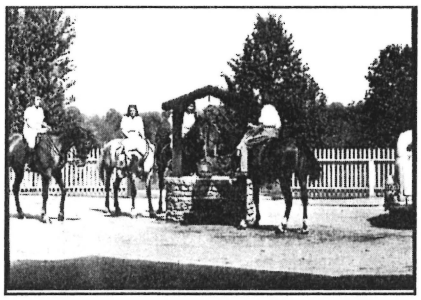
IMAGES
. . . then and now

From The Indian Hill Historical Society



Buckingham Lodge
1861

James Rheinstrom: Donor of Rheinstrom Park Remembered



"Rheinstrom's Wishing Well"

James "Jimmy" Rheinstrom, a resident of Indian Hill for 51 years, moved to the region during the Estate Era. His 30-acre Clearwater Farm on Graves Road was so named as an approximate translation of the German words "rhein" and "strom".

When he was 18, his father died; and he assumed the Presidency of Rheinstrom Brothers, manufacturers of liqueurs, cordials, and later glazed fruits. The brick building with the "Rheinstrom Bros." sign was a landmark on Columbia Parkway for years. When the company was discontinued, the building was donated to establish Riverview Neighbors House, a favorite charity of Rheinstrom's. Mr. Rheinstrom later was President of Kiefer Machine Co., a manufacturer of packaging machines.

The main house of Clearwater Farm was a shingle style structure, with a large U-shaped barn complex south of the house. A stone blacksmith's shop from an earlier era was preserved and maintained by Rheinstrom. The emblem for Clearwater Farm on the Map of Camargo (1928) was a saddle, symbolizing the owner's favorite pastime: riding.

Jimmy Rheinstrom, a member of the Camargo Hunt, rode to the hounds twice a week and often went hacking with friends on days he did not hunt. Members of the Hunt recall Jimmy being the first person to transport his horses to a meet by vehicle. In pre-trailer days, most riders rode their horses, or had groomsmen lead them to the meet. Having his mounts trucked in assured that they were fresh at the beginning of the Hunt. Jimmy loved the camaraderie of the Hunt and welcomed guests to his home, "located on Graves Road, Indian Hill Village, in the fox hunting country of Ohio... Members of the Camargo Hunt are welcome every day of the year." Meticulous about everything and always immaculately attired, he was formal in his manner. Proud of his barn, Rheinstrom remarked, "One might say that the house at Clearwater Farm is second in importance to the barn."

The barn surrounded a cobblestone courtyard with a wishing well and a mounting block to get on horses. At one end of the U-shaped structure a live-in servant (Philip Sickinger) resided with his family. Inside the barn, were Rheinstrom's workshop, storage space for vehicles and equipment, an area for cows and feed, and a six stalls for horses. At the opposite end of the complex were two wood paneled tack rooms, each having a fireplace and exquisite décor.

Regularly on Sundays friends met at Clearwater Farm for a ride. Horses were individually escorted to the mounting block by the groomsman. Rheinstrom always wore elegant garb and the appropriate hat. His horses were impeccably clean – hooves painted with oil, manes clipped, and bits polished, so exquisite that royalty could have mounted them! The rides over Indian Hill's trails lasted 2 – 3 hours with Jimmy, who loved to ride fast, leading the group.

Jimmy remained a bachelor all his life, and together with his sister Elsa, who lived with him for many years, held frequent soirees, with musical entertainment after dinner. Rheinstrom hosted many Hunt Teas and often invited guests to his farm after the Hunter Trials. His humorous invitations were mock Life magazines, with photographs of members of the Camargo Hunt, fake advertisements, and a centerpiece summons to "drinks and eats". Photography was another of Jimmy's hobbies; he gave friends small wooden matchboxes with their photo on the cover. Though he entertained lavishly, he was also known – in the midst of winter when the lake on his property froze for ice-skating – to bring a sack of potatoes to the lake, build a fire, and roast potatoes for the neighborhood children.

Rheinstrom died in 1977 and willed Clearwater Farm to Indian Hill for a park. After years of study, the Village razed the buildings and made the property part of the Green Areas; then the Recreation Commission constructed a one-mile long circular asphalt-jogging trail around the perimeter. Currently residents may use the park from dawn to dusk and enjoy the trees and rolling terrain that compose Rheinstrom Park, recalling Jimmy Rheinstrom - the man who made the park a reality.

Special thanks to Childress Rodgers for assistance with this article.