Western Reserve Studies Symposium
13-14 November 1992

"The Western Reserve: From Wilderness to Thriving Community"

Moderator: T. A. Sande

The purpose of this morning session is to examine the transformation of the Western Reserve region from pre-caucasian settlement to modern times. There are five papers that will be presented in two groups, following this theme in broad chronological form.

The first portion of this session is a panel presentation with three speakers. Harvey Webster, Supervisor of Wildlife Resource at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History will begin with an exploration of the land, its flora and fauna before the early caucasian settlers arrived. He will be followed by David Brose, Chief Curator, also from the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, who will describe the indigenous aboriginal culture of Northeast Ohio. Harry Lupold, Adjunct Professor of History, John Carroll University, will end this portion of the program with a study of the area's waterways -- so important in early regional transport -- from the natural lakes and rivers to the man-made canals popular in the first half of the 19th century.

The second portion of the morning session consists of a dialogue between two local historians who will examine communities that emerged within the Western Reserve. Robert Wheeler of Cleveland State University will discuss the Connecticut Land Company, the beginnings of the industrial community and the unique case of the Shakers. David Anderson, of Hiram College offers a provocative look at the 20th century residential communities of Shaker Heights, Waldon and Pirate's Cove.

The theme of settlement involves a number of considerations and is rich in interpretive possibilities. There is the seemingly obvious taming of the wilderness which progresses rather rapidly to more and more complex levels of community. The spectrum ranges from the natural forest to the industrial city. Within this flow of development there are fascinating eddies and cross currents, including the trend identified by Anderson back toward a perceived arcadia by contemporary Ohioans who seek release from the constraints and nuisance of modern urban society.