

IMAGES

...THEN AND NOW

From the Indian Hill Historical Society



Buckingham Lodge-1861

Village Christmas Parties through the Years

Several years after the founding of the Indian Hill Historical Society in 1973, the Board of Trustees decided to sponsor an annual holiday gathering. The first “Village Christmas Party” in 1980 featured a Christmas Nostalgia display, and music was provided by two harpists. Since that time, the Christmas Party has been held almost every year at the Little Red Schoolhouse. (In 2002, it was held at Livingston Lodge during the renovation of the Schoolhouse.) A holiday tree decorated by the Society’s Trustees has been the focal point of the many decorations at the festive event.

The music has varied over the years with harps featured four times. In 1983 pianist Shirley Jester began an extended engagement, providing her own special touch of Christmas music until 1987. In 1990 the Village Voices, a vocal chorus from western Cincinnati started performing with their memorable costumes and choreography. The Indian Hill High School Chorale came one year and the Cherub Choir of Armstrong Church charmed the audience for five years. The One More Time String Band appeared in 1995 – complete with fiddle, washboard, and foot-stomping entertainers. In 2000, Pete Michael, pianist and vocalist extraordinaire, was engaged; and he has led the sing-a-long at the keyboard for the past twelve years.

Over the decades, various themes have created a holiday ambiance in the usually sparse schoolroom. Décor has included “The Twelve Days of Christmas”, a gingerbread house extravaganza, a Candyland motif to delight sweet-toothed attendees, and dozens of Nutcrackers and Santas of all shapes and sizes. These decorations have been enhanced by wreaths, garlands, antique candles, natural greenery, bows and sparkling snowflakes around the perimeter of the room.



Entertainment abounds at the party. Youngsters can choose to color Christmas pictures or do crafts. Caricature artists are there to draw guests’ faces. There have been jugglers, magicians, balloon artists, and face painters – all of whom create a very merry (and sometimes chaotic) atmosphere. For several years, a nationally known champion ice carver created Christmas figures from huge blocks of ice on the front lawn. Several times, a petting pony was in the yard too. Guests of all ages delight in the holiday piano melodies and can choose to listen or join in the singing.

Tasty treats are available throughout the afternoon event. Liquid refreshments have included eggnog, punch, and “Schoolhouse Grog” (from a recipe in the Society’s *Treasured Recipes from Camargo to Indian Hill*). Trays and trays of homemade cookies and candies are displayed on the bountifully full buffet table. There is always a wide variety of palate pleasures. The highlight of the party is the arrival of Santa Claus by horse drawn vehicle – either a carriage or a sleigh. Parents and children rush outside to greet Santa as he arrives. Then, inside, Santa listens to the whispered wishes of each child who sits in his lap. Photographs are snapped and more merriment ensues.

The annual Village Christmas Party has been a gift of the Indian Hill Historical Society to residents for thirty three years. That tradition continues again this year. The many guests always enjoy the joyous magic of the season at this wonderful community event.

