

IMAGES

... then and now

From The Indian Hill Historical Society



Buckingham Lodge
1861

"Cap" Wilson of the Rangers



In 1931, the appointment of a new captain of the Indian Hill Rangers was announced. Herbert E. Wilson of Terra Alta, West Virginia, succeeded Chief Lynn Black. For the next 27 years, Cap Wilson, led one of the oldest police organizations in Ohio. After World War I, where Wilson served with the 38th Division in France, he enlisted with the West Virginia State Police, became captain in 1929 and was State traffic supervisor. When Wilson was welcomed as captain of the Indian Hill Rangers, he was praised by the Executive Board: "We were very fortunate in obtaining a man of his capabilities."

Early in Wilson's tenure, three Rangers, disgruntled with the new captain, threatened to strike in August 1931. After hearing their complaint, the Executive Board dismissed these three and secured replacements. Then in 1932 there was a recommendation by the Cincinnati Regional Crime Committee that the Rangers merge with the county police force. The Executive Board declined, noting, "The residents of Indian Hill prefer Rangers who are directly responsible to them." At that time, the force consisted of four full-time and two part-time men, who provided 24-hour coverage of the area.

Typical violations of the law included traffic misdemeanors, fish and game infringements, and trespassings. However, there were some unusual cases. In 1932 a prominent banker crashed his airplane on the Camargo Club golf course, and the Rangers extricated him unharmed. At a home on Blome Road in 1933, a still, vats of mash, barrels of liquor, and gallons of jug liquor, were discovered and confiscated by the force. It took four years of tracking before the Rangers finally shot the nocturnal "wild dog of Indian Hill," who raided local chicken coops and killed sheep, swine, and pet dogs. Rangers rescued youths stranded on islands in the Little Miami River and families marooned in camps along the river's shore when flooding occurred. Runaway horses roaming the area were brought to the Ranger hut until the owners could be found. Members of the force nabbed a jail escapee in Goshen, escorted runaway juveniles home, responded to a locomotive wreck in Madeira, captured robbers at Camp Friedlander, and nabbed thieves who stole evergreen trees from the Emery estate. The Rangers also published hunting rules, provided food for local quail coveys during heavy snows, and held mock air raids and civil defense tests during World War II and the Cold War.

Seeking the most modern equipment available, Cap Wilson's Rangers installed two-way radios in 1938, allowing the scout cars and the station to communicate. Elegantly uniformed in hunter green outfits with tuxedo stripes on their pants, the Rangers maintained a close rapport with residents. Cap even dressed as Santa Claus to visit local homes at Christmastime.

Marksmanship was a forte of the squad. They held internal shooting matches on their own range, and in the 1930's hosted pistol matches for the Cincinnati Regional Police Assn., and later held All American Open Pistol Matches. Their range - first at corner of Shawnee Run and Drake Roads, and later on at south Given Road - was the location of shoots every Sunday and target practice by appointment. Captain Wilson was supervisor of the range for decades.

A member and President of the Hamilton County Police Assn. and the Fraternal Order of Police, Cap Wilson served on the committee for the Indian Hill Boy Scout troop. He and his wife Tess were active in the village, and established a couples club when he retired in 1958. He served as an elder at Indian Hill Church, where his funeral service was held in 1968. Fondly remembered by those who knew him, Cap Wilson was revered for commanding the superlative Indian Hill police force during his tenure.