



## **Cincinnati History Museum Gallery Guide for *Cincinnati in Motion***

*Cincinnati In Motion* is a model of the city of Cincinnati as it appeared in the early part of the 20th century. It does not attempt to be geographically accurate. Rather, it depicts many of the interesting and significant features of Cincinnati during the period. Many of the non-significant buildings are made up to represent buildings that were typical of each particular area. The Downtown portion depicts the city at about 1940; the other areas depict earlier decades. This variation in time periods allows for the simultaneous presentation of features like the Miami and Erie Canal, Union Terminal and the four inclines.

Initially, the *Cincinnati In Motion* exhibit was to be a model railroad layout designed to present the railroad history of Union Terminal. Actual construction began after a year of researching information on Cincinnati buildings, railroads, streetcars and street layouts. As enthusiasm grew, the scope of the exhibit expanded to take in all of the modes of transportation found in early 20th-century Cincinnati.

Visitors can learn about many aspects of life in Cincinnati from approximately 1890 to 1940. They can see what typical neighborhoods as well as important public places such as Crosley Field, looked like, learn how the inclines operated and compare what the city looked like earlier to their experience of it today. By using the interactive computers in the exhibit, visitors can access more detailed related information on the topics of society, culture, leisure, government and transportation.

### **Background**

*Cincinnati In Motion* is one of the largest "S" gauge (3/16 inch = 1 foot) models in the United States. It covers 4,000 square feet and includes about 1,200 buildings, 12 moving streetcars, 18 working locomotives, four working inclines, a moving airplane, 500 stationary vehicles and about 3,000 miniature people, along with a large assortment of animals.

There are five major sections to the exhibit and two non-contiguous smaller sections. The major sections are: downtown Cincinnati, the Covington Waterfront, Price Hill to Ivorydale, the Ohio River east of Eden park to Mt. Adams, and Music Hall to the Zoological Gardens. The two small non-connected sections are: Lunken Field and Coney Island. Although the streets and buildings are generally geographically and historically correct to the time period in which they are located, in a few areas, space limitations necessitated some geographical inaccuracies.

### **Downtown Cincinnati—1940s**

Cincinnati's downtown flourished in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries due to the city's prime location for trade on the Ohio River. Although competition from railroads and trucks had slowed the river trade by the mid-20th century, downtown remained vital and continued to be the regional center for retail, commerce and industry. Improvement in the city's transportation networks changed the make-up of Cincinnati from a "walking city" where all the goods and

services needed to survive were within walking distance, to a city where neighborhoods beyond the downtown basin were accessible by inclines, streetcars and improved roadways.

During the 1940s, Cincinnati's downtown was the region's center for shopping, entertainment and business. The hustle and bustle of people downtown increased dramatically during World War II. At this time, there were department stores such as Shillito's and McAlpin's, bowling alleys, small retail shops, many restaurants and movie theaters, business headquarters and personal residences located in the area north of the river and between Mount Adams and the West End. Streetcars, buses and one remaining incline carried people efficiently around the city and to outlying neighborhoods.

After World War II, despite the activity in retail, commerce and social institutions, Cincinnati's downtown began to change. As property values along the river declined and vacancy rates and traffic problems increased, it became obvious that the city's business core was stagnating. Changes were made to both the riverfront and city streets in an effort to revitalize downtown, but not before many businesses and residents had relocated to the suburbs.

### **The West End—1930s**

By the early 1920s, Cincinnati's West End was a neighborhood in flux with deteriorated housing and a high population density (136 people per acre—nearly five times the city average). City officials began creating urban renewal by bulldozer. Tenements and old factories were destroyed and replaced with new structures that the city hoped would improve conditions.

Union Terminal, Western Hills Viaduct and the U.S. Post Office Annex were urban renewal projects that joined the city's primary rail transportation links and mail connection in the West End. The West End playground at Gest and Dalton streets was another of the urban renewal projects undertaken during this period. In 1933, federal money from the federal Public Works Administration was used to buy property and construct the Laurel Homes subsidized housing project.

Crosley Field, where the first Major League night game was played on May 24, 1935, remained the home of the Cincinnati Reds baseball team. Originally constructed in 1912 as Redlands Field, the stadium received several upgrades over the years to improve seating capacity and sight lines. The Reds played at Crosley Field until 1970, when the city opened a new baseball stadium on the riverfront.

### **Mount Adams—1920s**

For much of the 19th century, land associated with Mt. Adams was generally regarded as being of little or no value. In the 1830s, Nicholas Longworth, Cincinnati's first millionaire, acquired some of this land and used part of it for vineyards. He donated another parcel of land to the Cincinnati Astronomical Society for an observatory site. Despite this, much of the land on Mt. Adams remained undeveloped for years.

With the construction of the incline in 1874, Mt. Adams experienced a construction boom that lasted through the turn of the century. Limited real estate and difficult accessibility prevented manufacturing development, with the exception of smaller enterprises such as the Rookwood Pottery and Sterling Cut Glass. Most residents of Mt. Adams were employed by businesses in the Deer Creek Valley below Mt. Adams or on the riverfront.

