has a slightly more restrained modern design with a low horizontal profile. It is located on the edge of a clearing. (photo #13)

### B. Comfort Stations

There are eight comfort stations located in Mount Airy Forest. Six were constructed between 1932 and 1939 and two – Lodge Road and Colerain Avenue Comfort Stations – were built in 1949 in the immediate post-war period. Like the open shelters, the comfort stations vary in design but share common characteristics – the buildings were usually located at the edge of clearings, they were constructed in stone, had entrances for men and women at opposite ends of the building with wing walls for privacy, and had windows located high on the wall for privacy and natural light.

**Oval Comfort Station**, designed by R. Carl Freund, was the first comfort station built in Mount Airy and was completed in 1932. It is a stone structure with a metal-covered hip roof and was constructed in the form described above. The building is located on the west side of the oval near the edge of the woods. It serves the area where the Oval Open Shelter and Oval Concession are located. It was built with federal funding. (photo #14)

**Rail Fence Comfort Station**, also designed by Freund, was completed in 1933 with federal funding. It is very similar in design to the Oval Comfort station with slight variations in the roofline and the privacy walls. (photo # 15)

**Blue Spruce Comfort Station** was built in 1934 and designed by Freund. Rather than a simple rectangular form, this building has a slightly projecting center bay with two windows and side entrances.

**Furnas Hill Comfort Station** is similar in design to Oval and Rail Fence Comfort stations. It is a rectangular building with entrances at either end. The screen walls are freestanding with split rail fences connecting them to the building. It was completed in 1934.

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**McFarlan Comfort Station** was also built in 1934 and has the same roofline as the Rail Fence Comfort Station. This building design was attributed to architect H. Brunke. (photo #16)

**Ponderosa Comfort Station** was designed by R. Carl Freund in 1939. Its form features a projecting bay with windows and doors in the recessed wings. The building is constructed of stone with a wood-shingle covered hipped roof. (photo # 17)

**Lodge Road and Colerain Avenue Comfort Stations** were both designed by R. Carl Freund and built in 1949. The Lodge Road Comfort station is similar in form to Blue Spruce and Ponderosa Comfort Stations. (photo # 18)

The Colerain Station is unique however, in both design and location. It is built at the Colerain Avenue entrance to the park, rather than within the park itself. It has an Art Moderne appearance with a long low profile, large stylized concrete columns supporting an open loggia along the street, and curved concrete bench along the exterior wall. This comfort station combined restroom facilities with a shelter for those using public transportation to travel to and from the park. (photos # 19-21)

### C. Lodges

Mount Airy Forest has three lodges, one adapted from a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse that was located on property purchased for the forest and the other two built in 1948 and 1956 respectively. All were designed for year-round use and have both interior and exterior spaces designed to hold events and activities.

**Pine Ridge Lodge** was an adaptive use of a c.1860s farmhouse. Designed by R. Carl Freund, the project was undertaken in 1936 utilizing WPA funds and CCC labor. The lodge is a two-story stone building with gable roofline covered with slate. Exterior chimneys are located at either end. An interior two-story space was created and has double doors leading to a terrace on one side and a covered porch on the other. There have been some alterations since its conversion, including the removal of shingles on the gable end of the open porch, and additions at the rear of the property. (photos # 22-23)

**Oak Ridge Lodge** was designed by R. Carl Freund and completed in 1948. The building has a clean contemporary design but continues the rustic design vocabulary of Mount Airy Forest with stone walls, large stone chimney, integration of enclosed space and an open loggia, and siting at the edge of a ravine. The interior space features a large stone fireplace. The building was designed with walls of doors that could be opened when in use to fully integrate interior and exterior spaces. A more recent open shelter designed to be compatible with the historic building is located at the edge of the terrace. (photos # 24- 25)

**Maple Ridge Lodge** was designed by Cincinnati architects Felsberg & Gillespie and completed in 1956. The building is constructed of stone and has a long low profile. The massive stone chimney is a distinguishing feature. The building opens onto an elevated terrace with a view over an open meadow. (photos # 26-27)

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### D. Concession

The **Oval Concession** was designed by R. Carl Freund and completed in 1934. Located near the Oval Open Shelter and Oval Comfort Station, this building is constructed in stone with a wood-shingle covered hip roof. The building was designed for seasonal use and has large windows that open to provide service to customers. A rear addition was designed by Joseph Stith and completed in 1949. (photo # 28)

### E. Arboretum

The creation of an arboretum in Mount Airy was first proposed shortly after the park was established and the subject was revisited in the late 1920s. However, development of the Arboretum didn't begin until the 1930s with plantings and construction of the **Arboretum Center** in 1953. Designed by R. Carl Freund, the building was adapted from a former two story residence. The second floor was removed and the building given a contemporary mid-century appearance with an asymmetrical façade, horizontal profile, and wide overhanging eaves. The building is surrounded by gardens, which were recently restored. (photos # 29, 30)

### F. Service Buildings

The maintenance of such a large park required the construction of service facilities within the park boundaries. The **Storage Garage** and **Service Building** were both constructed in 1939 and are located near the Colerain Avenue entrance to the park. Both buildings are constructed of concrete block with flat rooflines, giving them both a utilitarian and spare modern appearance. (photo # 31)

The **Park Police Headquarters** is located adjacent to the service area along Colerain Avenue. Dating from 1959, the one story building is simple and utilitarian in design with an asymmetrical facade, high band windows under the eaves and a gable roofline. (photo #32)

### G. Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp

The **CCC Camp** was established in Mount Airy Forest in 1935 and continued in operation for a two-year period and employed 200 young men – all African-Americans. Construction of the camp began in May 6, 1935 and was ready for occupancy on July 24, 1935. It was constructed with CCC labor for a cost of \$18,000. The camp was basic and utilitarian in design, consisting of simple rectangular frame buildings constructed on concrete block piers with gable rooflines. The camp was turned over to the Cincinnati Park Board in 1939 and has been used by the County Welfare Department since 1947. The nine extant buildings were moved due to construction of the I-74, but they remained in the same general area and a similar configuration to the original design. (photo # 33, 41-42) The dormitory and dining hall buildings have artificial siding but they still retain their original size and form and clearly convey the character of workers' camp facilities.

