

THE INDIAN HILLS COLONY

In 1926 several prominent business and professional men from Detroit began the development of a private community dedicated to outdoor life and recreation. Members of this group were Colonel Charles S. Cole, Charles Stinchfield, Jr., George L. Canfield, J. French Paddock, and Harold DuCharme.

They purchased 647.45 acres of land along West Commerce Road in Milford Township, consisting of the Allmand, Ruggles, Hill, Magoffin, Ladd, Feeney, Caswell and Jackson farms, and all of the Sherwood and Clark farms, described as some of the most beautiful rolling land, wooded stretches, lake, trout streams, etc., in Oakland County. It was their plan to improve the natural beauty of the hills by naturalistic landscape treatment, and to preserve it by "very careful restrictions for all time to come." They planned to construct over ten miles of private roads and fourteen miles of bridle paths, as well as a dam that would double the area of Indian Garden Lake. Additional amenities would be a nine-hole golf course, bathing beaches, tennis court, and practice greens.

The developers expected to attract two hundred and fifty business and professional men and their families to the colony. They felt it would appeal to those who wanted a permanent year-round country home, a permanent or semi-permanent summer home, an inter-season lodge to fill in between the permanent summer home in the north, winter home in the south and the town house: a week-end lodge.

The colony was to be zoned into architectural areas, with Adirondack lodges, Swiss chalets, and modified rustic effects predominating in the northwest section; English type country homes predominating in the northeast and central sections; and Spanish mountainside and Pueblo Indian types in the south and southwest section.

Artistic road signs, a flint arrow head painted with an Indian with a drawn bow, the poised arrow pointing the direction to the Indian Hills colony, were placed along the roads.

The improvement work was being done by the Dunbar Construction Company under the direction of J. French Paddock, a prominent landscape engineer of Detroit, and one of the sponsors of the community. He had just completed his home in the Indian Hills, known as the "Headwater Lodge," on Indian Garden Lake.

The colony also remodeled the old Sherwood homestead into the Indian Hills Tavern, designed to serve members of the colony and "their many friends in Milford." The sponsors were most anxious to become better acquainted with their friends and neighbors in Milford, and held an outdoor party on the Bluffs at Indian Hills in July of 1926, and another entertainment, which included the former owners of farms in the Indian Hills tract, in August of the same year.

This ambitious development disappeared from the news by the next year. A visual scrutiny of the area today reveals little left of the Indian Hills Colony, with the possible exception of the "Headwater Lodge" still standing on Indian Garden Lake and a private road running north from West Commerce Road called "Indian Hills Road." The fate of the project is not known.

References:

The Milford Times: June 4, 1926; July 23, 1926; July 30, 1926; and Aug. 6, 1926