

March 28, 2005

734 So. Wintergarden Rd.
Bowling Green, OH

To Admirers of Wintergarden Park/Woods, St. John's Meadow/Woods (Some history)

The photos that I have only show a glimpse of the above area. These photos were taken by a hunter in thanks to my Dad for allowing him to hunt, in about 1949. I think the photographer worked for the FBI if I remember correctly. The photo of the big barn with Carl D. Redman (52) on the corn wagon, and my brother Jim (15) on the "Eagle" tractor shows Wintergarden Woods in background on left. The photo with two hunters and the Jersey bull between them shows a haystack in the left background and St. John's Woods in background. In all of these, please note, some of tall, large trees are still the tall, large trees today. The two tall cottonwoods in my woods, just behind the left hunter are still there tall and large. A herd of Jersey milk cows are in background.

At this time, about 1949, I think Wintergarden may have been just one lane paved and might have been referred to as Redman Rd. I don't recall any name just R. F. D. Rt. #1, Bowling Green, Oh as our address. The farm had 90 acres on both sides of Wintergarden Rd. We usually had about 20 to 25 head of cattle, 20 to 30 head of hogs, 15 to 20 chickens, 6 to 8 sheep, many cats, and a dog. Something happened every day. A new baby animal born, a stray cat came, an animal got out of it's pen, an animal was sold or the Vet called out. Hunting season was an exciting time. Many pheasants and rabbits were around. There were some woodchucks, very few raccoons, very few opossum. Deer and coyote were only heard of as being out west.

My first memories on the farm were Dad putting me on old Babe and I rode her from one barn to the other. "Don't forget to duck your head when she goes in the barn, I'll be down and get you off in a minute", he'd say. This was about 1942 and I was four years old. This old work horse eventually died in basement cattle area of the big barn. Dad called the Weston fertilizer to pick her up. Her mate was "Prince" a young gelding off the Iowa range.

Dad told me he bought Prince from Albert Tavernier who lived across the road to north. "Bertal" was what Albert Tavernier's Dad called him. He spoke mostly German and was very hard to understand. Albert used to be a cattle/horse dealer. He would sometimes go west and bring back horses. They were turned out on Wintergarden. The front part was farmed but a lane went along the north side back to wooded area and that is how the original trails came about in Wintergarden Park, from these horses he bought and turned out there. Maggie Schwind, Carol Rd., is Albert's granddaughter.

At one time he had bought a pair of matched black and white pintos and a buggy that he had back there. There was a lean-to, and hay/straw stored just west of the lodge in SW corner of parking lot. His nephew and I were taken for a ride down Wintergarden, Sand

Ridge, Maple, Pearl and back on Wintergarden. What a thrill! I was crazy to have a horse and shortly after this time, Albert got a nice little brown and white pinto just two years old. I eventually got this horse and had her until she died at about 19 years old. We raised 3 colts from her and the first one "Angel" was 33 years old when she broke a rear leg, and we had to put her to sleep. "Rowdy" died of grass poisoning in the barn At about 22 years old. "Georgie Girl" the youngest was born with a crooked front leg and she had to be put to sleep at 19. The mother "Betty" had died when the youngest was only 5 months old. Her big sister, Angel, took over mothering her. I miss them all to this day.

When I first started school in 1944, Wintergarden Rd. was dirt. My brother and I were expected to walk to Pearl St. to get the bus. Dad had a fit. Finally they agreed to come down and pick us up and turn around at the barn but in the afternoon we had to walk from Pearl St. Dad finally got them to bring us home the following year. I remember a road grader sat stuck in the snow for months one winter just in front of Dave Koons home and across from the lane back to Wintergarden. There was a huge pear tree here, on the west side of road and it caused a big snow drift. I can also recall Mom saying, (when the road was dirt), "If I hang my clothes out to dry on the clothesline, sure enough, a car will do by and get them dirty." The prevailing winds were always out of the SW and very dusty.

The neighboring kids used to dig holes back in St. John's Woods and play there, some holes are still there. "Brooker's Club House", I think it was called, was back in there, off Hillcrest, and had quite a reputation, was the rumor. The last time the St. John's Meadow was farmed, soybeans via grain drill were planted and it was so wet that the farmer was never able to harvest them. Dad tried to talk with the St. John's girls to grant him an easement to run a tile main along the westerly side of the meadow to Rudolph Rd. ditch but they were not farmers and just did not understand the importance of drainage, or they didn't want to spend the money. The Lee Bressler family (13 children) lived in the grey house on the hill on Sand Ridge, across from meadow area. They had a barn and several cows and livestock and there was a lane behind the barn that went back to St. John's Woods. Some of these Bressler heirs still live on Sand Ridge. Wintergarden/Redman Rd. had Clarence Smith family on the corner, Howard Brown home, then the Tavernier home, our place on the hill, then a big white house on corner of Sand Ridge. Going toward BG then the next places were two little old houses, Parkers lived in easterly one and later on Clarence Beaupre's mother lived there (over 100 years old) for many years. Finally the next home was the Lee Bressler home. Westgate was mostly the Brown farm.

My Dad moved to this farm when he was 7 years old, 1899. They moved from Bays, Oh. His parents divorced and he never saw his Dad again, even thou he lived near Cygnet, OH. My grandmother lost her mind, Dad said he slept in the barn a lot, one time he awoke and she stood over him with a hatchet. Dad's brother Elsa, died of typhoid fever when Dad was 12. Dad worked in the oil fields at 16. This was probably World War One, about 1908-1910. People were very poor. Most of wild life was killed off for food up thru the depression, late 1920's to early 1930's.

I believe Dad told me, that he was sent to Kentucky one time to train, but before he was sent on, the war ended. Maybe this was the Spanish-American War. In 1943 and 1944, I can remember Mom saying, "I want to get you to bed before the "blackout" begins. So this was World War Two.

The boy scouts used to camp in Wintergarden in 1940's. They always built a tower of wood poles. We could see it from the barn. Dad always referred to the woods as the "thicket". There used to be grassy areas in the SW corner of woods, another just north of the present lodge and then around where the lean-to was. Really soft wispy type of grass. I used to ride back here all the time. My horse, Betty, was very good at a fast run around all the trails, in the 1950's. Also, in the early 1950's, there was oil drilling happening on the west side farm where Tavenier's had lived. In the 1950's, 1960's and 1970's, girl scout day camp was here as well as the boy scouts. Then the boy scouts started using Potter's Woods on St. Rt. 281.

This is just some of the things I remember of the old days. I hope you enjoy hearing about this area from the last 60 years.

Carlene M. (Redman) Creps