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### Landscape Features/Elements

Mount Airy Forest includes planned landscapes and landscape features and man-made elements which contribute to its overall character and significance.

### Arboretum and Gardens

The Arboretum covers 120 acres in the park and includes more than 5,000 plants representing 1,600 species of trees, shrubs and evergreens. The Arboretum is located near the Colerain Avenue entrance to the park and is divided into a number of areas – each with its own planned design. The first plantings were established in 1932 in cooperation with the Federated Garden Clubs of Cincinnati. The first major planting period between 1932 and 1942 concentrated on tree and shrub planting – largely assisted with federal relief funding and CCC labor. From 1949-1950, the Braam Memorial Azalea and Rhododendron Collection was added and in 1958 the Wilson Wildflower Trail was established. The Arboretum is constantly evolving, including the following additions: the Green Garden to demonstrate home landscaping (1964), the Campfire Girls Garden of the States (1968), Daisy Jones Garden of perennials (1971), the Helen Meyer Rara Garden (1976), the George Kase Garden of Rhododendron (1977), the Westheimer Garden with pool and fountain near the Arboretum Center (1984), and construction of the lake Gazebo (1984). (photos # 34-36)

### Meadows and Open Lawns

The park was designed to have a series of meadows and open lawns on the ridge tops, connected by road and trails. The lodges, shelters and comfort stations were nearly always located at the center or along the edges of these areas. While there is an example of a childrens' play in one of the open areas, most are simply mowed and can be used for a variety of outdoor recreational activities. These areas are distinct and separate within the park, which makes it possible to accommodate large numbers of visitors and still allow the feeling of being in a secluded environment.

### Forest

As the name implies, Mount Airy Forest is heavily-treed. With many of the trees dating from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, a wide variety of species are represented, including both deciduous and evergreen trees. Records show that thousands of hardwoods such as maple, oak, ash, linden and beech were planted, along with evergreens, including pine, fir, spruce, red cedar and arborvitae. Although there are a number of improvements and structures that were added to the park, the forest comprises the vast majority of the 1,471 acres of the park.

### Stone walls/steps

Mount Airy Forest has a varied topography. Stone retaining walls and stone steps were built in a number of locations to accommodate changes in terrain. Much of this work was accomplished during the Depression with

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WPA funding and CCC labor. Like the buildings in the park, these elements utilize native stone and are carefully integrated into the landscape. They also reflect the hand labor and craftsmanship, which characterize the work accomplished during the Depression era. The stone walls along Colerain Avenue and West Fork Road are considered contributing structures, while the smaller areas of stone walls and steps are not substantial to count. (photos #37-39)

### Bridges

The extensive system of hiking trails and bridle paths in Mount Airy Forest traverse a varied terrain, including creeks and ravines. Bridges were built on both types of trails, with the majority constructed during the Depression and located along the hiking trails in the park. There were 38 bridges built at that time, ranging from six to 28' in length. The bridges were generally constructed of wood and all have been replaced due to deterioration. These newer bridges were designed to fit into the natural landscape and to be integrated into the trail system, as were the original ones. The replacement bridges are not substantial to count in the total of contributing/non-contributing features. (photo # 40)

### Summary

Mount Airy Forest includes natural areas, planned landscapes, buildings, structures and landscape features (roads, walls, pedestrian bridges, steps), which reflect the ambitious park planning and development that took place in Cincinnati in the early-mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. Conceived as the nation's first urban reforestation project, the park has developed over the years – especially during the Depression and post-World War II period – into a park with a variety of areas, spaces and structures designed to accommodate recreational, social and educational activities. But, most importantly, it offers a large expanse of protected land within the city limits where the public can enjoy the richness and diversity of nature. The park was developed carefully and incrementally, with each development being compatible with the previous work. The architectural vocabulary can best be described as rustic park architecture, which was promoted by the National Park Service during the Depression. Mount Airy Forest is well maintained and the park retains a very high degree of integrity of location, design, materials, craftsmanship, feeling and association. It is nearly 100 years old and has successfully achieved the vision of the Cincinnati Park Board as described in a *Cincinnati Time-Star* editorial on May 4, 1914: “It is no exaggeration to say that the Mount Airy Forest comprises the most picturesque assortment of hills, valleys, streams, woods, lawns and wild scenery that we have within the city limits. It has been described with justice as a magnificent bit of romantic scenery. The purpose of the Park Board in purchasing these various farms was to create a forest park, a unique undertaking for an American city. . . The Mount Airy Forest now comprises about 1,000 acres . . . it is hoped to gradually increase the size of the park by judicious purchase until it reaches a total of 1,500 acres. . .”

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Resource Numbers also keyed to historic district site maps.

