



# HACIENDA CINCINNATI

≈ Established 1898 ≈



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Geographical and Historical Memory

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## **The Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta Biogeographic framework of Hacienda Cincinnati**

The Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta is a mountain range located 11 degrees north latitude on the coast of the Caribbean Sea in Colombia.

It is an overall geographical landmark, as it is the highest mountain of the world on the inter-tropical zone and the highest altitude of the country.

Orogeny indicates that Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta was formed by the convergence of the Caribbean and South American plate during the Cenozoic era, which characterized by important geological changes in the Earth: clash of India with Asia and rising of the Himalayas, Great American Inter-change because of the emergence of the Panama Isthmus, rising of the Alps, widening of the Atlantic Ocean, among others.

The great mountain has a triangular-base pyramidal form, each side with an approximate length of 170 km and an approximate area of 12,230 km<sup>2</sup> calculated from 200 meters above sea level. In a straight line of 42 km from the Caribbean Sea, the mountain range rises reaching a maximum altitude of 5,775 masl at the snowcapped peaks Colón and Bolívar.

It is isolated from the Andean mountain range and from the Perijá range by the valleys of Ranchería and Cesar rivers. Likewise, it is separated from the delta and mouth of the Magdalena River by the Banana Zone and the Ciénaga Grande of Santa Marta.

This isolation condition both from the Andean system as from the great plain of the Colombian Caribbean has given it an island character within the continent, housing almost all the ecosystems of the tropical, dry and humid forests.

An important number of rivers, creeks and streams drain towards all directions, basically fed by the snowcapped peaks of the sierra and by the hydrographic stars originating in the mid-mountain foggy forests.

During the year there are two dry seasons and two rainy seasons. The principal dry season goes from December to the end of March. It is then followed by a period of rain that goes until the end of July, when there is again a shorter dry season until mid-September. Afterwards comes another rainy season from September to mid-December.

Because of its altitude and the proximity to the Caribbean coast, the sierra modifies the weather of the region, retaining great part



▶ Koguis



▶ San Lorenzo Range

of the humidity brought by the trade winds from the northeast, transforming it in the form of glaciers, watery snow, fog and moorland lagoons.

The region is the home to the Tayrona culture, the most monumental and singular indigenous civilization of Colombia. According to the Ministry of the Interior, the sierra is inhabited by almost 26,500 indigenous people distributed in the following four ethnic groups: Arhuacos (18,000 persons), Koguis (6,000 persons), Wiwas (Arsarios) (2,000 persons) and Kankuamos (500 persons). The indigenous acknowledge the singularity of the sierra and its ecological values. They consider it as the center of the universe with functions regulating the health of the Earth.

The Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta is an important endemism center of the country. It has 3,057 animal species registered. Until now, 635 species of birds have been catalogued in this

region, which constitute almost 35% of the total bird species of Colombia.

Colombia, the most biologically diverse country of the world per square meter, represents 19% of the birds of the planet with 1,879 species, of which 80 are endemic.

The Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta, which constitutes 1.5 percent of the Colombian territory, is the most important endemism center of the world, with 36 species and 55 subspecies of restricted-range birds at this only place. This is the reason why it has become the subject of multiple protection actions, among which worth noting are: Zone of Forest Reserve (Law 2 of 1959), National Natural Park (1977), World Reserve of the Biosphere



► *Oropendola nest*

and World Heritage (UNESCO 1979)

Within this biogeographic framework worth noting is the mountain crest of San Lorenzo, which formed in the 19th Century at the coffee belt of the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta.

San Lorenzo is a mountain range of the Sierra Nevada located east of Santa Marta. It is a territory rich in hydric resources where forms the hydric star of San Lorenzo, from where are born numerous streams and seven very important rivers of the region: Córdoba, Toribio, Gaira, Manzanares, Piedras, Mendiguaca and Guachaca. The Kennedy Peak (2,841 masl) is the most important elevation of this hydric system.

This region is exceptionally important for migratory birds from the northeast of North America that cross the Caribbean and arrive to San Lorenzo. It was recently declared as IBA, Important Bird

Area (AICA, in Spanish), a program internationally recognized.

Coffee growing is one of the most important economic and productive activities developed at the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta since the end of the XIX century.

98% of coffee production in the Colombian Caribbean comes from the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta. Crops at the mountains of the region of San Lorenzo are the most representative regarding quality and productivity.

