

WARREN 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 brief history of Warren Township and its schools.

Into this territory in 1798 came General Perkins, surveying the Western Reserve. In his party were Ephraim Quimby, William Fenton, John Leavitt and Phinnias Leffingwell, all of whom were early proprietors in Warren. And the next year the first permanent settlement in this township was made in what is now Warren, although a white hunter called "Old Merryman" lived there before that time. Around 1800 there were only two cabins, one belonging to Ephraim Quimby and the other to William Fenton. Quimby was an important man in those days. He was the first purchaser, buying both sides of the Mahoning. He laid out the original town of Warren in 1801, was proprietor of the town and, later, judge of the court.

Ohio was not yet a state but was part of the North West Territory as all the area north and west of the Ohio River was called. General Arthur St. Clair was the governor; and in 1800 he placed all of the Western Reserve in Trumbull County, which was one of the seven original counties of Ohio and named, appropriately enough, for Governor Trumbull of Connecticut.

By this time the danger from Indians in this region had largely passed, and settlers rapidly flocked there. Among the early comers was John Leavitt, of the first well known family of pioneers and a member of the Connecticut Land Company. Leavitt came here in 1800 with his wife and seven children. His home was on the west side of what is now Main Street, near the present location of the Erie station. It later became a house for public entertainment.

In 1801 the newly organized County Court ordered townships organized "according to the act of the Second Legislature of the territory north west of the Ohio River." Warren township was, therefore, organized by a meeting of all the voters at the home of Ephraim Quimby on April 6, 1802.

We read, almost with reverence, from the original records still on file in the office of the Township Clerk - records written in clear, beautiful handwriting, with the indelible ink and quill pen used in those days, now a century and a half gone by.

A. Leavitt was chosen in every election up to 1818, and John Leavitt was elected as trustee in 1830 and as head supervisor as late as 1843.

Leavittsburg was named for Enoch Leavitt, who in 1802 settled on a 1000-acre tract where the little village now stands. We do not know just when the name "Leavittsburg" was first applied to this settlement, but we first find it in the township records in 1821. It was only with the construction of the first railroad that it became large enough to be called a village. Leavittsburg, too, originally had a public square, just a little east of the present village. Somehow it became lost but was partly restored in the Memorial Park.

The first school building in the Western Reserve was in a little house of hewn chestnut logs built on the east bank of the river opposite the Public Square in Warren, on

the spot where in 1938 an exact replica of the original was dedicated and is still used for public functions. George Parsons was the teacher - the same Parsons who in 1834 became the first Mayor of Warren and in 1845 the first President of the New Western Reserve Bank. Shortly after this, a frame building was erected just north of the first log building. The first window lights in these early buildings were only greased paper. The pupils sat on the benches facing the walls.

Very little was taught in these schools besides Reading, Writing and Arithmetic, or the "3 R's" as these subjects have been called. But these met the needs of the times fairly well. From the earliest days, moreover, these schools were real community centers; and many public discussions and debates took place during the long winter evenings, with religion as the first topic.

Until 1820 all these schools depended entirely on local support; in fact, it was up to the local district whether it had a school or not. In 1825, however, Ohio passed a law requiring the establishment of schools, and levying a half mill tax for school purposes. The next year, 1826, the Trustees divided Warren Township into six districts; later, there were more districts. These included the east half of Lordstown and "that part of Champion which is inhabited." This was the beginning of the "District Schools" of which we were to hear so much throughout the rest of the century. The families of Leavitt, Leffingwell, and Austin were included in No. 6, which was the number of the Leavittsburg district for the next 75 years.

The increase in population made it necessary to establish more district schools. In 1847 there were 17 such districts. Until 1853 the schools were under the control of the Trustees. That year Ohio passed a law making an entirely new school system, providing for local boards of education and separate taxes for school purposes.

Almost the only subjects taught during the middle of the century were the same 3 R's we have found mentioned as required for apprentices in the indenture agreements. Just before the Civil War, a great many German people settled in the township; and there arose a demand for the teaching of German. In 1860 a special teacher was hired for two months to teach German in District No. 7 at a total cost of \$7.

Much has been written and spoken concerning the district schools of the 19th century. Ours was pretty much the same as the traditional school common to both New England and its western settlements. The recitation benches, the water bucket, and the common dipper, and the round stove in the center of the room, often with its fire-pot dangerously cracked and ringed around with drying mittens and footwear of hardy youngsters who had fought the elements for a mile or two in that day when school busses were a luxury yet undreamed - these were a part of that typical school of our great grandfathers.

The building, whether of logs, boards or bricks, was usually a one-room structure, which may or may not have had a separate cloakroom. The better equipped usually had a tiny belfry and bell, but the typical district school depended on signals from a hand-

clapper bell shaken vigorously by the teacher in the doorway. Such a building, for example, was erected by Warren Township Board of Education in 1876 for \$525.

