

IMAGES

...THEN AND NOW

From the Indian Hill Historical Society



**Buckingham Lodge
1861**

Grand Valley's Beginnings ~ 2002

Indian Hill has always protected its citizens' welfare and maintained the area's rural character emphasized in the 1941 Charter. For years Village officials had been in contact with Martin Marietta, who owned the asphalt facility known as the "gravel pits" in Camp Dennison. They believed they would be informed if the gravel pits property was offered to any organization other than the Hamilton County Park District.

So it was a surprise when The Wharf at Symmes was proposed by Camp Dennison Development LLC in January 2002. The partners involved were Darrell Liebson, Tim Hensley and Greg Hensley. They sought to create a single family lake front residential community of approximately 600 homes (350 detached single family units and 275 condominium attached units). The residences were to be built around a central lake "buffered by parks and some retail development". The group approached Symmes Township Zoning Commission and proposed a zoning amendment for the 304 acres. The *Indian Hill Journal* announced a public hearing review about the development on February 13.

As soon as Village Council and officials became aware of The Wharf, they conducted an independent study to determine the potential long and short term impacts it would have on the water aquifer. An article in February's *Bulletin* noted other concerns including the additional population at the schools, the prospect of overloading the sewer system, and the increased congestion on major routes and roads.



Vista at Grand Valley

Concerned residents of Indian Hill, Symmes Township and Camp Dennison expressed their opposition to the development plan by contacting the Symmes Township Trustees and the Hamilton County Commissioners. People who were against The Wharf attended Symmes Township meetings in February, where they asked questions and voiced concerns. Some people felt their queries were not answered. City Manager Mike Burns explained the Village's position to the Regional Planning Commission and County Commissioners. Mayor Stella Hassan and Council met with the developers and remained "strongly opposed" to The Wharf, citing four factors (mentioned above). Mayor Hassan also convened personally with

one Commissioner to review the results of the study on Indian Hill's water and sewage plant. That Commissioner, a self-proclaimed facilitator for the project, did not change his position.

In March, the Village firmly advocated that the Hamilton County Park District develop the gravel pits into a regional park, which would be consistent with the long range master plan formerly developed by Symmes Township. But it became apparent that possibility would not happen. Despite resistance from Indian Hill and Camp Dennison residents as well as Little Miami Incorporated, the developers proceeded, resubmitting a new revised plan with a smaller 97 acre rezoning request to the Commissioners.

In early April, Council held an executive session to discuss buying the 304 acres. Later that month, Council approved the purchase for \$7,500,000, and established a closing date of May 1. Details of the transaction were provided in a direct mail letter to residents. The water aquifer was protected and unsuitable development was stopped. This was the most expensive purchase ever made by Indian Hill.

Over the next year, Council conducted an ecological study of the property and considered a wide range of land use options. Various proposals included a church, a rowing club, a winter club, a park, and a Green Area. The Winter Club was approved (on leased land) and the gravel pit property was renamed Grand Valley Preserve. Its mission statement and objectives were publicized. The preserve has been enjoyed by Indian Hill water customers for more than 15 years. The saga of its acquisition shows how local people and a dedicated Council influenced history for future generations.



New Dock at Grand Valley