

Legacy Trail of Firestone Park

Columbiana, Ohio

Interpretive Panels 2021

Restoration and Beautification
Committee of Columbiana, Ohio

*Terra Design Studios
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*



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Idabelle Firestone

Gathering Place and Garden

*"A garden sweet, a garden small,
Where rambling roses creep along the walls;
Where dainty phlox and columbine
Are nodding to the trumpet vine."*

*Excerpts from "In My Garden"
by Idabelle Smith Firestone*

A place to make memories. A place to come together to celebrate music and theatre as a community. A place to bask in the color and fragrance of a garden. The Gathering Place and Garden embodies all of these experiences as a tribute to Idabelle Smith Firestone.

Snapshot of a Lady

Mrs. Firestone was much more than the devoted wife of Harvey S. Firestone. As a homemaker, caring mother, composer of music, and philanthropist, she was a woman of substance in her own right.

Her admiration for flowers and love of music formed the basis for many achievements in the later years of her long and fruitful life. She was a gifted composer, writing many popular romantic songs of the 1930's and 1940's. "In My Garden" and "If I Could Tell You" served as the iconic opening and closing themes for the nationally-broadcast "Voice of Firestone" radio and television programs. In 1948, Mrs. Firestone was elected to the prestigious American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers.

To honor her passion for flowers, David Burpee, an internationally-known plant hybridist, developed the largest and most colorful French marigold cultivar of the day and named it the "Idabelle Firestone Marigold." While the seed bank has been lost for this cultivar, you will find other French marigold varieties as well as columbine, phlox and roses in the Garden – plants she took every opportunity to sprinkle throughout her song lyrics and her life.



Idabelle Smith Firestone



Alling DeForest

Lilac Stroll Garden

"Earth laughs in flowers..."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Throughout history, lilacs have been crowd-pleasers. Perhaps it is their sweet fragrance. Almost certainly it is the riot of color they provide between May and June. As an added bonus, they offer shelter for birds and beneficial insects and food for butterflies. These are good reasons to include a collection of lilacs in the Park, but perhaps the most compelling came from understanding the thoughts of the Park's master planner, Alling DeForest.

