

HARTFORD

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 brief history of Hartford Township and its schools.

In 1786 Connecticut ceded to the Congress her claim to all western lands except a strip of land south of Lake Erie, extending 120 miles beyond Pennsylvania's western boundary. At once, Connecticut's general Assembly began looking at ways to have this Western Reserve land surveyed and sold, but it took nine years for them to come to an agreement on a plan. Finally in 1795, a committee of eight citizens representing each county of Connecticut was appointed. They were charged to sell the estimated 3,000,000 acres at a cost of at least 33 cents an acre before the land was surveyed. To make the venture even more speculative, the committee was required to dispose of the entire Western Reserve before completing the sale of any single portion of it.

A group of purchasers banded together under the name of the Connecticut Land Company and took over the Western Reserve. Although this company was never incorporated, the 57 members chose seven directors as managers; and task of surveying the land into townships five miles square was begun. Moses Cleaveland, head of the surveying group, was also directed to clear away any remaining Indian claims.

After two years, the directors were ready to allocate the land by lot and by shares to stockholders of the company. Because the land was so uneven in its worth, parcels of land were numbered and classified according to value and desirability. Shareholders drew lots according to how much they had invested in the company. From then on, each proprietor was responsible for disposition or settlement of his own lands.

Draft No. 73 was drawn by Uriah Holmes and Ephraim Root who had jointly invested \$12,903.23. The draft drew all of Hartford Township which was 17,317 acres of land. For Holmes and Root, this was strictly a financial venture; and they must have felt dismayed when their first sale of two 160-acre plots to Edward Brockway for the sum of \$500 was very little more than they had paid. However, Titus Brockway became their agent in the Reserve and disposed of most of the land for about \$2.50 an acre, a good return on their investment.

The name Hartford was derived because so many of the original settlers migrated from Hartford, Connecticut. This transplantation began in the summer of 1799 when Edward Brockway, Isaac Jones, and Ashel Brainard made the long trek westward. Working together, they built a cabin just north of the center and cleared enough land to plant a crop of wheat. As winter drew near, Brockway and Jones went back to Connecticut; but they returned the following spring with their families, Brainard's, and the Charles Merry family. Many other families soon followed. In 1804, a colony of more than ten families left Hartford, Connecticut, together. The

occasion of their departure was of so much importance that a meeting was called and a farewell sermon preached by the pastor of the Congregational Church. They started on their 600-mile journey with ox teams and wagons and arrived in new Hartford about six weeks later.

By 1805, there were 24 families in Hartford Township. There were many after a colony of German families from Cumberland City, Pennsylvania, made their home in the southeastern part of the township the following year.

In spite of the hardships in the early years of settlement, these people were eager to establish churches and schools so that their children would carry on the tradition of literacy that had been so important in New England society. School was first taught in 1804 in a log cabin at Burghill on the Captain Thomas Thompson property. Miss Tamar Bartholomew had 24 students coming from both Hartford and Smithfield to the north, as Vernon was called.

The citizens of Hartford celebrated the Fourth of July, 1805, by clearing the green at the center of brush and trees. Shortly afterwards, a school house was built on it - the first frame building as well as the first public one in the township. This building was in use for many years, also serving as a meeting place for church organizations and as a townhall. Miss Amanda Finney was school mistress for the first summer term, and Wells Andrews was teacher for the winter term. Among succeeding teachers at this school was Theodore Wade, who taught there for two seasons. He had 106 students in his day and evening schools. The night school was devoted to teaching spelling and writing. His salary for all these labors was \$17 a month.

Other schools were started in various part of the township, all of them subscription schools and most probably of short duration. But these settlers took the parental responsibility very seriously and banded together to provide as much schooling for their children as they possibly could.

In 1811 township government was organized, but the Hartford officials were concerned only with construction and maintenance of roads and highways and promoted education only in an indirect manner.

In Hartford, as in other townships of the Western Reserve, very important civil officials were the two Overseers of the Poor. Now this title has a very beneficent, custodial ring to it; but their actual function is made clear by this entry in the township clerk's record:

To either of the constables of Hartford Township, Greetings.
Whereas it had been represented to the Overseers of the Poor for said Hartford Township that the Widow Hugle, a transient person residing within said township, and it is probable she may become chargeable to said township, you are therefore commanded immediately to warn the said Widow Hugle forthwith to leave and

depart out of said township, and of this writ make legal service and due return to the clerk of said township.

This was signed by the Overseers and dated September 25, 1812. Further notation in the record indicates that the above message was read aloud to the said Mary Hugel by the constable.

