

IMAGES

... then and now

From The Indian Hill Historical Society



Buckingham Lodge
1861

Indian Hill's Bridle Trails



In the 1920s, a number of the Cincinnati families who moved to Indian Hill were avid riders. They founded the Camargo Hunt, dedicated to the sporting and social tradition of foxhunting. These outdoor enthusiasts enjoyed the exercise and camaraderie of the popular pastime and held Meets 3 times weekly for two decades, congregating at one another's estates on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays to chase foxes through the woods. With no horse trailers in that era, grooms or riders hacked the mounts to each Meet over a system of connected trails. These trails were laid out and kept up by the Camargo Hunt and Bridle Trails Committee for years. Volunteers and kennel men kept passageways

clear using tractors and bushhogs. During World War II, the Hunt met only twice a week and then in the 1970s, with increasing residential development, it relocated outside of Indian Hill. There are still a few local Camargo Hunt Meets within the village each year.

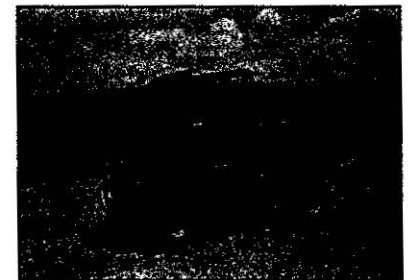
The 150 miles of bridle trails range from 25 feet wide to just the breadth of a horse. Some follow an old railroad bed (the Swing Line), or run on top of ridgelines, or between boundaries of early farms; and others are parallel to creek beds. Most are located in the Green Areas, though some have been donated as easements by property owners. When the Camargo Hunt Committee ceased maintaining the bridle trails, the Indian Hill Service Department took over the job, the Rangers began patrolling them, and the Village established a license system.

The Service Department mows the bridle trails twice a year. For easily accessible areas, they use a 4-wheel drive tractor, and in the summer they send crews out with machetes to clear the more remote areas. One man works twice a week on the trails, and he is assisted by others when necessary, and by temporary summer employees. If a trail erodes, a culvert is installed to buoy it, or it may be rerouted. Bridges are repaired, and overgrowth and fallen trees are cleared regularly. The Service Department relies on riders to inform them of unsafe areas. Several years ago a numbering system was created, marking the location of each trail, which has proved helpful for regular care or in emergency situations.

Until 1981, the police used mounted Rangers in uniform with Smokey Bear hats to monitor the bridle trails. Back then, if an officer could ride a horse, he could do trail duty. Nowadays instead of real horses and mounted Rangers, the police department uses horsepower vehicles. Currently Indian Hill has two all terrain vehicles covering the territory. Each squad divides the workload, and when weather and manpower allow, one Ranger is assigned to the ATV mule for 3-4 hours. He cruises the woods (and Grand Valley), citing trespassers and litterers, and those riding bicycles or motorized vehicles on the trails. Rangers have also issued citations for underage drinking and indecent exposure. In autumn, they ticket poachers who do not have a permit to hunt in the village. On occasion, they assist the Camargo Hunt as it crosses the road in pursuit of a fox. Also, Rangers on these fueled mules have rescued injured riders, conveying them to emergency vehicles.

The Village issues licenses to trail riders. The annual fee is \$75 for residents and \$100 for non-residents, with a one-time initiation fee of \$150 for non-residents. Trail riders must follow specified rules and regulations and are required to carry their license and keep a red tag on their horses' saddles. The fees paid by the current 189 licensed trail riders help defray Village maintenance expenses.

The bridle trails remain a unique feature of Indian Hill. On these byways Nature's beauty is evident. Varied wildlife and the changing seasons create a panoramic setting for riders. From one trail, nicknamed *Ski Slope* for being a steep hill, equestrians overlook a broad vista of the Little Miami River. Preservation of and safety within these historic green byways keeps them as community treasures.



**Officer Dave Schweppe patrolling
Grand Valley**

Thanks to Rick Robinson (Superintendent, IH Service Department) and Colonel Will McQueen (Chief, IH Rangers) for their assistance with this article.