

IMAGES

...THEN AND NOW

From the Indian Hill Historical Society



**Buckingham Lodge
1861**

The Shawnee Service Station

From the 1920s until the early 1940s, Indian Hill Village residents frequented original owner James Pierce's service station at the northeast corner of Shawnee Run and Drake Roads. Mr. Pierce sold the business in 1939 to Richard Valentiner. When Valentiner graduated from high school that year, his prospects were dim because of the Depression. His father, a respected Indian Hill Ranger, loaned his then 18 year-old son \$500 for a down payment on the filling station, with the understanding that one cent per gallon of gasoline sold was to be paid to Pierce until the sale was complete.

The Shawnee Service Station was typical of a filling station of that era. From 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. customers drove their automobiles up to one of the Sohio pumps, which were located practically out on the street. The three 10 gallon visual pumps each contained 500 gallons of fuel in reserve. Valentiner, the owner/attendant had to pump gasoline into the glass globe on top of the pump until the globe was filled. Then gravity would dispense the gas through the nozzle into the car. Measurement of the quantity of gallons was done visually rather than electronically, and the pump was usually kept full in order to serve the clientele more rapidly.



In summer months, customers insisted that they did not want "hot gas", so Valentiner would release the stored 10 gallons back to the dispenser, and pump fresh "cold gas". Since fuel expanded when temperatures rose over 90 degrees, patrons would get more for their money this way.

Many chauffeurs of the local estate owners filled up at the Shawnee Service Station. Lincolns, Dusenbergs, and even a 16-cylinder LaSalle were regularly seen there. The chauffeurs transported residents from their Indian Hill homes to Union Terminal – a popular destination in the heyday of train travel. Some estates had pumps on their properties, so those drivers did not do business at the Shawnee Service Station.

No major mechanical work was done at the station, but Valentiner would change the oil for his customers. In the pre-EPA era, the used oil was just drained out on to the ground.

He would change tires the old fashioned way – without a lift. Cars were raised manually on a jack, and tires were rotated or changed using a tire iron, sledgehammer, and screwdriver. Minor auto parts (such as fog lights) were available for purchase, and many clients had charge accounts at the station, payable on a monthly basis. In the late 1930s, gasoline cost 12 to 14 cents a gallon.

Inside the station was a little grocery store, where soft drinks, ice cream, bread, pies, sardines, other snack items, cigars, and cigarettes (14-17 cents a pack) were sold. The market became a gathering spot for Village youngsters, who would socialize while consuming Hershey Bars and Coca-Colas (5 cents each). Valentiner managed the station 6 days a week for two years. On Sundays (generally a slow day) his sister, Ann Gruenemeier, tended the business. Over this time period, the young man paid off his loan and accumulated savings. Then World War II started, rationing began, and Valentiner sold the station.

In 1941 Indian Hill incorporated and passed resolutions excluding commercial establishments within Village limits. Thus the Shawnee Service Station was closed. The landscape at a prominent Indian Hill corner was forever changed.