

BRISTOL TOWNSHIP

The Alpha Omega Chapter, Alpha Delta State, of the Delta Kappa Gamma Society International, an honorary women educators' group, in cooperation with the Martha Holden Jennings Foundation, presents a brief history of Bristolville Township and its schools.

Bristolville celebrated its own Centennial in August of 1905 in the park which had been laid out and designed by M. D. Phelps in 1864.

Bristol was named after a town in Connecticut and was surveyed and laid out by Alfred Wolcott, an agent for the Connecticut Land Company, who received a section for his labor.

The Civil Township of Bristol was organized in 1807, and at the first election in 1808 Lyman Potter was elected Justice of the Peace. Also elected besides the trustees were a clerk, a constable, an overseer of the poor, a treasurer, fence viewer, and a lister of property. Taxes in the rural area during early settlement were 20 cents per house and 18 cents per cow.

The first permanent settler in the north part of town was Abraham Baughman, in 1804, on what was known as the Satterlee farm in 1905. Mr. Baughman also erected the first saw mill and grist mill.

Many of the early settlers were German, and early pioneers brought an abundant supply of farm animals. Another early settler was Jacob Norton, who came and began farming in 1806. Different histories of the area state that as early as 1802 William Sager and three companions came from Virginia to find a spot in Bristol. One of Sager's companions was William Barbe, who purchased 200 acres of land. Gabriel Sager moved into the community in 1810.

The northwest portion of the community was settled by such families as Martin, Lloyd, Baughman, Potter, Cline, Kagy -- to name a few.

Among the early settlers, the families who came were from 11 states and countries. These families had ancestors in the Revolutionary War, the French and Indian Wars, the War of 1812, and the Civil War.

Bristol also led the way in the Temperance movement, as local residents refused to serve whiskey or wine at a barn raising, wedding, and other events -- or allow its sale. There were several local anti-drinking crusades back before 1858. It is said that in Bristol one of the first public destructions of a saloon by women was staged. In the 1850's a school house was sold to a man by the name of Miller for use as a saloon. This so incensed some of the ladies in the community that a group of them raided the place. Some of the ladies who participated with great fervor were Mrs. Aaron Fenton, Mrs.

Jessie Thompson, Misses Sue, Mary and Sophia Sager, Electa and Celia Mayhew, Rebecca Norton, Stella House, Ann Pattengel, and Hattie Baughman.

The ladies raided the structure while Miller tried to defend it and himself with a hatchet. Miller brought suit against the ladies, but the township backed them, and the case resulted in a mere \$1 fine against the ladies.

Suit against the women involved quite an array of local talent from the local area and other areas. Some of the men involved in the court case were John Hutchine (later a member of Congress), William Forest and Robert Ratliff, lawyers in the Warren area.

Bristol had always been forward in advancing education from the early one-room school districts to the formation of the special district in 1884 and township supervision in 1892. The first school was taught by Gabriel Sager in 1810. German was the only formal subject taught.

The first English school was taught by Seth Ensign two years later. Later, Lucy Badger “kept school.” The Sager, Barbe, and Norton families erected the first log cabin school at North Bristol in 1812. Many district one-room schools were built after 1812.

The first church was the Mennonite, fathered by Gabriel Sager, which lasted until Gabriel died. The Mennonites also organized a school in 1810, but it was short-lived.

A Christian Church was organized in 1820, a Congregational in 1817, and a Methodist in 1818 by Reverend Ira Eddy. This church was part of a circuit extending from Lake Erie to Warren.

The first postmaster was Gideon Sprague. The post office was in the eastern part of the community in a location called Spokane.

The town flourished as one of the best cultivated areas around, proud of its school and churches, its shaded roadways, inviting and prosperous homes, and its park area. The soil of the township was greatly diversified with a gravelly loam predominately. Most of the area was flat to gently rolling with a hilly area in eastern portion. Big Yankee Creek took a southeasterly direction through the township from the north center line.

The first storekeeper was Samuel Swelland. Lyman Potter kept the first tavern. The stage began operations through the township in 1828.

The first mill was erected in 1806 by William Sager for Abraham Baughman. This was both a grist and a saw mill. The area was rich in lumber and farming. Baughman Creek was alive with fish, and the early settlers salted and stored them for winter food.

The first regular physician was Chandler Chapman. The railroad station was located at Bristolville Station on the Pennsylvania line about three-fourths of a mile to the east.