Resource Number	Date	Building Name	Architect	Contributing
1	1931	Oval Open Shelter		Yes
2	1931	Rail Fence Open Shelter	R. Carl Freund	Yes
3	1931	Hidden Ridge Open Shelter (Hemlock Shelter)		Yes
4	1932	Furnas Hill Open Shelter		Yes
5	1932	Oval Comfort Station	R. Carl Freund	Yes
6	1933	Rail Fence Comfort Station	R. Carl Freund	Yes
7	1934	Furnas Hill Comfort Station		Yes
8	1934	McFarlan Comfort Station	H. Brunke	Yes
9	1934	Blue Spruce Comfort Station	R. Carl Freund	Yes
10	1934	Oval Concession	R. Carl Freund/Joseph Stith	Yes
11	1934	Ponderosa Open Shelter		Yes
12	1935	CCC camp (9 buildings)		Yes
13	1936	Pine Ridge Lodge	R. Carl Freund	Yes
14	1937	McFarlan Open Shelter	H. Brunke	Yes
15	1937	Blue Spruce Open Shelter	E. L. Gill	Yes
16	1939	Service Garage		Yes
17	1939	Service Building		Yes
18	1939	Ponderosa Comfort Station	R. Carl Freund	Yes
19	1948	Oak Ridge Lodge	R. Carl Freund	Yes
20	2000	Oak Ridge Lodge open shelter		No
21	1949	Colerain Avenue Comfort Station	R. Carl Freund	Yes
22	1949	Lodge Road Comfort Station	R. Carl Freund	Yes
23	1950	Stone Steps Shelter	R. Carl Freund	Yes
24	1953	Arboretum Center	R. Carl Freund	Yes
25	1956	Maple Ridge Lodge	Felsberg & Gillespie	Yes
26	1959	Police Headquarters		Yes
		<b>Major Landscape Element</b>		
27	1939	Colerain Avenue Stone Walls		Yes
28		West Fork Road Stone Walls		Yes
29	1975	Interstate 74		No

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

Mount Airy Forest  
Cincinnati, Hamilton Co., OH

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This Mount Airy Forest National Register nomination was prepared in conjunction with the *The Historic Resources of the Cincinnati Park and Parkway System, 1817-1959*, a MPD, which documents the history and development of one of the most comprehensive urban park systems in the nation. The MPD includes historic contexts, definition of property types and registration requirements, methodology, and bibliography. Mount Airy Forest is the largest park, by far, in Cincinnati's park system. The period of significance extends from its creation in 1911 until 1959, when the Police Headquarters was constructed. The end date also coincides with R. Carl Freund's death, the architect for twelve Mount Airy Forest buildings. His death also established the end date for the MPD described above. The vast majority of the park was developed during the Depression era utilizing both federal funding and federal labor programs.

Mount Airy Forest is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A as one of the earliest (if not the first) urban reforestation projects in the nation; for its Depression era development utilizing federal WPA and CWA funding; and for the African-American Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) labor that provided manpower for tree-planting, road and trail building, and construction of shelters and comfort stations; and under Criterion C for landscape architectural significance as a joint design developed by noted landscape architect George E. Kessler and State Forester Edmund Secrest; for its architectural significance representing "Rustic" park architectural design; for the quality of the construction and craftsmanship of the buildings and structures in the park; and for the association with R. Carl Freund, the Cincinnati Park Board's most prolific architect, who designed 12 buildings in Mount Airy Forest and 37 for the Cincinnati Park Board between 1930 and 1959.

Mount Airy Forest was established in 1911 with an initial purchase of 168 acres "lying west of Colerain Avenue near the top of Colerain Hill, thus starting the first municipal reforestation project in the United States." (George W. Kase, Mount Airy Forest history, unpublished paper, 1969) Although reforestation efforts began immediately, the construction of roads, trails, buildings, and walls began during the Depression. The CCC camp established in Mount Airy Forest was one of 2,600 camps established nationally to employ young men aged 17-25. Of the several thousand CCC camps established during the Depression, approximately 150 employed all African-American youth. Between 1933 when the CCC was founded and 1941, 250,000 African-Americans served in the CCC. (Edgar Brown, *The CCC and Colored Youth*, U. S. Government Printing Office, 1941) The CCC camp in Mount Airy Forest operated from July 10, 1935 to July 14, 1937, and provided 51,414 man days of work in the park and accomplished a tremendous amount of work.

Mount Airy Forest contains a number of buildings constructed between 1931 and 1956, which falls within the period of significance established for *The Historic Resources of the Cincinnati Park and Parkway System, 1817-1959* MPD. Among the contributing buildings are the following: Rail Fence Open Shelter (1931), Oval Open Shelter (1931), Furnas Hill Open Shelter (1932), Rail Fence Comfort Station (1933), Furnas Hill Comfort Station (1934), Blue Spruce Comfort Station (1934), Oval Concession (1934), Ponderosa Open Shelter (1934), Blue Spruce Open Shelter (1936), Pine Ridge Lodge (1936), McFarlan Open Shelter and McFarlan Comfort Station (1937), Ponderosa Comfort Station (1939, R. Carl Freund), Oak Ridge Lodge (1948), Lodge Road and Colerain Avenue Comfort Stations (1949), Stone Steps Open Shelter (1950), Arboretum (1953), and Maple

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Ridge Lodge (1956) Of these buildings, R. Carl Freund designed 12 of them with four others attributed to other architects, including Joseph E. Stith (Freund's partner), H. Brunke under the auspices of the National Park Service, E.L. Gill and Felsberg & Gillespie. (Cincinnati Park Board, *A Guide to Art and Architecture in Cincinnati's Parks*, 1995)

### Historic Overview

At nearly 1500 acres, Mount Airy Forest is the largest park in Cincinnati's extraordinary park system, documented in *The Historic Resources of the Cincinnati Park and Parkway System, 1817-1959*, MPD, also prepared by the author of this nomination. Although the park system dates back to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and both Eden Park and Burnet Woods were major park developments in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the foundation for the park system that exists today was established in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century with the visionary plan prepared by landscape architect George E. Kessler in 1907. Kessler recognized Cincinnati's rapid rate of growth and was concerned that if an aggressive land acquisition program was not undertaken soon, that property in key locations might be developed for industrial or residential uses and become too expensive to purchase at a later date. He believed that the Cincinnati Park Board should place a high priority on purchase of land with development of the parks taking place later as funding became available. In the introduction to the 1907 plan, Kessler wrote: "Cincinnati has still the opportunity to transform itself into an attractive city unrivaled among American communities, yet it cannot defer this great work any longer without losing much that is good, and every year's delay means added cost and largely reduced areas of available lands. . . . When the whole system as recommended shall have been secured, and this work should be done with the least possible delay, it will be found that Cincinnati had acquired a comprehensive scheme of parks and boulevards at comparatively low cost . . . . (*A Park System for Cincinnati*, pp. 9, 14-15)