Perhaps of no other age may it be as truly said that the school was just as good or as bad as its teacher. This is not surprising since this official, whether man or woman, had no professional requirements except a certificate, had no one to turn to in case of need, and had usually an ungraded group of from 10 to 50 youths of ages ranging from six to the twenties, and requiring a minimum of 20 or 30 recitations a day.

From the earliest times, some kind of examination was required of school teachers. Back in the Civil War days such examinations were held for all Trumbull County teachers at our County Court House. Sometimes these were pretty rigid. On one occasion only 21 out of 51 applicants passed, and we read that “a wholesome alarm has been awakened among the teachers by the stringency of the examinations.” Perhaps we can better understand the conditions of teacher qualifications by reading this announcement by Wittlesay Adams of Warren, which appeared in the Western Reserve Chronicle, August 26, 1863, following a schedule of such examinations:

Applicants will bring slates. No text book or atlas can be consulted by applicants during any examination. Each applicant will be required to pay eight cents for postage and revenue stamps.

In order to elevate the standard of qualification, it will be the policy of the Board not to grant certificates of long duration, except to applicants who proved themselves thoroughly qualified, and to reject entirely those who can not pass a satisfactory examination as required by the 45th section of the School Law.

In those days when teachers were left entirely to their own resources, it was a most important forward step when the more progressive among the teachers and boards of education conceived the idea of holding group meetings to discuss their common problems. Such a meeting was held for all Warren Township teachers in the high school room at Leavittsburg, August 29, 1892. Such meetings came to be established on a county wide scale and were known as Teachers’ Institutes. The ideas and inspiration emanating from these meetings indirectly benefitted thousands of boys and girls when your parents and grandparent were children.

No problem has been more persistently current than that of teachers’ salaries. Back in 1861, the monthly wages for men teachers in Trumbull County was \$21.62: and for women, \$10.48. This figure in each case was about \$6 below the state average. Surely, equal pay for equal work was not the policy at that time. The average school year for Trumbull County in 1861 was six months and eight days. It was officially predicted that there would still be lower salaries and shorter terms for 1862 because of the “dread of the expense of the war and of the expected hard times.”

Teachers' salaries had not improved much, furthermore, by the end of the century. In 1893 the Warren Township Board employed W.W. Glass for September and October for District No. 1 at a salary of \$1.25 per day; and in June, 1898, the Board decided that the salary for the school year 1898-99 should not exceed \$28 per month.

During the last of the century, the traditional curriculum of the "3 R's" came in for its share of revision in line with social trends. Even before 1850, some schools taught history, logic, natural philosophy (which we call science today), orthography, and other subjects found in schools at that time. As we have said, the school was as good as its teacher; and every age had produced its quota of intelligent, well-informed, and progressive teachers.

In December 1888, the Warren Township Board held a meeting to discuss the teaching of physiology and hygiene. It agreed to confer with the Warren City Board, adopt the same book, and then purchase one book for each school, each teacher to give oral hygiene! How is that for thrift in grandfather's day? By 1890, United States history, geography, language and grammar had become firmly established in most schools of this area.

On December 17, 1877, the Warren Township Board took its first steps towards a uniform system of textbooks. On August 10, 1891, the Board held a meeting to consider the new textbook law, which for the first time required five-year adoptions.

Together with the enrichment of textbooks came the gradual acquisition of some of the more common teaching aids. The first such instance noted was in 1876, when the Board authorized the purchase of eight sets of geography charts for its various schools. In 1882 a copy of Webster's Dictionary was purchased for each district at a cost of \$1.50 each. In 1889 a \$30 set of maps were bought; and in 1895, seven New Education charts for reading.

The agitation for a new and enlarged district at Leavittsburg began as early as 1885, when the residents of District No. 6 petitioned the Board to make theirs a "special district, with all the rights to elect officers and to manage and control said special school districts as provide by the school laws of Ohio." The petition was rejected by a vote of eight to one. But the fight was not abandoned, and the efforts of the champions of this movement to achieve their goal constitutes one of the most interesting and dramatic chapters in our school history. One condition forced some kind of action. The school at Leavittsburg had grown so rapidly that by 1886 more space had to be found. A committee appointed to study the matter reported that a new building would cost \$4,500. Slight relief was obtained by building an additional room and a fire escape from the second story at a cost of \$823. The relief was only temporary, however; and the agitation continued until April 15, 1893, when the Special School District of Leavittsburg was created by an act of the Ohio Legislature. The boundaries were the same as for District No. 6, extending to and including part of Braceville, along the Newton Falls Road.

This, then, was the beginning of Leavittsburg School, the name of which is even used today to designate the Warren Township School, created when centralization was effected in 1916.

The script by Jerry Borgen, 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 in Trumbull County with a focus on early education and the role of the woman educator.