



## The City of 7 Valleys

According to local lore, Cincinnati – like the ancient Rome of Cincinnatus – is the city founded upon seven hills. In fact, a favorite Cincy trivial pursuit is to disagree on which hills are the “official” seven. If you ever lost one of those discussions, don’t fret. Cincinnati is actually a city of valleys...This is nothing to feel “down” about, though. Our valleys tell a story of power through persistence and of great changes brought about through the incredible power of water and time.

About two million years ago, the land here was a fairly level plain. Ancient rivers slowly eroded wide deep valleys that still exist to this day. The ancestral Ohio River joined the East Fork of the Little Miami River at California, and together they flowed northwest across Norwood to join the ancient Licking River in what is now the Mill Creek valley, around Elmwood Place. The combined stream continued flowing north in the Mill Creek Valley, then turned west and joined with the Great Miami River near Hamilton, Ohio. Tributary streams that fed those rivers also cut deep ruts into the land. The flat areas left between the ancient rivers were the ancestors of our hills.

The Ohio River we know and celebrate was formed much later by the Wisconsin Glacier. 50,000 years ago the glacier clogged the old rivers and lakes with outwash and ice and poured large amounts of melt-water over the land. The water sliced through what had been dry land just south of Cincinnati, creating our Ohio River views.

Want some evidence of this that you can see with your own eyes? Just walk or drive to the overlooks in Alms, Eden, Larz Anderson, Mt. Echo, Fairview, French, or Drake parks. From the overlooks, look as far as you can at the ridge and hill tops both near and far. Notice something? They’re all on the same level – the same height as the overlook on which you’re standing. Two million years ago you could have had a nice flat stroll to over there.

From Alms Park, you can see where the combined East Fork and ancestral Ohio River turned north, to make the Little Miami River valley. From Drake Park, look across that valley to the Mt. Washington water tower barely visible in the distance. At Eden Park, Larz Anderson and Mt. Echo, look across the narrow trench dug by the “new” Ohio River at the Kentucky hills, so close and right at eye-level. From Fairview’s scenic drive you can check out the Mill Creek Valley, and confirm that it’s much too wide in proportion to the stream that uses it now. From the top of the hill in French Park, look over the wide expanse of that valley to the distant ridge of College Hill, Mt. Airy, and the Mt. Airy water tower.

How many million tons of soil and gravel were moved? How much rock was melted away, to make those majestic river valleys? Ponder for a minute the awesome power of the water that drop by drop, aided by *lots* of time, carried that land away bit by bit. Wonder whether you drank some of those same water drops today (it’s possible).

So Cincinnati doesn’t really have seven hills. With our time-saturated valleys and gorgeous views – who needs them?