

FOWLER

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

Fowler Township, formerly known as Westfield, contained 16,500 acres. It was purchased from the Connecticut Land Company by Samuel Fowler of Westfield, Massachusetts, and sold to settlers under his direction. Abner Fowler, brother of Samuel, in consideration of services rendered in surveying the land, received 100 acres at the center of the township. The township was purchased by Mr. Fowler for less than 50 cents per acre.

Fowler is the fifth township of the second range and is bounded on the north by Johnston, on the east by Hartford, on the south by Vienna and on the west by Bazetta.

Fowler Center, a neat and enterprising little village, is situated about one mile west of Fowler Station. Tyrell Hill, a lively growing place, is on the southern township line, about one mile from the corner of Fowler and Hartford.

Abner Fowler was the first settler. The first cabin was built by him in the spring of 1799 and stood on the side of the public square, a little northeast of the crossroads. Mr. Fowler's wife died before he left Massachusetts, and he lived alone in his pioneer dwelling until other settlers arrived. The Fowlers were descendants of one of the oldest of New England families, and several of them were prominent both in the affairs of their native state and of the nation.

In 1806, seven families arrived from Connecticut after a journey of from four to six weeks. They settled in the southeast corner of the township in the vicinity of Tyrell Hill, in Tyrell Corners, named for Elijah Tyrell.

There were Indians in the township of Fowler when the white men arrived, but there was nothing unusual about them either in their lives or the way in which they treated the white men.

A sawmill, gristmill, and machine shop were located at Tyrell's Corners soon after the Connecticut settlers arrived; and this made the settlement a most important one, as many of the implements used by the pioneer farmers were manufactured here. The first store was opened at Tyrell's Corners by Elijah Barnes, and stores were later opened at McClurg and Fowler Center.

The first frame house in Fowler was built in 1815 by James Fowler, the son of Samuel Fowler, the proprietor of the land of the township.

The first trial was an action for stealing instituted against Abijah Bolton by his brother-in-law. Bolton was convicted and sent to the penitentiary. The township had been remarkably free from crimes of a violent nature.

The first school in the township was opened in 1806 in Wakemen Silliman's cabin with Miss Esther Jennings, afterwards Mrs. Abner Fowler, Jr., as a teacher. This school was for the benefit of the children of recently arrived Connecticut settlers, and it was 1814 before a township school was built. This school, located about a mile south of the center, was taught by Miss Polly Nichols. The previous winter Newman Tucker had taught a school in the home of John Vaughn. By 1921, Fowler schools were centralized, with H. J. Finsterwald being principal of the high school, Frances Houston as high school teacher, Madlean Clark, Myrl Groves, Edna Bascom and Alberta Cratsley, grade school teachers, and Mrs. Daisy Currie, instructor of music.

In 1807 Reverend Joseph Badger, the noted pioneer missionary, visited the settlement and preached his first sermon.

The Methodist Church was organized about the year 1815 by Reverend Alfred Bronson and consisted of himself and his wife, Abner Fowler and wife, Newman Tucker and wife, and Charles Tucker. These were all of the first members. Soon after, Reverend Joseph Davis, a local preacher, and his wife joined with seven members of the Barnes family. The first church was a small frame building erected south of the center.

The Disciples church organization took place in the various homes of the new settlers, then in the warerooms near Mr. Clawson's store, and in the old carding-mill property now owned by Mr. Alderman and used as a nailkeg head factory. The society built their church during the year of the great hailstorm in 1852. A. C. Williamson was the architect. The church is in a very prosperous condition (1921). In 1953 this 100-year old church was condemned as unsafe and closed. It was later rebuilt.

The Congregational Church was organized at an early date (date not known), but it did not progress and was later bought by the Methodist Church in 1873.

The United Brethren had an organization formed sometime about the year 1840 in the western part of the township.

Dr. Porter was probably the first practicing physician who settled in the township. He came to the Center about 1819, from New York State, practiced his profession a few years, and then bought a farm one and one half mile west of Fowler, where he lived the remainder of his days.

R. Harry Beach came in 1826 and practiced medicine for 54 years, when he moved to Cortland and retired. Other physicians were Dr. W. A. Horton, Dr. Tinker, and Dr. Arthur Hold.

At one time in Fowler Center, the store and post office was kept by Mr. E. E. Clawson, a blacksmith shop by Warren Boston, and another by Josiah Enos, a hotel by John T. Trowbridge. Nail keg heads were manufactured by Lewis Alderman on an extensive scale; a cheese factory was operated by C. A. Campbell, who manufactured about 15 cheeses per day.

Among the industries in the township were: tinshop, horse-powered cider mill, apple-drying kiln, a brick kiln and a casket factory.

Historical sites are: The DeWitt home on Route 193 at Cadwaller Road and the small one-room schoolhouse which sits next to the house; Troy's Market built in 1860-1865, located at Fowler Center, which has been serving as a store, a doctor's office, etc., for decades; the Craft house, located on Everett-Cortland Hull Road, near Cortland Village limits and dating back to 1825.

This script was by Jane Dilley and Mildred Misconis, 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 townships of Trumbull County with a focus on early education and the role of the woman educator.