Rookwood Pottery, founded in 1874 by Maria Longworth Nichols, granddaughter of Nicholas Longworth, moved from its original location in a schoolhouse on Eastern Avenue to a new home in Mt. Adams in 1891. At its height in the 1920s, Rookwood employed 200 men and women and

received 4,000 visitors annually. The Great Depression destroyed the company's sales; by 1941, it was in receivership. Despite several attempts to revive the business and the Rookwood name, the building went unused until 1966 when it was restored and converted into a restaurant.

### **Spring Grove Cemetery—1910s**

Due to the population explosion in Cincinnati during the first half of the 19th century, the old municipal burial ground between Fourth and Fifth and Main and Walnut Streets was overcrowded by the 1830s. Many of Cincinnati's earliest citizens, including Israel Ludlow, were moved to the less crowded Episcopal Presbyterian Burial Ground on Twelfth Street (the present-day location of Washington Park). Unfortunately, within 10 years, this burial ground was also overcrowded and in poor condition. Other denominations were able to allocate land for new burial grounds in St. Bernard, Delhi and Walnut Hills but Cincinnati needed a large, urban, non-denominational facility comparable to New York's Greenwood Cemetery or Mount Auburn in Boston.

In 1845, Spring Grove Cemetery was chartered as a "rural" cemetery located outside of the city limits. On August 28, 1845, the grounds at Spring Grove were officially consecrated. The 166-acre site, with woodland, springs, gently rolling hills and a "picturesque" quality became the final resting place of ordinary citizens and famous Cincinnatians alike. The cemetery took pride in its ability to offer affordable lots on a square footage basis. The well-to-do could purchase large lots but those with little means could also obtain an adequate burial plot.

Prussian immigrant Adolph Strauch, a landscape gardener by trade, commented in 1854 that the new cemetery resembled "a marble yard where monuments are offered for sale." Despite his criticism, Strauch became the landscape gardener at Spring Grove and developed a model landscaping plan designed to produce "the pictorial union of architecture, sculpture and landscape gardening, blending the well-regulated precision of human design with apparently wild irregularities of divine creation." He discouraged the use of "excessive ornamentation", turned the swamps into lakes and developed the cemetery as an arboretum. Today, there are more than 330 varieties of trees and shrubs at Spring Grove.

The natural beauty of the cemetery also made it a popular park for local residents from its beginning and Spring Grove continually made improvements for the comfort of its many visitors. Seats and benches were placed under large shade trees; privies and shaded shelters were also installed. In 1881, the Gate Lodge was converted into a ladies waiting and rest room and more shelters were added in 1919.

### **Ivorydale—1910s**

After a fire in 1884 destroyed the Procter & Gamble factory located on Central Avenue, construction began the next year on a new, larger facility in the Mill Creek Valley. Designed by Solon S. Berman of Chicago, some of the 20 buildings in the complex were constructed of stone, with decorative dormers, clerestory roofs and carved granite arches. The neatly trimmed lawns and flower gardens that enhanced the complex were unusual and innovative compared to other factory designs of the time. The new facility also enabled Procter & Gamble to take advantage of the excellent transportation networks located in the Mill Creek Valley. Ivory soap and other products manufactured at the Ivorydale plant were shipped across the region and the country by way of the Baltimore & Ohio and Big Four railroads as well as the Miami Erie Canal.

The company's signature product, Ivory Soap, was introduced in 1878. Known as "white soap" because of its color, it was marketed with the slogan "so pure, it floats". The popularity of Ivory Soap led Procter & Gamble to name its new headquarters "Ivorydale". Over the years, in

addition to Ivory Soap, Procter & Gamble developed many other successful products including Crisco, the first all-vegetable shortening, Ivory Flakes, Joy dishwashing liquid, Tide laundry detergent and Crest toothpaste.

### **Over-the-Rhine—1900s**

German immigrants to Cincinnati named their neighborhood Over-the-Rhine because crossing over the Miami & Erie Canal reminded them of crossing over the muddy Rhine River in their homeland. By 1900, German-Americans in Cincinnati had established a German language theater, over 30 periodicals, 48 churches and synagogues, two orphanages, a home for old men and another for widows, six cemeteries, numerous clubs, building and loan associations and singing societies.

Although German-Americans settled into every part of Cincinnati, most of their cultural institutions and businesses remained concentrated in Over-the-Rhine. The largest cluster of saloons, beer gardens and concert halls—integral parts of German-American culture—was located along Vine Street. Near the turn of the century, more than 50 saloons and five theaters operated between the canal and McMicken Street. This district was a major tourist attraction with a local and national reputation.

### **Mount Auburn—1900s**

Mount Auburn was the first of the hilltop suburbs around Cincinnati that enabled residents to move out of the crowded and often dirty and smelly downtown basin. Wealthy families were the first to move up to Mount Auburn both to escape the crowded basin and Cincinnati taxes. Some of these early Mount Auburn residents were returned to the city when Mount Auburn was annexed to Cincinnati in 1849.

