

# THE HISTORICAL RECORD

May 2025

A Publication of the Wyoming Historical Society and the Wyoming History Museum

## CINCINNATI'S FIRST PARKS

Thursday, May 8th

The Cincinnati Park System that we know today, started not with a decree from City Hall, not by an act of the State, but from average Cincinnatians desperate for a breath of fresh air in the ever-expanding, crowded urban basin. Through the use of historical photos and original source material, we'll examine the unique origins of the first parks to be created in Cincinnati during the 1880's.

Today's Cincinnati Parks span more than 5,000 acres (about 10% of the city's total land area.) But the park system grew from humble beginnings. Join Michael George, senior naturalist with the Cincinnati parks, as he recounts the history of the Queen City's first public parks.



Michael George has been the Center Director of the Trailside Nature Center in Burnet Woods since 2007. Previously he served as the Center Director of the Avon Woods Nature Preserve in Paddock Hills. As an outdoor educator, he has worked with children of all ages that he has introduced to the natural world during school visits, summer camps, and educational programming. Michael holds a BA in Cultural Anthropology from the University of Cincinnati and an Associate's Degree in Horticulture from Ohio State University. He is also a Certified Interpretive Guide with the National Association for Interpretation.

**PROGRAMS ARE AT 7 PM**  
**Wyoming Civic Center**

**FREE - OPEN TO THE PUBLIC - REFRESHMENTS**

Wyoming Historical Society  
800 Oak Avenue  
Wyoming OH 45215  
513.842.1383

History@Wyomingohio.gov

Open Tuesday 10:30-3:00  
or by appointment.



**Wyoming History Museum**  
A Unique and rewarding  
place to visit.

Member of:  
Ohio Local History Alliance  
American Association for State and  
Local History,  
Ohio History Connection

Wyoming Historical Society  
is a 501 (c) 3 not-for-profit  
corporation.

## 3RD GRADE TOURS CELEBRATE TWENTY YEARS...

Twenty years ago your Wyoming Historical Society, in partnership with Wyoming Schools, began the yearly 3rd Grade Tours. The tours consisted of a school day packed with tours, information, bus rides, information and lunch in the Oak Street gym. The State mandated curriculum says that 3rd graders should learn about their community. And for twenty years we have done that. The students learn about our Water Works, Public Works, City Council, Historical Society, History Museum, a bus trip to learn about



Third graders sitting in the council seats.

the Canal and environs and a stop at the Reily house to learn about the naming of Wyoming. While over the years the logistics have changed some, it was always a highlight of the 3rd grade year.

After our annual evaluation of the tour, in an effort to better regulate the amount of information that is given the students in one long day, a change is anticipated. In conjunction with Wyoming Primary Schools, the Historical Society will be splitting the tour into two years, 3th and 4th grades. The Social Studies curriculum for 4th grade is learning about Ohio, to that end we will change the bus tour and Reily House to the 4th grade tour.

A thank you to all our volunteers and parent chaperones for their assistance in making these tours a special part of the Wyoming Primary School experience.

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## A THREE BARREL MONEY CHANGER...

Remember years ago going to the Ohio State Fair or the Carthage Fair or even the May Fete? Those are the kinds of places you would find the money changer pictured here. You would get change to ride the ride or play the game. This one has space for nickels, dimes and quarters. Press the lever and out comes the coin. You could either thread it through or hook it over a belt. Of course, this was back when a quarter was worth a quarter!!!! This changer is on display in our museum thanks to John Sears.



## MEMBERSHIP...

Our membership year is January-December with our membership drive happening late each fall. However, we gladly welcome new members at anytime of the year. For a year dues are: Individual \$25, Family \$50, Business \$75, Lifetime \$500. High school and college students are free. New members joining after August will be credited through December of the following year. New members please send your check, name, address, phone and email to us and we will handle the rest. 800 Oak Avenue, Wyoming, OH 45215. Thank you.

## BUSINESS MEMBERS



## STEVE TONNE "THE PAINTER"

Steve Tonne paints homes, inside and out, with high quality craftsmanship and products. Over the years, the business has grown by good old-fashioned word of mouth. They pride themselves on a job well done, and folks seem to agree because they are a small business that grows mostly by referral. Ask your neighbors or start counting our Steve Tonne "The Painter" white yard signs – you'll see that they are painting the exteriors and interiors of Wyoming area homes.

