

IMAGES

... then and now

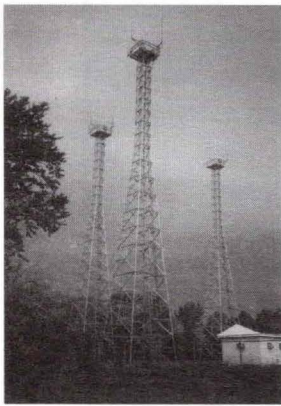
From The Indian Hill Historical Society



Buckingham Lodge

The Story of Radio Range Park

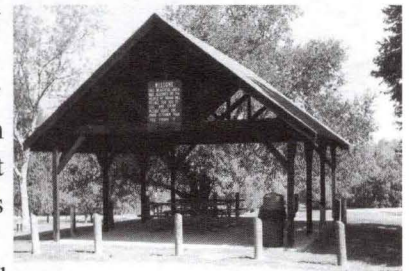
One of eleven recreational areas in the village, Radio Range Park is located on Indian Hill Road. The five radio towers explain the derivation of its name.



Originally, the property was a farm owned by Isaphene and Elias Muchmore. When her husband died in 1892, she remarried M. Waits. There they grew produce and harvested fruit from a large orchard. Decades passed. South of the farm, Lunken Airport was dedicated in 1930; five years after Edmund Lunken gave Cincinnati the Turkey Bottoms land. For a brief time it was the largest municipal airport in the country. Pilots landing used radio beacons to align their planes with the concrete runways. One such early beacon was located at the California, Ohio, waterworks.

During Roosevelt's administration, PWA funds provided for the construction of 56 additional radio stations with beacons throughout the USA. The goal was to stimulate national development of commercial aviation. When it was determined that the best possible additional site near Lunken Airport was the Waits farm, the government leased it, and later purchased it for \$1600. The orchard and other shade trees were removed, and five steel towers - several of them 125 feet high - were built in four months. The radio beacons were operated by remote control from Lunken Airport.

The towers broadcast oral and visual beacons, and used the dot dash system. They had a range of over 100 miles. These enabled pilots to determine their position. When directly over the towers, there was a dead spot - no signal was received. Here pilots cut their motors and glided on to Lunken's runways. The towers also broadcast continuous weather reports and other pertinent data by radio beam.



In 1970 the US Government established the Property Review Board, which turned over under-utilized federal lands to state and local governments. The Village Manager, A. Wray White, informed the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation and the General Services Agency that Indian Hill wanted to attain the FAA tract with its now obsolete radio transmitting towers and soon thereafter 10 ½ acres was conveyed to the village. The Assistant Secretary of Defense presented the land to Indian Hill Police Chief John Diekmeyer at a ceremony in Cleveland. Council authorized making the property into a park, and monies for improvements were provided over a 4-year period from Green Area Funds.

Landscape architect John Bentley developed a site plan. A curved entry led to the existing transmitter building, which was remodeled as a shelter area. Wood chip walking paths were installed. Deciduous and conifer trees were planted in reforestation areas, and the towers were screened by additional greenery. Parts of the existing meadow remained as open field space, and cover plants were added on the east side for wild bird habitat. A parking lot was built, and picnic tables were placed at selected sites. All new plantings were native Ohio specimens; and the entire project cost \$13,075.

For over 30 years, Indian Hill residents have enjoyed the recreational facilities at Radio Range Park. Bluebird boxes, installed by Svante Humbla in the 1980's, are monitored by volunteers. The Service Department maintains the park and shelter area so picnickers, bird watchers, and families can walk its paths and see an array of wildlife and greenery near the old transmitter stations.