

# IMAGES

## ...THEN AND NOW

*From the Indian Hill Historical Society*



**Buckingham Lodge  
1861**

### The Antique Hay Rake at Bonnell Park

Buckingham Lodge and Bonnell Park were donated to the Village of Indian Hill by Lola Bonnell after her death in 1966. The lodge has been the office for the Indian Hill Historical Society since 1990 and the adjacent 13-acre park features a large field and wooded hillside with a riding trail. An old-fashioned Gem water pump and cement trough – reminiscent of the Village’s farming heritage – still remain in the field. Now a recent donation is situated near it – a vintage dump hay rake.



**Bill Grob**

The Grob family were prominent local farmers for generations. John Edward Grob came to Indian Hill before 1870 and between 1872-1883 purchased three parcels of land at 7405 Given Road, where he established the 100-acre family farm. After he passed, the farm went to his heirs, and then to other family members. Two of his sons, Carl and Johnny, were partners at the farm for 40 years, and besides tending to their own place they farmed about 500 acres of land on Indian Hill, which they rented. When the brothers died, the original farm consisted of about 45 acres (some parcels had been sold), and William “Bill” Grob inherited it. In December 2023, Bill Grob died. The farmstead was sold to Turner Farm and his farm equipment was auctioned in June 2024. Tools, tractors, loaders, wagons, bulldozers, and all manner of agricultural implements were dispersed. One item was an antique horse-drawn hay rake.

A hay rake is a wide two wheeled machine with curved iron teeth. Operated by the farmer from a seat mounted over the rake while a horse powered it through the field, it was used to collect cut hay into heaps. This was part of the preparation for the hay prior to it being baled or loaded on a wagon. After it was cut, hay was fluffed and turned so it would dry. As the horse drew the rake, the farmer used handles to manipulate the rake over rocks and around tree stumps. The teeth dragged along the ground where the hay lay, and when the teeth were full, they were lifted, leaving the hay in piles. After it was collected, the hay was stored in the loft of a barn. It was later used as forage for the farm livestock.

The Grob hay rake is about 13 feet long with teeth almost 4 feet long. The teeth are spaced 5 inches apart. Invented in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it saved time and manual labor, as the horse or horses pulled the rake. This was much easier than raking by hand. The rake was used by the Grobs on their farm as well as at other rented properties.

At last summer’s auction, buyers purchased the contents of the Grobs’ historic barns and outbuildings. Bill’s hay rake was acquired by a friend for sentimental reasons. He decided that it should remain in Indian Hill and subsequently donated it to the Indian Hill Historical Society. The decision was made to display it in Bonnell Park. Village officials were consulted, and a hard surfaced platform was installed as a base for the hay rake.

On a sunny day this summer, the hay rake was delivered to its current site. The Indian Hill Public Works Department unloaded it from a trailer and positioned it atop the platform. A sign was procured to explain the provenance of the hay rake. Observers can now imagine the days of yore when agriculture was a true vocation in Indian Hill. Visitors can gain insight into the Grob farm where multiple generations raised soybeans, hay, oats and speltz, and livestock grazed. Farming techniques were passed along to family members, and harvests were plentiful. The land was husbanded by Bill Grob’s ancestors and by him. As he once said, “My office is the seat of my tractor.” He loved the soil there, and the life that went with it. His forefathers actually used the hay rake now located in Bonnell Park. Though it resembles a metal sculpture, it is more than decorative. It was a vital innovative tool and part of the lore of this area; and it stands as a reminder of the Grobs – Indian Hill’s longtime local farmers.

