

IMAGES

...THEN AND NOW

From the Indian Hill Historical Society



Buckingham Lodge-1861

The 2015 Oral History Institute

The Indian Hill Historical Society has actively collected oral histories since the 1970s, and has archived more than 200 recordings. They document various facets of life and personal experiences relating to the Village. These oral histories provide a glimpse into the community's particular history.



Lindsay & Judith

This past June Board of Trustees member Judith Affatato and Historian Lindsay McLean attended the fifteenth annual Oral History Institute at Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio. Sponsored by the Ohio Humanities, the three day seminar was informative and educational. Five experts from Ohio colleges/universities offered information on planning and conducting successful oral history projects. The theme was *Catching Stories* – and both practical and philosophical considerations were addressed. Each attendee completed a practice project that encompassed all stages of oral history.

The syllabus included interviewing techniques, transcribing, archiving, legal issues, funding issues, ethical issues, and distribution. There were fourteen sessions. The first day, the purposes of oral history were reviewed. Then after discussing how to research and plan an oral history, how to outline it and engage interviewees, participants were divided into groups of 5 people. Each group began planning interviews based on a specific theme. An oral history was done with all seminar participants as an audience. Afterwards, the

interview was evaluated. Issues such as delving into painful remembrances, how to do follow up questions, and how to read body language were discussed.

The second day each group of 5 worked with faculty to frame questions for an interview. Each participant interviewed another participant, and was interviewed by a different participant, using up-to-date digital devices. Later the interviews were transcribed. Faculty cautioned interviewers (and the organizations they represented) to be mindful of consent forms, the rights of the interviewee, and privacy issues. Also there were sessions on transcription difficulties and storage of oral histories.

On the final day, the dangers of disseminating oral histories were examined. Distribution on the World Wide Web has resulted in court cases for some institutions. The faculty also discussed funding projects and the role of a grantor as an owner of an interview. Then each group presented their thematic oral history interviews. Evaluations of the seminar were completed and certificates were presented.

The Oral History Institute was held at Kenyon College in bucolic, agricultural Knox County. The campus is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The American Gothic and classical buildings are surrounded by impressive outdoor artwork, making the site very inviting. This top-tier liberal arts college's location and the impressive faculty comprised of professors of History, Sociology, Archiving, and Journalism enhanced the conference.

Oral history actually gives voice to history. Even though human memory is fallible, oral history delivers a narrative from the perspective of one person at one time. As a primary source document, each oral history is a permanent record which preserves knowledge for future generations. Granted, oral history is subjective, but the case can be made that all history is subjective. Oral history has tremendous merit. It focuses on people. Oral histories do, in fact, "catch stories".

The Indian Hill Historical Society's collection of oral histories is preserved at its office, Buckingham Lodge. Visitors can listen to these narratives or read indexes of their content. The Society welcomes suggestions from individuals who would like to be interviewed, or have ideas for potential interviews. Please contact us at 891-1873 or ihhist@cinci.rr.com to help preserve more local history.

Conference Attendees

