

IMAGES

. . . *then and now*

From The Indian Hill Historical Society



**Buckingham Lodge
1861**

The Shawnee Service Station

During the years between the World Wars Village residents often frequented James Pierce's service station at the corner of Shawnee Run and Drake Roads. Mr. Pierce sold the station in 1939 to Richard Valentiner. When Valentiner graduated from high school that year, his prospects were dim because of the Depression. His father, a respected Indian Hill Ranger, loaned his 18-year-old son \$500 for a down payment on the filling station, with the understanding that one cent per gallon of gasoline sold was to be paid to Pierce until the sale was complete.



The Shawnee Service Station was the typical filling station of a bygone era. From 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. customers drove their automobiles up to one of the Sohio pumps, which were located practically out on the street. The 10-gallon visual pumps each contained 500 gallons in reserve. Valentiner, the attendant, had to pump gasoline into the glass globe until the globe was filled, and then gravity would dispense the fuel through the nozzle into the car. Measurement of the quantity of gallons was done visually rather than electronically, and the pump was usually kept full, in order to serve clientele more rapidly.

In summer months, customers often insisted that they did not want "hot gas," so Valentiner would release the stored 10 gallons back to the tank and pump fresh "cold gas". Since fuel expanded when temperatures rose over 90 degrees, patrons would get more fuel this way.

Many chauffeurs of estate owners filled up at the Shawnee Service Station. Lincolns, Dusenbergs, and even a 16-cylinder LaSalle frequented the pumps. The chauffeurs often transported people from their Indian Hill manors to Union Terminal – a popular destination in the heyday of train travel. Some estates had their own pumps on their property, so these drivers did not use the Shawnee Service Station.

No major mechanical work was done at the station, but Valentiner would change the oil for his customers – and in the pre-EPA era, the used oil drained out on the ground. He would change tires the old fashioned way – without a lift. Cars were raised manually on a jack, and tires were rotated or changed using a tire iron, sledgehammer, and screwdriver. Minor auto parts (such as fog lights) were available for purchase, and many clients had charge accounts at the station, payable on a monthly basis. In the late 1930's gasoline cost about 12 to 14 cents per gallon.

Inside the station was a little grocery store where soft drinks, ice cream, bread, pies, cakes, sardines, other snack items, cigars, and cigarettes (14-17 cents a pack) were sold. The market became a gathering place for Village youngsters, who would socialize over ice cream cones, Hershey Bars, and Pepsi-Colas (all 5 cents each).

Valentiner managed the station 6 days a week for two years. On Sundays (generally a slow day) his sister, Anne Gruenemeier, tended the business. Over this period, the young man paid off his loan and accumulated savings. Then World War II started, rationing began, and Valentiner sold the station.

In 1941 Indian Hill incorporated and passed resolutions excluding commercial establishments within Village limits. This closed the Shawnee Service Station, and changed the roadside landscape at a prominent Indian Hill corner.



Thanks to Richard and Hazel Valentiner for assistance with this article.