

GREENE

A HISTORY OF GREENE 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 Greene Township and its schools.

Greene Township, by location in the original survey of the Western Reserve, was known as township seven in range three, the townships numbering from the south line of the Reserve north, and ranges from the Pennsylvania line west. The members of the Connecticut Land Company who owned it were Mr. Parkman and Mr. Greene of Boston, who had it surveyed into sections one mile long east and west and one-half mile wide north and south, the northwest corner section being number one.

Originally, Greene consisted of six townships: Williamsfield, Wayne, Colebrook, Kinsman, Gustavus and Greene. Later, when Ashtabula County was organized, the three northern townships of Williamsfield, Wayne and Colebrook were cut off from the others.

In the allotment sold by the Connecticut Land Company, an eastern corporation, Joseph Howland secured the township of Greene, and Gardner Greene the township of Howland. These men later exchanged their holdings and named the townships for themselves. Thus, the township of Greene was named by and for Gardner Greene.

The township of Greene composed of Kinsman, Gustavus and Greene, was visited in early spring of 1817 by six men. John and William Harrington, John Wakefield, Ephraim Rice, Roswell Bartlett and Ichabod Merritt. They came from Canada and western Pennsylvania. In the early part of the 1800's, Canada had offered one hundred sixty acres of land to any man who would settle on it. A good many people from Vermont and other New England states accepted this offer. When the War of 1812 came, and England exacted of the immigrants that they become British subjects or leave the country, most of them abandoned their newly acquired farms and came to northeastern Ohio. The question of migration was discussed among families and the six men came to Trumbull County to examine the soil, timber, and water supply. They were pleased with their findings.

Selecting sections seven, fourteen and seventeen, they went to Warren and bought them of the owner's agent, General Simon Perkins, at \$2.50 per acre. When they were told that each must deposit fifty dollars, Mr. Wakefield had no money, but William Harrington had ninety-three dollars and General Perkins allowed him to pay this as a down payment on the two lots. This tract they divided into six equal parcels, each one mile long east and west and eighty rods wide north and south. To Ichabod Merritt – he was the youngest – they gave first choice. He took the north piece because there was a deer lick on it. William Harrington took the south piece. John Harrington took next to

Merritt, and John Wakefield next to William Harrington, with Ephraim Rice to the north and Roswell Bartlett the south middle piece.

That spring Ichabod Merritt, Ephraim Rice and John Wakefield built three log cabins, sixteen feet square and seven feet high. The roofs were made of oak shingles held on with poles; the floors of puncheon were made by splitting out flat pieces from logs and smoothing them with axes. Merritt's mother occupied the first cabin built, keeping house for her two sons, Ichabod and Aaron. These cabins were followed by one for John Harrington, Bartlett and William Harrington. That fall, Ebenezer Kee bought part of section four just west of Merritt and built a cabin and moved in.

The early cooking was done in the fireplace either before the coals, in the ashes, or hanging from the crane. Often people visited stopping a day or two and the occasion was one of hilarity. One time such a party arrived at home of William Harrington. Just as they appeared a peculiar character in the neighborhood who was a hunter wandering around in the woods, wearing a coonskin cap with a tail hanging in front of each ear and one behind, dropped in. Mr. Harrington asked him if he did not think he could go out and shoot a turkey. He replied that he thought he could. He soon returned with the fowl, and in a short time it was dressed, stuffed and hung by a string in front of the fire to roast. It then became the duty of young Charles to sit and turn it so it would be browned all around. Young Charles was not infatuated with his job and noticed that by twisting the string tightly it would untwist and twist up again, and allow him to take a little leisure. He had just discovered this wonderful invention and was working it out when his mother, who was overseeing the cooking, informed him that she could not have grease splattering all over everywhere, so he had to go back to his despised task, slowly turning until he was nearly roasted himself.

The boys living along Mosquito Creek used to trap mink and muskrat. For the former they got twelve and a half cents apiece, for the latter twenty-five cents.

In the election held in the spring of 1819, the voters living west of Pymatuning Creek did not vote to suit those living on the east side. The eastern section petitioned to be set off as a township with Kinsman as its name and this was done. Again, at the election in the spring of 1820, the voters from the new settlement did not vote to suit the more wealthy and populous eastern part. The people of the eastern half then petitioned to be set off as the township of Gustavus, which petition was also granted.

They left the township of Greene with a name but no officers. At the election held September 4, 1820, the following officers were chosen: Ephraim Kee, John Harrington and Roswell Bartlett, trustees; Ebenezer Kee, clerk; David Rice, treasurer; Ephraim Rice and John Wakefield, overseers of the poor; William A. Bascom, constable; Ephraim Kee, William Harrington and David Rice, road supervisors; Wyman Wakefield, fence viewer. This election was held at the home of William Harrington. Roswell Bartlett was elected the first justice of the peace and his commission bore the date May 20, 1822.

Notes and Incidents

The first birth was Deborah Harrington, only daughter of John and Rhoda Kee Harrington, on March 14, 1818. The second was that of Edwin Wakefield, son of John and Sally Kee Wakefield, born October 18, 1818.

The first marriage was John M. Justin to Ruth Higgins, in November, 1820. The second was William Harrington to Charlotte Bascom in March, 1821.

The first post office was kept at the middle corners with Major Churchill as postmaster. The mail came through from Warren to Jefferson once a week, and was carried on foot for two years by Caleb Leonard, of Bazetta, for seventy-five dollars per year.

