

IMAGES

... then and now

From The Indian Hill Historical Society



Buckingham Lodge
1861

A Look Back at The Camargo Kennels

During the 1920s, a number of Cincinnati's prominent families migrated to the farming settlement of Indian Hill. Many were avid sportsmen and members of the Cincinnati Riding Club, where they played polo and practiced equestrianism. Julius Fleischmann, Learner Harrison, Leonard S. Smith, O. DeGray Vanderbilt, and Lucien Wulsin provided the impetus for the Camargo Hunt, established locally in 1925 and recognized by the Masters of Foxhounds Association in 1928. They cleared trails, constructed panels (jumps), and imported fox cubs. They built elaborate stables and encouraged the sport of foxhunting.

At his 1600-acre Winding Creek Farm, Mr. Fleischmann also built the Camargo Kennels and cottages for qualified professional staff. He provided the first pack of English foxhounds and hired Charles Samways to be huntsman. The Camargo Kennels were constructed with a British design, devised by Peter Beckford, Esq. in his 1898 *Thoughts on Foxhunting*. There were two large lodging rooms and several smaller ones, all with courtyards. In the center of the cork floored kennel was the boiling room (kitchen) where meals for the hounds were prepared, next to the feeding court. There was also a small whelping house and another outbuilding used as a quarantine kennel for new or sick dogs.

The hound kitchen was a vital part of the kennel. It was believed that the hounds, being carnivores, should be kept fit with a diet based on flesh. In Great Britain, neighboring farmers provided injured or dead animals to the huntsman, and in return, the Hunt destroyed varmints on their farms. The source of meat for Camargo's hounds is unknown. The huntsman was responsible for boiling the flesh (mostly cattle, horses, or sheep) and adding oatmeal, barley, and/or vegetables, and sometimes oil to this pudding-like broth.

Charles Samways, Camargo's memorable second huntsman, was a professional British hunting servant whose father had been a kennelman to King Edward VII. Responsible for the actual Hunt, he also supervised the hounds and the kennel. This included cleaning the buildings, the hygiene, health, and exercise and training of dogs, and feeding and breeding them. Samways resided in the Huntsman's Cottage at Winding Creek Farm. For more than 40 years, the Camargo pack was fed flesh by Samways. When he retired, the new huntsman, Russell McKee, began feeding prepared dry food to the hounds.

The Camargo pack became a half-bred pack, with the crossbreeding of English and Welsh hounds. Later American, Kentucky, and Virginia hounds were introduced to the line. Hounds were bred for stamina and scenting ability. The handling of the hounds was a year round, day in day out occupation. The pack was taken out for exercise and training walks 3 times daily, which established a rapport between the hounds and the huntsman and kept the dogs in excellent condition.

By the terms of Mr. Fleischmann's 1969 will, the Camargo Kennels property was transferred to Indian Hill's Green Areas. The Camargo Hunt and kennels moved to Clermont County in 1973 because of the development of Indian Hill and the need for more hunting grounds. The original kennels, though structurally sound, became vacant, and its cottages were rented. In

1989, the Village decided to raze the kennels and cottages since the necessary rehabilitation of the structures was prohibitively expensive.

Pillars with the insignia of the Camargo Hunt mark the entrance to the former site at 8125 Spooky Hollow Road. The Camargo Kennels represented a unique era of Indian Hill history. As the home for the hounds, whose hard work is the heart of foxhunting, it was an iconic structure. Hunt members revere the memory of this former village landmark.