The first land for Mount Airy Forest was acquired in 1911. "This property in its natural state consisted of flat-topped abrupt hills and deep wooded valleys . . . the hillsides and valleys mostly wooded with original or second growth hardwoods . . . the general plan was prepared by the late George E. Kessler and State Forester Edmund Secrest . . . . After approval of the plan by the Park Board, the planting of the first municipal forest in the United States was begun. (*Cincinnati Public Recreational Opportunities*, nd., na.) Among the first parcels were farms that were considered unproductive. Additional land was added to the park over the next 20 years.

George Kessler wrote the introduction to the 1913 *Cincinnati Park Board Annual Report*. In it he stated, "In every large city the out-door recreation and the opportunity it gives for healthful enjoyment, the System, as a whole, becomes incomplete, unless one or more great outlying properties are acquired. These properties should be large enough to receive a very large portion of the population at any one time without overcrowding and really bring the country within easy reach of the great urban population. This can only be done through the acquisition of large areas of ground. . . . In European cities the contiguous forest areas have become the great outlying parks. . . . In Cincinnati, the gradual acquisition of the properties – now known as Mt. Airy Forest – would supply to the northern or northwestern sections of the city, one of the finest forests as a park, that could

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be established about any city in the country. The very happy condition which has held this property practically inaccessible for private development, has made it possible to acquire a large area at a nominal cost. . . In the forest growth, covering in particular the rugged hillsides, there already exists a charm. . . Through a further development of these properties, distinctly as forests, Cincinnati will acquire a fine outlying park. . . .” Clearly the intention in purchasing the Mount Airy land was to create a vast urban forest within the urban area.

By 1929, Mount Airy Forest consisted of over 1,300 acres. Reforestation efforts began immediately and a 1914 editorial, “The Mt. Airy Forest,” which appeared in *The Cincinnati Times-Star* on May 4, 1914 reported, “In its work in developing the Mt. Airy Forest, the Park Board has had the constant advice of the Department of Agriculture at Washington, the Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station and its own landscape architect George Kessler. Within two years a total of more than 1,200,000 trees have been planted. Tulip poplars, cypresses, white oaks, European lindens, and red cedars have been put in great numbers. Persimmons, paw paws, berries, edible or ornamental . . . are scattered throughout the plantings. . . .”

While the plantings were well underway in the 1910s and 1920s, development of park facilities and roads and trails began during the Depression utilizing various federal relief programs for funding and labor.

George Kase, who worked in Mount Airy Forest from 1933-1969, wrote a brief paper “The Park Forester bids Au Revoir to Mount Airy Forest” upon his retirement in 1969. He describes his role in the park and what he identified as three major periods of development, 1911-1920, 1921-1932 and 1933-1968.

The first period (1911-1920) was defined by land acquisition and the first stage of rehabilitation and reforestation. Purchases during this period – nearly 1200 acres – cost on average \$120 per acre. Much of the land, which had been grazed and farmed, was not suitable for agricultural purposes and erosion on hillsides was a problem. Based on a plan prepared by State Forester Edmund Secrest (and George Kessler), over 550 acres were planted with hardwoods, including maple, oak, ash, linden and beech; and another 100 acres with conifers, including pine, fir, spruce, red cedar and arborvitae.

The second period (1921-1932) was marked by little additional planting and much less land acquisition with only an additional 150 acres was added to the park. However, some physical improvements were made with the construction of the Colerain Avenue entrance and two roads – Furnas Ridge to the Oval and Blue Spruce Road to Shepherd Road. These improvements were funded through voter-approved park bond issues, which were approved during the period after the completion of the Kessler Plan in 1907 before the beginning of the Depression.

The third period (1933-1968) extended from the beginning of federally-assisted park improvements and ended with Mr. Kase’s retirement. Mr. Kase wrote that between 1933 and 1943, 90% of the facilities that existed in 1969 were built during this period, including “. . . paved roads, picnic areas and facilities, shelters and comfort stations, trails, service roads, service area and buildings. . . .” (Kase p.3) Reforestation efforts began again, as

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did maintenance of the areas previously planted. Between 1933 and 1956 “all of the physical facilities now (1969) available to the public were completed.” (Kase, p.4). This included post-war development of Oak Ridge and Maple Ridge lodges and the adaptation of the Arboretum Center from an existing farmhouse. The Arboretum was “planned and developed between 1938 and 1942 with over 5,000 plants representing 1600 species and varieties of trees, shrubs and evergreens.” (Kase, p. 4) (Note: Another source stated that the first plantings in the Arboretum occurred as early as 1932, in cooperation with the Federated Garden Clubs of Cincinnati.)

As Kase described, nearly all of the park facilities were constructed during the stated period of significance – 1911-1956, with much of it accomplished during the Depression from 1933-1943.

The Cincinnati Park Board took advantage of a number of Depression-era programs to improve parks and parkways throughout the city, including the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), the Civil Works Administration (CWA), the Public Works Administration (PWA), the Works Progress Administration (WPA), and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). The CCC had an enormous impact on the development of Mount Airy Forest. The camp was located within the park and provided the manpower for all types of projects. Combined with funding from the WPA, CWA and the National Park Service, the park was transformed during the period between 1933, when these programs began to be established and ending in 1943 when programs were suspended to direct resources and manpower to World War II. During this period, Cincinnati built 65 park structures and four parkways – nearly half of the 135 structures that were built during its 175-year history. (*Cincinnati Historic Inventory, Park Buildings, 1929-1943*).