The first merchant was Jonathan Worthen who came with a wagon load of goods and set up in a small building at the east corners. He also put in machinery for carding wool, driven by horse power. George Hezlep and Stoddard Stevens were merchants at the east corners in early days and were followed by George P. Curtis, who commenced about 1835 and continued in business at the same stand for thirty-five years.

For forty years, the east corners was the main business point in the township. After the Civil War the center has been the business as well as the geographical hub of the township.

Elk, deer and wild turkey were plentiful and bears and wolves were frequently seen.

Schools and Teachers

The first school was taught by Roswell Bartlett in the winter of 1818-19. The next winter, James Bascom taught and the following winter, John Harrington was the teacher. In 1821, William Harrington taught; and the winter of 1822, W. Bartlett. The summer schools, during those four years, were taught by Rhoda Rice, Mary and Syrena Evans, and Charlotte Bascom. The first teachers were taken from among the settlers. As the settlement grew, neighborhood schools were erected, often taught by a father. Eventually, there were eight district schools.

There were four terms of school each year. Often the older boys could only attend one or two terms a year, since they were needed to help with the farm work. The teachers boarded around among the families of their district, served as janitors, and were often paid in produce. Miss Helen Bascom once received a log chain as partial pay for her services. It is related that Charles A. Harrington sometimes walked five or six miles each way to go home rather than stay with some of the families in his district. There was great rivalry among the districts. Spelling contests were held and contestants often

walked two or three miles to compete. The Keys and the Bradens usually took the honors.

The township never built an academy, but in 1846, Charles Harrington, who previously had taught in the district schools and had attended Oberlin College, opened a select school in the old Presbyterian Church. Mr. Harrington had handbills printed and passed out advertising the school. Twenty-nine pupils were enrolled at the beginning of the first term; fifty had enrolled by the end of the term. There were sometimes as many as one hundred enrolled. Pupils came from nearby towns and boarded at private homes and at a large boarding house run by Mr. Major Churchill and Mr. William Horton. Mr. Harrington acted as board of education and superintendent, as well as instructor. Others who assisted in the school were Lauren Coleman, Lewis Harrington, Dwight Kee, and Elder Bates, and by their ability in thorough teaching made this school a success and raised the standard of education in the township to a point not often attained in more pretentious buildings erected in a more populous and wealthy townships. The instruction was on a high school level.

The school ran until the Civil War broke out, when the young men went into service and the schools generally were more or less disorganized. This school was discontinued in 1859. Greene citizens have always been proud of the fact that they sent a greater proportion of men into the service in the Civil War than any other township anywhere – one hundred of its two hundred voters.

Mr. Harrington's scholars were scattered in many parts of the United States. Many were doctors, ministers, attorneys, state legislators, authors, and other prominent people. In his travels, and those of his friends, former students were often "run upon." Some years later, Mr. Harrington was visiting relatives in Minnesota and in driving became very thirsty. Getting out of the carriage to procure a drink, he discovered a large patch of melons. His thirsty condition made this fruit particularly attractive. Going to the house, he asked if he could buy some of the melons. The housewife replied, "No," but she would give him all that he wanted. As he was leaving, she watched him rather closely, and then asked, "Aren't you Charles Harrington?" And when she found out that she had guessed right, she told him that she was one of his old pupils.

Between 1860 and 1890, Greene may have had an occasional term of high school. The following excerpt which appeared in the Greene news of the May 29, 1889 issue of the Warren Chronicle would indicate that there were high school classes in 1885. It said: "The hiring committee, appointed by the school board, has hired Professor E. J. Southwick to teach the Fall term of high school. Mr. Southwick's experience and success as a teacher seems to insure us of a good term of school and certainly afford an excellent chance for those who have been deprived of high school privileges for the past four years. Let every eligible pupil make calculations to attend and thoroughly test the practicability of home education, of the school by the people, for the people." This school continued until the districts and high schools were centralized in 1900. It was held in the town hall. Other superintendents were Mr. Dunbar, Mrs. Tidd, Earnest Dray and Ira Rutledge.

Greene was the second school in the county to centralize, following the lead of neighboring Gustavus. In 1899, the Board of Education sold the eight district schools for \$2,000, bonded the township for \$8,200, and built a fine red brick building on land donated by Orin Cory on the north side of the road east of Greene Center. This was a six-room two-story building with central heating in the basement. There were wide corridors, cloak rooms, an office, a library, a home economics room and a science laboratory. The first classes started in 1900. It became the First Grade School in 1902, although it didn't actually receive its charter until 1904.

The first superintendent was E.J. Southwick; other teachers were: Ira Rutledge, grammar grades; Mary Clark, intermediate grades; and Edith Rice, primary grades. Average attendance was two hundred, with forty-four in the high school.

By 1935, The Old Brick School was outgrown. A new one hundred sixteen foot by one hundred ten foot fireproof building of tan brick trimmed with Ohio sandstone was built in front of the old building.

In 1959, the educational system took another step forward by consolidating with the Johnston and Mecca Schools. The high school pupils are now transported to Mecca to join with Johnston and Mecca pupils for greater educational advantages, including better equipment and more courses. Some of Mecca's grade pupils are brought to Greene. Once again, only eight grades are taught in Greene, but under what different conditions than the old district school!

No history of Greene schools would be complete without mention of Miss Elma Christy who had the distinction of teaching in the school system more years than any other person, from 1921 to 1973. The length of time she served attests to the fine quality of her work.

This script by Vivian Sprague, 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 of Trumbull County with a focus on early education and the role of the woman educator.