

IMAGES

...THEN AND NOW

From the Indian Hill Historical Society



Buckingham Lodge-1861

Olde Mills Around Indian Hill

Early settlers of the area were attracted by the potential waterpower of the Little Miami River and its tributaries. Local mill owners capitalized on this commercial enterprise from the late 18th until the late 19th century.

Mills harnessed energy and processed raw materials, making them valuable commodities. After a dam was made, water was diverted to a set of mill wheels via a flume or pipe. From the flume, water dropped to the wheel's paddle, propelling the wheel, which transferred power to the drive shaft. That powered the gears, which created movement. In earlier times, farmers used mortars and pestles to crush grain, a two-man saw to cut wood, and carded wool by hand. Mills processed a large quantity of material at a much greater speed. Millstones could be raised or lowered, which altered the product. Grain could be made into fine flour or coarse food for livestock. Sheep's fleece was carded, combed, and wound on spools. What would have re-



quired a day to card by hand could be done in an hour with waterpower. Coarse wool was used for knitting, and finer grades were made into clothing. Logs were sawed into planks and boards of varying sizes.

Pioneers in the Miami Country cleared their plots of land, established homesteads, and settled the frontier. Mills eased the workloads of these early residents. After supplying their families with the necessities, they were able to sell surplus lumber, wool, and grain to downtown Cincinnati markets. Also the mills were gathering spots, and brought together scattered neighbors, facilitating social intercourse in the then sparsely populated community.

Captain John Beasley, a Revolutionary War veteran established the first local mill in 1792 on the north bank of the Little Miami River near the mouth of Walton Creek, east of current day Walton Creek

Road. He operated a sawmill and a gristmill.

The Armstrong family (with six sons and three daughters) moved to Ohio in 1800. The sons assisted their father, and despite "freshets" (floods) destroying several structures initially, they built a grist mill and sawmill near today's Newtown Bridge in 1802. Brothers John and William purchased Beasley's mill, while brothers Thomas and Leonard built a third mill. The Armstrong Mills were known as the Upper Mill, the Middle Mill, and the Lower Mill. Their fine flour had an excellent reputation amongst local folk.

In Camp Dennison, Christian Waldschmidt constructed a sawmill, gristmill, and two distilling vats for making whiskey in 1797. Products from the Waldschmidt enterprises were sold as far away as New Orleans. These included whiskey, lumber, staves, and barrels of flour. In 1810 Waldschmidt established the first paper mill in the area. Local women were paid for their scrap rags which were processed into paper. The *Western Spy*, a Cincinnati newspaper, was printed on paper milled in Camp Dennison. When Waldschmidt died, his son-in-law, Matthias Kugler took over the mill operations. Today's intersection of Kugler Mill Road and State Route 126 is close to the original Waldschmidt mill site.

Farther upstream, John Elliott and other men formed a company establishing a mill at the juncture of Sycamore Creek and the Little Miami River. They built a flour mill, a sawmill, a wool carding mill, and a distillery. Their goods traveled via river to New Orleans to the markets there.

Over time, the mills became obsolete with the advent of new power sources like steam, oil, and electricity. Yet the entrepreneurial millers and their water powered ventures played a major role in Indian Hill's early economy.