

IMAGES

... then and now



Buckingham Lodge
1861

The Old Christian Church



The stone structure at 8690 Spooky Hollow Rd. beside Sycamore Creek has a rich history. Built about 1825, it has been a church, mill, residence, barn, and educational center.

The "Second Great Awakening" - or interest in religion - occurred about 1800 when revivals and camp meetings were popular in the "western" states of Ohio and Kentucky. Frontier conditions determined the character of the Awakening. Settlers were struggling to make a livelihood in the

wilderness, and clergymen were scarce. Population was scattered, and there was little time for establishing churches or public institutions like schools.

Pioneers were attracted to religious revivals. Families loaded their wagons with provisions and traveled up to 100 miles to attend. Camping in the woods for days, they cleared trees, built benches and preaching platforms on log stumps, and listened to clergymen's exhortations. Meetings lasted for days; services continued day and night; and common people were converted by the thousands. Manifestations of being "slain in the spirit" included fainting, singing, shaking, and jerking. Based on their own religious conversion, pioneers returned home to establish independent churches in frontier settlements. Many new sects were established, including the New Lights, or Christians in 1804, a group that emphasized individuals worshipping Christ in their own way.

Rachel and Zelah Rude were among the pioneer settlers of northern Indian Hill, and purchased 100 acres of bottom land near present day Remington on Sycamore Creek about 1802. After inheriting the tract, his son James and wife Nancy gave an acre for the building of a Christian Church at the junction of today's Spooky Hollow and Loveland-Madeira Roads, a key local crossroads then and now.

The Christian Church was made of local stone, probably by pooled labor of the congregation. In 1824 the Rudes established a local Christian Church—a religion that already had a strong following in southern Ohio. The church provided support for pioneers during hardships and served as a social institution, bringing together its members for church functions, meals, workdays, and singings. It had a civilizing influence on the frontier, setting forth moral codes where vice was a way of life for many. A stabilizing force in the backwoods, the church by 1873 was overflowing, so the group moved to a larger building at 9885 Remington Road, and the small stone church was sold to Conrad Zurwelle.

Zurwelle, a miller, had already purchased and was running Elliott's Mill just across the road; so he converted the church into a grain mill. He added a second story to the building, and using steam, he ground wheat and corn for customers. In the 1890's the church was converted to a private residence and in the 20th century became a barn.

The Greenacres Foundation ^{was given} purchased the old stone church in 1988 to use in their mission to provide environmental education for the public. After renovation the building became a classroom. Adults have visited it for workshops, symposiums, family programs, and photography instruction. Children (including Earth Explorers and 4-H) have participated in interactive experiences after instruction at the Old Christian Church. Youths have experienced nature through tracking animals, hiking, planting, and outdoor sensory encounters. Thousands of students, Scouts, and members of the local community have learned about Indian Hill's traditional woodland and farmland inside its walls. Its current preservation and use by Greenacres ensures that future generations will gather and learn there.