

WARREN CITY

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 Warren and its schools.

In the city of Warren settlers fashioned the first school of hewn chestnut logs approximately 18 x 28 feet, notched to fit, with a door and five windows. The window openings were covered with paper soaked in grease and "set" with a hot iron. Glass panes later were used, fastened in with wooden pins. Heat came from a fieldstone fireplace.

Crude benches were made from slabs of wood, which had two-inch holes bored with an auger to hold wooden pin legs. Pupils faced the wall where a shelf was fastened to hold their books.

One room was adequate, for Warren had scarcely more than a dozen cabins with 30 or 40 inhabitants. Men and women gathered in the school in the evenings and debates were held by the men with the women sitting quietly by. A popular subject was religion with fore ordination, atonement, and baptism by immersion or sprinkling as a favored topic. One entire winter was given over to a debate of the pros and cons of whether a smoking chimney or a scolding wife were the worst affliction.

George Parsons, who later became Warren's first mayor in 1834, was the first teacher of the school. He was connected with the Leavitt and Austin families.

A replica of this first school house stands in Monument Park where the original was built.

The second school house was in the neighborhood of the old Park Hotel. Mr. John Leavitt was probably the first teacher in this second school. It later became a dwelling. The third school was a frame building north of First Street.

The first teacher, Miss Mary Case, daughter of Leonard Case, Sr., was a very talented young woman. She had a sweet voice and sang in the early choirs. She married Mr. Benjamin Stevens, and they had two daughters, Mary and Harriet.

Miss Mary Bostwick was the second woman teacher in the city. Her school was known as "A Young Ladies' Seminary." It was held in the third story of Castle William. It is recorded that "she gave at least one public exhibition, at which young ladies read essays and performed in general, as is usual upon such occasions."

On November 10, 1818 an advertisement appeared in the Western Reserve Chronicle of the grammar school to be opened in Warren in which Latin and Greek, English language, geography, arithmetic, geometry, philosophy, and logic will be taught. Mr. Reed was the teacher of this school. The tuition for Latin and Greek and higher

branches were \$5.00; for arithmetic, grammar, and geography \$3.00. The committee was Adamson Bentley, J.B. Harmon, Jeremiah Brooks, and Ephraim Quinby.

In 1819, L. Andrews opened a school on Main Street. In the early 20's Mr. Tower had a school in a frame building at the corner of Market and Park, and it faced Park Avenue. About this time Miss Norton (afterwards Mrs. General Curtis of Sharon) taught in a building on East Market Street that had been used as an office by Judge Calvin Pease. Here Miss McNeal also kept school.

About 1818 the Warren School Association was formed. The association trustees erected the Warren Academy about 1820. There were 4 departments: 2 primary, one for girls and one for boys; and 2 high schools, again one for girls and one for boys.

Early accounts of the Warren Academy never seemed to discount the ability of the teachers to teach, however, a great deal is said about their ability or inability to govern. The right of people in authority to domineer over those under them in the state, in the school, and in the home was never for one minute doubted.

The Warren Academy was a successful school and many of the Trumbull County's first citizens obtained their education there.

W.H. McGuffey applied for the position of head master and was turned down. He afterwards said that the mortification he felt acted as an incentive for further study, to which he attributed his success in life.

In 1837-1838 a select school was held in a large frame building where the Pendleton machine shop now stands. Mr. Daniel Jagger, a resident of Windham, was the teacher.

In 1843 Miss M. J. Reynolds opened a school for "Young Ladies." In 1844 Mrs. L. L. Chamberlain opened a school to teach "all the accomplishments necessary to female education." In 1845 Mr. and Mrs. Charles F. Bonson opened a school for young ladies. Martha and Frances (Fannie) Dickey were among the early teachers. In the fall of 1845 these two young women had a school of 60 scholars.

Spelling matches were important at that time. The scholar who missed words was obliged to step down and let the successful scholar go ahead of him. The pupil who stood at the head of the class each day received a mark and the next day went to the foot of the class to work his or her way up again. At the end of the term the child having the most head marks was given a prize.

Morning sessions opened with Bible reading, singing, and prayer. In most cases the teacher, turning her back to the pupils, knelt on the floor with her elbows in the wooden chair and asked the Father's blessings on saints and sinners. Boys threw paper wads and light missiles, and the girls giggled. All were punished.

Water was brought from a near-by well and stood in a pail during the session. The “teacher’s pet” or pupil in good standing was allowed, in the middle of the morning and again in the afternoon, to pass this liquid refreshment in a long handled dipper.

The only advantage these dingy, dark school rooms had over the later schools was that the aisles were necessarily short, and the terror which over took a pupil when on Friday afternoon as he or she made his way to the platform to “speak his piece” was of short duration.

