



VISITING & HIKING

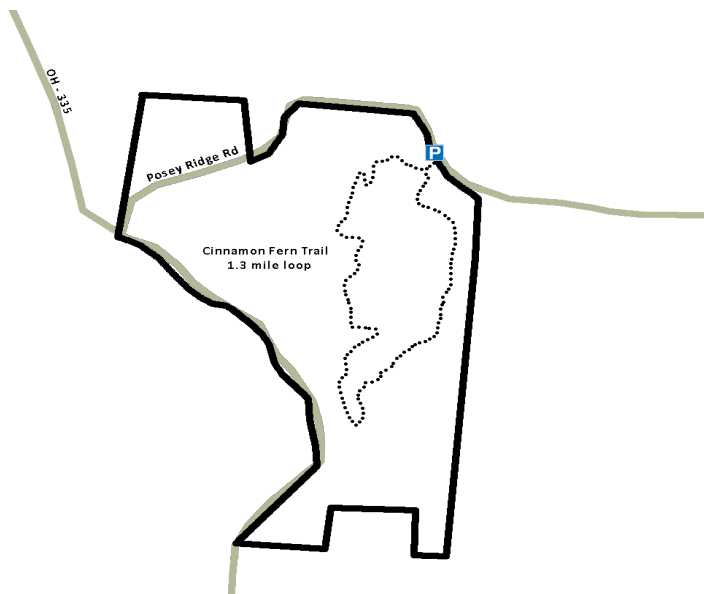
Samson/Obrist Woods

Current Size: 146.526 acres

The Arc of Appalachia's operations are 100% supported by private donations. If you love what we do, [please support us](#), so that our wildlands preservation work and trail stewardship can continue.



Dogs are permitted at Samson/Obrist Preserve on a six-foot leash. Please see [Hiking Arc Preserves](#) for more dog-friendly trails.



Hiking Trail: The Cinnamon Fern Trail 1.3 mile loop offers a variety of features, including rich and abundant ferns and acidic soil-loving plants, a hemlock grove, towering oak trees, and a large natural recessed sandstone cave. The trail descends toward the recessed cave, where seasonally a small 20-foot waterfall cascades over its edge, then follows along the rich banks of McConnell Creek, where large verdant cinnamon ferns grow in profusion. As the seasons shift into fall, the ferns change into a brilliant yellow, along with the vibrant colors of fall forest foliage.

You are Entering a highly protected nature preserve. Regulations exist to protect natural communities from the

impact of public visitors. Please follow these regulations to leave Samson/Obrist as beautiful as you found it. Remain on trails at all times and walk single file to protect bulbs of native wildflowers bordering the trail. Do not disturb, pick, or collect flowers, plants, rocks, or wildlife. Hunting, caving, fishing, trail biking, rock climbing, wading, campfires, and swimming are prohibited.

Address: 717 Posey Ridge Rd, Beaver, OH 45613.

Directions from Piketon to Samson/Obrist Woods parking: Drive south on US-23 from Piketon. Turn onto the OH-32/OH-124 ramp and follow OH-124 East for 10.7 Miles. Turn right onto OH-335 South and follow for 3.4 miles. Turn left onto Posey Ridge Road and follow Posey Ridge Road for .6 miles. The trailhead parking lot will be on your right.

Interpretive Kiosk: An interpretive kiosk is located at the trailhead. We encourage you to take a picture of the trail map with your phone before hiking the trails.

Samson/Obrist Woods hiking trails are open from sunrise to sunset. Please note parking lots are not winter-maintained, and the trails are not safe to hike during periods of heavy rain, ice, and snow. Trails are closed during

our annual Deer Management Hunt which takes place on the 1) Monday through Sunday following Thanksgiving, and 2) Saturday and Sunday before Christmas.

Natural history: The preserve is nestled just north of the ancient Teays River Valley, in an area of rugged ridges and ravines. Early in the 1800s, this land was one of many rural homesteads in Pike County where families worked hard to coax a meager living from the thin hillside soils. The outstanding features of Samson/Obrist Woods are its large sandstone rock shelter and its large grove of immense black oaks that were deliberately spared by multiple generations of the Samson family. The nature trail passes through both of these features.

Created entirely by donations: Samson/Obrist Woods was created entirely by the donations of land from two neighboring and benevolent landowners.

The Samson Woods donation was made in the summer of 2005 when John and Emily Samson donated their 76-acre farm in Pike County. Their gift was made in memory of Clifton and Dorothy Samson, John Samson's parents, and was formally dedicated to John's great-grandfather, William J. Samson.

William J. Samson purchased the Appalachian hill farm that would become Samson Woods in the mid-1800s. He managed the lower-lying acres as pastures and farm fields but permitted the elevated hill country to remain in its natural forest cover of oaks. A modest house was built on the property for William's family, and the house and farm were passed on to his son, John (our donor's grandfather), who continued to occupy and steward the farm. Later, the farm was turned over to John's father, Clifton, who was the first of William's descendants to seek residence and vocation away from the farm. Clifton nevertheless returned frequently to the farm on weekends to care for the land. From Clifton, the land went to John, who gifted the land to the Arc.

Although the forest has almost assuredly been cut sometime since European settlement, the Samsons had a remarkable and unheard-of family practice of leaving the big oak trees untouched. That tradition was continued by John Samson, who had played in the woods as a boy and hunted there as a man. John's father, Clifton, remembers when the hillsides were covered with American chestnuts, and he must have painfully witnessed them succumbing to the blight. With the passing of his grandfather in 1948, the last Samson to live on the property, and then his father in 1987, he eventually became owner and steward of the beloved family woods – which now, due to natural succession, covers the entire property. John remembers planting tiny pine trees in what used to be sloping farm fields in the mid-sixties, planting 2,000 to 3,000 trees a year for three years running. Those pine plantations are now being taken over by hardwoods. Even the foundation of the Samson farmhouse lies in the deep shade of a cove forest. What was once the front lawn is now densely carpeted with spring beauties in the spring.

In John's words, letting go of the land was one of the hardest things he had ever done. But he knew in his heart that the only way to save the woods into perpetuity was to give it away.

The second land donation to the Samson Woods Preserve came in 2018 when Marjorie Obrist of Columbus announced to the Arc she wished to donate her land in Pike County inherited from her husband. The 71-acre farm had been in the Obrist family for four generations and lay immediately adjacent to the land that John Samson had gifted earlier. Marjorie's gift was made in tribute to George E. Obrist, Jr., her late husband, and in honor of his children and her stepchildren: Ellen Nelson, Kathleen Chatterton, Marianne Cosper, and George E. Obrist, III.

World's most perfect tree: One of the interesting stories associated with the Samson Woods property is about a sugar maple tree once known as "the world's most perfect tree." At some point in its young life, its trunk had become severed around 12 feet up, causing a natural coppicing of the trunk, at which point a large number of branches symmetrically radiated out from it. By fate, the tree had been growing in the middle of a cornfield, and its form and stunning fall color could be admired without visual obstruction from the road. According to local legend, sometime in the forties a photo of the tree showed up in *National Geographic* magazine, and earlier yet, in the local high school yearbook. Today, the much older maple is still standing, now surrounded by a thicket of younger trees. It no longer has the charisma it had in earlier years, but it is healthy and still growing strong.