The CCC was created by President Roosevelt on March 31, 1933. Roosevelt described the CCC program in a radio address, “First, we are giving opportunity of employment to one-quarter of a million of the unemployed, especially young men who have dependents, to go into forestry and flood prevention work. This is a big task because it means feeding, clothing and caring for nearly twice as many men as we have in the regular Army itself. In creating the Civilian Conservation Corps we are killing two birds with one stone. We are clearly enhancing the value of our natural resources, and second, we are relieving an appreciable amount of actual distress.” (May 7, 1933 radio address, [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com))

CCC programs were established in every state, usually with federal and local partners. The program, operated by the U.S. Army, had a quasi-military character to it with the young men living in camps. The Army contracted locally for food, fuel, and equipment, which infused money into the local economy. At its peak in 1935, when the Mount Airy CCC camp was established, there were over 2,600 camps employing over 500,000 young men. Of the total number of CCC camps established during the course of the program, only a small percentage – approximately 150 – were composed of entirely African-American youth. Yet even with this small percentage of camps, the CCC employed 250,000 African-Americans during the course of the program. “In the early years of the CCC some camps were integrated, but prompted by local complaints and the views of the U.S. Army and CCC administrators, integrated CCC camps were disbanded in July, 1935. . .” (New Deal

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Network, <http://newdeal.feri.org>) This was exactly the time that the CCC was established in Mount Airy Forest and Mount Airy's CCC camp was a segregated camp.

The Mount Airy CCC camp was established in a cooperative agreement between the Cincinnati Park Board and the National Park Service as the cooperating federal agency. George W. Kase, who had been working for the Cincinnati Park Board in Mount Airy Forest, was granted a leave of absence to work for the National Park Service as the Project Superintendent for the camp. The first group of 20 African-American youth arrived on May 4, 1935 from Fort Hill, Ohio. This group was charged to assist with construction of the camp, which was located on Diehl Ridge, within the park (now located in the west section of the park). The camp was constructed in slightly less than three months at a cost of \$18,000. In July, the "entire company of 160 enrollees, all property and equipment was moved in convoy from Fort Hill, Ohio to Mount Airy Forest. . ." (Kase, *A Resume of the Civilian Conservation Corps, Mount Airy Forest, July 10, 1935 – July 14, 1937*). During the two years it was in operation, the CCC camp provided 51,414 man days of work, the National Park Service contributed \$58,583.63 and the Cincinnati Park Board contributed \$9,242 for an average of \$1.32 per man day utilized.

According to a report prepared by George W. Kase, the CCC was responsible for construction of the following buildings – McFarlan and Conifer Point Shelters, McFarlan Comfort Station, a service building and garage; 11 parking areas, four rubble concrete check dams, 5,000 linear feet of roads, 3,000 linear feet of water lines, 500 linear feet of stone walls, 18,500 linear feet of fence, 2,500 linear feet of guard rails, 2 miles of pedestrian trails, and two footbridges. In addition, the CCC participants planted 35 acres of fields and planted over 10,000 trees and shrubs. (Kase, George W. *A Resume of the Civilian Conservation Corps, Mount Airy Forest, July 10, 1935 – July 14, 1937*)

Development of facilities during the period from 1933-1943, which utilized federal relief funding included the following: Rail Fence Comfort Station (1933), Furnas Hill Comfort Station (1934), Blue Spruce Comfort Station (1934), Oval Concession (1934), Ponderosa Open Shelter (1934), Blue Spruce Open Shelter (1936), Pine Ridge Lodge (1936), McFarlan Open Shelter and McFarlan Comfort Station (1937), and Ponderosa Comfort Station (1939).

Development of facilities continued in the immediate post-World War II period, with the construction of Oak Ridge Lodge (1948), Colerain Avenue and Lodge Road comfort stations (1949), Stone Steps Open Shelter (1950), Arboretum Center (1953) and Maple Ridge Lodge (1956).

### Architectural Significance

Mount Airy Forest contains a remarkable collection of buildings, structures, walls and infrastructure that results in a coherent and cohesive whole. The architectural design of the buildings was established during the Depression with "rustic" architecture as the favored style. Combined with the extensive use of native stone and

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heavy timber, the buildings blend seamlessly with the landscape. Although designed in a similar vocabulary of style and materials, each of the buildings is distinctive. The Oval and Furnas Hill Open Shelters utilize peeled cedar logs as decorative elements; the Pine Ridge Lodge was an adaptive use of a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse into a park lodge with rustic details; the Colerain Avenue Comfort Station has an Art Moderne appearance with a low horizontal profile and round stone columns; and Oak Ridge and Maple Ridge lodges exhibit Wrightian influences with their long horizontal profiles, and massive stone chimneys.

A high level of craftsmanship is evident everywhere – in all of the buildings, the stone walls along Colerain Avenue with the WPA plaque at the park entrance, the stone steps located throughout the park, the fences and trails. This park was the result of the work of hundreds of people who built with pride, skill and hard work.

R. Carl Freund began working for the Cincinnati Park Board in 1930 and continued until his death in 1959. During that period of time, he was responsible for more park buildings than any other architect – a total of 37 buildings. In addition to those in Mount Airy Forest, he designed other major buildings in the park system, including the Trailside Nature Center in Burnet Woods (1939), the Open Shelter in Mount Echo Park (1940), the Pavilion (1941) and Concession in French Park (1947), the Park Board Administration Building in Eden Park (1955), the Pavilion in Bellevue Hill Park (1955) and the V-shaped shelter in French Park (1956).

