

IMAGES

...THEN AND NOW

From the Indian Hill Historical Society



**Buckingham Lodge
1861**

Indian Hill Historical Society Antiques Classes Remembered

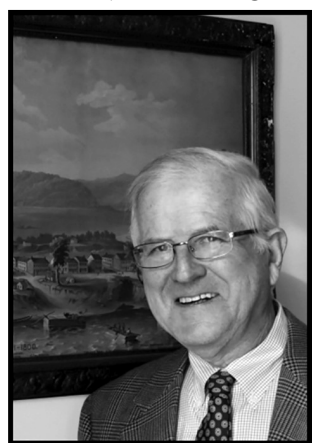
From 1987-2000, Antiques Classes were offered to the general public for a nominal fee. At that time, many people were interested in educating themselves and collecting pieces from the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. Mr. Ray Mongenas, renowned expert in the field of antiques, was the instructor.

The eight-week course took place during the months of January and February at the Little Red Schoolhouse. The cost ranged from \$75 to \$100 for the entire course. A different topic was scheduled each week. Ray taught, showed slides to demonstrate various features, and brought specimens from his own collection to illustrate his remarks. The Indian Hill Historical Society was a co-sponsor of the classes, as it provided the venue; and the organization received a small portion of the enrollment fee.

The syllabus for each winter was carefully prepared and covered a variety of subjects. Examples were “The History of Antique Furniture Hardware”, “Chippendale in England and America”, “All about Country”, and “Three Centuries of Boxes”. Usually there was a guest speaker for one of the eight sessions. Hattie Miller and Walter Farmer spoke about decorating with antiques. Anita Ellis from the Cincinnati Art Museum discussed Rookwood Pottery. Bill Wiebold lectured on pewter smithing, and Mary Allen covered Shaker boxes. Other guest speakers included Ed Mongenas (Ray and Kathy’s son), Riley Hunter of Cincinnati Art Galleries, Pamela Kirchner, Jim Swinehart, and Frank Farmer Loomis. Once a session, participants brought in one of their own treasures for “show and tell”. The classes were casual gatherings where questions were welcomed. Both men and women whose exposure to antiques ranged from dabbler to serious collector attended them. Some people wanted to decorate their homes, and others wanted to invest for future returns.



An excellent lecturer and teacher, Ray Mongenas educated his audience about European and American history as well as antiques. He was keen about learning the provenance of various pieces, curious about how and where items were created, and inquisitive about the evolution of different motifs. One session might focus on the feet and legs of wooden furniture (e.g. hoof foot, claw and ball, tapered); and the next week Ray might talk about pottery. (e.g. Spode China of the 1700s was composed of 50% clay and 50% animal bone, as pieces would not chip as easily with that combination of material.) Fascinating facts were shared every Tuesday for two months.



Ray Mongenas

Ray Mongenas had and still has a deep knowledge of and background in antiques. Over the years, he and his wife, Kathy traveled all over the USA to top notch antique shows to buy and sell. Together they owned a store in O’Byronville for about a decade, which was a treasure trove of beautiful antiquities and furnishings. The Mongenas also managed the very popular Indian Hill Antiques Fair beginning in 1982 (and concluding in 2015). In an interview from 1987, Ray said, “A well informed customer is a better customer.” He shared his expertise with attendees of the classes, giving them insights into many topics relating to furniture and decorative arts of yesteryear.

Ray was self-educated. He did independent research, attended forums and seminars, communicated with other experts in the field, and delved into the construction and creation of home décor. One early teacher was Hattie Miller of Mariemont. Annually Ray visited Colonial Williamsburg (VA) where he attended lectures on antiques. Other places from which he gleaned information were Deerfield Village (MA), Winterthur (DE), Shelburne Museum (VT), Sturbridge Village (MA), and the Henry Ford Museum (MI). Trips to these historic sites broadened his understanding of antiques and were the source of many lectures to

students at the Antiques Classes.

When the 21st century began, public interest in antiques declined, so the classes were suspended. The Antiques Classes always had a friendly ambiance; people would raise their hands with questions or share their own insights. Informative and fun, they were a successful and popular series offered jointly by the Historical Society and Ray Mongenas.