

IMAGES

. . . *then and now*

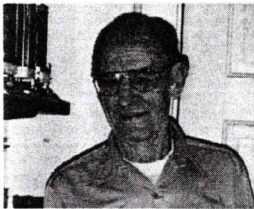
From The Indian Hill Historical Society



Buckingham Lodge
1861

Indian Hill Shooting Ranges, Part I ...as recalled by Clarence Smith, Rangemaster

The Indian Hill Shooting Ranges are located in Camp Dennison on State Route 126 overlooking the Little Miami River. Clarence Smith, the Rangemaster for the last 20 years, lives on the property and supervises the use of the Police Range. Long involved with Indian Hill, Clarence's knowledge of guns and his devotion to shooting have influenced the course of his life.



Hired in 1940 by A.H. Chatfield to serve as a Minuteman in this rural area, Smith was the last man to join this elite private police force, at a starting salary of \$1200 per year. When the Village was incorporated the following year, the Minutemen's cars and equipment were turned over to the Rangers; and Smith joined the force. Smith recalls a population of 500 families then, and the main problems were chicken thieves, horse thieves, and bootlegging.

At the urging of the Rangers' Board of Trustees all Village policemen became superior marksmen. They used a small two-point range behind the original Ranger station - the old Swing Line's Ramona depot at Drake and Shawnee Run. But, for more extensive practice they went to the range in Redbird Hollow.

The Rangers entered Redbird Hollow from lower Given Road, crossing the creek on a rustic swinging bridge, and following the rail bed to a small lodge. They used a 25-yard range along the banks of the creek and a 50-yard range parallel to the road. As they improved their skills, they won many trophies and recognition in local and national competitions. Today, all that remains of the old Ranger lodge in the Hollow is a remnant of the stone fireplace.

In 1958 Redbird Hollow Range was considered dangerous to passersby on trails, and Indian Hill (with the help of Senator Robert Taft) purchased from the federal government 31 acres which had been used as a Civil War post at Camp Dennison. The grounds had an existing National Guard range, and Lee Petrov, a member of the Village Council then and board member of the NRA, laid out the present range. There are actually two separate ranges. This month *Images* covers the upper "police range," and next month the history of the civilian (lower) range will be described.

Forty-five organizations other than the Village Rangers use the Indian Hill Police Range, with Clarence Smith overseeing scheduling and maintenance. Open every day except Sunday, the Police Range is currently reserved on Mondays for the Rangers, but groups on other days include the Hamilton County Police Association and the Secret Service. Regular target practice is mandatory for all policemen; but Smith points out many officers shoot at additional times to improve their skills.

Clarence Smith served 35 years as a Ranger. In addition he was the director of the Indian Hill Junior Rifle Club from 1962 until 1983. His activities with and training of hundreds of Village youths will also be related next month in *Images*.

Smith shoots at least twice each week and still competes in Police Association matches. He has witnessed many changes over the years, but he remains active, enthusiastic, and knowledgeable about firearms. He is a state certified firearms instructor, an NRA firearms instructor, an official referee, and a teacher at the Police Academy at Sharonville. A modest man with a sense of humor, Smith, when asked about the many trophies inside his home, smiles proudly and jokes, "They're not much fun to dust."

