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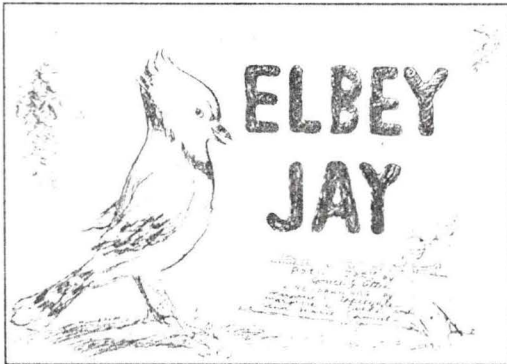
... then and now

From The Indian Hill Historical Society



Buckingham Lodge
1861

Elbey Jay: The Bird and the Book



In summer of 1964 an injured baby bird with a broken leg was found outside the Drake Road residence of Ede and William Schmidt. The Schmidts took it to veterinarian Dr. Edward Kennedy, who set its leg with an ice cream stick. The Schmidt family nursed the young bird back to health with pablum, egg yolk, and milk with a medicine dropper. Over time the leg healed; the bird became full grown; and was called Elbey Jay – for little blue jay.

Elbey lived at the Schmidt's – first roosting in their garage, and later flying to nearby homes. He became a neighborhood pet, and his antics were related at Indian Hill gatherings. Ede Schmidt and friends from the Indian Hill Artists decided to tell Elbey's story in a children's book titled *Elbey Jay*.

Joyce Attee, an English major from Rollins College, who took postgraduate classes at UC, wrote the poem story of Elbey's recovery and his activities. Line

drawings were done by Marjorie Applegate, Marjorie Ewell, and Ede Schmidt to illustrate the bird's life. Ede mentioned to her friends that Elbey had done something impish, and Joyce wrote a 4-line verse to describe the incident. Another lady drew it. Most of the story was true, but a few fantasy pages were included. The forty-page book had poems on the left-hand pages and illustrations on the right.

Some of the incidents covered included having cake when Elbey's ice cream stick cast was removed. Elbey's habit of perching on the Schmidt's horse, Elbey's various roosts inside the house, how Elbey almost fell into a bubble bath, and Elbey's relationship with the Schmidt dogs and cats. The drawings show rural Indian Hill of yesteryear. Rabbits, squirrels, bugs, and bees populate the outdoor scenes. Wooden gates, weathered fences, and the Schmidt barn are pictured. One illustration shows the glass milk bottles delivered by the milkman daily. Another drawing has Elbey flying between clothes on a clothesline—tidbits that evoke nostalgia when viewed 40 years later.

The book was published privately, with a cover by Ede and dedicated to the vet who fixed Elbey's leg. It was available for Christmas 1964, with the proceeds from sales donated to the Indian Hill Green Areas Fund. A copy of the book was sent to Lyndon Baines Johnson at the White House as a holiday gift, and the author/illustrators received an acknowledgement from the President's secretary.

Elbey's saga continued. He migrated south in winters (except the mild 1968-69 season) and returned each spring. When he returned, a sign proclaiming "Welcome Home Elbey" was displayed at the Drake Road residence. One year his wing got stuck in the garage door as it was being lowered, and he returned to the vet for a partial defeathering treatment. During his indoor rehabilitation he was treated to cut up bananas, sunflower seeds, hamburger, and graham crackers. Several get well cards were sent to the ailing bird, which grew quite comfortable inside, flying from room to room and learning to perch on Bill Schmidt's head. Another year Elbey brought his mate to the Schmidt birdfeeder where she produced two babies – an event heralded in the *Cincinnati Enquirer*!

In 1969 Elbey Jay was translated into Latin by Herb Davison and four students at CCDS. The young men: Robert Burton, Brooks Jackson, Guy Peters, and Jeff Spain creatively translated words like television and ice cream into Latin. Elbey was drawn in Roman Legion attire for the book cover and the Schmidt's *Home Sweet Home* became *Domus Dulcis Domus*.

Elbey Jay had many friends throughout the village. His story was read by residents and by a President, and he captured the imagination and talents of many Indian Hill villagers four decades ago.

Special thanks to Joyce Attee for assistance with this article.

Correction: November's article: Ohio's Wild Turkeys incorrectly said that it was not permissible to hunt them in Hamilton County. There is a spring season for wild turkey in all 88 counties of Ohio, including Hamilton.
