

IMAGES

...THEN AND NOW

From the Indian Hill Historical Society



**Buckingham Lodge
1861**

The Old Christian Church

The stone structure at 8690 Spooky Hollow Road beside Sycamore Creek has a rich history. Built about 1825, it has been a church, mill, residence, barn, and educational center.

The “Second Great Awakening” - or interest in religion – occurred about 1800 when revivals and camp meetings were popular in the then new western states of Ohio and Kentucky. Frontier conditions determined the character of the Awakening. Settlers were struggling to make a livelihood in the wilderness, and clergymen were scarce. Population was scattered, and there was little time for establishing churches or public institutions like schools.

Pioneers were attracted to religious revivals. Families loaded their wagons with provisions and traveled up to 100 miles to attend.

Camping in the woods for days, they cleared trees, built benches and preaching platforms on log stumps, and listened to clergymen’s exhortations. Meetings lasted for days; services continued day and night; and common people were converted by the thousands.



Manifestations of being “slain in the spirit” included fainting, singing, shaking and jerking. Based on their own religious conversion, pioneers returned home to establish independent churches in frontier settlements. Many new sects were created, including the New Lights, or Christians in 1804, a group that emphasized individuals worshipping Christ in their own way.

Rachel and Zelah Rude were among the pioneer settlers of northern Indian Hill, and purchased 100 acres of bottomland near present day Remington on Sycamore Creek about 1802. After inheriting the tract, their son James and wife Nancy gave an acre for the building of a Christian Church at the junction of today’s Spooky Hollow and Loveland-Madeira Roads, a key crossroads then and now.



In 1824 the Rudes established a local Christian Church – a religion that already had a strong following in southern Ohio. The church provided a sanctuary and support for pioneers during hardships and served also as a social institution, bringing together its members for church functions, meals, workdays, and singings. It had a civilizing influence on the frontier, setting forth moral codes where vice was a way of life for many. A stabilizing force in the backwoods, the church by 1873 was overflowing, so the group moved to a larger building at 9885 Old Remington Road, and the small stone church was sold to Conrad Zurwelle.

Zurwelle, a miller, had already purchased and was running Elliott’s Mill just across the road, so he converted the church into a

grain mill. He added a second story to the building, and using steam, he ground wheat and corn for customers. In the 1800’s the church was converted to a private residence, and in the 20th century it became a barn.

Louis and Louise Nippert purchased the Old Church in 1949 when they bought their home at 8300 Spooky Hollow Road. They transferred the structure to the Greenacres Foundation in 1988. It was renovated and is now a large room used as a classroom for students from local schools. The first program at the Old Church was held in 1989. Nowadays customized field trips provide

hands-on experiences for children outside in the woods, creeks, gardens, and nearby environs. Past programs include activities like collecting maple syrup, measuring water quality, and harvesting vegetables. There are currently four full time educators, and programs are held year-round. An average of 5000 visitors attend the Old Church annually. The use of the Old Christian Church by Greenacres Foundation for educational purposes ensures that future environmentalists will treasure Indian Hill’s woodlands and farmlands in the years to come.

