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## A Brief History of the Clark County Park District

In September 1976, the Aberfelda Natural Area Committee was formed as an outgrowth of the Historic Tree Search of the Horizons '76 Committee, of the Springfield & Clark County American Revolution Bicentennial Committee.

Two White Oaks were found in Aberfelda Woods that were over 200 years old and the desire to preserve that unique area was again stirred up in those participating in the tree search.

Through necessary research and investigation, the Aberfelda Natural Area Committee found the best way to preserve natural areas in Clark County was to work toward the creation of a countywide park district.

Thus, the efforts began toward this goal and ultimately when all the proper legal steps were completed, Probate Court Judge Lewis W. Digel scheduled a public hearing to consider the request to create the Clark County Park District.

On Thursday July 21, 1977, Judge Digel heard extensive testimony on the need to have a park district. The following Wednesday, July 27, 1977, the judge officially created the Clark County Park District.

On Monday, October 31, 1977, Judge Digel announced the appointment of Alfred P. Strozdas to the one year, Ralph Newman to the two year, and Marianne L. Nave to the three year term, as the first Board of Park District Commissioners.

The first Board of Park District Commissioners got started by studying Chapter 1545, of the Ohio Revised Code, which dictates what a Park District can do. The Park District Commissioners also kept busy researching, organizing, planning, creating a wish list of possible park lands in all areas of the county, and formulating goals for the new Clark County Park District.

The four goals adopted in 1978 were:

- *To strive to acquire natural areas within the District for public use as they become available...*
- *To set out to acquire, develop, maintain and conserve natural areas that are unique...*
- *To develop a park system that will not compete with existing parks within the District, but complement facilities already available, and that will fill the void between state and municipal park systems, so as not to duplicate services or waste tax dollars...*
- *To provide park and recreation resources not already provided by other governmental bodies in Clark County.*

Richard O. Brinkman, President of Clark Technical College, saw the importance of these goals and in April 1978, he agreed to co-chair the Clark County Park District Tax Levy Steering Committee with Dr. Horton Hobbs, of Wittenberg.

When Al Strozdas had to resign due to the workload of his consulting firm, Judge Digel appointed Dick to that unfinished term, and then to the next three year term as Commissioner.

During those early years of the CCPD, we spent a lot of time visiting existing park districts in Ohio, learning as much as we could about the operations and Dick always volunteered to drive. The three of us got well acquainted as we learned what planning we needed to do as the Board of Park District Commissioners, even though we had no park.

The CCPD logo was designed by a Clark Technical College (now Clark State) art student in a competition among artists of the area in 1980. The CCPD Commissioners chose the best design which was submitted by artist Linda Robertson, and which is still in use today.



by Marianne Ludlow Nave  
CCPD Board of Commissioners  
President 1978 -1987

We negotiated and received the opportunity to hold the trust deed to Springfield Sand and Gravel Company property next to the Fairgrounds, which was expected to be turned into another green space area for Clark County residents by 1997. This action made us feel we were recognized as a governmental entity and that a CCPD park was clearly in the future.

Judge Digel followed the park district closely throughout his term on the Probate Court Bench. During his tenure, he gave the approval for the Board of Park District Commissioners to accept the trust deed for the Springfield Sand and Gravel property.

As part of the Prime Ohio land negotiations, that trust deed was used for a land trade with the City of Springfield to obtain George Rogers Clark Park as the first Clark County Park District acquisition.

Since that time, the Springfield Sand and Gravel property received an extension for their operations, so they will be mining the area at least another 15 years before it becomes a park.

In an interview on the CCPD once, Dick pointed out "Springfield and Clark County are fortunate that a number of unique natural areas still exist. They are, however, rapidly diminishing and one day soon may be gone forever. By acting now to acquire and preserve them as compliments to our state and municipal park systems, we can preserve our heritage."