Mount Airy Forest also includes the work of other architects. Joseph Stith, who expanded the Oval Concession in 1949; H. Brunke, designed the McFarlan Comfort Station and McFarlan Open Shelter, under the auspices of the National Park Service; E. L. Gill designed Blue Spruce Open Shelter; and Maple Ridge Lodge was designed by Felsberg & Gillespie.

The forest itself is an important design element in the park. Although it appears completely natural, it too, was designed by talented and creative people. Landscape architect George Kessler and State Forester Edmund Secret are credited with the original plan. George Kessler, a noted landscape architect, was largely responsible for laying the foundation of the park system that exists today in Cincinnati. Beginning with his plan in 1907, which inspired the entire community, the Cincinnati Park Board was formed by public vote in 1908 and subsequently passed several levies for purchase and improvement of parks prior to the Depression. In addition to Kessler's work in Cincinnati, he developed Kansas City's park plan in the early 1890s, the park and boulevard plan of Indianapolis (NR confirm date), the St. Louis Worlds' Fair site (1904), and plans for a number of other communities. "His legacy of magnificent parks, boulevards and gardens still delights millions of city residents throughout the Midwest. The cityscapes of Dallas, Houston, Kansas City, St. Louis, Denver, Cincinnati, Indianapolis and a score of other locations bear witness to Kessler's talent." (Culbertson, Kurt. *"Landscape Architect for the American Renaissance"* *Midwestern Landscape Architecture*. p. 99)

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Mr. Secrest was also an early proponent of the development of the Arboretum, first proposing it in 1914 and again in 1929. Although tentatively approved by the Park Board in 1929, funding was not available for implementation until the 1930s. It now covers 120 acres of Mount Airy Forest.

The one major development that occurred after the period of significance for this nomination was the construction of I-74 through Mount Airy Forest, bisecting the park. Fortunately this is not apparent once the visitor is inside the park.

### Summary

“The Mount Airy Forest operation, in area, is about 40% of the Cincinnati Park system. Approximately 95% of all physical development was accomplished from 1934 to 1958. It can be said that the original dream of a few public spirited citizens nearly 60 years ago has materialized, -- that of establishing a large forest-park for recreational and educational purposes, to rehabilitate this large area of over 1,000 acres by reforestation and property management practices . . . to promote and encourage out-of-doors activities in a highly industrialized region, and to encourage and educate the public to enjoy and respect this great natural environment.” (Kase, p. 5, quoted in part from an editorial, May 1915)

The development of Mount Airy Forest was a massive undertaking, which included reforestation of hundreds of acres, construction of buildings, structures, walls, steps, roads and trails. It resulted in a park of exceptional quality. The forest and the buildings, structures, roads, trails and landscape elements retain a very high degree of integrity of location, design, materials, craftsmanship, setting, feeling and association. The park is very well maintained and clearly conveys its intended purpose of a large public park, with natural areas and recreational facilities, located within the city limits of Cincinnati.

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### Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries incorporate 191 individual land parcels, as recorded by the Hamilton County Auditor. The list of individual parcel numbers is attached.

### Boundary Justification

The entire 1,471 acres of Mount Airy Forest is included in this nomination. It is land that has been associated historically with the creation and development of the forest and it the land still owned today by the Cincinnati Park Board and operated as Mount Airy Forest.

### Photographs

Photographers: Jeffrey Darbee  
Nancy Recchie  
Benjamin D. Rickey & Co.  
593 South Fifth Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43206

Date of Photos: September 2007 to September 2008

### Photo Views:

1. View of roadway in park
2. View of bridge on trail
3. Rail Fence Open Shelter
4. Oval Open Shelter
5. Oval Open Shelter, exterior detail
6. Oval Open Shelter, interior detail
7. Furnas Hill Open Shelter
8. Furnas Hill Open Shelter, interior detail
9. Ponderosa Open Shelter
10. Ponderosa Open Shelter, interior
11. Blue Spruce Open Shelter
12. McFarlan Open Shelter
13. Stone Steps Open Shelter
14. Oval Comfort Station
15. Rail Fence Comfort Station

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16. McFarlan Comfort Station
17. Ponderosa Comfort Station
18. Lodge Road Comfort Station
19. Colerain Avenue Comfort Station
20. Colerain Avenue Comfort Station
21. Colerain Avenue Comfort Station, historic photo
22. Pine Ridge Lodge, historic photo
23. Pine Ridge Lodge
24. Oak Ridge Lodge
25. Oak Ridge Lodge
26. Maple Ridge Lodge
27. Maple Ridge Lodge, detail
28. Oval Concession
29. Arboretum Lake
30. Arboretum Center
31. Service Garage
32. Park Police Headquarters
33. CCC Camp, historic photo
34. Arboretum landscape
35. Arboretum landscape
36. Arboretum landscape
37. WPA plaque on Colerain Avenue wall
38. Stone wall along West Fork Avenue
39. Stone steps in park
40. Bridge on trail in park
41. View of former CCC camp dining hall and dormitories
42. View of former CCC camp office building

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### Verbal Boundary Description

191 Parcel Numbers included within boundaries of Mount Airy Forest, Cincinnati, Ohio, as recorded by the Hamilton County, Auditor and the City of Cincinnati Real Estate Office.