The largest coffee growing expansion at the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta occurred between 1895 and 1915, period in which were established the most important coffee haciendas of Santa Marta: Cincinnati, Vista Nieve, La Victoria, El Recuerdo, Minca and María Teresa, around the town of Minca. Further north, next to the town of Bonda, were established the haciendas Jirocasaca, Onaca, Manzanares and Las Nubes, among others.

In the beginning of the 20th century, the coffee of the Sierra Nevada contributed with almost 3% of Colombian export coffee production.

Because of the special conditions of the Sierra Nevada – rainfall, latitude, high slopes, types of soils, and sun –coffee growing requiring permanent shading for the crops has been developed.

These multi- strata plants of shaded coffee represent one of the best conservation options in the face of the transformation of pre- mountainous forests, combined with the presence of natural habitats in great part of the coffee farms.

▶ *Coffea arabica typica*







## Hacienda Cincinnati, 1898

Hacienda Cincinnati was established late XIX century by the American electric engineer Orlando Lincoln Flye (1861- 1937), who arrived to Santa Marta under contract with the Governor's Office of Magdalena to install the first hydroelectric plant of Colombia, which would generate electricity for the city.

Below is the chronology of this historic coffee hacienda:

**1890** Arrives to Colombia from Ohio, United States, Orlando Lincoln Flye, electric engineer contracted by the company "Colombian Telephone & Telegraph Company" to install and implement the first telephone plant of Barranquilla, at the time with a population of 25,000 people.

**1892** Contracted by the Governor's Office of Magdalena and the "Compañía de la Luz Eléctrica" (electric light company), Orlando Flye returns to Colombia to build and implement a hydroelectric plant and the network for electric power transmission for the city of Santa Marta.

**1893** During the explorations developed at the middle basins of the rivers near the city with the purpose of looking for the best water supply required by the generating turbine, Orlando Flye collects some coffee samples of the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta and sends them to New York, to a friend of his who is related to the commercialization of coffee grains, and who answers with the greatest enthusiasm that the sample received "was of the best quality, wishing to have each year several thousand sacks of the coffee of the Sierra Nevada".





► Orlando and Eva Flye

► Selection of coffee berries

Encouraged by the news received from abroad, Flye decides to remain in Santa Marta and starts exploring the area of San Lorenzo to start a coffee project.

**1893 (June 21)** His wife, Eva Blanot, and their two small children, Harry and Carmie Flye, arrive from the United States to live in Santa Marta to accompany him in this venture.

**1893 (December 7)** Noche de Velitas (Little Candle's Day) Public lighting and electric power service is inaugurated in Santa Marta.

The new hydroelectric plant of Santa Marta was located in the middle basin of the Manzanares River, 10 km distance from the city of Santa Marta, which at the time had 6,500 inhabitants, and was the third city of Colombia to have permanent electricity service, after Bucaramanga (1891) and Barranquilla (1892), and further followed by Medellín (1898) and Bogotá (1900).

The hydroelectric plant built by Flye in 1893 would become the first plant of the country. The second one would be the hydroelectric plant of Charquito in Bogotá, opened in 1900, the property of the company Samper Brush & Cía.

**1894- 1896** Orlando Flye explores an area northeast of Bonda, at the Calabazo region, where he establishes the Cacaogualito farm. However, because of the hot climate and low rain fall characteristic of the region, the project failed.

**1897** Orlando Flye is contracted by William Crane, administrator of the company "The Victoria Coffee Company", owner of the





► *Illustration of La Casa Grande on the cover of the book “Coffee and a Love Affair” by Mary S. Boardman, 1908*

coffee hacienda “La Victoria”, established in 1896 by the English Charles and Alice Bowden, in order to develop infrastructure works in this coffee plantation.

At the same time, he cooperates with Marshall & Co., owner of the coffee hacienda “El Recuerdo” in the construction of the infrastructure for this farm, thus expanding his knowledge in coffee growing.

From the hacienda “La Victoria”, Orlando Flye starts exploring the area of San Lorenzo until he finds the ideal place for his project, at an altitude of 1,300 meters and 25 kilometers from Santa Marta. He decides to call it “Cincinnati” in honor of the city where his wife Eva was born.

With coffee seeds from the hacienda “El Recuerdo” he establishes the required seedlings for future planting at Hacienda Cincinnati.

