

IMAGES

...THEN AND NOW

From the Indian Hill Historical Society



**Buckingham Lodge
1861**

The Taft Memorial

Cincinnati has many memorials of the Tafts, the political family dynasty whose members made countless contributions to the city, the state of Ohio, and the nation. Among them are the Taft Museum of Art, Taft Theatre, Taft Hall at UC, the William Howard Taft Historic Site, and Wm. Howard Taft Road. Here in the Village there is another: the Taft Memorial at the Indian Hill Church cemetery. It is the grave of Robert Alphonso Taft Sr.

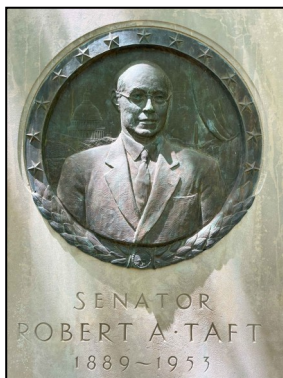
One of four sons of William Howard Taft (the 27th President and 10th Chief Justice of the Supreme Court) Bob graduated from Taft School, Yale (1910), and Harvard Law School (1913). He was at the top of his class at both colleges. He married Martha Bowers in 1914. At the outset of World War I, he was rejected by the Army for having poor eyesight. He worked for the FDA in Washington, D.C., and then as legal advisor to the American Relief Administration in Paris. Taft then returned to Ohio. In 1917 Taft purchased 46 acres in Indian Hill, Sky Farm, which was his residence until the end of his life. He was elected to the Ohio House of Representatives in 1920, and in 1930 to the state Senate. He and his brother Charles co-founded the law firm Taft, Stettinius & Hollister in 1924, which continues to this day. While serving in Ohio's legislature, Bob became known as a loyal Republican who worked tirelessly and understood complex issues. He was regarded as a taciturn man and an intellectual.



At Sky Farm on south Drake Road the Tafts renovated the original farmhouse to create an elegant home which had a commanding view of the valley and the city. They raised strawberries, asparagus, and potatoes on the farm or at their other Indian Hill property. They raised four sons and had a summer house in Quebec, Canada.

In 1938 Taft was elected to the first of his three terms as a U.S. Senator, where he served until 1953. He opposed the New Deal and constantly voted for smaller government. Though known to be an isolationist, after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, he fully supported the American war effort. He believed in a conservative domestic program, low taxes, balanced budget, limited government spending, pro-business policies, and a strong national defense. He did not want to become entangled in foreign affairs and was against the foundation of NATO. As Chair of the Senate Labor Committee, he co-sponsored the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act, his masterpiece legislation. It banned unfair union practices, outlawed closed shops, and authorized an 80-day cool-off should a strike threaten the national interest. By 1950 Taft had been given the nickname "Mr. Republican". As an aside, his nine grandchildren called him "the Gop", a reference to the Grand Old Party.

Three times Robert Taft sought the Republican presidential nomination - in 1940, 1948, and 1952. He was defeated thrice by Willkie, Dewey, and Eisenhower. After Ike won the 1952 election, Taft became Senate Majority Leader. The two men became friends and played golf together. After a shared round at Augusta National in April 1953, Taft had hip pain. Walter Reed Hospital (in D.C.) and Holmes Hospital (Cincinnati) found that he had malignant cancer (later determined to have originated in his pancreas). On July 31 Taft died at age 63. In 1959 a memorial carillon 100 feet



high and a 10-foot bronze statue were dedicated in his memory in Washington, D.C.

In accord with the tradition of that era, Robert Taft's funeral took place soon after his passing. Services occurred at the then new Indian Hill Church on August 4, 1953, and Senator Taft was interred in the church burial ground east of the building and north of Red Bird Hollow. Taft was the first person to be laid to rest in the cemetery. Mr. Ben Tate (Taft's friend and Indian Hill resident) contacted out-of-town acquaintances about contributions. This resulted in a memorial wall being erected at the site. Adjacent to it were a terrace and garden. Wheeler Williams produced the bas-relief bronze portrait of the Senator on the wall. The Taft Memorial is prominent at the cemetery because all other markers are flush to the ground.

Robert A. Taft Sr. was a public servant in the finest tradition; he exemplified integrity, courage, and high principles. The Taft Memorial honors him. It is a serene place to quietly contemplate this truly dedicated citizen and all of his good works.