

THE START OF THE METROPOLITAN PARKS HIKING CLUB

The February 1965 issue of *Green Islands* contained a headline that read as follow: "Interested in Hiking? Come and Join the Club." New director of the parks, John Daily, (Dr. Arthur Wilcox had left for Fort Collins, CO) invited hikers interested in forming a hiking club to join him in an organizational meeting on March 19. The location was the Charles Goodyear Memorial Shelter on Newton St. At this meeting John B. Gale was elected to be temporary chairman. He and his committee spent the next few weeks working out various details for the club organization.

The May issue of *Green Islands* notes that Mr. Gale was elected president, Donald L. Vogt, pathfinder, Pauline Kimmich, secretary, and Mrs. Charles Staats, treasurer. Directors elected at that time were Nancy Runkle, Mrs. Dale Akins and Howard Furtow. A club hike was planned for June.

The June issue of *Green Islands* read as follows: "Club Charts First Hike Over 2.5 Mile Mingo Trail. The Metropolitan Park Hiking Club has scheduled its first

official hike for 3:00 p.m. on Sunday, June 27 in Sand Run Metropolitan Park. Pathfinder, Don Vogt, said the hike will cover the 2.5 mile Mingo Trail. Mrs. Leonard Nichols has been elected rear guard. Official records of distances and members making the hikes will be started with this hike. There is still time for Summit County families to join and take part in the club's initial hike. Dues for a family for the remainder of the year will be \$1.00. The club has reserved Coon Hollow for the Mingo hike with the starting time 2:00 p.m. Members may park at Coon Hollow and use the picnic facilities there before or after the hike."

The July issue of *Green Islands* has a heading that reads as follows: "Club Arranges Hike. The Metropolitan Park Hiking Club will take a two mile hike through Hinckley Reservation of the Cleveland Metropolitan Park District on Sunday, July 25. Pathfinder, Donald Vogt, has appointed Dale Akins as leader. Mrs. John Gale will be rear guard. Vogt said members should assemble at 4:00 p.m. at the Whipp's Ledges parking lot which can be reached

from West Richfield by proceeding 2 ½ miles west of West Richfield on Rt. 303 and 1 ½ miles south on State Rd. A sign on State Rd. points to the parking area. A picnic will be held after the hike."

The November issue of *Green Islands* has the headline that reads as follows: "Hikers Vote for Vogt. Don Vogt, newly elected president of the Metropolitan Park Hiking Club, announces that the club will make a 3.5 mile trek through Findley State Park on Sunday, November 14. Members should meet in the parking lot at 2:00 p.m. Vogt recommends Rt. 224 to Sullivan, then Rt. 58 north to the park; or Rt. 18 to Wellington, then south on Rt. 58. Other new officers include Edward Rimerman, pathfinder; Leonard Nicholas, treasurer; Mrs. James Kimmich, secretary; Nancy Runkle, Guy Newton and James Kimmich, directors.



HISTORY OF THE AKRON METROPOLITAN PARK DISTRICT'S HIKING SPREE



The whole idea for a Fall Hiking Spree Program originated with Dr. Arthur Wilcox, third

director of the Park District. He was stimulated into action by President John Kennedy who was pushing a Physical Fitness Program for Americans. This program encouraged hiking throughout the country, everyone seemed to be walking or running. Dr. Wilcox tried to conjure up a method whereby the Metropolitan Park District could participate in such a fitness program and help people keep fit. There were many reasons why a hiking program would help:

1. We had trails that were little used.
2. There was a hunt at that time for a place to conduct a fifty mile hike and we had fifty miles of trails.
3. We needed to and were upgrading all our trails and designing new ones.
4. We needed to reduce the policeman image of park rangers by having people talk to them.

Publicity for the program was initiated and as a result the Fall Hiking Spree was begun. "Hiking Spree" because other terms seemed to be dull and

"spree" had a connotation of lively and joyous participation.

Dr. Wilcox was surprised as the hiking spree returns started to come in. He didn't expect many people to do the full set of trails and he even talked about cutting a few staffs to give hikers finishing recognition. When it developed that we were going to have an overwhelming response, John Kasarda, Superintendent of Maintenance, got the idea of broom handles, and as an extra touch, putting a cord through the handle and a park district decal on the staff. The following year we wondered how we might recognize second year hikers. Bert Szabo suggested the idea of a shield and followed through with the design and insignia. The most important part of the program was the hiker's contact with park personnel.

Seven trails were walked in the fall of 1964 for a total of 12 miles in six parks (our total number of parks). Two of the trails were at Virginia Kendall Park. Mr. and Mrs. Robert Butcher contributed the first 600 staffs. 1,530 hikers finished the 1964 Spree and received hiking staffs.

Our thanks to former chief naturalist, Bert Szabo, for providing us with this information.

AMPHC



AKRON METRO PARKS HIKING CLUB THE BEGINNINGS