

BROOKFIELD

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 history of Brookfield and its school.

It was a beautiful land of high rolling hills, many springs and streams, with a variety of wild animals living among the trees and along the waterways. By the surveyors, it was known as Tract #4 in Range I. It was bounded on the north by Hartford Township, on the west by Vienna -- by Hubbard to the south and on the east by the rolling hills along the Pennsylvania line. The westward slope of the hills was known as the Slope locally. By 1870 it was so commonly identified in that way that postal authorities could properly deliver a letter to a person living in Slope, Ohio.

In the late 1700's, though, such communication was impossible. It was then a wild and lonely land, but not uninhabited. There were Indians -- mostly of the Erie tribe, but some of the Huron and other wandering tribes. These often encamped along the streams, hunting and fishing until they were ready to move on. The Indians did not often quarrel with the white men. There are some recorded incidents of savage conflicts, but for the most part fierce mighty warriors were few in the area. The Indians either moved on or some even began to enjoy the white man's ways and adopted them. The Indian boys and white boys often played together; in wrestling the white boys could often throw the Indians but rarely could white boys outrun the Indians.

Other early human inhabitants were those whites who had "drifted" into the area from the south and east, and had just taken over portions of unused land upon which they could "eke out" a living for themselves. These people known then as "squatters" were later given title to such land providing they had remained on it for at least twelve years. All this was a problem with which the land agents of the Connecticut Land Company and Mr. Samuel Hinckley would have to deal in later years. Mr. Hinckley -- a Massachusetts gentleman -- made his purchase of the whole tract from the above land company in 1797. For it he paid the sum of \$12,903.23 -- less than a dollar per acre. Mr. Hinckley named the area Brookfield, possibly for a Massachusetts town. Many families from Connecticut made their plans to leave the east and seek their fortunes in what to them then was the far west.

One of Mr. Hinckley's first acts was to set aside a portion at the center of his land tract, an area which he designated as "the green". He also ear-marked an acre for the cemetery. These plots were later cleared by Jacob Humason who became one of the earliest teachers in Brookfield.

Soon the selling of land portions began, and the first parcel was sold to James McMullin Sr. His plot contained 160 acres in the eastern part of the township. Mr. McMullin built his log cabin near a spring. It was a rough structure of unhewn notched logs fitted together at the ends and "chinked" with mud. Split logs known as puncheons were laid down for flooring. This remained the McMullin home for many years. Seven

sons and many grandchildren were born to this family as the years went by. Such family groups, through successive generations, have made their contributions to the area's population, culture and economy.

More and more white families came from the east and south to make their homes. Among them were families whose names were Chatfield, Hughes, Hart, Newcomb, Briggs, Alderman and Ulp -- to name only a few. There were many others also and by 1810 Brookfield Township was organized with a group of men elected by settlers to be officers in charge of public affairs. These men were called trustees and the names of Cunningham, Patrick, and Smith are among those who served during the first years in this capacity. The primary duties of the trustees were to supervise the building and care of roads. By 1811 these were laid out and followed a well-planned pattern. In fact many of the original roadbeds are still in use today. It was necessary that these roads be provided to give all settlers access to points east, south, west and north. It was necessary too that the Center be within the range of all.

In Brookfield's early settlement days people were much aware that their children were growing up far from the educational advantages available in the eastern and seaboard states. We could pass over the early school years in Brookfield and fail completely to appreciate the very great achievement of the early settlers in the field of education. We should not allow this to happen. The problem must be considered as it then was. There was no school board -- no taxes to provide funds -- no state aid or federal funds. There was no course of study in any subject except by those who had attended schools in the east. There was no equipment -- few teaching aids -- fewer tools and materials needed for building and no labor-saving devices. We must then ask -- How did these people begin, and with what? They began with themselves using their determination and their strong wills to provide for their children whatever educational advantages they possibly could. They felled the trees as needed for logs. Horses were used to pull the stones from creeks for foundations. Leather made from animal skins provided hinges for doors. Later nails and a few tools came from the east or south by way of river boat or wagon train. It must be remembered that building schools was done after the necessary job of making a living for families was completed by these fathers. Progress was slow. The first school stood along Big Yankee Run and was built in 1807. One by one more schools were built as needed. All in all ten were provided with two near the Center and the others along the roads most convenient for the school population. The first teacher in the area was Miss Lois Sanford who taught at the Yankee Run School in 1807. She had come out from Connecticut. Her salary was 75 cents a week plus board at the Jones' home. During the summer Miss Sandford worked in the Jones' store to pay for the food she'd eaten during the school term. She received twelve dollars in cash for a four-month term -- the cash being contributed by the parents. This was in 1807. By 1911 Brookfield was paying their teachers forty dollars for a first year and fifty for a four and a half month term with no board included. Considering that almost a century has been spanned between 1807 and 1911 it appears as small progress, but progress it was.

