

## FARMINGTON

### A HISTORY OF FARMINGTON TOWNSHIP AND ITS SCHOOLS

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 Farmington and its schools.

Farmington Township, located in northwest Trumbull County, originally called Henshaw, played an important role in Trumbull County history. Farmington had eleven original owners and changed hands many times until finally most of it belonged to Solomen Bond. It was originally named Henshaw as Samuel Henshaw was one of the original owners. The name Farmington was given to the township by E. P. Wolcott who before coming to Trumbull County lived in Farmington, Connecticut.

The first settlers to live in Farmington were David Curtis and Captain Lewis Wolcott. They came in 1806. The first women to come were Mrs. Elizabeth Curtis, Mrs. Anna Ledyard Curtis, and Mrs. Elihu Moses. As other early pioneer women, they left comfortable homes to come to Farmington and live the hard rugged life of the pioneers.

Farmington was first settled mainly by Connecticut people. Its growth was a slow one and not until long after its organization was it thickly populated.

In the winter months of 1807-1808 most of their provisions were purchased in Mesopotamia. They bought venison from the Indians and on one occasion purchased a fine buck for a silver dollar. Many Indian artifacts have been unearthed for more than a century from a prehistoric Indian mound one mile north of the village, near the banks of Swine Creek.

The early roads were paths marked by blazed trees. There was a route of travel from Warren via Bristol and Mesopotamia, running diagonally through the northeast of Henshaw and a bridge across Grand River about one mile and a fourth northeast of the center of the township. Most of the 1807-1808 winter was spent in clearing the land, and in the spring crops were put in that didn't yield too many crops. The women and children played a big part in helping the men clear and plant the land.

We think of the pioneer women as always being at hard labor, but occasionally a woman, either from executive ability or inclination, managed to retain some of the ways of eastern society. Mrs. Amos P. Woodford and her sister Miss Wheeler held Saturday afternoon receptions around 1814 which the young neighborhood attended. They were taught to hold polite conversation, how to appear in company, and how to do fine sewing and embroidery. This was probably the first informal schooling in the township.

The first marriage in the township was of Lewis Wolcott and Nancy Higgins. The first birth was that of Caroline Wolcott on September 12, 1808.

The first person to die in Farmington was Mary Wolcott. She was a daughter of Josiah Wolcott, and on her trip to the West, when she walked much of the way, she fell from a log while crossing a stream into the water, caught a cold and later died in 1808. The spot which was cleared for her grave is now used for the cemetery.

Anna Bruce, the wife of Asahel Belden, was the first woman to construct an oven in Farmington. She grew tired of trying to bake in a kettle so made an oven for herself.

The first woman suffragist was Mrs. Samuel French. She was not only fearless as to principles, but on meeting a bear in the forest saved her life by suddenly opening her umbrella and shouting at the same time.

Mr. Stewart, of Vienna, established the first store in Farmington. It stood on the southeastern corner at the center. Part of the old store still stands today. A stagecoach tavern was operated in 1810 at what is now known as Dulka's Corners on the Warren to Painesville State Road. Farmington was known as a town of temperance. Spiritous beverages had to be brought from other areas or made at home.

A narrow gauge railway from early times transversed the township from southeast to northeast and was later absorbed by the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. Operating for varying lengths of times in all parts of the township were flax, flour and saw mills and cheese factories. A part of the original Old Creamery that stood on the corner of College Street has been remodeled into a lovely home today. An old blacksmith shop still stands opposite the town park with an original Blacksmith Shop sign hanging over its door.

In the spring of 1816, the first schoolhouse was erected in Farmington on the northeast corner of the center near a spring and a pear tree. Josiah Wolcott and Captain Benton cut the logs. Erastus Wolcott hauled the logs. Almira Hannah was the first school teacher of Farmington. Erastus and Almira were later married and together they played a major part in early education of the children of Farmington. Very soon after the erection of this first schoolhouse a second one was put up where the business section of the town now stands.

In 1831 the Farmington Academy was established. It was known as this until 1849. Up until seventy-five years ago dark suited young men and modest young women in long flowing gowns came from all over Ohio to attend this institution of higher learning. James Greer was the first principal and so successful that he sometimes had three hundred students. It was so popular that in 1849 the old building was abandoned and money was given from many liberal people in the county to build a new three-story school. It was known as the "Farmington Normal School." The Congregationalists, a religious group, was in charge of the school. However, in 1854 the Methodist Church took over. They felt that all people from all religious denominations should have equal advantage and be able to use the facility. The name was again changed. It became the "Western Reserve Seminary." In 1868 two dormitories were constructed and students could board. Many state senators and other influential people were educated here. In 1854 the faculty compared favorably with any other in the country. The campus

consisted of three acres of lawn and stately shade trees on the north side of College Street and two acres on the south side directly opposite.

By the turn of the century times and conditions and centers of education had changed and caused the school to deteriorate and enrollment to decline. The last class of six students was graduated June 7, 1906, and after three quarters of a century of continuous schooling the doors were shut. Fire later destroyed the academy which was being used as a hotel. One of the most distinguished alumni of the academy was C.E.W. Griffith, uncle of the elder Lynn B. Griffith, former judge and a native of Farmington. Mr. Griffith was a world renowned Shakespearean reader. He was the only reader in the world who could read the entire thirty-six plays of William Shakespeare as well as doing Dante's work. His home, Shakespeare Cottage, was kept intact for many years following his death as a memorial. It still serves as a home in the community.

The Congregational Church of Farmington Center was organized October 8, 1817 by Reverend Joseph Badger and Abiel Jones. It had eleven members. The church grew very slowly. In 1818 the Methodist Episcopal Church was first formed and to support a minister the people in the congregation signed and pledged an amount of money that would be paid by selling wheat, corn, rye, oats, etc. A Baptist church was later formed. Dr. Abiel Jones served the town both as a doctor and as the minister to the Congregational Church. He was considered a very efficient doctor and minister.

The beautiful cemetery in Farmington lies between the center of Farmington and West Farmington. It is well kept and presents a beautiful appearance when entering the town. In the cemetery is a soldiers' monument made of marble structure. It was erected by the citizens of the township in commemoration of the gallant services rendered by the soldiers from Farmington in the late war of the Rebellion. It was dedicated in 1865 at a cost of fourteen hundred dollars and James A. Garfield, one of our former presidents, gave the dedication speech.

In 1831 the Farmington Post Office was established. It was later moved to West Farmington which caused a verbal war between the two villages for the possession of the office which lasted many years. It was finally settled by the re-establishment of the Farmington Center office. Today, one post office serves Farmington and West Farmington. It is located on Main Street in West Farmington.

Several industries were begun in the early history of Farmington. A saw mill was built on Grand River by Josiah Wolcott and Eastman Small in 1816. By the 1860's a flax-mill was built and employed ten to twenty-five hands. It burned in 1871 and a flour and grist mill was erected in its place. Farmington also had a Standard Chair Company, a cabinet factory and two cheese factories in the 1870's. These industries later became obsolete and were not replaced by other more modern industries.

Today, Farmington still remains as one of Trumbull County's townships. It has grown from a township of a few to close to one thousand. Even though it is small it has not lost its identity as a prosperous township. Many small businesses are in operation as

well as several small industries. If the early settlers of Farmington could pay a visit to this small northeast township that was known to them as Range 5, Township 6, and called Henshaw and later Farmington, I am sure they would be very proud of the accomplishments that it has had in the last one hundred seventy-one years.

*Script by Linda Woodford...Narration by Gene Roberts. These programs were prepared by the Delta Kappa Gamma Society in cooperation with 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 the woman educator.*