**1898** Foundation of Hacienda Cincinnati and the first planting of the Typica variety (Coffee arabica typica)

**1901** First coffee exports to the United States.

**1902 (August 2)** Construction is completed of the family home at the coffee hacienda, called La Casa Grande (the large house).

**1908** Mary Boardman Sheldon, governess of the children of Orlando and Eva, writes the novel “Coffee and a Love Affair: An American Girl’s Romance on a Coffee Plantation” published in New York.

# Vista Nieve

Melbourne Romaine Carriker



► *Meb Carriker senior and Mel Carriker Flye, 1934*

**This book recounts experiences of Hacienda Cincinnati and her perception of the region, characterized by the coffee and banana boom, and important migrations of English, Italian, Lebanese and North Americans that at the time arrived at the small, but very active city of Santa Marta, which had then become one of the world centers for banana exports promoted by the United Fruit Company.**

**1911 Arrives to Colombia the ornithologist and entomologist Melbourne Carriker with a commission of scientists from the University of Michigan in order to study the birds of the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta.**

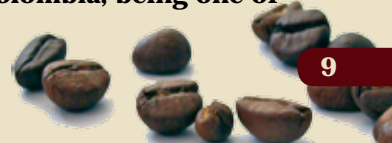
**Orlando and Eva Flye propose to them that Hacienda Cincinnati be the base of their research. Melbourne Carriker immediately accepts and moves to the hacienda.**

**1912 Meb Carriker marries Carmie Flye, oldest daughter of Orlando and Eva.**

**1916 South of the Hacienda Cincinnati, in the sector known as Vista Nieve, the Carriker Flye family develops a smaller scale coffee project, with the support of Orlando Flye.**

**1918 Farmers from Santander link to the region that with the intention of immigrating to Cuba had arrived to Santa Marta, but the ship La Habana sets sail without them: Families Reátiga, Cucunubá, Pineda, Balaguera, Cáceres, among others.**

**1920 Orlando Flye attends to the opening session of the First National Congress of Coffee Growers of Colombia, being one of**





► *Coffee picking season*

► *Meb Carriker  
1912*

the three delegates of the Department of Magdalena, altogether with José Ignacio Díaz Granados Capella (Hacienda Manzanares) and Pedro Manuel Dávila Pumarejo (Hacienda María Teresa). Seven years later the National Federation of Coffee Growers (Federación Nacional de Cafeteros) of Colombia is founded.

**1925** Hacienda Cincinnati has 500,000 coffee trees and becomes at the time the most productive coffee plantation of the region of Magdalena and one of the most important of the country.

**1927** Meb Carriker and his wife Carmie Flye leave the country to live in the United States for their children to complete their studies.

The Carriker Flye family transfers the Hacienda Vista Nieve to the Coffee Hacienda Cincinnati. The new property grows in size and productivity: the plantation reaches 700,000 coffee trees planted in 404 hectares. Hacienda Cincinnati is in full production and conceived as a self-sufficient farm.

The Flye gave each family living at the hacienda a house, free education for the children, electricity, a food store with non-profit food and supplies, medical services at the hacienda and Santa Marta, religious services at the Chapel of San José of Cincinnati assisted by the parish priest of Minca, a theater, library and other facilities. These services extended to the community of the region.

**1933** Orlando Lincoln Flye and his wife, Eva Blanot were decorated by the Municipal Council of Santa Marta (Resolution 14 of 1933) being distinguished as illustrious citizens and



▶ *The Carriker Flye Family* ▶ *Coins from the Hacienda Cincinnati mint, 1900*

adoptive children of the city.

**1937** Eva and Orlando Flye die in Newton, Massachusetts, United States.

**1941** William Flye Blanot, youngest son of Orlando and Eva, assumes the direction of the hacienda. Meb Carriker, returning to Colombia for a new scientific research on the birds of the region, works with his nephew in the administration of the plantation for the next five years.

The hacienda reaches its maximum coffee production with an annual volume of 265,000 kilos of excelso coffee and a coffee plantation of 678 hectares.

**1950** Starts a stage of improvement to the infrastructure and production of the farm. William Flye B. builds internal roads in the hacienda to facilitate collection of the grain. The road from the hacienda to Santa Marta is extended and there is now vehicle communication to the port of the city.