The number of middle class residents began to increase as better public transportation and easier access to Mount Auburn became available. The Main Street Incline (1872) and the Mount Auburn Cable Railway (1887) reduced the time it took to ascend the hill and opened the suburb to less affluent homebuyers. Mansions were soon interspersed with multiple family dwellings and smaller houses.

When Christ Hospital moved to Mount Auburn in 1893, it brought with it doctor's offices, nurse's residences and other related businesses. By the 1920s, much of the residential housing had been replaced by offices and parking areas, changing the community and its character.

### **Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Gardens—1900s**

The Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Gardens is the second oldest zoo in the nation. A collection of approximately 1,000 birds imported from Europe in 1872 to try to end a plague of caterpillars was housed in Burnet Woods before being released. There is no record of how successful the birds were, but they inspired local citizens to start a zoo. The zoo opened on September 18, 1875 with three deer, eight small monkeys, buffalo, a tiger, a hyena, a talking crow, an alligator, an old circus elephant, a pair of grizzly bears, a pair of elk, six raccoons and 400 birds.

In the first 20 years of its existence, the zoo experienced many financial difficulties and went into receivership in 1898. The Cincinnati Zoological Company was able to bring the zoo out of receivership and keep it going. The Cincinnati Traction Company purchased it in 1901 and operated the zoo for 16 years. In 1917 the Cincinnati Zoological Park Association, funded by donations from philanthropists Mary Emery and Anna Sinton Taft, took over management of the zoo. In 1932 the city purchased the zoo and now runs it through the Board of Park Commissioners.

Despite the many changes in ownership, the zoo grew over time. Besides the live animal exhibits, the Zoo houses refreshments stands, a dance hall, roads and walkways and picnic grounds. Among the Zoo's most memorable attractions were the performances by the Cincinnati Summer Opera. Between 1920 and 1972, operas were presented in an open-air pavilion and were broadcast by NBC radio.

### **Lunken Field—1940s**

Established in 1926 by Cincinnati valve manufacturer Edmund Lunken, Lunken Field served the civilian aviation needs of Cincinnati and the surrounding region during the first half of the 20th century. The City of Cincinnati assumed operation of the airfield on December 13, 1927 and four days later established airmail service between Cincinnati and Chicago.

Despite new construction and renovation in 1937, Lunken Field could not keep up with the region's civilian aviation needs. Its location on low-lying ground with higher surrounding hills made instrument landings difficult. In addition, the runways could not be easily extended in order to accommodate new, larger aircraft. For these reasons, the Kenton County Airport in Kentucky, located on high, flat ground, was the principle site for military aviation during World War II. After the war, the Kenton County Airport evolved into the regional civilian airport in use today as the Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky International Airport.

The Aeronautical Corporation of America, founded in 1928, was located adjacent to Lunken Field. In 1941, the company changed its name to Aeronica Aircraft Corporation and moved to Middletown. In addition to the civilian C-2 and C-3 airplanes, Aeronica built hundreds of gliders and trainers, and the Grasshopper, a light liaison and artillery observation plane, for the military during World War II.

### **Coney Island**

Coney Island began in the late 19th century in an apple orchard used as a site for picnics. In 1889, the Coney Island Company purchased the park. They built a lake and a ride called "Shoot the Chuter" that featured gondola-style boats careening down a slide into the lake. Under the guidance of businessman George Schott, who became the general manager in 1924, attractions like the Wildcat roller coaster, Sunlite Pool and Moonlight Gardens were opened.

In 1936, Coney Island covered over 128 acres of ground and attracted thousands of Cincinnatians to enjoy the rides and swimming pool and listen and dance to the big band sounds of Ozzie Nelson, Glen Miller and Tommy Dorsey. The 1937 flood destroyed most of the park, but with \$300,000 and ideas brought back from the 1938 World's Fair, repairs and improvements were quickly made.

Through the 1940s, approximately one-third of the visitors to Coney Island reached the park by steamboat. The *Island Queen II*, a 280x 80-foot side-wheeler capable of carrying 4,000 passengers, was one of the largest steamboats of its day and the last of that name to ferry passengers to the park. In an unfortunate accident, the *Island Queen* caught fire from a worker's welding torch and burned to her waterline at Pittsburgh in 1947. From then on, visitors to Coney Island had to reach the park by automobile, streetcar or bus.

### **Vocabulary:**

*Revitalization* – making changes to the riverfront and city streets to encourage business and residential activity

*Urban renewal* – clearing rundown areas of old buildings in order to make room for new construction

*Rural cemetery* – 19th century park-like cemetery located outside the city limits  
*Ivory Soap* – popular white soap made by Procter & Gamble

**Focus Questions:**

1. What is “S” gauge scale?
2. Name two early 20<sup>th</sup> century urban renewal projects in Cincinnati.
3. How did Over-the-Rhine get its name?
4. What steamboat carried visitors to Coney Island?
5. What neighborhood was the first hilltop suburb of Cincinnati?