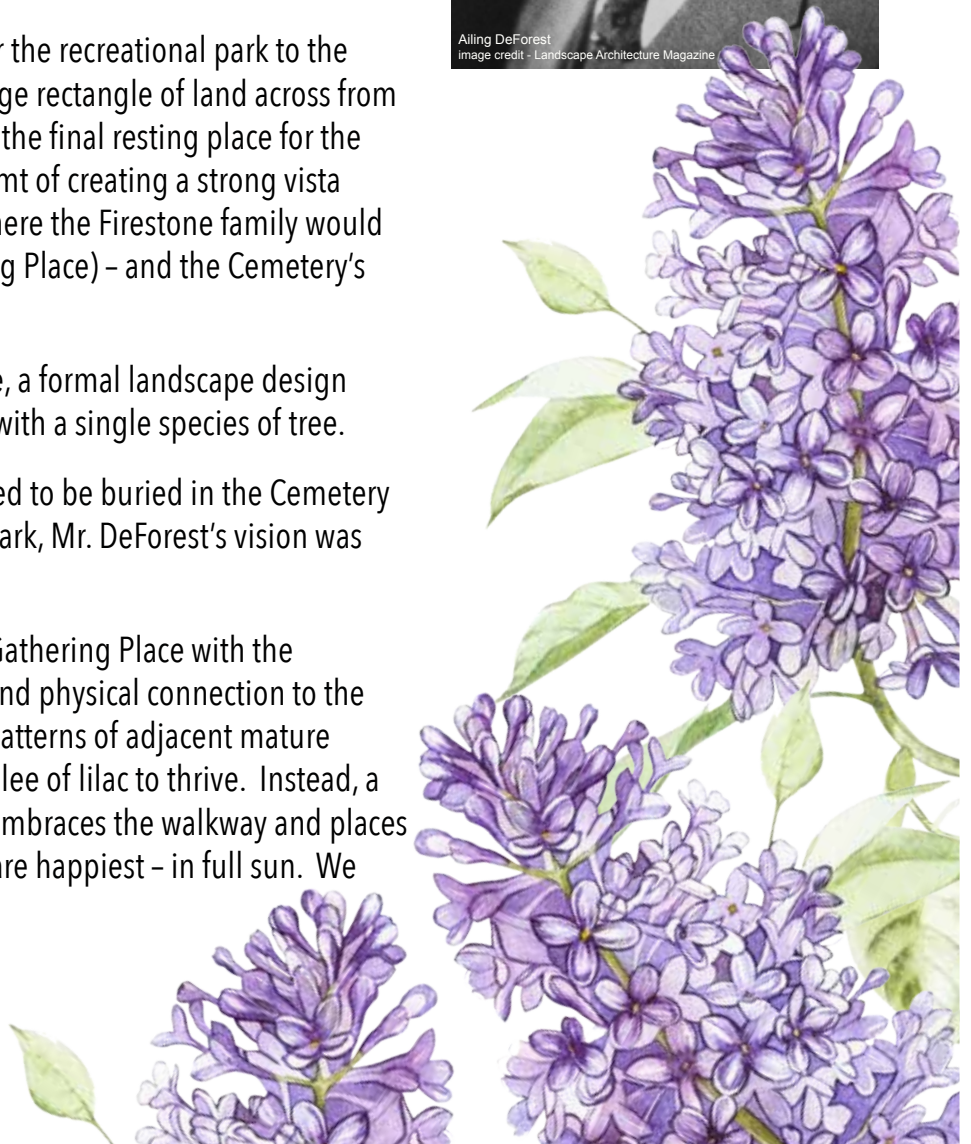
Rebirth of a Vision

When the Firestones gave the land for the recreational park to the Village of Columbiana, they kept a large rectangle of land across from the Columbiana Cemetery to serve as the final resting place for the Firestone family. Alling DeForest dreamt of creating a strong vista between the park's highest point – where the Firestone family would have been interred (now the Gathering Place) – and the Cemetery's mausoleum.

He described his vision as a Lilac Allee, a formal landscape design concept that lines a straight pathway with a single species of tree.

Since the Firestones eventually decided to be buried in the Cemetery and gave the rest of the land for the park, Mr. DeForest's vision was never realized.

Until now. A brick walkway links the Gathering Place with the Mausoleum and offers both a visual and physical connection to the Cemetery. Unfortunately, the shade patterns of adjacent mature trees would not permit a traditional allee of lilac to thrive. Instead, a formal pocket garden symmetrically embraces the walkway and places multiple varieties of lilac where they are happiest – in full sun. We hope Mr. DeForest is pleased.



Hanna Homestead

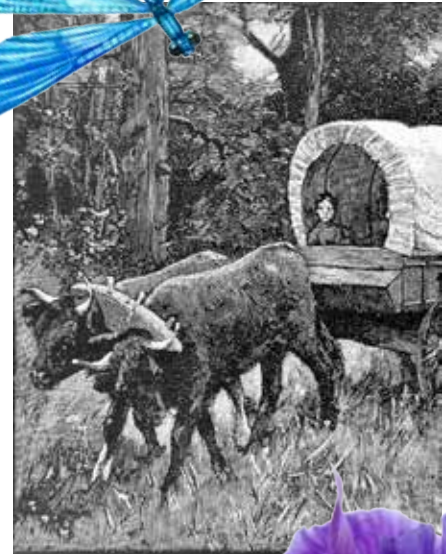
Spring Garden

"Where there is water on Earth, you find life . . ."

Neil DeGrasse Tyson

When the Hannas discovered this spring, they likely found iris, marsh marigolds and skunk cabbage growing in the spring-fed pool and streamlet. Colorful dragonflies hovered over the water. Carpets of woodland wildflowers, ferns and grasses thrived beneath the mature woodland trees, and flowering dogwoods brightened the deep shade.

Here at the Spring Garden, many of these species have been planted to recreate the landscape that would have greeted the Hannas in the early 19th century. However, while the spring water still spills from the rock wall, the wall and its shallow pool are 21st century enhancements to offer the soothing sounds of water and a welcome place of respite.



Why is this spring important to the Park's heritage?

This spring is likely the reason the Hannas decided to make this land their home in 1810, therefore becoming one of the early European homesteaders in the County. Reliable access to clean water was essential, and this spring provided them that. Having emigrated from Scotland, the moist bog-like spring probably felt a bit like their homeland, even though the plants were strangers.

