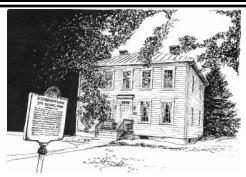
IMAGES

...THEN AND NOW

From the Indian Hill Historical Society



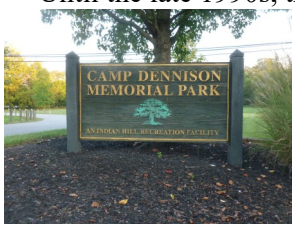
Buckingham Lodge
1861

The History of the Camp Dennison Memorial Park

Recreational parks cover 120 acres in eight locations within Indian Hill. Additionally there are two parks and Grand Valley Preserve located in Camp Dennison, the Symmes Township hamlet adjacent to the Village. The Camp Dennison Memorial Park is popular with sports teams and nature lovers.

In 1960 the Village acquired a 99 year lease on 75 acres of land along the banks of the Little Miami River, east of State Route 126, and north of the intersection with Kugler Mill Rd. The deed also conveyed an easement of access for the Crescent Nook Fishing Club (Columbus, OH) which apparently had excursions to the Little Miami circa 1910, but is now defunct. The $32,000 purchase was consistent with the belief at that time that Indian Hill should protect itself from city encroachment by establishing a green area around the Village.

Until the late 1990s, the land remained agricultural. As sports programs for Indian Hill youths expanded, the need for additional fields became evident. The facilities at Livingston Lodge and Stephan Field were heavily used both fall and spring. The property in Camp Dennison was relatively flat, so it was ideal for the development of new recreational fields. The site had historic significance. It was here that the Waldschmidt settlers established their mill and community in the late 1700s; and in the 1860s, Union soldiers used it as a training ground during the Civil War.



The Village engaged Savage Walker & Associates to prepare a preliminary concept plan in 1996 and held public meetings for anyone interested in the project. Input was received from the Recreation Commission, the Camp Dennison Civic League and the D.A.R. Because of concerns that the park might become a teenage hangout, changes were made in the drawings. Dugouts were eliminated from the baseball fields; the service building had only one light at night; a proposed basketball court was shelved; and the walking trail was modified so that pedestrians would be visible at all times. The revised master plan contained 3 baseball/softball fields, 3 soccer fields, a one mile loop shaped walking path, a new access road on State Route 126 with an extra lane for turning, and a 200 car parking lot. The fields were designed with the possibility that they could be rotated which created extra space on the sidelines. The Public Works Department installed a playground for children aged 3-9 in 1997. This was located next to the restroom/storage building. And still there was additional space in the park in case there was a need for expansion in future years.

Weather and site situations influenced the project. Jeffrey Allen Corporation was the contractor. Extremely wet conditions during the fall of 1996 slowed work at the facility and the soil, which was mostly silt, had to be compacted carefully. Weeds permeated the asphalt on the walking trail and that needed remediation. The lawn needed to be reseeded. The park opened for soccer mid-September 1997. A formal dedication took place May 23, 1998. Softball, baseball and soccer games were played and refreshments were served. Mayor Steve Black's remarks focused on the rich history of the area, and how the name of the park reflected the community and its past.

For several years, Village staff worked on landscaping, which included planting 130 trees and 30 shrubs. Fifteen benches were installed and spectator grandstands were added, as were trash receptacles and signage. In 2002, Phase II commenced. A triple use field was created – large enough and flexible enough for soccer, football, or lacrosse. Because the new field was south of the parking lot and across a stream, a pedestrian bridge was built. Grading near the new field created an additional area for practice.

Currently there are 6 lacrosse fields and 3 baseball fields. The 18 year old park is open from dawn to one hour after sunset. The Public Works Department maintains the park. It is the largest of all the Village parks, and is the most heavily used. It has several memorial trees, a memorial bench, and a Veteran's Memorial for Richard "Red" Weaver, a Camp Dennison native who died in Vietnam. Visitors and residents enjoy the Camp Dennison Memorial Park because of its spacious nature and the variety of outdoor recreational opportunities it offers.