

IMAGES

...THEN AND NOW

From the Indian Hill Historical Society

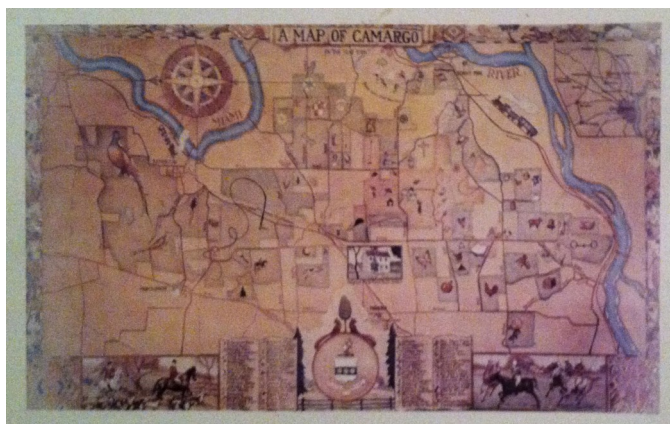


**Buckingham Lodge
1861**

The Map of Camargo

With the formation of the Camargo Realty Company in 1924, its stockholders and many locally prominent citizens purchased land and constructed estates in close proximity to the newly proposed country club in Indian Hill. The club was the nucleus of the new development. The company owned over 860 acres that year, and it later obtained considerably more. Residential lots ranging in size from 10 to 250 acres were purchased by people who sought to enjoy “country life” in the northeastern area outside the city.

O. DeGray Vanderbilt, one of the original stockholders, acquired 80 acres and a farmhouse on current day Old Stable Road, and remodeled the structure, creating Twin Fires. In 1928 Vanderbilt commissioned artist Frank Meyers to paint the *Map of Camargo*. Its purpose was to show the location of the estate properties owned by members of the community described as Camargo.



The oil painting is primitive in style. It depicts 80 locations of property owners in the late 1920s (at the bottom of the map) by name and by symbol, and the symbol is situated at the location of each parcel. An interesting feature is that, contrary to cartographic tradition, the map is positioned with north on the left, rather than at the top. Each symbol has a name, but the symbols do not necessarily reflect the name of the estate. Many of the names are based on ownership, such as Betts Place or Miss Jones' Place. But other owners adopted descriptive names for their homes, for example, Hayfields and White Gates.

The Little Miami River meanders around the edge of the painting, and the major roads are named and plotted. Adjacent hamlets are located – Montgomery, Allandale, Remington, Madeira, Milford, and Terrace Park. Two three-car railroad trains – the P.R.R. and the B&O are depicted and a stylized pheasant is on the left hand side. Fittingly, the artist placed the image of Twin Fires, the Vanderbilt estate, prominently in the center of the map. It is the only house shown, with all other properties marked by symbols. At the bottom are two scenes reminiscent of life in Camargo during the Twenties – the Camargo Hunt and a game of polo. A compass provides balance to the map insert with the Camargo Club's location. Also notable is the crest with three sunburst medallions, a white horse, two red foxes, an ornamental tree, and the motto “Nihil Verius”, Latin for “Nothing Truer”.

The symbols on the map were either chosen by the artist or under the guidance of Mr. Vanderbilt, who commissioned the art. Many symbols pertain to houses or hunting, such as a whip, stirrup, riding boots, a horseshoe, saddle, bit, hound, and rider's silks. Some symbols may have been hobbies or pastimes of the property owner, like the polo mallet, golf bag, tennis racket, shotgun, open book and fencing saber. Others may have represented the produce or vegetation of a parcel, such as a dairy cow, chicken, strawberries, carrot, daffodil, flower, ear of corn, acorn, and cask of wine. Some others are hard to interpret; among these are a pyramid, hour glass, bale of cotton, rick of wood, and a fedora. Each symbol connotes some meaning, and each has charm. Of the 80 map symbols, 13 properties were not built by their 1928 landowners. Later other homes were constructed on those parcels.

The *Map of Camargo* was inherited by Lafreda Vanderbilt Rhoades, who displayed it for decades above her mantelpiece. It now hangs in the dining room at the Camargo Club. Many of the estates are featured in [From Camargo to Indian Hill](#), by Virginia White. Both the book and the map may be purchased at the Indian Hill Historical Society.