In the paper written by Mollie Norton in 1905 for the Bristol Centennial, some interesting facts were given about schools before the turn of the century. Mrs. Norton reported that in the “old-time” teaching days teachers in the area boarded a few days or weeks with various families, “depending on the spirit of hospitality manifested.” She further reported that primary education was of more importance in former days than at that time, after 1900. “Correct punctuation in reading and writing was an accomplishment that is now sadly neglected,” she said.

Mollie Norton further lamented the fact that so many more books and changes were being introduced that it is no wonder pupils were lacking in rudiments, or a good primary education. If a boy were bad in the “old times,” he was made to sit between two girls -- girls, the opposite. (I doubt if that would work now.)

Mollie Norton went on to relate that in the “early days” duties were performed as privileges such as passing water, cleaning, helping to build fires (no teacher during the “old days” would ever dream of being paid for these duties). Boys and girls were separated at recess, and scholars were taught to be respectful and polite – including such things such as bowing. Sometimes teachers treated students with bags of apples, since apples were scarce and candy was much too expensive.

Mollie went on to state that wages for teachers in the “old days” were from 75 cents to \$1 a week. Teachers, too, were dependent on their own ideas and resources. Copy books were made of fools-cap, and ink was made by boiling a bit of maple bark and adding a bit of copperas.

Mollie declared that too much was planned for teachers -- that they didn't need to work as hard as formerly. She stated, “Their work is so planned for them now that it is like our own breakfast foods – made ready to eat without work, or our clothing which is ready to don without care or work on our part.” She went on to state, “Yet the old time teacher laid a foundation of which she had no need to be ashamed. The noble men and women who received their education from a few months or years at most in the old district schools became “stalwarts.”

The following women were among the many who have taught in Bristol Township: Mrs. P.W. Gardner, Hannah Davis, Sophie Metcalf, Ruth Brocket, Susanna Sager, Amanda McClain, Clara Jones, Ann Howard, Olive Adams, Maria Buckingham, Mary Norton, Dorothy Hottel, Mary Almire Perry, Celia Mayhew, Mollie Norton.

Some interesting facts can be gleaned from an annual report of the public schools of Bristolville given in 1904 -- one year before the Centennial.

The board of education consisted of three people acting as President, Secretary, and Treasurer. There were four people on the faculty -- one acting as superintendent as well as teacher. The fall term consisted of 16 weeks (Sept. 5 - Dec. 23), the winter, 12 weeks (Jan. 9 - March 31), and the spring term, 8 weeks (April 10 - June 2). Rhetorical exercises were held regularly for all students.

Monthly exams were given to all pupils with a daily average below 90. Exams were given at the end of each term, and no credit was given for grades under 70 for graduation.

There was a complete course of study for each grade, with required review of the previous year as indicated. The report included a roll of all students back to the year 1888. The new Bristol school was built in 1918 on Route 88, east of Route 45, beside the Carnegie Library.

The Bristol Public Library was originally a Carnegie Library built in 1912, mostly through the efforts of N. A. Gilbert, a retired lawyer from Cleveland and his wife Anna, the daughter of one of Bristol's original surveyors. Mrs. Gilbert donated the land and also had the "interview" with Mr. Carnegie.

Some of the industries that have existed in Bristol, other than stores and barber shops, have been: feed mills, saw mills, a table factory, sorghum mill, the Dinkey Railroad (which ran from Mecca to Oakfield), livery stables, inns, a barrel factory, buggy and wagon shop.

In 1853, there was a busy life at the Stover farm with its sugar-bush and "teacher boarding." Students were coming and going from the Mutton Hill College across the road. The arrival of a Railroad in 1859 came with mixed emotions. It was the same year one of Bristol's native sons, John H. Kagy, was killed at Harper's Ferry. Bristol gained state-wide recognition when the first Civil War monument in Ohio was built there in 1863. The famed Lincoln impersonator, Ben Chapin, was also a Bristol native.

There has been some growth in the area (1840 - 802 population, 1880 - 1,162, 1970 - 2,404) but nothing to detract from its rural atmosphere, its stately old houses, tree-lined roads, and pride in school and community affairs.

This script by Mary Jane Carr, narrated by Gene Roberts. These programs were prepared by the Delta Kappa Gamma Society, in cooperation with the Martha Holden Jennings Foundation, to promote a better understanding of the history of the townships of Trumbull County with a focus on early education and the role of woman educator.