

IMAGES

...THEN AND NOW

From the Indian Hill Historical Society



**Buckingham Lodge
1861**

The Indian Hill Antiques Fair Remembered

For more than three decades, the Indian Hill Antiques Fair was a highlight of the summer for collectors and dealers who attended the Sunday show held at Indian Hill High School and Middle School, 6845 and 6865 Drake Road. Mostly managed by Kathy and Ray Mongenas, nationally known antiques experts, it was considered one of America's best one day antique events.

Ray and Kathy have devoted their careers to antiques. Early on they owned a shop in Delhi, Collectors II, selling reproduction furniture, gifts, and antiques. They soon phased out the gifts and reproductions and concentrated on antiques. The family moved to Loveland in 1980, where they still live and maintain their inventory in a separate building on their property. As collectors themselves, they are fond of the William and Mary period (early 1700s) and own stunning pieces from that era. For decades, the Mongenas have exhibited at shows in the eastern half of the U.S. and built their reputation and clientele. The couple have displayed antiques at 30-40 shows per year. Educated and personable, they are esteemed by others in the same business.



Ray Mongenas

The Indian Hill Boosters Club was led by Lou and Carol Finkelmeier in the early 1980s. Boosters provided extra funds for extracurricular activities, as state law limits school boards' spending to only half their budget on such events as band and field trips. Lou and Carol approached Ray and Kathy about managing an antiques show to benefit the Boosters, and the four founders began planning. An equitable portion of the admission fee and a percentage of booth rentals was donated to the Boosters, and the dealers and managers received the rest.

The Indian Hill Antiques Fair was advertised locally and nationally by the *Enquirer*, WLW, the *Tri-State Trader*, *Maine Antique Digest*, as well as showcards and posters distributed from Kentucky to Columbus, Ohio. Dealers assembled from far and near—coming from Florida to Maine, Wisconsin, Idaho, Texas, Colorado, and Ohio and bordering states, and the local Cincinnati area. They usually came for the weekend, set up their booths, spent Saturday night (Kathy helped arrange accommodations in nearby hotels), enjoyed Queen City cuisine and attractions, and sold antiques all day Sunday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. One feature of the Fair was the ability of buyers to see and touch items and ask the dealers questions about them. There were about 100 dealers at the Fair. It was extremely popular for merchants and collectors alike. The attendance was phenomenal. Even the first year (1982) the parking lot was filled with cars before the Fair opened.

A wide variety of treasures was offered; everything from baseball cards to highboys could be found. There were leather bound books, maps, all sorts of textiles (from coverlets, quilts, and rugs to lace napkins) maps, pewter, glass, silver, pottery, folk art, arrays of toys, garden and outdoor décor, and high-end period furniture. Merchandise ranged from sewer tile art to museum quality pieces. Some dealers specialized in one field, i.e. Native American memorabilia, while others offered an assortment of pieces. Some well-known East Coast dealers had followers who traveled to Indian Hill to browse for new acquisitions.

Admission to the Fair ranged from \$5 in its early years to \$10 later. Often there was a concession stand offering simple food to the crowds, with proceeds going to the Boosters. Kathy and Ray Mongenas managed to keep the show spectacular for years. They introduced a booth called "Dealer's Choice" which featured a particularly notable selection of antiques. Another of their innovations was an annual special event, which included displays from the Cincinnati Art Museum, a Dayton based antique bicycle group, and locally owned vintage automobiles. One year Wes Cowan, "History Detective" did free single item appraisals for visitors. Also there were souvenirs of the Fair ranging from pins to fans, tee-shirts, pencils, and yardsticks.

Eventually attendance at the Fair dwindled. Times changed as did popular interest in antiques. Fewer dealers came. The internet and social media affected sales. The Indian Hill Antiques Fair became a victim of circumstance, and it ran its course. The final Fair was held in 2014. During its heyday it was fun, had a family feel, and was a positive experience for all involved. For 32 years it was a special summer tradition of Indian Hill.



Fair giveaways