

IMAGES

...THEN AND NOW

From the Indian Hill Historical Society



**Buckingham Lodge
1861**

Memorial Day in Indian Hill

Memorial Day (originally called Decoration Day) is a day of remembrance for those who have died in the nation's service. There are many conflicting stories about its actual origins. Known to have started soon after the Civil War, some people believe the first observation occurred when Mississippi ladies showed impartiality by strewing flowers on the graves of both Confederate and Union soldiers. News of this tribute was instrumental in other towns' decisions to hold similar commemorations. In 1868, the head of the Grand Army of the Republic (an organization of Union veterans) proclaimed that Decoration Day should be observed on May 30th throughout the land. It is believed that date was chosen because flowers would be in bloom all over the U.S.A. Over the succeeding decades, communities developed their own traditions, some holding religious services, placing flowers or flags on graves, or having potluck dinners at the cemetery to remember the deceased. Besides being a current legal holiday, and marking the unofficial start of summer, it has a greater significance.



Indian Hill Community Band, 1904

Since 1878 Indian Hill residents have observed Memorial Day at Armstrong Chapel. From archives and oral histories, it is apparent that this ceremony is one of the Village's longest standing traditions. In earlier years, students from Jefferson School (now Jefferson Center, the administrative office of Armstrong Church) crossed Indian Hill Road and lined up in pairs behind the Old Chapel, boys in one line and girls in the other. They paraded through the cemetery following a veteran. Boys placed American flags in the star holders of tombstones of veterans, and girls placed peonies on other grave markers. One young girl recalled how much she dreaded the ceremony because she had to maintain a solemn demeanor while carrying the peonies, which had ants crawling out of petals and on to her arms. The Indian Hill Community Band played military tunes as the children proceeded through the cemetery. At the conclusion, *Taps* was played on a bugle.

Changes to the program have been made over the years. Flag markers are placed at veteran's graves prior to or after (instead of during) the observance, and flowers are no longer distributed by schoolchildren. The Community Band was replaced by the Indian Hill High School Marching Band during the Bill Fenton era, and currently there is a brass ensemble from the high school. The ceremony now includes ministers from both Armstrong Church and Indian Hill Church. Boy Scout Troop 502 is responsible for raising the American flag at the beginning of the event and for lowering it to half-mast near the conclusion. A Scout recites the Gettysburg Address. The Mayor of Indian Hill delivers a speech which is later published in the Indian Hill Bulletin. Topics that previous mayors have discussed included patriotism, sacrifice, freedom, bravery, and service. The audience sings both the *National Anthem* and *America the Beautiful*. Besides honoring the deceased veterans by reading their names, all living veterans at the ceremony are invited to come to the podium and tell which branch of the armed forces they served in, which war, where they went, and what they did.



Boy Scouts raising the flag

For obvious reasons, the Roll of Honor has increased in numbers. The audience ranges from infants to elderly; and even a few canines attend the event. At the casual gathering, which lasts about an hour, some attendees dress in red, white and/or blue. Residents pay tribute to local veterans who served in 8 wars (Revolutionary, War of 1812, Civil War, Spanish American, World War I, World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam War). By attending this annual observance at the beautiful historic setting, the people of Indian Hill honor deceased community members.