Thus only householders could dwell within the township, and the settlers accordingly avoided the property taxes they would have incurred if they had had to assume the costs for support, medical care, education and burial expense of the unwanted poor. Though this seems unbelievably heartless to us today, it must be realized that these industrious, frugal farmers poverty was a sin, the result of slothfulness and lack of character. This method of avoiding contamination of their community was only right and proper.

Through the apprentice system, individual householders did assume the care of the community's orphaned children and even some outsiders' poor children. In this arrangement, the child would be bonded to the master until he was 18 or 21 years old. In return for their services, the master provided a home, food, clothing, and a practical education. The practical education was mainly sufficient reading instruction so that they would be able to read the Bible, an ability essential to their salvation. This "closed society" arrangement did affect the schools in that it made available more money for education than would have been possible in the early years when just providing sustenance was such a struggle.

Ohio Law eventually mandated that townships assume the responsibility for the schools. In 1828 the Hartford Township Trustees met jointly with the trustees of Brookfield and established eight district schools. Two of the eight schools were to be the joint responsibility of Hartford and Brookfield. Each one-room district school had its own local board of directors so that within the township there was considerable variance in the school tax rate, the condition of the school, and the program offered.

For 25 years the trustees were the civil officers responsible for the schools and disbursed township money to all of the district schools. In 1840 township record show that \$359.09 was the total sum spent on education for all eight district schools for that year, undoubtedly less than \$2 per pupil per year.

A reorganization of the district schools was begun in 1853 to fulfill a new state requirement consolidating all of the district schools into one township system controlled by a single board of education. A representative from each of the ten districts then in existence was appointed to serve on the new board. Gad Hart was chosen chairman of the meeting committees for these purposes: to study curriculum, textbooks, and rules and regulations for the schools; to reorganize the sub-district schools in the township; to handle school funds with the township treasurer; to study the new law for duties imposed upon school board.

Reading, writing and spelling were the only subjects; however, additional branches were outlined that could be offered to pupils of suitable age whose parents or guardians requested such instruction. The additional offerings included such courses as arithmetic, geography, grammar and physiology. The board eventually adopted McGuffey Readers, Stoddard's Mental Arithmetic, Thompson's Higher Arithmetic, Mitchell's Geography, Pinneo's Grammar, and Cutler's Primary Physiology.

One of the chief problems of these schools was the rapid teacher turnover, a problem common to most schools for many years. According to the board's annual report of 1878, four gentlemen and eight ladies were hired that year to serve in seven schools. Only one lady taught in the same school for 27 weeks the school was in session that year. The total amount paid all teachers that year was \$1,244.82.

Also, teachers were held liable for any damage to the schoolhouse or other school property while they were conducting school. The school directors decided how much was to be withheld from the teacher's wages to cover the damages. The teacher was granted the right to recover such losses from the persons responsible, but it probably was a right that amounted to very little in actual practice.

The district's schools were finally consolidated into one centralized school in 1906.

The development of higher education also started very early in Hartford Township. In 1824 John Crowell, from Warren, Ohio, began teaching secondary courses at the home of the Captain Thomas Thompson, who had previously sponsored the first reading school in Hartford. He was succeeded by the Reverend Wells Andrews, son of Asa Andrews, an 1805 settler. Mr. Andrews was a Yale graduate.

By 1847, there were 150 students coming from all over Trumbull County and Mercer County, Pennsylvania, to the Hartford High School, taught by John Lynch, Mary Conant, and F.V. Hayden.

Mr. Lynch stayed for several years, and Mary Conant became Mrs. Lynch. Under their enthusiastic leadership, the school was moved to larger quarters in the old Congregational Church. Now the community raised over \$1,500 by subscription so that the building could be repaired and refitted for school purposes.

At this time, also, a corporation was formed to operate the Hartford High School. The Incorporation Act was approved by the General Assembly in 1850. This was still a private institution providing a college preparatory course and attracting students from a wide area.

In 1887 the Hartford Academy had an enrollment of 132 ladies and gentlemen. Finally in 1885, the Hartford Academic Institute gave way to a public high school operated by the Hartford Special School District in the same building. Tuition was free for all Hartford Township youth under 21, but non-residents were charged \$2.00.

Thus, we see how the development of an educational system in Hartford Township was patterned after the New England model they had left behind. Reading schools in parents' homes gave way to district schools serving students in all parts of the township; district schools with local boards of education were followed by a consolidated system of district schools. The district schools were finally replaced by a centralized school serving the entire community. The high schools followed the same pattern, originally started by individual teachers in parents' homes, later developing into corporate enterprises, and finally becoming a public-tax-supported-institution for the entire community.

Although this same pattern evolved all over the Western Reserve, Hartford Township is distinctive in that schools started up so early in its settlement and secondary education followed so quickly. Its high school and academy were so outstanding that Hartford was regarded as the "Athens" of Trumbull County.

The script by Betty Birrell, 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.