

(in the 1800s and early 1900s)

from The Quartoquecentennial of a Pride Community-1978 Hilliard, Ohio

by Mary Miller

Adults as well as children need some form of recreational activities whether it be one in which they participate or one that they can watch and enjoy. The Hilliard Board of Education recognized this fact when in 1875 they passed a motion to have singing in the schools and in 1879 granted permission to the Hilliard Brass Band to use one of the rooms. In 1880 a Dramatics Club was also using the school facilities. In 1894-95 the high school sponsored a six-course lecture series, to be held at the Methodist Church. The first mention of a Fourth of July celebration was in 1887 when there was a community picnic in Scofield's Grove, northeast of the village. At the turn of the century there were bowling lanes, located on the west side of Main Street, between Norwich and Center Streets, and billiard rooms, across the street. It is not know how long these existed, but the Village Council at this time were regulating the hours they could be open. Today these activities are located in bowling allies which were opened in the early 1960's: Hilliard Lanes, located on Scioto Darby, west of Walcutt Road, and Ten Pin Alley Lanes, once called Wildcat Lanes (and called Sunset Lanes until late 1977), located on Constitution off Main Street.

The Plain City Advocate makes mention of some of the activities in which the residents of Hilliard participated to enjoy themselves. In 1906 a Farmers' Institute was held at the Methodist Church. In 1907 the first mention is made of horse racing held during the Fourth of July Community Picnic in Weaver Grove (formerly Scofield Grove). Each week during the summers of 1913, 1914 and 1915 George Wing, Sr., of Dublin, showed silent movies in an open air theater located on Norwich Street east of the bank.

Hilliard Auditorium

During the spring of 1916 the Hilliard Auditorium was built on Winterringer property on Center Street, west of the Winterringer store. It was opened with the high school commencement exercises. On May 27, 1916 the first motion pictures were shown with 500 persons in attendance. The management had secured the Pathe Service and presented shows on Wednesday and Saturday night of each week. There would also be some type of vocal music or readings. Esther, (now Mrs. Don Sifrit) daughter of Frank Winterringer, played the piano during the showing of the films. This auditorium continued to be a place of entertainment. There were performances of a traveling opera company, magician's shows, basketball games (an independent team made up of ex-high school players) wrestling matches and dances. The Hilliard Band, under the direction of John Wright, High School Music Teacher, with approximately twelve adult members, was in popular demand for all social functions. They sponsored a dance in 1919 which featured the Heber Brothers of Columbus, reportedly the highest paid dance band in the area. There were dancing classes at which one could learn the one-step or two-step and the waltz at a cost of ten lessons for \$5.00. Churches and organizations held bazaars and dinners in this large room. The arrival of the talking pictures in the late 1920's put an end to the movie theater in Hilliard for people could drive to Columbus to view this new marvel as well as be entertained by the very exciting and dazzling stage presentations (vaudeville).

During the 1920's there was an independent baseball team which had a ball field on the northwest edge of town.

In August, 1917, the first Chatauqua was held in a tent in Weaver Grove. It was held over a weekend so that all could attend to enjoy the educational and entertaining programs.

During these early years there was a hotel located on the east side of Main Street, about halfway between Norwich and Center. Here a traveling salesperson or visiting dignitaries might have room and board. The first proprietor (early 1870's) was Lattimer, later there was Sherbuhdy House. In 1919 it was mentioned that the Columbus North Riding Club rode to Hilliard to have lunch here.

One of the favorite money making projects of various groups was the Box Social. The ladies would wrap a delicious lunch in brightly colored boxes. These were auctioned off, without revealing the owner's name, to the highest bidder who then shared the lunch. Sometimes the gentleman might bid on several boxes to make sure that he would secure the partner he wished.

Because Weaver Grove was such a popular meeting place for reunions, picnic, etc., a five acre section of it was given in 1934 to Hilliard for a park. This was the beginning of the Hilliard Park System. It now contains tennis courts, playground equipment, and picnic tables.

That there is a little "ham" in all of us is apparent. Numerous plays and talent shows have been recorded through the years. The Redmen had a minstrel show in 1928 which they presented not only locally but to other communities. There was always a play with local talent at the Farmers' Institute. The schools produced at least two plays per year. Grade school promotional exercises were a time for every child to give a reading, sing or act in a small play or skit.