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**Historic photo of CCC Camp.**  
(source: Cincinnati Park Board archives)



**Historic views of two of the properties purchased for Mount Airy Forest.**  
(source: Cincinnati Park Board archives)

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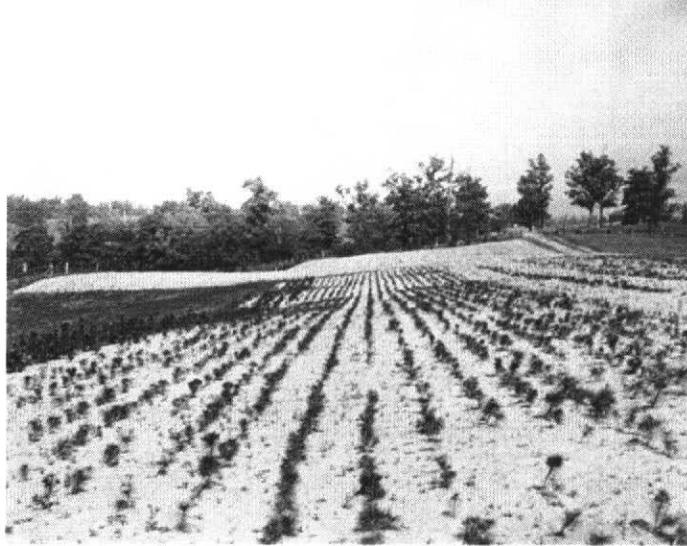


Photo of early tree planting effort.  
(source: Cincinnati Park Board archives)



Signage for bond levy-approved improvement to Mount Airy Forest.  
(source: Cincinnati Park Board archives)

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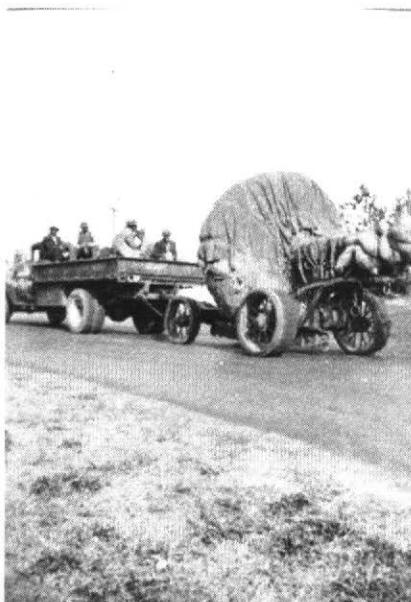
Section number Additional Documentation Page 22

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**CCC "We Can Take It" motto (right).**

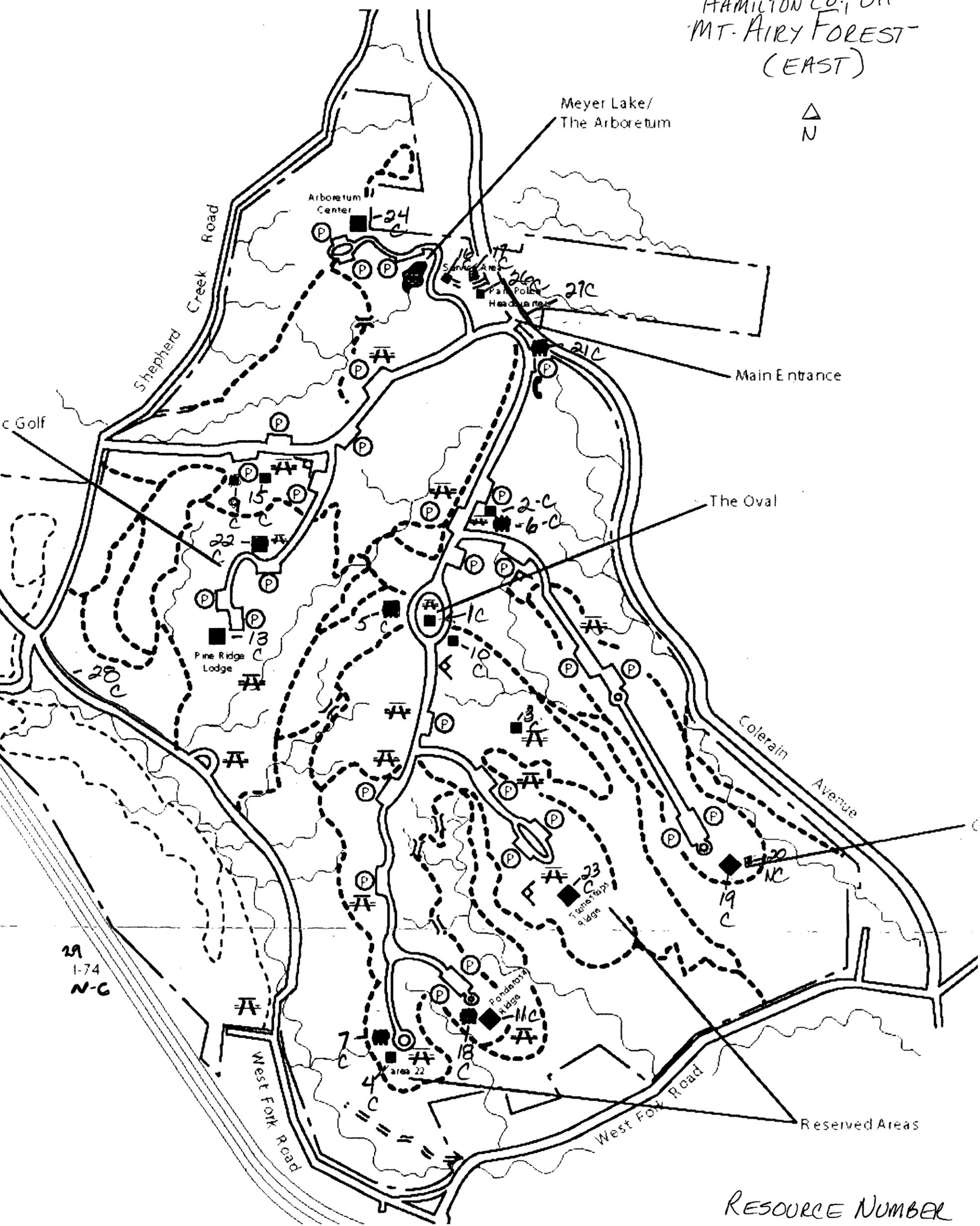
(Source: Archival Research Catalogue (ARC), National Archives and Records Administration)



