

IMAGES

...THEN AND NOW

From the Indian Hill Historical Society



Buckingham Lodge-1861

Bridle Trails of Indian Hill

In the 1920s, a number of the prominent Cincinnati families who moved to Indian Hill were avid riders. They founded the Camargo Hunt, dedicated to the sporting and social tradition of foxhunting. These enthusiastic equestrians enjoyed the exercise and camaraderie of their sport and held Meets 3 times weekly for two decades, congregating at one another's estates on Tuesday, Thursdays, and Saturdays and chasing foxes through the woods. There were no horse trailers in that era, so grooms or riders hacked the mounts to each Meet over a system of connected trails. These trails were laid out and kept up by the Camargo Hunt and Bridle Trails Committee for decades. Volunteers and kennel men kept passageways clear using tractors and bush hogs. During World War II, the Hunt met only twice weekly, and then in the 1970s, with increasing residential development, it relocated outside of Indian Hill. Yet there are still a few local Camargo Hunt Meets within the Village each year.



The estimated 150 miles of bridle trails range from 25 feet wide to just the breadth of a horse. Some follow an old railroad bed (the Swing Line); some run on top of ridgelines, or between boundaries of early farms; and others are parallel to creek beds. Most are located in Green Areas, though some have been donated as easements by property owners. When the Camargo Hunt Committee ceased maintaining the bridle trails, the Indian Hill Service Department (current Public Works Department) took over the job. The Rangers patrolled the trails and the Village established a license system.

Now the Public Works Department mows the bridle trails seasonally. For easily accessible areas, they use a 4-wheel drive tractor and a field mower. If a trail erodes, a culvert is installed to buoy it. Bridges are repaired and fallen trees are removed. The Public Works Department relies on riders to inform them of unsafe areas. Several years ago, a numbering system was created, marking the location of each trail. This has proved helpful for riders identifying areas that need care, and in emergency situations.

Until 1981 the police used mounted Rangers in uniform to monitor the bridle trails. Back then, if an officer could ride a horse, he could do trail duty. Nowadays, the Rangers patrol the trails periodically, ensuring the safety of riders and residents.

Occasionally, if manpower permits, they assist the Camargo Hunt as it crosses the road in pursuit of a fox.

The Village issues licenses to trail riders. The annual fee is \$75 for individual residents and \$100 for non-residents, with a one time initiation fee of \$150 for non-residents. Trail riders must follow specified rules and regulations and are required to carry their license and keep a red tag on their horse's saddle. Riders must refrain from riding on posted property, close gates after passing through, and protect property ridden over. The fees paid by the 139 current licensed trail riders help defray Village maintenance expenses.

The bridle trails remain a unique feature of Indian Hill. On these paths Nature's beauty is evident. Varied wildlife and the changing seasons transform the scenery for riders. From one trail, nicknamed Ski Slope, equestrians overlook a broad vista of the Little Miami River. These historic green byways are a community treasure.