Improvement of technological conditions at the coffee processing plant and the new road to Santa Marta allowed William Flye to obtain important progress in productivity and lower production costs for the company.

Coffee “Anita” – the brand of Coffee Hacienda Cincinnati – is successfully exported to Holland. Also the coffee “San Marco” has an excellent reputation in the national market.

The industrial chain of coffee consolidates in Hacienda Cincinnati: the product is grown, dried, selected, threshed,





► *Hacienda Cincinnati jute coffee sacks*

roasted and packaged at the coffee processing plant.

**1953** The bridge over the Mill Stream is opened facilitating direct access of vehicles to the coffee processing plant.

**1957** The XIX Coffee Congress of Colombia meeting in Bogotá decorates William Flye Blanot with the Grand Cross of Agricultural Merit.

**1964** William Flye parcels out among his workers 486 hectares of the sector of Valparaíso at Hacienda Cincinnati.

**1972** William Flye dies (age 72). The new administrators of the farm are William and Beatriz Flye Salcedo, third generation of the Flye family.

**1975** Period of the so-called “marimba (marijuana) bonanza” that brought insecurity to the region by groups outside the law, social and economic deterioration for legal businesses in the region of Magdalena, generating lack of workers for coffee harvesting.

**1979** In a message on the regional and global responsibility for the preservation of ecosystems of the sierra, UNESCO declares the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta as World Heritage and Biosphere Reserve of the World.

**1981** Melbourne Carriker Flye (66), grandson of Eva and Orlando, PhD in Zoology, returns to Colombia for the first time after remaining 54 years in the United States. He visits Haciendas Cincinnati and Vista Nieve, where he was born in



► *Harvesting season, Lote El Paraíso, Hacienda Cincinnati*

## February 1915.

Impacted by the crisis of the coffee haciendas of the region, he made the decision of writing a book on the entrepreneurship of his maternal grandparents and his parents in the coffee business at the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta, initiated in early 1900.

This book, “Vista Nieve”, is a historical reference to the main events that framed the valuable contribution of Orlando Flye and his family to the development of the city and to the growing of coffee in the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta.

**1984** The Flye family sells Hacienda Cincinnati finalizing a successful period of coffee of 86 years and three generations dedicated to growing coffee.

**1986** The farm has a considerable fall in coffee production. During this time come the partial loss of machinery at the processing plant and the general deterioration of its infrastructure and crops.

**2007 (February 25)** Melbourne Carriker Flye dies at 92 years of age, in Lewes, Delaware, United States.

**2010 (March 27)** Hacienda Cincinnati, with an approximate area of 689 hectares and a coffee plantation of 45,000 trees, is acquired by the company Cincinnati Coffee Company.

With the vision of contributing to the preservation of one of the most important environmental ecosystems of the world





► *Coffee tree nursery, Hacienda Cincinnati*

**a master plan is adopted to grow organic, shaded coffee of Colombian and special varieties.**

**Different actions are started of a permanent character, among others:**

- ✓ **Rehabilitation of existing plantations**
- ✓ **and recovery of the forest shade by planting native species to fix nitrogen and protect from erosion: *Erythrina poeppigiana*, *Inga* sp., among others.**
- ✓ **Permanent program for the manual collection of non- organic waste inside the hacienda.**

**2011** First stage for planting 450,000 organic coffee plants of special Arabic varieties.

**2012** Architectural restoration of La Casa Grande and rehabilitation of Casa Carmelita.

**Second planting stage of 320,000 organic coffee plants of special Arabic varieties.**

**Hacienda Cincinnati is certified as organic coffee production unit under the standards: USDA Organic, JAS, Organic Farming EU, UTZ and Starbucks.**

**77% of the area of the farm (509 ha) is preserved as natural environmental reserve. The new plantation is established in areas traditionally destined to growing coffee and pastures, with a plantation of 814,000 coffee plants.**







▶ *Green coffee berries*

▶ *La Casa Grande, architectural restoration 2012*

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# Birds of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta

▶ *Santa Marta Toucanet*



▶ *Baltimore Oriole*



▶ *Santa Marta Warbler*



▶ *Bright-rumped Attila*



▶ *Santa Marta parakeet*



▶ *White-tipped Quetzal*





***Waterfall, El Retiro stream, Hacienda Cincinnati.***

*Photo by Fabio Díaz Granados G.*



SANTA MARTA  
COLOMBIA