

LORDSTOWN

A HISTORY OF LORDSTOWN 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 Lordstown Township and Its Schools.

Samuel P. Lord was the original proprietor of the land in Lordstown. He lived at Lyme, New London County, Connecticut, and owned by grant from the state of Connecticut, to him as one of the sufferers, or as purchaser from the original claimants, nearly all the territory within the township, the exception being a portion of the "Old Salt Spring Tract" in the southeast part of the township. Mr. Lord sent his agents to his land in the Western Reserve, who reported the land here as fertile as his own in Connecticut. So he gave the land his name and concluded to hold the land for advanced prices, that would follow the settling of neighboring townships, thus preventing earlier settlement of the township.

The first schools were laid out by the trustees of 1828. Seven school districts were established and located in such a manner that children had usually less than two miles to walk to school. They would to be not less than twelve nor more than forty householders to one district. Householders chose a school committee of three with a collector and clerk. The committee had full responsibility for hiring a teacher and management of finances.

The first schoolhouse was built on the Moses Haskell farm and stood on a knoll on the west side of the center road, in the center and north part of the township. It was a log house, after the pioneer style of architecture. The first teacher was a Mr. Everett, of whom nothing more can be ascertained.

The first schoolhouse at the center stood a short distance south, near the "ledge" and was a small log cabin. The first teacher of whom any account can now be ascertained, was Anna Harmon. She was a dear lover of Bohea tea, and carried it with her to school and always kept a tin full of hot by the schoolhouse fire. Many times "Aunt Anna," as she was called, found more than tea grounds in the bottom of her tin. The next teacher was John Fullerton, an old bachelor, who was given to mirth. He was fond of his cups of different variety and indulged in "occasional sprees." He succeeded, however, in pushing the expanding mind of the scholars as far as the English reader, and the "rule of three" which then embraced the highest branches of education, and was deemed amply sufficient for all the demands of life. Granvile Sears afterwards combined his trading of making boots at night with teaching in the daytime; and it is related of him that in an emergency he could "lay about him with a hickory-gad" in a way that commanded the respect if not the admiration of the students of his academy.

About 1840, a frame school building was erected at the center. The first select school was taught by Joseph King, who later became a minister in Pittsburgh. He was a great worker in the cause of education, and subsequently, as his school increased in numbers, taught in the town hall, and succeeded in fitting many teachers for successful work, and secured quite a reputation for the school at Lordstown. His brother, John King, followed; then, Mr. Campbell, and after that the interest in the school seemed entirely lost, until S.F. DeFord came, who was an excellent educator. He taught two terms in the old hall, but afterwards, began and finished the Lordstown Academy; the school was very successful for some time. After DeFord, R.W. Duncan taught the school for years. The school was afterwards allowed to cease, and in 1870, the building was sold for a cheese factory, but about 1877, the township purchased the building for township purposes.

In 1875, the Lordstown Educational Society was formed, of which A.G. McCorkle, James Wilson, Jr., D.K. Woodward, George W. Harshman, John C. Pew and L.G. Longmore were the working members. The organization proposed to engage teachers for a grade school and pay from their own treasury the amount necessary to employ competent teachers over and above what the township trustees would allow to be paid for teachers from the public fund.

One family walked one and one-fourth miles to the schoolhouse in District Number Two which stood in the present Space Center, near the north entrance on State Route Forty-Five. It was known as the Pew District since it was carved out of the corner of the Pew farm. The children walked to school every school day. During the extreme weather, in the eight month term, the parents would take them with horse and buggy.

After completing the eighth grade, the children then went to the high school at the center of Lordstown, where the firehouse is situated. It was customary for students to drive a horse to the center where the horses would be put in a rented stable for the day. However, some students walked from homes in the outlying areas.

In each one room district school, the teacher taught all grades. The subjects were: reading, writing, arithmetic, spelling, composition and geography.

Usually on Friday afternoon, there would be something special, such as a spelldown or a program of a literary nature with essays, short plays, memorized poems, and singing old favorite songs. One such entertainment was held in the evening. The building was lighted with kerosene lamps brought from home. In winter, there was "central heating"--- a large stove stood near the center of the room. Anyone seated in the far corners were allowed to move nearer the source of heat; if too warm one could move far away from the stove.

The water system was unique; a pail of water, brought from a neighboring house, stood on a table. Beside it was a basin and a bar of soap for hand washing. A long-handled dipper for dispensing water was in the pail. About this time, the public became germ conscious. It was considered "unhealthy" for all children to drink from one dipper,

so individual collapsible cups became necessary. It was an honor and a privilege to go to the neighbor's house to bring a fresh pail of water, usually one in the morning and another at noon.

To answer the call of nature, one asked permission to leave the room to go to a small building with "his" and "her" compartments. The buildings were appropriately called the "outhouse."

In 1877, the cheese factory was purchased for a township building. The first floor of the two-story building was the town hall where the township elections took place and the trustees met to conduct the business of the township. The room was equipped with long bench-type seat. A stage above floor level had a rolldown curtain and wings at both ends and a wall across the back. Here entertainments were enjoyed; some produced by the local literary society, and others by talent from outside the community. At times the high school students gave plays, debated, read essays and gave declamations. High school commencements were held here from 1907 until the centralized building was opened in 1917.

Our high school began in a small way. At first, there was a two-year course taught by one individual, the Professor, as he was called by the students. The first class of five received their diplomas in 1907. The next class, 1908, was very unusual. There were no disagreements or arguments. It was very cooperative. Why was this so? This was the smallest class to graduate, the membership being ONE. The third class was composed of five members. The 1911 class had six members. Five taught school and two made teaching a career.

As the years rolled by, Lordstown's one-room school was centralized. The school at the center housed the eight grades and three years of high school. Moving day was 1917, and the first class to graduate the then three-year course was in 1918 with three members. In 1919, a class made up of several former graduates were given the first diplomas of the four year course.

The Lordstown schools and township have kept growing and this year, 1977, they have dedicated a new high school.

The script by Eleanor Fenstermaker and Ann Tims. 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.