

IMAGES

...THEN AND NOW

From the Indian Hill Historical Society



**Buckingham Lodge
1861**

Horticultural Antiquities at the Rowe Arboretum

Two fascinating relics of natural history can be viewed at the Rowe Arboretum – a petrified log and the slice of an aged Redwood tree. The background story on how those items got to the Village goes back to the relationship between Mr. & Mrs. Stanley Rowe and Mr. and Mrs. Leland Banning.

Stanley and Dorothy Rowe were married in 1915 and moved from Hyde Park to Indian Hill in 1928, where they built Annesdale, a 200 acre estate on Muchmore Road. During a trip to Tennessee, a friend showed the Rowes his collection of trees and shrubs. The Rowes thought this would be a wonderful hobby and began to accumulate numerous specimens that are now known as the Rowe Arboretum. Every summer the couple went to the shore in Weekapaug, Rhode Island to escape the summer heat.

Another prominent Cincinnati couple, Mr. & Mrs. Leland Banning frequently spent their summer vacations in Watch Hill, Rhode Island, only 6 miles from Weekapaug. The Bannings lived in Avondale and were socially active and traveled extensively. Mr. Banning owned a lumber company in Cincinnati, and had interests in timberlands and sawmills in Tennessee, Kentucky, and Arkansas. He was a collector of wood curios from all over the world.

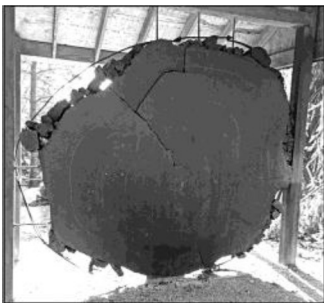
Though no written record exists of the friendship between the couples, they were acquainted. Sometime before 1933 Leland Banning gave a petrified log to the Rowes for their horticultural collection. He had previously donated many wood specimens to U. C. and the Public Library. The Rowes wanted to return the favor, and sought to find a souvenir that would be a good addition to Mr. Banning's wood collection. In 1933, a Redwood tree fell in California, and Mr. Rowe sent his name to the authorities in hopes of acquiring some specimens. Two large slices were delivered to Mr. Rowe in Ohio. One was kept at the Arboretum, and the other was given to Leland Banning, to reciprocate for the gift of the petrified log.



Petrified Log

The log is a fossil. When it was buried by sediment and deprived of oxygen, groundwater flowed through its sediment, replacing the original wood with inorganic material. The result was a composite of the original woody plant material which exhibits details of the bark, wood, and cell structure. The petrified log at the Arboretum dates to the Triassic Period. (about 230 million years ago).

The Redwood slice is an 8' by 10' section of a Coastal Redwood. It is one foot thick. The Latin name of the tree is *Sequoia semper virens*. Initially, the slice at the Arboretum was propped up outside by telephone poles along the upper driveway to the main house. The slice has markings on its rings denoting specific historic dates. The identical slice given to the Bannings was donated to the old Natural History Museum and subsequently to the Museum Center. It was determined that the tree slice's beginnings were 583 A.D.



Redwood Slice

There is an amusing legend about the Redwood slice. Apparently Dorothy Rowe's family from Knoxville, Tennessee were frequent visitors at Annesdale. One family member was reputedly "on the looney side". So to get him out of the house, he was given an assignment – to count the rings on the Redwood slice and place a thumbtack at every 50 years. If visitors view the slice at about the 3:00 position, there is evidence of those former thumbtacks.

The 1350 year old Redwood slice was moved in 1985 to its present location on the main path. It was in danger of falling down because the telephone pole supports were rotting. A shelter was built to keep the slice from total exposure to the weather. The Arboretum Manager applied a coat of wood preservative to it as a protective measure. It is located next to the petrified log.

A visit to the Rowe Arboretum is always fascinating and educational with its live plantings and scenic pathways. Particularly interesting are these two unique specimens – the log and the slice. Both of them exemplify Mother Nature's antiquity and the Rowes' desire to share horticultural treasures with the public.