

IMAGES

...THEN AND NOW

From the Indian Hill Historical Society



**Buckingham Lodge
1861**

The Story of Redbird Hollow

Redbird Hollow Trail, a favorite of Indian Hill residents, is one of numerous paths through local forests. A naturalist's delight, the 54 acre tract belongs to the Nature Conservancy and the Redbird Hollow Association. In the glacial era, ice floes created the ridges and hollows through which streams later flowed. The glacial conglomerate in the Hollow reveals that this was how its topography was formed.



In the early 1900's an interurban rail line ran through Redbird Hollow, linking Cincinnati with suburbs and villages in nearby counties. The "Swing Line", officially named the Cincinnati and Columbus Traction Line, connected Norwood with Hillsboro. Its owners, who originally had hoped to extend the line to the state capital, included three members of the Swing family – thus its nickname. Narrow rails with overhead electrical cables joined Madeira with Ramona (Indian Hill) and Terrace Park; and the roadbed paralleled the stream through the hollow, where remnants of masonry abutments can still be seen.

The Swing Line was abandoned in the early 1920s, and soon after the Camargo Realty Company was formed to develop the "Hill". Plans included the Camargo Clubhouse, golf course, riding club, polo fields, and lots to be sold as home sites. These lots were large parcels laid out on the knolls and fields of Indian Hill, with the less desirable bottomland (the "reserve") left vacant, including the old railbed and Redbird Hollow stream.

In 1963 the Camargo Club investigated the possibility of selling the "reserve" in order to raise funds. Led by Helen and Bob Black, landowners of both sides of Redbird Hollow sought to preserve the peaceful valley and its nature trail. Several proposals were considered. Some property owners donated land and money to the Nature Conservancy, and a number of others created a nonprofit organization, the Redbird Hollow Association.

In 1964 the sixteen families of the Association purchased the "reserve". Redbird Hollow became the property of both the Nature Conservancy and the Redbird Hollow Association, with the latter in control of most of the Swing Line property. Members of the Association included owners of land abutting the hollow, plus those residents of Camargo Club Drive who chose to join. The Hollow has been cared for since then by the Redbird Hollow Association, Indian Hill Public Works, and Nature Conservancy volunteers.

Over the years, the Redbird Hollow Association has addressed issues ranging from possibly closing the trail, to the invasive plants, to the erosion of the path. The Nature Conservancy donated 21 acres to the Green Areas Trust in 2002, but still owns a large part of the hollow.

Today Redbird Hollow is a serene preserve where wildflowers abound, and deciduous trees shade the trail. Dogs and Village inhabitants frequent the path. This remnant of Ohio forestland and stream, designated an Ohio Natural Landmark in 1983, remains a fragile oasis in the heart of Indian Hill.

