

IMAGES

...THEN AND NOW

From the Indian Hill Historical Society



**Buckingham Lodge
1861**

The Story of Radio Range Park



One of the many popular recreational areas in the Village, Radio Range Park is located on Indian Hill Road. The five radio towers nearby explain the derivation of its name.

Originally the property was a farm owned by Isaphene and Elias Muchmore. When her husband died in 1892, she remarried M. Waits. There they grew produce and harvested fruit from a large orchard. Decades passed. South of the farm, Lunken Airport was dedicated in 1930 - five years after Edmund Lunken gave Cincinnati the Turkey Bottoms land. For a brief time it was the largest municipal airport in the country. Pilots landing there used radio beacons to align their planes with the concrete runways. One

such early beacon was located at the California, Ohio waterworks.

During President Roosevelt's administration, PWA funds provided for the construction of 56 additional radio stations with beacons throughout the USA. The goal was to stimulate national development of commercial aviation. When it was determined that the best possible site near Lunken Airport was the Waits farm, the government leased it, and later purchased it for \$1600. The orchard and other trees were removed and five steel towers – several of them 125 feet high – were built in four months. The radio beacons were operated by remote control from Lunken Airport.

The towers broadcasted oral and visual beacons, and used the dot dash system. They had a range of over 100 miles. These enabled pilots to determine their position. When directly over the towers, there was a dead spot – no signal was received. Here pilots cut their motors and glided on to Lunken's runways. The towers also broadcast continuous weather reports and other pertinent data by radio beam.

In 1970 the US Government established the Property Review Board, which turned over underutilized federal lands to state and local governments. The Village Manager at that time, A. Wray White, worked with federal authorities to attain the FAA tract with its obsolete radio transmitting towers, and the 10 ½ acres was conveyed to the Village. The Assistant Secretary of Defense presented the land to Indian Hill Police Chief John Diekmeyer at a ceremony in Cleveland. Council authorized making the property into a park, and monies for improvements were provided over a 4 year period.



Landscape architect John Bentley developed a site plan. The transmitter building was remodeled to become a shelter. Wood chip walking paths were installed and trees were planted for reforestation and to screen the towers. A curved entry, parking lot and picnic tables were added. The project cost \$13,075 in 1972. The new park was a superb addition to the Village's holdings.

More recently in 2014 the Indian Hill Garden Club presented a plan to the Village to update and improve Radio Range Park. It included planting prairie grass, trees, and other wildflowers and plants to attract bees and

butterflies. Vernal pools, a boardwalk and additional walking paths were created. Also thousands of daffodil bulbs were ordered. With assistance from the Public Works Department, the project of refreshing the park is ongoing. The Garden Club plans to continue improving Radio Range Park with proceeds from their annual Country Market. The aim is to enhance the area's wild native environment. Village residents who visit will be able to enjoy an array of wildlife and natural planting at this unique park beside the old transmitter station.