Historical accounts describe the Hannas as good people who freely allowed weary travelers to water their horses and themselves at the spring. Some say that the adjacent Springfield Road was named because of these acts of kindness.



Hanna Homestead

Cabin Ruin Garden

"Nature soon takes over if the gardener is absent."

Penelope Hobhouse

Pioneer plants are opportunistic and tenacious. They have the will and the means to take over the most inhospitable environment, readying it for longer-lived species who need better soil and shade conditions. The Cabin Ruin Garden is a created folly in the landscape meant to celebrate this pioneering spirit in the plant world while also honoring the bravery of two of the early homesteaders in Columbiana County – the Dixon and Hanna families.

Meet the Hannas.

In the early 1800's, the Robert Hannas settled near another Quaker pioneer family, the Joshua Dixons, who were living in what is present day Columbiana. The Dixons had a fair daughter, Rachel, and the Hannas had a strong son, Benjamin. They married in 1803 and bought 160 acres from Joshua in 1810. Benjamin and Rachel built a log cabin at the top of a low knoll near a cool, clear spring, on land now known as Harvey S. Firestone Recreational Park. Log cabins at that time were simple: 16' x 20' structures containing only one room, a generous hearth, a door in the front and one in the back, and a loft used for storage and sometimes sleeping.

The Cabin's exact location in the Park, its size, and architectural details remain a mystery. So, rather than a historically correct replication, the Cabin Ruin Garden includes the "remnants" of a typical cabin and its landscape while recognizing the regenerative power of plants as they reclaim untended land.



Rachel and Benjamin Hanna
image credit - Historical Society of Columbiana and Fairfield Township



Rain Gardens and More

"The glory of the garden lies in more than meets the eye."

Rudyard Kipling

You may think you are standing in a parking lot.

But look more closely. You are also standing in a garden - a garden that captures the rain, slows it and beckons it to return to the soil as nourishment. This **Rain Garden** helps keep the raindrops that fall in the parking lot here in the Park, lessening the risk of downstream flooding. Plants and their roots help with that.

You may think you are standing in a Rain Garden in a parking lot.

But, look more closely in the summer and early autumn. Count the number of butterflies you see. They LOVE the blooming shrubs and flowers in the parking lot islands. Most butterflies live only a few days before they mate and lay eggs, so do not take their presence for granted! Enjoy this **Butterfly Garden**.

You may think you are standing in a Butterfly Garden and Rain Garden in a parking lot.

But look more closely. You are also standing among many canopy trees that, as they mature, will lend their shade and cool the parking lot. These trees transform into an overhead garden when they bloom - yes, most trees do flower! In spring and summer, look upward to discover those flowers in this **Canopy Garden**.

You may think you are standing in a Canopy Garden, Butterfly Garden and Rain Garden in a parking lot.

And you are!



Harvey S. Firestone

The Lookout

The view from The Lookout has changed dramatically from the time that Harvey S. Firestone stood on this spot and oversaw the construction of the Park in 1934. Then, he would have been looking out over a grassy area with ballfields in the distance. If he visited today, in the foreground he would see a "green parking lot" that captures and cleans rainwater, reduces heat radiating from the pavement, and provides habitat and food for birds and pollinators.

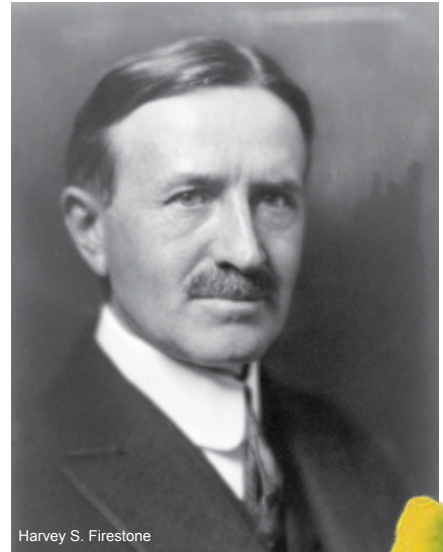
From Mr. Firestone's Vantage Point

Harvey S. Firestone was a huge supporter of Columbiana, his hometown. In 1933, he and his wife, Idabelle, donated land and money to establish a Park for the town he so loved.

