

IMAGES

...THEN AND NOW

From the Indian Hill Historical Society



**Buckingham Lodge
1861**

The Worcesters of Orchard Farm

Elizabeth and Harry Worcester were prominent residents of Indian Hill in the early and mid-20th century. Though they were not native Ohioans, they (particularly Harry) left a mark on the region.



**Harry Worcester,
Union Terminal Mural**

Harry A. Worcester was born in Albany, New York in 1863. His father was treasurer of the New York Central Railroad during the Civil War, and helped develop it after hostilities ceased. Harry received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Yale in 1884. He started his railroad career in 1885 as assistant station master at Grand Central Station, New York City. Promotions came rapidly, and by 1905, he was Assistant General Superintendent of the Michigan Central.

That year he married Elizabeth Howard Whiting on October 18th. The *Detroit Free Press* noted, "It is one of the interesting and notable weddings of the autumn season, both the bride and groom being popular members of the ultra-fashionable circles of this city." The wedding floral decorations included "esparagus, palms and, white cosmos" – quite an unusual combination from a 21st century perspective.

In 1906, Harry became General Superintendent of four divisions of the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railroad. Between 1902-1913 he was Assistant General Manager, General Manager, and Vice President of the Big Four Route which linked Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago, and St. Louis. When the Big Four merged with New York Central Railroad, Harry Worcester became Vice-President.

The couple moved to Cincinnati in 1906. Local newspapers regularly reported on their activities hosting dinner parties, attending dances, debutante soirees, and teas. In 1910, they lived on Keys Crescent, but by 1916 they had acquired a place in Indian Hill. Legend has it that Elizabeth did not want to move to the country, and she told her husband that he could go to Indian Hill and get scalped by Indians, but she would not move. So Harry acquired drawings of a Bucks County Pennsylvania stone farmhouse and hired a Cincinnati contractor to build a replica on South Drake Road. He installed an orchard there, and told his wife that the new home was adjacent to the Taft estate. When shown photographs, Elizabeth finally was persuaded to move. Their estate became known as Orchard Farm.

The Worcesters were avid travelers. Harry had his own railroad car, and it allowed him to commute downtown each day from Plainville. They traveled to Florida one winter, en route to Cuba. Another time they went to Nassau. Summer travels were easterly, to Brass Rocks, Massachusetts and Camden, Maine.

H.A. Worcester was selected President of the Cincinnati Union Terminal Company when it was founded in 1927, and he served in that capacity until Union Terminal was completed in 1933. This project was a brilliant achievement. It replaced 5 stations scattered around Cincinnati, and the switching of freight and transfers of passengers were expedited at the central location, then the largest half dome in the western hemisphere. At the time, Union Terminal was considered the finest railroad terminal in the country. Mr. Worcester was depicted in one of the mosaic murals at the Art Deco terminal.

After retiring at age 70, Mr. Worcester died of a heart attack at home in 1930, aged 75. Mrs. Worcester remained at Orchard Farm. Known to have had a sense of humor, when stopped for speeding one Sunday at age 83, she told the officer, "Young man, I am on my way to church." She celebrated her 90th and 100th birthday parties at her home. She wore corsages on each shoulder, at her waist and on her hand bag. She died in 1969, aged 103. The couple were buried at Sleepy Hollow Cemetery in Tarrytown, New York.

The Worcesters lived in a bygone era and were active socially and in industry. Though they had no children, they had many friends. To have shepherded the construction of Union Terminal was a spectacular accomplishment. It is impossible to underestimate the importance of that structure to Cincinnati's history.



Elizabeth Worcester