

IMAGES

...THEN AND NOW

From the Indian Hill Historical Society



**Buckingham Lodge
1861**

Early Pioneers: Smith & Sarah Clason

The pioneer settlers who came to the Ohio Country in the late 1700s and early 1800s were enterprising adventurers. Most of them came from the eastern states of Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Virginia, and Maryland. Families journeyed with all their earthly possessions over the Allegheny Mountains or down the Ohio River to an unknown terrain where they established homes, made their livings, and gradually created new communities in hamlets along what was then the western frontier. One of these families was the Clasons.

Smith Clason and his wife Sarah hailed from Stamford, Connecticut. Their acquaintances, Andrew Ferris and Benjamin Stites had written describing Ohio's land available for newcomers, which enticed the couple to head west in 1818. Smith's ancestors were emigrants from Scotland who were hostile to the Cromwell government and fled to America. Sarah's (nee Bayeux) relatives were from France. The Clasons were well educated and were of considerable means for a young couple. They traveled accompanied by wagons loaded with furniture, china, silver, a spinning wheel and other accoutrements, and brought a significant amount of money. Sarah wanted to purchase land in Walnut Hills, but Smith preferred a more eastern location because it was closer to his friends. They bought 100 acres north of Madisonville for \$2000. Their property was located on both sides of present-day Kenwood Road. Their first home was a log cabin.

The legend of Indian Hill's appellation is related to their farm. When a Native American was shot and killed during an attempt to steal a horse nearby, he was buried on the Clason's acreage, and his grave became a point of interest and local lore. Thus the name "Indian Hill" originated. The Clason land was productive. A letter from Smith to his father in Connecticut stated that "the wheat was very good and commanding fifty cents a bushel, oats and corn tolerably good, plenty of apples, a few peaches, butter 25 cents a pound and hay 10 dollars a ton." Sarah's transition to Ohio was filled with some hardship and homesickness for her faraway parents. In 1820 she wrote them, "As for enjoyment of life, I think I prefer the Eastward... The people here for the most part are very different in their conversation and habits so that it appears more unpleasant..." But they stayed in Ohio.



Flatboat transporting goods

Over the years the farm became more prosperous. Smith Clason took or sent his produce by flatboat to Natchez and New Orleans. In correspondence with his father back East, he devised a price list for articles to be sold – besides those mentioned above. Corn was 31½ cents a bushel, potatoes 37½ cents, and other commodities (flour, pork, salt, and sugar) were also marketed. An industrious farmer and intelligent businessman, Smith was successful. He purchased more land adjacent to his original parcel and acquired 160 acres in Sandusky, Ohio.

Smith Clason was active in the community. He was Magistrate for three years and tried between 300-400 cases. He also was a surveyor and laid out the first turnpike leading to Cincinnati - Linwood Pike. He served as Captain of the militia. His various appointments were signed by the first Governor of Ohio (Tiffin), as well as President James Monroe and other later presidents. His farm was named "South View" and was situated on the crest of a hill overlooking Madisonville. It had a commanding view of that quaint town and the other distant hills of current day Cincinnati.

Sarah Clason adapted to her new life and in a later letter to her sister she wrote, "We have a beautiful farm and everything to make us happy of the good things in this world... I am much better satisfied with this country than when I wrote to you before." She and Smith had four children: Emily, Priscilla, Lewis, and Thomas. Smith died in 1831, age 41, and Sarah passed in 1859, age 64. Both are buried in Laurel Cemetery in Madisonville. They bequeathed their property to all four children. The Clason offspring remained prominent in local affairs, and part of the original homestead was owned by direct descendants well into the 20th century.

The Clasons were resourceful, energetic, and successful. Despite some trials, they thrived. Along with other early courageous men and women, these pioneers were instrumental in establishing a viable settlement in the area adjacent to Indian Hill.



**Smith & Sarah Clason's
monument in Laurel
Cemetery**