

IMAGES

. . . then and now

From The Indian Hill Historical Society



Buckingham Lodge
1861

Remembering the Outdoor Education Center, continued...

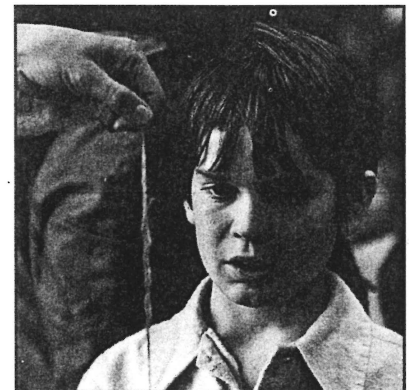
Volunteers were a major strength of the OEC. In the beginning there were workdays to prepare the OEC; and later volunteers were trained to supervise and teach children with their guide notes. Many volunteers were parents of students, but others volunteered out of interest and civic spirit. Barbara Laco (Volunteer Associate Director) and Carole Finkelmeier (Volunteer Coordinator) were invaluable, and several other stalwart ladies devoted themselves to the OEC for decades.

Funding the OEC was a joint effort. The PTA's, garden clubs, and individuals provided cash, and materials; labor was donated by the Village and volunteers; and many materials were given by friends over the years. Budget items included building and land repair and maintenance, furnishings, garden tools, birdseed, program costs, and refreshments (lemonade and hot chocolate). The popular Indian Day, Pioneer Day, and Pack Your Wagon Day introduced students to different cultures and historical eras. During Indian Days, children learned sign language, gardened with shells, made pemmican, did native dancing, cooked inside a cow stomach heated with hot rocks, and experienced a homemade tepee. The Pack Your Wagon program encouraged group dynamics, as each class was told to choose what they would take on a pioneer wagon from New Jersey to the Ohio lands in the 1800s. Pioneer Day's activities included butter making, cooking in an open fireplace, quilt making, creating vine baskets, whittling wooden toys, making corn husk dolls, tin punching, playing the dulcimer, spinning and weaving wool, churning butter, and candle dipping.

The OEC Director, Bob Terwillegar, was known by everyone as "Mr. T." His enthusiasm and creativity provided the spark that ignited the program. He maintained the site, oversaw the volunteers, created notes for guides, developed every program, acquired all necessary items, and adapted to the needs of teachers and classes over the years. Mr. T. scrounged materials and collected items at local farm auctions. He made a tepee out of canvas he purchased. He harvested honeysuckle vines from the roadside and soaked them overnight for Pioneer Day basket making. To prepare for Indian Days, he acquired four cow stomachs from a downtown slaughterhouse. In every program he used real objects to teach.

The OEC philosophy was based on learning by doing, with science, history, language and math woven together. In one of the logbooks is the

statement: "The children enjoy being made aware of the ordinary and the hidden and extraordinary that we can teach them about." When Mr. T. retired in 1991, the OEC closed its doors. A modified Pioneer Day program continues as a field trip for fourth graders. All who went to the OEC – either as children or as volunteers – learned from interaction with others and the environment; and this unique curriculum and place enriched thousands of students for 21 years.



*IHHS's Hauck Library now contains the logbooks and records of the OEC.
Special thanks to Mr. T. for help with this article and for his
donated materials.*

**Former volunteers and students: Please send your remembrances
to the Historical Society.**