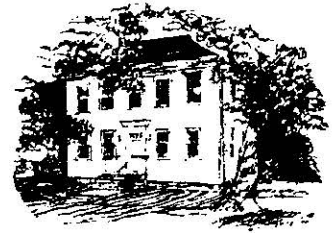


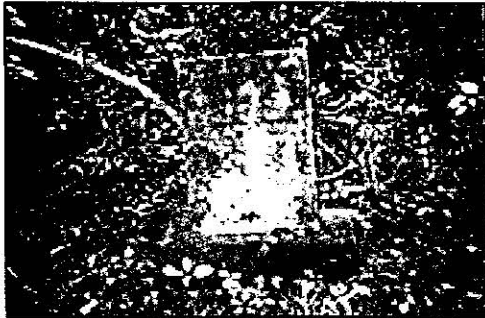
IMAGES

... then and now



Buckingham Lodge
1861

Pioneer Gravestone Brings to Mind Earlier Era



The recently relocated tombstone of an early Indian Hill pioneer reads: William Gerard, Died July 18, 1836, Aged 51 Years. Remnants of another uninscribed stone lie nearby behind a local residence. The Gerard/Garrard family helped tame Ohio's wilderness in the settlement years.

William's grandfather, Rev. John Gerard, a Baptist minister in Virginia, served a church in what is now West Virginia from 1754-1770. Jonathan, the youngest of his 11 children, was born in 1763, married Leah Hays, moved to Pennsylvania with relatives in the 1780s, and then went west to Ohio. Their son William – one of 9 siblings – was born 1785.

The first settlement in southwestern Ohio was Columbia, established in 1788 by Major Benjamin Stites, had 20 men, 2 boys, and 5 women. Five more families joined the initial group a month later. Common practice in those days was construction of a blockhouse for mutual protection from Indians. Individual landholders cleared their lots near the fort, and pioneer neighbors established small communities. There were about 40 such fortifications built in southwestern Ohio between 1788 and 1795. The Native American tribes resisted the encroachment of settlers, raiding and attacking them. The forts provided defense against the frequent attacks. Usually groups who moved to the Ohio Lands were already tightly knit bands and included members of an extended family. Each landowner worked on his holdings by day and returned to the fort at night for refuge. Fort Miami was at Columbia, and Fort Washington was at Losantiville. Smaller settlements with crude fortifications were called stations.

To become associated with a station, one had to sign a contract that pledged to share the duties of defense for the whole group/settlement. This ensured mutual defense for the group as they coped with the problem of survival in the wilderness. Stations were named for their founders, and one early one was Garrard's, named for Jonathan. Though contemporaneous accounts vary, the Garrards most likely arrived in Ohio in 1790. Jonathan and about 15 families located their settlement on the east side of the mouth of the Little Miami River- near a bend in the river and beside a well-known ford. Accompanying Jonathan was his brother Joseph Garrard, who was killed by Indians in 1792. After the Treaty of Greeneville in 1795, when most hostilities with Indians ceased, land further out from the fortifications were purchased by successive waves of Eastern settlers. Ohio's population grew and dispersed farther from the rivers. Trees were girdled, crops were planted, and mills were established. The hardships, privations, and labors of the original settlers resulted in small frontier communities that branched out several miles apart.

Not much has been recorded about William Gerard. Most likely he labored to establish a homestead in the wilderness. Garrard's Station, where he probably first lived, was located on land that is now Lunken Airport. He moved to Indian Hill and married 17-year-old Mary Muchmore in 1810. Their union resulted in 12 children, 8 boys and 4 girls. The diary of Sally Miller, an 1800's Madisonville resident, states that William died of intemperance. He was buried on a knoll in the woods and his heirs owned property on the Hill past the Civil War. His last will and testament, recorded in July 1836, bequeathed to his "beloved Mary all his real estate, goods, chattel, rights and interests."

William Gerard was part of the first wave of settlement in the Ohio valley, but few details of his life are known. Yet he and other early pioneers whose names have been forgotten laid the foundations for the future growth of what is now Indian Hill. His modest gravestone marks that his family honored his memory.

Note: The surname Gerard was spelled in a variety of ways interchangeably on the frontier and included variations like Gerrard, Garard, Girrard, and Jerret, based on the literacy of the scribe.

Thanks to B.W. for assistance in locating the Gerard grave.