

IMAGES

...THEN AND NOW

From the Indian Hill Historical Society



**Buckingham Lodge
1861**

The History of Stephan Field

About sixty years ago, Stephan Field at the southeastern corner of Drake and Shawnee Run Roads was a simple sand baseball diamond, with two ponds at the rear of the property. It is now named in honor of Paul Stephan, whose enthusiastic promotion of knothole baseball, leadership, and volunteerism inspired hundreds of boys in the 1950s and 1960s.



Paul and Alice Stephan were from farm families in Brown County, Ohio. They met at a square dance in a barn, and got married when Alice was 18. The newlyweds moved to Clifton, with Alice working on her education degree from UC, and Paul in the government office at the stockyards. He was the first local radio broadcaster of agricultural news, quoting the prices of livestock at noon each weekday on WLW. After leaving the Cincinnati stockyards, he became superintendent at the Schroth Packing Co. As their family grew, the Stephens wanted to return to farm life. Paul was offered a position as manager of a Graves Road estate, a job he had from 1950 until 1963. After this, he was manager of a Shawnee Run Road estate. Their three sons attended Indian Hill Schools.



In 1953, second son, Paul Jr., asked his father to manage his baseball team. Paul agreed, and he started his longtime commitment to baseball in Indian Hill. Though he had never played, he was familiar with the game, and a loyal Reds fan. Learning by doing, Stephan was coach/manager for two of his sons, and then manager/promoter of many other teams for over 20 years. Paul spent up to 6 hours a night on baseball. The 1950s knothole teams practiced wherever they could get a field: Drake Elementary, the Village diamond, and Country Day School. He did every job imaginable: lining and dragging the fields, carpooling, scheduling, and finding umpires, sponsors, uniforms, and equipment. Alice helped with storing and mending uniforms. Urging his players to practice every day, he taught them to love the game.

The number of teams increased every year. Stephan tried to find a team for every boy, and said that baseball was special because "small boys can compete on an equal basis with larger boys". He initiated and maintained the knothole program for decades. Early team names were Rangers, Chiefs, Juniors, Regulars, and Pee Wees. Later names were Maulers, Tomahawks, Apaches, and Cherokees. By 1962 there were 12 teams, some of which won district titles. Their trophies were displayed in the Village Hall. Many Indian Hill boys learned about competition and sportsmanship from Paul Stephan.

In recognition of his efforts, Stephan Field was dedicated and named for Paul Stephan in August 1964. The ceremony included speeches by the Mayor and Council Members. Coaches and players from past years attended and saw the unveiling of the bronze plaque which stands there still. Three Cincinnati Reds players delivered a letter of commendation, and later Stephan was inducted into the Cincinnati Knothole Hall of Fame.



Today Stephan Field is used for baseball, tennis, bocce, walking, jogging, and rollerblading. The 4th of July Celebration is held there. The Field has added new attractions. State of the art playground equipment attracts the young; the Bicentennial Sculpture stands as a storybook of Village history; and a statue honors two longtime friends/residents who walked the path together for years. Residents who visit Stephan Field know it to be a Village treasure. It honors a man who taught the love of a particular outdoor sport to many Indian Hill children.