

HOWLAND

A History of Howland 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 Howland Township and its schools.

Howland Township is the fourth township in the third range as laid out by the Connecticut surveyors. It lies east of the township of Warren, and between it and Vienna Township. Bazetta Township is north and Weathersfield south of Howland and the city limits of Warren touches it on the western line. Mosquito Creek, a stream of considerable size, flows through the township from north to south and divides Howland into two almost equal portions. The Mahoning River cuts across a small corner in the southwest part of Howland.

Joseph Howland, for whom the township was named, received land east of Warren by draft in 1798 as part of the Connecticut Land Company. It is interesting to note that Joseph Howland was the great grandson of John Howland, who arrived on the Mayflower and was the thirteenth signer of the Magna Carta.

Joseph Howland did not settle in Howland. Early historians have written that if Joseph and his wife, Lydia, had witnessed a sunset on Howland Hill they would have been very proud that this township was named for him. The name "Howland" means "high land" and there are numerous breath-taking views from the highlands of the township.

Joseph Howland paid \$24,000 for two Trumbull County townships, Howland and Greene. He sold 1,600 acres of this original tract to Captain John H. Adgate for \$1,600, one dollar per acre. Captain Adgate's land was located near the southwest corner of the township. He became the first settler of Howland, arriving in the summer of 1799 bringing his family with him. They came from Pennsylvania by way of Pittsburgh to the Beaver River and up the Mahoning River. It was a long hard journey. They traveled by ox-cart and many miles on foot, cutting their way through dense forests. Captain Adgate and his wife had seven children, three girls and four boys.)

In 1805 Isaac Heaton and his brother, James, settled in the southeastern part of Howland. James sold out to Abraham Drake and went to Weathersfield. Isaac, known to settlers as Squire Heaton, lived and died in Howland. Squire Heaton became magistrate of the township and had numerous disputes to settle. Squire Heaton was once challenged by a Warren lawyer on one of his legal decisions. The attorney told Squire that his verdict wasn't law. Squire answered, "Law, law. What do I care about law. All the law I want is here," and he laid his hand on his old leather-covered Bible. He was a man of good judgment and sound common sense though he did not have much education.

In 1812, the Commissioners of Trumbull County organized township four, range three, into a separate township and election district. The early records were lost, so the first township officers are unknown.

The people of Connecticut made religion and education priorities in their thinking and living. With these basic beliefs, there was a provision in the certificate of sale of the Western Reserve Land that there should be five hundred acres reserved in each township for the support of the Gospel and five hundred acres for the support of the schools. There is very little information available about the early schools in Howland. It is recorded that the first school house was built on the Fourth of July, 1804, near where James Ward lived. The first teacher was Ruth Alford. No biographical sketch of her can be found, but there are references to Alford's serving in the War of 1812 from Trumbull and Mahoning Counties. These names were Charles, Darius, Elijah and Silas Alford.

At that time, a girl who had not married before she was in her late teens could earn a living as a school teacher while waiting for a marriage proposal. Like most school teachers of the early 1800's, Miss Alford was probably not paid in money. The wages were usually one dollar's worth of flax and linen cloth a week. Female teachers "boarded round" with different families in the district. The women teachers did not have it easy. They often arrived at school on cold winter mornings with their long skirts frozen from the walk through the deep snow. The women teachers who married, stopped teaching because married women were not allowed to teach.

The first school house in which Miss Alfred taught was a simple structure of logs. Inside there was a huge fireplace, which extended entirely across one side of the school room. The fireplace was heated full blast by long heavy logs, which were rolled into it as needed. It was here that wet clothing was dried and cold hands and feet were warmed. Later a Maria Heaton Stove, manufactured by James Heaton, was given to the Howland log school house. Boards set on wooden pins driven into the floor, formed the pupils' writing desks. The benches were rough and primitive formed from slabs of wood without backs or anything to rest the arms or body on. Boys and girls of those days didn't skip their breakfast, but ate heartily of bacon, Johnny-Cake and milk. Because they ate so well and exercised by working, the children needed no support for their aching backs as no child suffered from that ailment. Incidentally, since cornmeal was a staple article of food in the early days, Johnny-Cake was a part of the daily diet. The dough was prepared on a smooth board, kept especially for this purpose, and placed before the hot roaring fire. Some young member of the family was chosen to watch it. The side next to the fire would bake quickly, then the board was turned around and the other side received the heat in turn.

Other log school houses were built as families clustered into neighborhood groups. One was built in the northwest part of the township, taught by John Ewalt, John Anderson taught in another school house built in the King neighborhood. The Howland Township map in the Trumbull County Atlas, 1874, shows six original school houses in the various sections of the township. The number of schools increased until the township was centralized when school was centered in two buildings, the Center and the Bolindale Schools. In 1917, the children were brought to the Central School in horse-drawn vans.

The first high school graduation in Howland was held in 1921 with Miss Anna Mary Strudoff as the lone graduate.

The first religious service, at which a sermon was preached, was held at the house of John Reeves in 1803 with a Baptist minister conducting the service. A Presbyterian Church was organized in 1815 by Reverend Joseph Curtis, pastor of the Warren Church. There were thirteen original members. In 1820, a log building was erected in the northeast section of the township, used as both church and school house. In this building a Methodist Church of ten members had its beginning. There was also a Disciples Church organized in 1828. The people of Connecticut were undoubtedly pleased at the devout spirit of the Howland pioneers as shown in their endeavors to organize churches in their own particular denominations.

Any history of Howland would not be complete without mention of Howland Springs. The water from these springs has a fine reputation for its medicinal qualities. It is still bottled and delivered to homes in Trumbull County. Howland Springs opened as a health resort at an early day. John Hank first owned the land on which the springs are located. Howland Springs became a summer resort and a Sunday gathering place for people of the surrounding area during the days of good driving horses and smart "rigs." General Garfield often visited the Howland Springs Hotel, and under the trees near the old bowling alley, he and politicians of Trumbull County talked by the hour.

The County Tavern and Store, run by John Collins and later by John Sowers, was the first store in Howland. Young boys who walked from Warren to Vienna to attend Beige Academy would always stop at the Collin Store to refresh themselves "with some ginger cookies, candy, and a tin cup full of sweet cider."

Pioneer industries were limited to sawmills and gristmills. The first mill was built in 1814 Samuel Kennedy. This was located on a branch of Mosquito Creek. Septimus Cadwallader located a gristmill on the same stream in 1815.

There is an extensive bed of flagstone underlying the surface in the northwest section of Howland. It is among the best to be found anywhere. The first sidewalks of Warren were laid with Howland flagstone. There was also some coal under the surface, which provided work for the early pioneers.

As one rides through Howland Township today, the historical plaques on buildings remind us of the contributions of those early settlers. These plaques are on the Sealy House, which has been entered in the National Register of Historical Places, the Sealy Cemetery, Howland Springs Hotel Site, Ewalt House, Ewalt Cemetery and Hall Airport Site.

This script by Kate Von Thayer and Jane Cooper, 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 the focus on early education and the role of the woman educator.