

IMAGES

. . . *then and now*

From The Indian Hill Historical Society



Buckingham Lodge
1861

Elliott House, a Pioneer Relic

The oldest home built and still in use in Indian Hill, the Elliott House was completed in 1802 by John Elliott, a Scottish immigrant who came to the United States from Ireland at age 22. He married in Pennsylvania in 1786; and, like many of their contemporaries, the newlyweds moved west in search of inexpensive land. After living briefly in Kentucky and Columbia (near today's Lunken Airport,) they purchased 112 acres for \$450 at "a millsite on the Little Miami River at the mouth of Sycamore Creek" in 1800.



The Elliotts' first home on the site was an 11-foot diameter hollow decayed sycamore tree. By 1802 they completed a two-story house, using stone from Sycamore Creek. They cleared the land, established a garden, and raised 6 children there. In 1810, Elliott, already a Columbia Township Trustee, went into the milling business. He and his partners built a flour mill, a saw mill, a wool carding mill, and a distillery. John Elliott died in 1843, at age 81; and the graves of both John and his wife Mary are in Miami's Evergreen Cemetery.

The house on Given Road changed hands about nine times before it was sold in 1898 to Will and Eva Sterrett who lived there until 1920. They remodeled the house, enclosing the back stairway, and covering the exterior stonework with stucco, a treatment fashionable at the time. The Sterrett descendants sold the house and farm to Henry Livingston, who in 1921 deeded it to the United Jewish Social Agency. It became a summer camp for children until the mid-1960's. The Elliott house was used as the main lodge, and frame additions to it served as kitchen and dining areas. In 1967 the Livingston Area was purchased by the Village of Indian Hill. The Elliott house became the home of the Outdoor Education Center, where schoolchildren toured the house and learned the history of its pioneer family.

The Elliott house was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976. A Restoration Committee raised over \$30,000, permitting archeological studies and architectural evaluations. An addition to the rectangular house was removed, and the entire house was stripped down, defining the original walls, beams, stairwells, windows, and chimneys. The shingle roof was replaced, two chimneys were restored, and the exterior masonry was repointed. Further fundraising efforts failed to obtain the money needed for complete restoration, so in 1985 the Village sold the building and leased the land for 99 years to Richard and Barbara McFarland who agreed to faithfully restore the structure. Their work over the last eleven years has resulted in the reconstruction of one of the oldest buildings in the Miami Purchase. Authentic in many of its features, from the cherry staircase to the fireplaces, the McFarland home respects the historic integrity of the house.



The construction techniques used in the Elliott house bridged manual (hand hewn) and mechanical (water-powered) technologies. An old log gutter was hand hewn from a 40-foot tree, while wooden floors showed evidence of being sawed with water power. The hand cut limestone walls are approximately two feet thick, and a beehive oven was discovered behind the kitchen fireplace. The Village is fortunate today to have this building, which stands as a memorial to the early pioneer family of John Elliott—frontiersman, miller, community leader, and farmer.

"Cat's Meow" replicas of the Elliott House are available as collectibles at the Indian Hill Historical Society.