

VIENNA

A HISTORY OF VIENNA TOWNSHIP

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 Vienna Township and its schools.

When surveyors from Connecticut came into this area of the Western Reserve, they found a land of unbroken forests. There was an Indian trail that ran along through the woods in the vicinity of the Avalon Golf Course traveling from old Route 82 where it meets the present Scoville Drive and continuing southward. This was the only beaten path in the district. The surveyors found wild game plentiful – deer, bears, wolves, turkeys, and the like – and the many streams that interspersed the forests held good fishing, but the land was a wilderness. Because of this, it was not an easy task to divide the land into the tiers and ranges as specified by the Connecticut Land Company.

Mr. Uriel Holmes, Ephraim Root and Timothy Burr had bought from the Connecticut Land Company the land now known as Vienna Township. The principal agent for this was Mr. Holmes, who in 1798, came out to this land from Connecticut with a surveying party to lay out the lots and farms. The party worked through the spring and summer, returning to Connecticut in the fall. In the following spring, Mr. Holmes returned and brought other settlers with him.

On March 12, 1806, Township No. 4 was organized by the Commissioners of Trumbull County as the Township of Vienna. It contained all the land in both Brookfield and Vienna but was called by one name, Vienna Township.

About five years later, in 1811, Brookfield was set off by itself as a separate township, and Vienna became, as it is today, a township five miles square.

Whether Isaac Flowers and Dennis Palmer came to Vienna in 1799 or 1800, it is not positive, but that they were the first settlers, is sure. Their families were soon joined by the Isaac and Darius Woodford families who came from Connecticut.

New settlers, mostly from Connecticut and Pennsylvania, continued coming into the township. Before long Vienna Township was dotted by their cabins which were built of logs covered with bark, with greased paper serving the place of window glass. Huge chimneys made of sticks and mortar served as a place to cook their meals, to warm them, and to give light to the cabin.

There were two ways these first settlers entered the township. Some came through New York State to Buffalo and along Lake Erie, then southward into the ranges. Others came through Pennsylvania to Pittsburgh, to the Beaver River and up the Mahoning River. Mostly, they came by ox teams and the old Yankee oxcarts. Long periods of walking were a part of their journey, too. Often during their trip, it became necessary to cut their way through the thick woods.

These early pioneers were very friendly and helpful to each other. It's said they would turn out in large numbers, and in a single day would perform wonders. History records are an example of this: When Mr. Samuel Hutchins' barn was struck by lightning, the neighbors for quite a distance turned out to help. They hewed timber for the new barn, and put on the roof. They shaved the shingles from trees and then put on the siding. This finished building the barn, but for good measure, they hauled a load of hay to complete one single day's work.

The first settlers in the Western Reserve brought with them from their far-off eastern homes the New England ideas of religion and the importance of education. Wherever these people went, the church and the schoolhouse soon followed. And so it was in Vienna.

The building where the first school was taught in Vienna must surely have been different from any other first school building in Trumbull County, for it was held in a hog pen on the farm of a Mr. Samuel Clinton. Miss Lulie Mackey, whose ancestors came into the township in 1805, has written an account of this first school. She tells that in the spring of 1805, the fathers and mothers of Vienna recognized the need for a school for the rapidly increasing children. They looked for a site for the school and decided upon an unoccupied hog pen about a mile south of the Center. This was swept, cleaned and supplied with greased-paper windows. The last things added were two strong hooks for the support of whips in case any student got out of line!

The history books do not agree on the name of the teacher for this school. Three different names are given: Miss Tamar Bartholomew, Mrs. Ira Bartholomew, and Mr. Horace Flowers. Possibly, each taught a different term. We know that Mr. Flowers taught in the winter. Tamar Bartholomew probably taught there after the school's spring cleaning.

The pigs were not required to vacate their lodgings for long as the next year, in 1806, a new frame building 20 by 26 feet was erected as the Center for the purpose of teaching the children of Vienna Township. No school was taught in the township at that time except in that building at the Center. A Mr. Andrew Bushnell came from Hartford Township to become the first teacher in this school. James Julius Humason was another early teacher here for fall and winter terms.

