

IMAGES

... then and now

Presented by the Indian Hill Historical Society



Buckingham Lodge
1861

The Camargo Fruit Farm



During the 1920s there was an influx of newcomers to Indian Hill seeking a place where they could enjoy the advantages of country living and still be close to Cincinnati. They established the Camargo Realty Company, planned the Camargo Country Club, and bought large parcels of land from local farmers. Suburban families moved east from neighborhoods like North Avondale and Hyde Park. They envisioned an attractive community of well-heeled contemporaries who liked outdoor sports like fox hunting, polo, and golf.

John B. Hollister and John J. Rowe were stockholders of the Camargo Realty Co. in 1924. The company purchased 60 acres, took out options on 12,000 more, and began selling residential lots. Mr. Rowe was President of the First National, and later the Fifth Third Bank, and Mr. Hollister was an attorney at Taft, Stettinius, and Hollister who later served in the US Congress. Hollister kept his house in Hyde Park, and built a summer cottage on Camargo Club Drive in 1929. In 1932 Jack Rowe built a residence on the same street and moved to the Hill. These two gentlemen jointly began an agricultural enterprise aptly named the Camargo Fruit Farm.

Consisting of 76 acres on the north side of Graves Road and encompassing present day Graves Lake Drive, the farm once was the property of Thomas Graves, a native of Portsmouth Ohio who traded goods on the Ohio River before settling in Indian Hill. Graves' heirs sold the parcel to Hollister and Rowe, and in 1927 they hired a farm manager, Roy E. Yelliott. Moving to Ohio from Pike County, Illinois, Yelliott returned to the birthplace of his wife, Bonnie Finch. With their sons, Finch and Sheridan, the family managed the operations of the Camargo Fruit Farm.

There were two apple orchards and peach, plum, and pear orchards, plus a few cherry trees. Though most of the farm's focus was on fruit, the Yelliotts had other responsibilities. There were cows and horses in one barn, and a second was a hay barn, hand built by the Graves family - 3 stories high with hand-hewn wooden-pegged timbers. A large garden provided vegetables for the Yelliott, Hollister and Rowe families. Two Belgian draft horses were used for power on the farm. Part of the farm revenue came from stabling the saddle horses of other villagers. Bonnie Yelliott made cottage cheese from the milk, and a small poultry operation produced eggs and chickens. Sheridan Yelliott (named for Civil War general Philip Sheridan) can recall collecting eggs, cleaning the poultry house, pumping water for the livestock, pitching hay into the barn, and especially harvesting the apples.

In autumn the apples were collected for sale in Madeira and Madisonville or at commission houses in downtown Cincinnati, and bruised apples went to a cider mill in Cherry Grove. Other apples, kept for later sale, were stored at Cincinnati Cold Storage on Central Parkway. Camargo Fruit Farm prospered with careful management and hard work. Even during the winter there were chores: repairing outbuildings, mending fences, and pruning trees. When skunks or foxes raided the chicken coop, Roy Yelliott used his double-barreled shotgun to kill the varmints. Occasionally the Camargo Hunt chased a fox across the pasture - with hounds going under the wooden fences and horse and riders jumping over them.

In 1938 a fire completely destroyed the old farmstead; but no one was home at the time of the blaze, so there were no injuries. The Yelliotts moved to a relative's home on Indian Hill Rd. For a while Hollister and Rowe kept the place intact, but at the outset of World War II, they ceased farming operations, and the Camargo Fruit Farm was sold.

The land was subdivided into lots as the demand for homes in Indian Hill increased after the war. Pastures were divided, orchards chopped down, barns razed, and farm equipment dispersed. Yet the old farm pond remains - for which Graves Lake Drive is named. The Camargo Fruit Farm was noteworthy as a part of the Village's agricultural history.

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