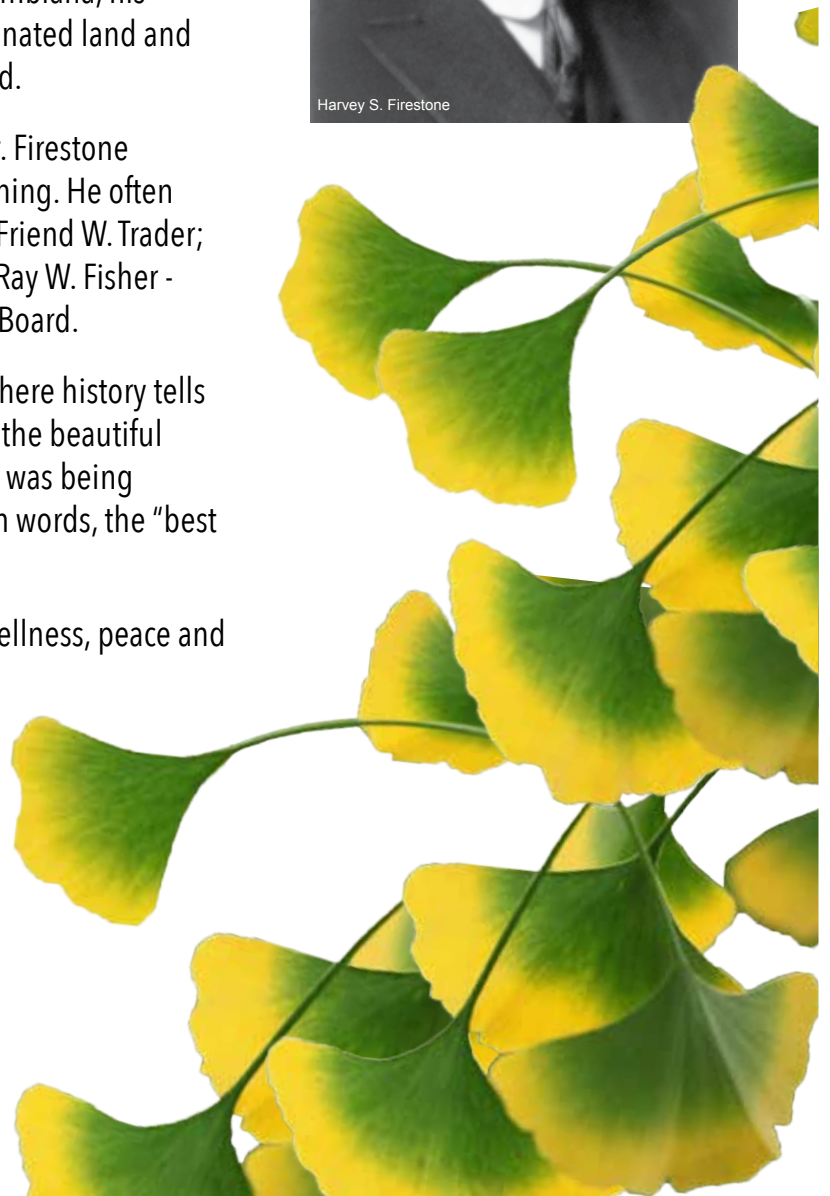
Even though he no longer lived in the village, Mr. Firestone remained very involved in the Park's overall planning. He often visited Columbiana to oversee construction with Friend W. Trader; Dan J. Miller; Dick Fitzpatrick; Ray C. Miller; and Ray W. Fisher - collectively the newly-established, and first, Park Board.

This large boulder marks the approximate spot where history tells us Harvey S. Firestone stood and looked out over the beautiful expanse of the Park, standing guard proudly as it was being developed and constructed to become, in his own words, the "best little park in Ohio."

Harvey S. Firestone's legacy continues to foster wellness, peace and recreation for visitors to enjoy the Park's beauty.



Harvey S. Firestone



Mirror Lake

Added to the initial design of the Harvey S. Firestone Recreational Park, construction workers still managed to complete Mirror Lake in time for the Park's official opening in 1935. Once known as the "duck pond", today's Mirror Lake has been transformed and brought into the 21st century, with refreshed plantings, shoreline improvements and a lovely strolling perimeter path. These improvements were made possible through the generous donation of Patricia Tingle in honor of her son, David.