About 1844 Professor Bronson established an Episcopal Female Seminary. The project was not a success, and it was later abandoned. Later a select school for boys and girls was opened in the basement of the old Methodist Episcopal Church on the river bank.

School taxes were not collected by the government. The school directors were empowered to collect them, and in case of refusal to pay, they were authorized to sue as in any other case of indebtedness. This gave rise to considerable litigation. At one time three of the wealthiest citizens dissatisfied with the schools refused to pay their taxes; whereupon the directors levied upon one a harness, a fat calf of the second, and a wagon of the third; exposing these articles at public sale, at the court house door to the highest bidder, to the infinite amusement of those taxpayers who had cheerfully responded without process of law. This summary example, it is said, was potent for a long time in facilitating the collection of school taxes.

In the late 1840’s changes were made in the public school system by the state. On February 21, 1849, a general act was passed by the legislature, the provisions of which seemed to meet the approval of many citizens of Warren. John Hutchins delivered a public lecture on the subject, and on March 31, 1849 a legal call was made for an election to decide on the adoption of the act. The election was held at the court house on April 10, 1849 for law No. 134-22, and it passed.

The high school was established under the charge of Miss Martha Dickey in a two-story frame building, which stood at the site of the present brick structure on Monroe Street.

Several frame school buildings and rooms were rented so that six primary and secondary schools were opened during the summer months. The teachers were Fannie Dickey, Mary Brown, Amanda Brown, Elizabeth Tuttle, Mary Tillotson, and Francis James.

The salaries paid their teachers at this time were \$4.00 per week in the high school and \$3.50 per week in the other schools. The price of tuition for foreign scholars was fixed at \$3.00 per term in the high school, \$1.50 per term in the primary. On September 10, 1849, the first regular session at all schools opened.

At the close of the first year M.D. Leggett (later commissioner of patents) resigned the superintendency, and Mr. J.B. Cox was elected to fill the vacancy. He began his duties on September 1, 1851, and served 3 years at \$600.00 per year. Mr. Cox was afterwards general in the army, governor of the state, and secretary of the interior under President Grant.

In 1853 there were 9 teachers employed in Warren and the attendance was 542.

On September 1, 1854 Reverend James Marvin assumed charge as superintendent and stayed for 8 years. At first his salary was \$900.00, and then it went to \$1,000.00, and finally reached \$1,200.00 per year. He resigned in 1862, and became a professor at Allegheny College in Meadville, Pa.

On May 19, 1854 a meeting was held to provide by taxation, money to build a school house. In 1855 \$8,000.00 was raised by taxation, and a brick high school building was begun. Robert Gibson helped make bricks for this school. The first diplomas were granted in 1857. The Chronicle speaks of the elegance of the building, its beautiful location, its apparatus for natural sciences, and its splendid teachers.

Holidays were: the 2nd day of the county fair, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Years Day.

In 1898 two women were elected to the school board under a new school law. In the primary election 4 men and 2 women, Carrie P. Harrington and Harriet T. Upton were candidates. The 2 women received the highest number of votes. Mr. Gillmer and Mr. Weir were next, and Mr. Vautrot and Mr. Campbell were defeated. The men treated the women with the greatest courtesy and equality.

The building on Monroe Street was finally vacated on a Tuesday morning, May 1, 1951. It was the day that Central Junior; after 68 years of children's voices ringing and footsteps echoing through its hall, faded in the background. A large number of Warren citizens lined Mahoning Avenue as a parade of 550 ex-Centralites, carrying their books, moved out from the school at 9:30 a.m. and marched up Mahoning Avenue, N.W., preceded by their own band and majorettes, the Warren G. Harding Senior High School band, and a police escort to the new Harry B. Turner Junior High School. Superintendent of schools, H.B. Turner, board members, the school's architect, and contractors were present at the brief flag raising ceremony.

Following Mr. Turner's welcoming the students and teachers to the new building, the students entered the new school and within five minutes after the ceremony, slightly after 10:00 a.m., the new school was in session. A Warren Tribune Chronicle reporter said he saw many of the old citizens with a tear in their eyes as they listened to the brief ceremony. They realized their old senior high school was no longer to be used for classroom purposes.

Left behind in the move to the new junior high school was the old Central name, its 34 years history, cumulation of traditions, and its place in Ohio history as one of the first junior high schools in the state when started by Superintendent Turner in 1917. Today there are only memories of the old Central building when it served as Warren's high school from 1882 until Warren G. Harding High School opened in 1926.

This script was prepared by Sarah Grant and Frances Gillespie, narration by Gene Roberts. These programs were prepared by 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.