## 2024 Wyoming Historical Society

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work 513.771.1500  
cell 513.702.9009  
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**EMILY BOEHM, DDS**  
411 Wyoming Avenue  
Wyoming, Ohio 45215  
phone: 513.821.0668  
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## NIKKI GIOVANNI LIVED HERE... Sherry Sheffield

Since the late 2024 death of African-American poet, commentator, writer and educator, Nikki Giovanni (formally named Yolande Cornelia Giovanni Jr., after her mother) a number of scenarios have been passed around about her relationship to Wyoming. I went to the best authority I know, my classmate at Wyoming, Mendel Gentry. He and Nikki were classmates at the Oak Avenue School in the early 1950's. Nikki and her family (mother, father and sister Gary) rented an apartment at 1038 Burns Avenue. Both of Nikki's parents were graduates of Knoxville College in Knoxville, TN. Her mother was a teacher and later worked as a Supervisor for Hamilton County Social Services. Her dad worked for the Tennessee Valley Authority when they lived in Tennessee and for the YMCA and Glenview School here in Cincinnati.



The Giovanni's moved to Jackson Street in Lincoln Heights in the 1954-55 time frame. Nikki transferred to the Lincoln Heights Elementary School but Gary, who was three years older, was in the class of 1957. Nikki's career is long and storied. She retired in 2022 after 35 years, as University Distinguished Professor at Virginia Tech.

Mendel tells a story from their time at Oak Avenue. In about Nikki's 4th or 5th grade, the school, about seventy students, spent a day at the zoo. After a fun filled day with animals, rides and games, the bus was about to board and head for home when Mendel, Nikki and Joe Stanley decided to try to ride "Fun in the Dark" again. And it was fun but when the ride was over, the buses were gone. The three eventually found a zoo employee who took them to the bus stop and put them on a bus that would take them to Wyoming. The bus driver dropped them off at the then Police Station, 400 Wyoming Avenue, now Gilligan's. Each kid walked off to their respective homes. The parents and the school never found out that the kids had been left at the zoo.

The picture above is Nikki from her 2nd grade Oak Avenue class photo. The one to the right is more recent.



## MUSIC OF A DIFFERENT SORT....

Hilda Marie Wehmeier Myers had an impressive career as a non-traditional recording artist. In the 1920s, Hilda Myers recorded about 500 piano songs for the Vocalstyle Music Company. This firm produced song rolls for player pianos with the differentiation of having the lyrics on the side of the roll in alignment with the played notes. This allowed users to learn the words and music of the song simultaneously.



In order to produce the master roll, Hilda would perfect the provided original music piece on her own time, then record it in the Vocalstyle studio for production. At the recording studio, “(e)ach hammer of the piano on which she played was equipped with a small rubber hose...The hoses ran into the next room and made marks on a large paper roll. When she was finished a battery of girls in the cutting room would hand cut the roll or perforate it at each mark. That became the master roll.” (Cincinnati Enquirer, 6 May 1973, pg. 4-H)

After the demise of the player piano era, Mrs. Myers continued her musical pursuits as the organist at First Church Christ, Scientist in Wyoming. During her time in Wyoming, she lived at 16 Allen Avenue and 9 West Hill Lane with her husband, Raymond. She was widowed in 1962 and lived with her son, Robert, at 119 Forest Avenue in the 1970s. Mrs. Myers passed away in 1985 and is buried at Oak Hill Cemetery in Glendale.

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## JOINING THE BOARD IS: **Andrea Zeidler**

Andrea Zeidler was raised in Wyoming, moved away after graduating from Wyoming High School, and returned in 2021. She and her family love to explore new restaurants and spend time outdoors, so you'll frequently see them strolling around the Village and Crescent Park with their four-year-old son. Andrea loves local history and is an avid fiction reader. She enjoys collecting artwork and likes to intermingle memories of her family's travels with the indoor plants Andrea grows (her husband says too many) and the menagerie of cats, birds, and fish that comprise the Zeidler household. Andrea achieved a B.S. in International Business at Xavier University and a Juris Doctor through the evening program at Chase Law School. She currently works for the State of Ohio.



**The Wyoming Historical Society**  
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**Wyoming OH 45215**

Look forward to seeing you at our  
next program May 8th...

## OTTO ARMLEDER....

Otto Armleder Memorial Park and Recreation Complex is part of the Cincinnati Park District that we will hear about at the May program. Otto built and lived at 104 Elm Avenue. After several short lived careers beginning when he was 15, he started the Otto Armleder Carriage Company producing horse-drawn buggies, which became the Armleder Motor Truck Company as automobiles became popular.

The Cincinnati Hills Christian Academy named their downtown location, the Otto Armleder Memorial Education Center.



## PRESIDENT'S LETTER... Amy Pursley

It won't be long before our three Wyoming Primary Schools will be replaced. Before these buildings are gone, we want to capture the memories they hold. What are your fondest memories of these three buildings



and the people who taught and learned within them? We'd love to keep these stories and any photos you would like to share with us in our archives so they can be preserved for future generations. Feel free to send your stories and photos to [History@WyomingOhio.gov](mailto:History@WyomingOhio.gov) or bring them down on a Tuesday and we will scan them.