

Petition regarding Richfield Heritage Preserve, formerly Crowell Hilaka (aka “The Girl Scout camp” and the Kirby Estate)

In November 2014, the citizens of Richfield voted to purchase the land now known as Richfield Heritage Preserve; to be administered by the Richfield Joint Recreation District (RJRD). On October 10, 2016, the Master Planner for the RJRD presented four scenarios for the future of the preserve. In three out of four “visions” for the future, the lower dam is removed and Kirby’s patented lake is drained. In the only scenario which includes the lake, almost every other building, including Gund Hall, is demolished.

Cost is cited as the determining factor. However, the RJRD board has NOT considered additional funding sources beyond the bond revenue. Yet, **ADDITIONAL FUNDING FROM OUTSIDE RICHFIELD** is available!

This property is unique, with a unique story that can and should be leveraged to preserve the historic elements and enhance the recreational and educational value of the property.

As Richfield citizens we want:

- **RJRD to leverage the assets of the park (ie, Gund Hall rental, historic preservation grants and tax credits, fund-raising through partner groups, etc.) to bring in funds to preserve and maintain current park features**
- **The historic structures of the property to be mothballed until funds are raised to restore them or the citizens decide which ones are no longer needed**
- **The lower lake to be kept as nearly as possible to its historic form while complying with ODNR regulations.**

_____	Address:	_____
Signature		_____
_____	Email:	_____
Name (Please Print)	Phone:	_____

**If mailing in your petition, send to Richfield Historical Society
(P.O. Box 215, Richfield, Ohio 44286)**

More information on dams: Although the Master Planning team stressed the risks and responsibilities of maintaining a dam, ODNR does not require dam removal. When owners value their lakes, dam repair is a viable option. <http://engineering.ohiodnr.gov/>

More information on the lower lake: <http://www.friendsofcrowellhilaka.org/lower-lake.html>

Statement of the Richfield Historical Society to the Richfield Joint Recreation District Concerning the Lower Lake - September 2016

The lower lake is the central historical element in that whole property. It's the world's only known patented lake. Kirby's house, the mill, the boat landing, and the dance hall are all oriented around the lake. Kirby loved it. His bedroom windows and his workshop loft all overlooked the lake. It was a source of inspiration and tranquility for him.

If you remove the lower dam, then you lose the lake. If you lose the lake, you lose the immediacy of Kirby's story. Kirby's story is what makes this property unique. Kirby's home blended technology and nature - a lesson needed for our time.

Lose the lake and you lose Kirby's 20th century spin on the ancient combination of lake, dam, mill, and bridge that existed around the world for over a thousand years. These four elements were all components of an integrated system that was the main source of power generation for over a thousand years.

Lose the lake and the mill won't ever work. Sure you can "save" it, but what for? It's got an overshot wheel. That means the water has to come in over the top and it needs a millpond in order to work. Kirby's wheel design was an innovative experiment. Kirby's Mill was placed on the National Historic Register in 1978 largely because the wheel was the first of its kind. You can't convert it to an undershot wheel without losing the essence of what Kirby built. In addition, we are just finding out now how experimental the whole mill design was. It appears as though Kirby re-engineered his original concept for the millhouse structure. That too, is part of the story. What a great thing to demonstrate to children: if your first try fails, then re-design your solution. Kirby's Mill shows that. But only if it has the power of falling water to drive it.

Lose the lake and we lose the opportunity to have the property designated as a historic district on the National Registry of Historic Places. This designation is not only prestigious; it makes the property eligible for historic preservation tax credits and other historic preservation grants.

The repair of the lower dam will cost money. But that's why the RJRD set the amount of the bond issue higher than just the cost of the land purchase. RJRD still has millions of dollars for capitol repairs on the property - most of which must be spend in the next two years. You have the Friends of Crowell Hilaka to raise awareness, excitement, and needed funds for historic building restoration later on.

RJRD voted to call the place "Richfield Heritage Preserve" because they wanted to Preserve Richfield Heritage. Keeping the lakes by repairing the dams is a necessary first step.