

IMAGES

...THEN AND NOW

From the Indian Hill Historical Society



Buckingham Lodge
1861

A Family Compound of Indian Hill (Part II)

Continued from last month

Lucille and Albert Berne's abode – the easternmost of all the five homes on Cunningham Road and closest to Camp Dennison – is a classical white brick structure which reflects a French influence. Lucille Kroger was the last of her sisters to marry at age 34. She attained a college degree from Wellesley and later was Treasurer for the Kroger Company for three years while her brothers were serving in the Army during World War I. A redhead, she studied horticulture, was inspired by Frederick Law Olmstead, and created an elaborate garden on the property. Albert, a musician, taught at CCM. The Bernes had two sons. Lucille died young at 43 before her boys matured. There is a Dixie Selden portrait of her with them at the University Club of Cincinnati. The elegant manse still stands. The lot is about 7 acres as several parcels in the back were sold.



Adjacent to the Bernes, Helen Kroger Homan and her husband Rudolph also lived on Cunningham Road. A curved long tree lined driveway approached their 18-room house situated on 23 acres. The playhouse and pool on the property were built the same year (1929-1930). The house has an off-center entry with wings to the east and west. The Homan estate was a gathering spot for all the Kroger clan. The Homans had two daughters and a son. A later owner of the property added a 24 stable barn. The expansive place and its grounds were meticulously maintained and upgraded through the decades. This property was recently subdivided.

Gertrude Kroger (nicknamed Tutu) and her husband Irving Pettengill lived in a Cape Cod style home nestled between those of her sisters Helen and Gretchen. Their five children were raised in the rambling shingle clad residence with "autocratic benevolence", according to a relative. In the 1950s one wing of the original 1930 dwelling was separated, enlarged, and moved north on the driveway. It still stands with some renovations. Subsequently an owner razed the southern part of the original structure and built a mansion which burned down in 2017. Currently there is a new owner and residence at the south end of the driveway.



Gretchen Kroger (the baby of the family) and her second husband George Barnes lived in a grand Neo-Classical home constructed in 1928-29 and perched on a hilltop. By 1938 Gretchen divorced Mr. Barnes and married Bruno Graf. They had two biological children, and Gretchen had two adopted girls. The exterior of their abode featured side gables, dormers and a slate roof; and the interior rooms had elaborate woodwork. Later owners added an outdoor Italian style folly, guesthouse, and lake enhanced by water features and surrounded by world class sculptures. In 2011 this estate was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The property recently sold, and the house was razed after the MIHJFD used it for training purposes.

That Indian Hill once had the Kroger Compound is noteworthy. The extended family – four sisters and a brother – along with their spouses and children – shared many experiences and their households were landmarks in the community.