The Reverend Mr. Nathan Darrow saw double duty in Vienna's early days. He served as minister of the Presbyterian Church and also as a Vienna school teacher until around 1828. An advertisement in one of Warren's papers carried this message:

“The subscriber expects to commence an English school at the center of Vienna on the first Monday of December next, for the instruction of young gentlemen and ladies in arithmetic, English grammar, geography, astronomy, etc. The term will be for four months and the price of tuition 3 dollars per term. The Sacred Scriptures will be daily read in school and the strictest attention paid to morals and manners.”

It was signed by Reverend Mr. Darrow.

As the number of families living in the neighborhoods increased, it became necessary to add other school buildings to the one at the Center. In the southern part of the township stood one of Vienna's old landmarks, the “Block Schoolhouse,” named from the fact that it was built of hewed log blocks. This building was replaced in 1858, but the school on that site, about a mile and a half south of the Center, was always called the “Block School.” It was used until the Vienna schools were centralized in 1916. The unused building finally burned down on March 18, 1920. The old bell from this school is in possession of the Donald Crew family in Vienna.

For the children in the western part of the township, a school was built at Murrey's Corners on old Route 82 about a mile and a half west of the Center. This was always called the “Murrey School.” For the boys and girls living in the southwestern areas, a school called the “Carey School” was built on the Angling Road, now called the Niles-Vienna Road. And, like the Block School, the Murrey and Carey schools were used until centralized schools came to Vienna.

Soon school bells were ringing in many parts of the township. In 1875, Ichabod Payne reported that there were “eleven school houses in the township, with schools in all, and very well-filled with pupils.”

Private schools called academies flourished into a number of Trumbull County townships. In the 1840’s and 50’s, the principal of the Vienna Academy was the Rev. Mr. Chester Birge, pastor of the Presbyterian Church. Among his students were a number of boys from Warren who boarded with Mr. Birge’s family and attended his school.

Most children attended the district schools until they were thirteen or fourteen years old. For many that ended their formal education, but there were other learning activities that were added to their education, such as the literary societies, the spelling bees, the singing schools, and the geography schools where states and capitals were learned through song. These activities were held in the evenings, sometimes at the schoolhouse, and often in the homes around the village.

A letter written in 1945 by Elmina Alderman, a young girl of thirteen, to her cousin in Connecticut, mentioned her schooling. Here are a few lines from the long, beautifully written letter:

“As my father has left paper unoccupied, I was determined to rite a little to let you know how well I can rite. I have never been to school a great deal, and what I have been was to a common district school. You, of course, must know that I am only imperfectly learned. I always had a great desire to go to a higher school, but that lot was never destined for me. I am very fond of reading and learned a good deal at home. I have acquired some knowledge of arithmetic, grammar, and geography.”

The breaking out of the Civil War had its effects upon the schools. In Trumbull County, it was hardly thought worthwhile to hold some district schools, in winter, because the attendance was so small. The older boys went off to war leaving the older girls with the double duty at home and no time left to study.

When the little frame building that stood on the southeast corner of the Warren-Sharon and Niles-Vienna Road became too small, a new, two-story building was erected in the middle of the Village Green in 1872, and school was taught in that building until 1916 when Vienna Township schools were brought together into the centralized school in the present red brick building just east of the Center.

Former students of the old, two story wooden building hold within their memories pleasant school days spent at that school.

Mr. Irel Mathews was a long-time teacher at the Center school here.

It is interesting that after a century this school house continues to serve the community as the Vienna Township Grange Hall.

School bells no longer ring out at the little log and one-story frame buildings that circled the township in the 1800’s, but today, the old, white, two-story schoolhouse stands where it has stood since 1872, on the Village Green, between its two century old neighbors – the Methodist and Presbyterian churches. It stands as an important reminder of those beliefs in the importance of giving their children an education, and of those hundreds of boys and girls who answered the call of Vienna’s long-ago school bells.

The script was written by Lovira and Adda Alderman. Narration by Gene Roberts. These programs were prepared the Delta Kappa Gamma Society in cooperation with the Martha Jennings Holden 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.