From 1807 until 1868 the Brookfield Township schools were under the supervision of the road overseers as there was no other school board. In 1868 a state law

in Ohio was passed calling for a separation of the school system from other township affairs. Prior to 1868 any directives came from the road supervisors and the parents. The three R's were to be stressed and the teacher could use her own creativity in adding any additional courses. There were limits to be recognized, however, as learning was a serious business. There were few discipline problems as each child knew his parents expected him or her to make the school hours count. Parents demanded good behavior and laid down strict rules from the pupils and for teachers as well. If a pupil failed to comply the teacher could be reasonably sure of support from the parents who were contributing a share of the teacher's salary.

Miss Sanford, the first teacher in Brookfield, must have achieved success with her pupils. In her first class there were fourteen pupils with an age range from six to fifteen. Since none had had any previous schooling they all began together in the first grade. Miss Sanford became "Aunt Lois" to both pupils and parents.

It is important for us to remember that while learning was a serious business in our first schools, there was also fun and recreation. Pupils devised their own games and took advantage of seasonal activities to add enjoyment and interest in their lives. Perhaps much of the fun developed from the need to be creative in devising games and the home-made equipment "dreamed up" by the players themselves.

In the early 1800's the township had been divided into thirteen school districts. However, only ten of these were ever built. As each one was completed the next was planned and provided as pupil-population grew. Each one was built a little better than the one before it.

By the mid 1800's Brookfield gave promise of becoming an area of leadership in Ohio. People were coming to the area in great numbers. Some of them had acquired sufficient education to cause them to raise the goals for their children. There were more teachers, more physicians and persons interested in a wider variety of economic pursuits. The area was receiving more supplies from the outside and its people were putting to use the natural and human resources of the community. Prospects were bright as industries grew and multiplied. Treadmills were used for power to run machines where possible in the foundry, woolen mill and cabinet works. Coal mines were very important as they opened in the township. There were saw mills and grist mills and from these mines and mills products were being sent out to other areas. It was a period of growth and expansion and it appeared likely to continued.

The schools were taking part in the area's advancement. Ideas and lessons gained at school were carried home and often resulted in improved conditions there. During this hey-day of prosperity all but two of the one-room schools were replaced by several other buildings larger and better equipped. A two-story elementary building built in 1904 and a two-story brick building erected in 1908 were provided to take care of the educational program of the younger children. Horse-drawn "buses" transported the pupils as these schools were at the Center but all children of the township were involved.

Each van carried 18 to 20 pupils. Side curtains kept some of the wind, snow and rain away from the passengers.

By 1912 Brookfield opened its first high school and the first graduation was in 1914. Prior to this a student seeking a high school education had to enroll in either the Hartford Center Academy or attend Youngstown's Rayen High.

Much has taken place in Brookfield Township since the dream of prosperity was vibrant. High hopes for a thriving and prosperous community had faded. To a large extent, the industrial and commercial advances have withered. At the present time there are three elementary schools -- Stevenson, Curtis and Addison scattered over the township and placed in the areas of highest density of pupils' population. There is also a junior high and a high school, and together these schools provide a creditable school program for Brookfield's youth.

Although Brookfield has emerged as a less prosperous township than have some of its neighbor-areas (which began with much less potential), it remains a good and healthful community. There is an interest among its citizens to provide an adequate educational program for all Brookfield's children. This fact must be recognized as on May 17, 1977 the Warren Tribune carried an account concerning the purposes of a Brookfield Citizens' Committee. After study and investigation, the committee recommends to the Brookfield Board of Education that a new school be provided in the near future. In the early 1800's the citizens were interested and involved in education. In 1977 the people are again through their representatives stating the educational needs of the community as they see them. They are asking members of the Board of Education to initiate whatever steps are necessary and advisable to provide an adequate modern and sound educational program for Brookfield youth. Parents and all citizens are involved and keep on being so from one generation to another. This is the American tradition in action.

This script by Lorene Beatty, narration 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 in Trumbull County with a focus on early education and the role of women educator.