

IMAGES

...THEN AND NOW

From the Indian Hill Historical Society



Buckingham Lodge
1861

The Grange Hall of Indian Hill



Most nineteenth century residents of Indian Hill were independent farmers. After the Civil War, however, agriculture changed and became more commercialized. With new tools, better livestock, and more transportation, there were challenges for the individual farmer. The national fraternal order of the Patrons of Husbandry appealed to local folk, and in 1875 the Jefferson Grange #1164 was organized.

Founded in 1867 by Oliver Kelley, the Grange was a secret organization open to both men and women. Like the Masons, Odd Fellows, Elks, and Moose, Grange chapters emphasized traditional rituals for meetings. By 1876, Ohio had over 1000 local Granges, each pursuing their common objectives of laboring for Grange, country, and mankind. The Grange promoted policies of interest to its members, including rural electrification, Rural Free Mail Delivery, and Social Security for farmers. It also fought the monopolistic late 19th century railroads.

It is believed that the Jefferson Grange had its headquarters in a building at the corner of present day Drake and Beacon Hill Roads. At monthly meetings, members shared knowledge of new techniques of crop rotation, soil conservation, and fertilizers. The high point of their year was a local fair held the weekend before Labor Day. Residents entered fruits, vegetables, grain, animals, and fowl in competitions. Handiworks such as cabinetry, embroidery, sewing, tatting, and knitting were displayed. Baked and preserved goods from area kitchens were judged, with adults winning ribbons and children cash prizes.

The Grange Hall became the local social center, with men gathering for games of pool or cards, and women for quilting bees. During winter months, square dances were held, and the Indian Hill Orchestra practiced there regularly. The annual minstrel show with jokes, skits, and music was a festive occasion, as were the annual game supper, Lincoln Day Dinner, and 4th of July celebration.

In 1899 the Grange Hall was purchased by the Ladies Aid Society of Armstrong Church who then rented it back to the Grangers and other community groups. In 1917 a neighboring building was purchased "to provide sociability, increase neighborly spirit, and forward community well being." Both sites were maintained by income from bazaars, dinners, handiwork, and catering for the Carthage Fair. Rents were collected from Campfire Girls, Band Boys, individually sponsored celebrations, and political groups. Over the years the Ladies Aid group heard such lectures as "The Qualities of Aluminum Ware in Cooking", "Surgical Dressing for Soldiers", and "Voting Procedures for Women" (after the passage of the 19th Amendment). An active branch of the Hamilton County Library was also located in the Hall.

As time passed, the buildings deteriorated, and the Grangers disbanded in 1917. After World War I, the Ladies Aid Society and the Men's Club utilized the buildings until the mid-1930s, when waning membership and financial deficits ended their activities.

For six decades, the Grange Hall served the residents of this community. Social events, neighborly projects, and locally oriented programs held there were beneficial, as attendees worked together at the grassroots level to improve themselves. Though the building no longer stands, its impact on Indian Hill of yesteryear is noteworthy.