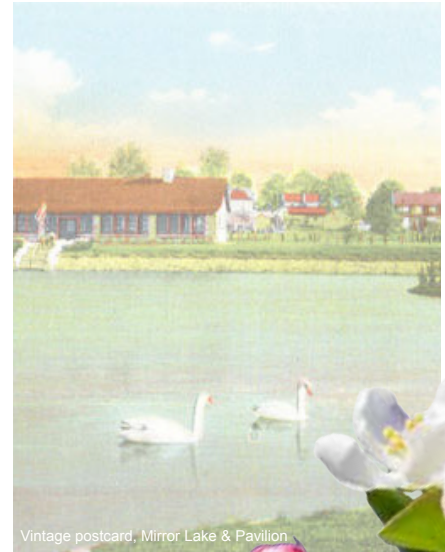
Then and Now

Mirror Lake was the only part of the Park to have been constructed using large power machinery. Its main purpose was (and is) to contain the Park's run-off and provide a controlled release into the storm drainage systems to the north.

From day one, Mirror Lake was the hub of the Park, sought by two-legged and winged visitors alike. Two famous feathered residents were a swan pair named Clark (Gable) and Mae (West) who happily stayed at the Lake during warm weather, wintering at local farms. Columbiana residents enjoyed fishing in spring and summer and ice skating in winter months. They even marked off a "regulation-sized" hockey rink at the south end of the Lake near Mirror Lake Pavilion.

Clark and Mae were later replaced by George (Burns) and Gracie (Allen). Some Columbianans still garner nostalgic memories of these gorgeous yet not always friendly creatures!

As Mirror Lake continues to blossom season-by-season, it remains an exciting destination for present-day visitors to the Park.



Vintage postcard, Mirror Lake & Pavilion



Welcome to the Legacy Trail Loop!

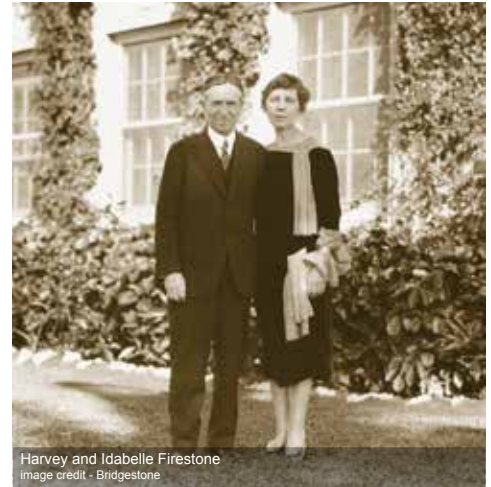
The Legacy Trail Loop, an immersive and interpretive walking journey, invites you to meet the past stewards of the land we now call Harvey S. Firestone Recreational Park. There have been many, from the indigenous people who honored the land in pre-European settlement days to present day benefactors who rallied to restore the Park's vigor and relevance. Rather than attempt to interpret hundreds of years of history, the Loop shines its spotlight on a brief yet important slice of the Park's timeline - between the early 1800's and mid-1900's.

As early European homesteaders in Columbiana County, the Hanna family settled here in 1810. They, and subsequent owners, worked the land for more than a century until Harvey S. Firestone, a Columbiana native, and his wife, Idabelle, purchased the tract in 1933. They graciously gifted the land to the Village of Columbiana for use as a recreational park the same year and hired well-known landscape architect Alling DeForest to prepare a master plan. The Park opened in 1935. Mr. Firestone died shortly after in 1938, and he and Idabelle Firestone, as well as other family members, are buried in the Columbiana Cemetery directly across East Park Avenue.

The Loop invites you to:

- enjoy interpretive pocket gardens and follies;
- lengthen your journey by exploring the Cemetery; or
- embark on the Outer Legacy Trail that wends past historic stone pavilions and culminates at a Park favorite - Mirror Lake.

Regardless of which path you choose, we hope you leave the Park refreshed by its beauty and with a deeper understanding of its rich heritage – plus a desire to return!



ORIENTATION MAP KEY

-  Legacy Trail Loop (1/4 mile ±)
-  Great Tree Lawn
-  1 Idabelle Firestone - Gathering Place & Garden
-  2 Alling Deforest - Lilac Stroll Garden
-  3 Columbiana Cemetery
-  4 Hanna Homestead - Spring Garden
-  5 Hanna Homestead - Cabin Ruin Garden
-  6 Harvey S. Firestone - The Lookout
-  RR Restroom