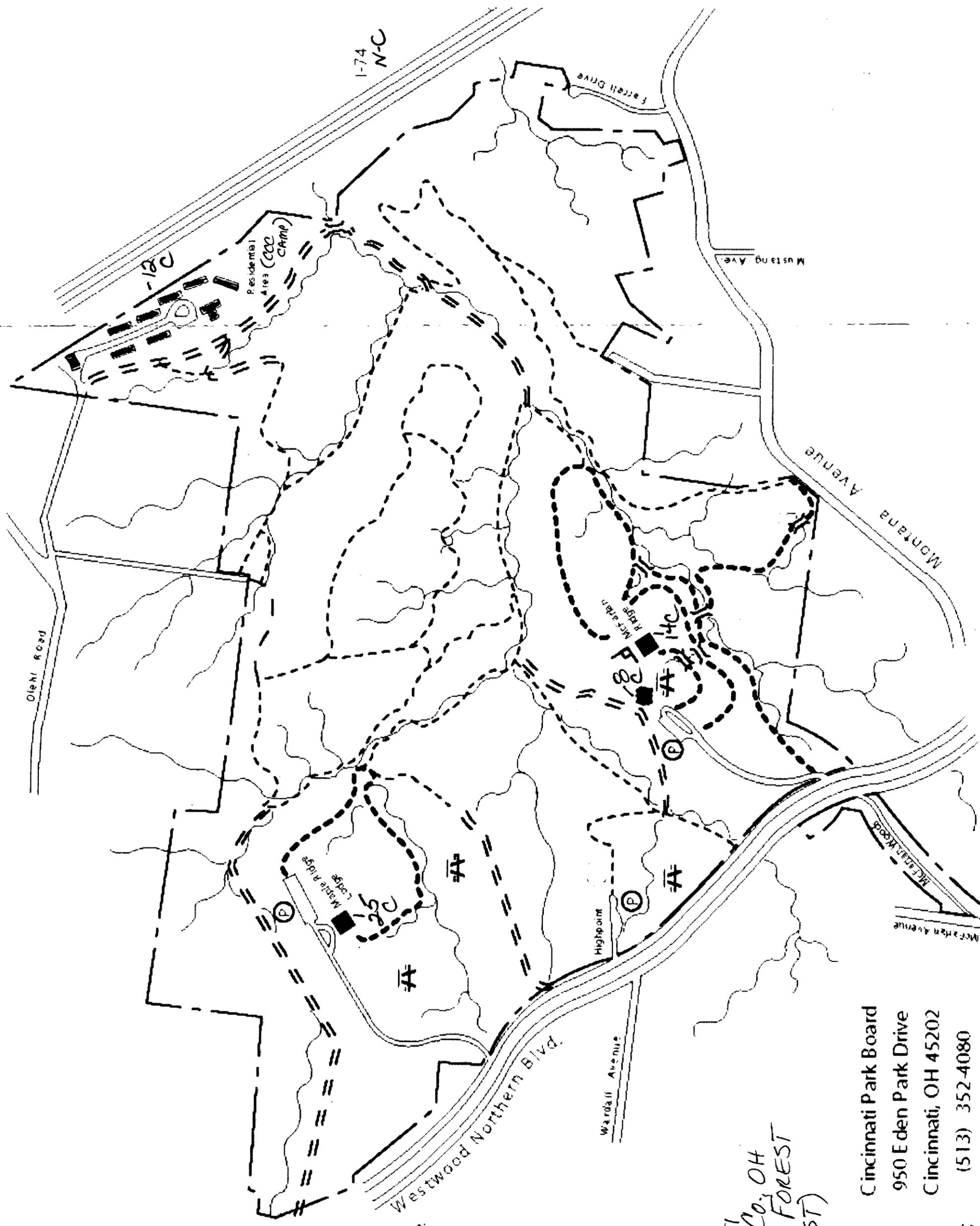
**CCC workers planting trees (right).**  
(source: Cincinnati Park Board archives)



CINCINNATI  
 HAMILTON CO., OH  
 MT. AIRY FOREST  
 (EAST)



RESOURCE NUMBER  
 C- CONTRIBUTING  
 NC- NON-CONTRIBUTING



CINCINNATI  
 HAMILTON Co., OH  
 MT. AIRY FOREST  
 (WEST)



Cincinnati Park Board  
 950 Eden Park Drive  
 Cincinnati, OH 45202  
 (513) 352-4080

RESOURCE NUMBER  
 C- CONTRIBUTING  
 NC- NON-CONTRIBUTING



*Mt. Airy Center*

*Hamilton County, OH*

*N*

*Mt. Airy Center*

*CINCINNATI*

*St. Anthony's Monastery*

*BALTIMORE*

*FLORIDA AVE*

*VIRGINIA AVE*

*HAMILTON*

*TAPPAN AVE*

*WOLFNER ST*

*CHASE AVE*

*ST. BONIFACE*

*ST. ANTHONY*

*ST. PIOUS*

*ST. PIOUS*

*HOME*

*LIBRARY*

*NORTH BEND*

*CITY BDY*

*WATER TANK*

*HARRISON AVE*

*WOMAN*

*INTERSECTION*

*Wesleyan Cem*

*St. Pious Sch*

























THE AREA  
IS OPEN  
TO THE PUBLIC  
FOR RECREATION  
AND ENJOYMENT  
OF THE PEOPLE  
OF THE STATE  
OF TEXAS













NO STOPPING  
PARKING  
BUS  
STOP  
TOW ZONE →





































WPA  
1939











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