

Friday, May 11, 2018

Little Cities of Black Diamonds Tour



Today we will take you on an educative heritage fieldtrip into the Little Cities of Black Diamonds, a microregion in Southeast Ohio that encompasses four counties with a unique story of national significance including a history of bust to boom coal mining, breaking the color line, organized labor and environmental resilience.

Our tour guide for the day will be John Winnenberg, co-founder of Sunday Creek Associates and member of the Little Cities of Black Diamonds Council whose mission it is to keep alive the past stories and traditions of the Little Cities of Black Diamonds Region and through its history, culture and environment to help enrich the future quality of life in the region.

Wildcat Hollow



Our first stop will be Wildcat Hollow, a calm and scenic section of Wayne National Forest, Ohio's only national forest. We will be met by Joe Brehm of Rural Action, a non-profit organization that seeks to promote social, economic, and environmental justice by training, organizing and supporting communities. Wildcat Hollow sits in quiet contrast to a tumultuous past. Early coal, oil and iron ore extraction, which largely ended in the 1920s, took a heavy toll on the region's environment. Although forests now cover many of the scars left behind by the early mining and population boom, signs of the region's mineral and human history are still visible.

Rendville



Our next stop will be Rendville. Now the smallest incorporated community in Ohio with less than thirty inhabitants, it has a unique interracial history that is the central focus of the Rendville Historical Preservation Society. Rendville was home to five prominent African American leaders, including Richard L. Davis, an early mine labor organizer. We will also visit Rendville Art Works, a unique art center for differently abled individuals.

Shawnee



Our next stop will be historical Shawnee where we will have a nice lunch in the Tecumseh Theater and Frans Doppen will present his book *Richard L. Davis and the Color Line in Ohio Coal: A Hocking Valley Mine Labor Organizer, 1862-1900*. Our visit will include a trip to the amazing upstairs theater where miners went for entertainment.

New Straitsville



At New Straitsville we'll visit Robinson's Cave, a natural amphitheater and the cradle of the United Mine Workers of America, one of the most powerful labor unions the United States have ever witnessed. Cheryl Blosser of the New Straitsville Historical Society will tell us the story of how the secret meetings at Robinson's Cave gave birth to the United Mine Workers.

Eclipse



Our final stop will be the Eclipse Company Town where the company store has been beautifully restored and now houses a beer hall with over 40 beers on tap, including the our own local Jackie O's microbrews. We'll have time here to have dinner and sample some tastings before returning to the OU Inn.