

BAZETTA

The Alpha Omega Chapter, Alpha Delta State, of the Delta Kappa Gamma Society International, an honorary women educators' group, in co-operation with the Martha Holden Jennings Foundation, presents a brief history of Bazetta and its schools.

The new Ohio Country in 1801-1809 seemed to be a land of great interest to all. The Scouts described it as being very unusual. Grass grew in sections as high as a horse's shoulders. The rivers were full of fish, as well as being navigable, and furnished a sufficient supply of water for human use, for watering fields, and for water power. There were forests of huge trees, and there were salt springs. Indian woman had discovered these springs when they boiled the water. Later, this salt was measured by the bushel.

Let us travel north of Warren, as you know it, and for a point of direction, on Route 5, and stop at an old, high brick house. The Pestalozzi family live there. Once, two men, Edward Scoffield and John Budd, were the first ever to come here and cut their way through the woods to this section called Bazetta (believed to be an old Indian name). They settled here about 1804-1805. Very slowly some others came. The little band of settlers grew; and though the greater part of the township was a solid, unbroken wilderness, with here and there, above the trees, smoke from a log cabin, their spirit was undaunted. Many of their structures were without windows, doors or floors. Even those who had floors laid them on puncheons or split logs, with one side hewed. Temporary doors were constructed with the aid of a blanket or quilt, and greased paper acted as a substitute for glass.

The chief pleasure of the men were found in the chase; deer, bear, wolf, turkey, opossum, and squirrel were looked upon as fair game. At some seasons of the year, night was made hideous by the howling of the wolves in this neighborhood, and sheep were protected from the ravages with difficulty. Fences were built around the sheep pens so high and close that a wolf could neither jump over, nor crawl through. The young boys were occupied as shepherds.

The women corded the wool by hand, spun, wove, and made all the family's clothing; carded the shorn wool, prepared and preserved all the food, dipped the candles for sparingly lighting the cabins. The girls helped their mothers and also picked berries in the summer. In the winter, the men had to chop ice from the streams for water.

By this time, there were several children. Ten were needed to start a school. So the first school was built in the Walnut Creek Hollow, about 20 rods above the Cheese Factory, now the site of the Farm Bureau. It was a small log structure, loosely built. Everything was primitive. In the summer of 1813, Charlotte Bell taught the first school in the newly erected building. One of her precepts was "Bread tastes sweetest if earned by the sweat of the brow." Miss Bell was the janitor, also. It was here, and for some years to follow, where a boy wore clothes fashioned from his father's wedding suit. The

material was a heavy dark brown, tan, and dark blue. Father gave this suit a little wear, and it was hung in a makeshift closet or packed in a trunk beside mother's wedding gown. The first obstacle encountered by mother was the discovery that moths had attacked the seat of the breeches. It was customary to sew patches to cover the holes. Our young scholar had to be careful not to stoop, lest the patches showed; and this would have been a "dead give away." If the pants were too short, his long black hand-knitted stockings would sometimes be not long enough to cover his knees, which often caused an inferiority complex.

And here, the scratching away with slate pencils was far from musical or soothing. Someone had a folding slate with four surfaces and all bound with red felt, laced to the frame with black cord, and a hand woven muffler to deaden the frequent crashes to the floor. Nothing but soapstone white slate pencils, which few could afford, protected jumpy nerves against that scratching, squeaking, rasping symphony. The folding slate that closed like a book was rarely needed for the serious business at hand. The inside surfaces were sometimes used for rude caricatures of the teacher or kiddish comments on her ears, hair, or bustle. The erasing process would send today's coddled youngsters to a clinic for sterilization. In the absence of a wet cloth, nature's convenient source of moisture was employed in conjunction with the palm of the hand. If Miss Bell or another teacher caught this being done, the scholar would be made to write fifty times, "I won't spit here any more."

Of course, the tin dipper was chained to the pail and later to the schoolyard pump. A towel worked its full five-day week. Caps hung three deep on wooden pegs. Your seatmate might be in school for a week before it was discovered that his baby sister had scarlet fever, or it might turn out that the one next to you, with his jaw bound for a toothache, had the mumps.

School lunches were brought in shoe boxes, baskets, and lard pails and sometimes rodents helped themselves.

Sometimes a real treat of "Grandma's Gingerbread" was in a lunch. This is the recipe:

I always take some flour, just enough for the cake I want to make. I mix it up with some buttermilk if I happen to have any -- just enough for the flour. Then I take some ginger -- some like more, some like less. I put in a little salt and pearl ash, and then I tell one of my children to pour in molasses until I tell him to stop. Then the children bring in the wood to build up a fire -- and we have gingerbread.

The first Church, 1818, in this community of Bazetta was the Baptist. The congregation met sometimes in the schoolhouse and again at some of the homesteads. In 1824, that church was still very small and struggling for a certain existence. In 1826, a Disciple, named Scott, came to the town of Bazetta and set forth the doctrines of Campbell. This preacher so charmed the Baptist ears, that in a very short time every member of the old congregation, with the exception of H.K. Hulse, joined the new cause.

There were 28 charter members; among them were the families of Samuel Bacon, Samuel Headly, Asher Coburn, James Bowen, Asher W. Coburn, and Edward Scofield.

Cortland was known as Baconsburg or East Bazetta in those days. There were, of course, no railroads, few buildings, few streets; and there remained around the settlement thousands of acres of uncleared land covered with a dense growth of tall timber.

Two points were then prominent: one at what is now the corner of Main and High Streets; the other on South Mecca Street where Walnut Creek bisects the road. At both of these places early mills had been started, and there were a few dwellings clustered about these early industries.

The first Disciples of Baconsburg had no church building. At the beginning they held their meetings in Samuel Bacon's barn, later in his house; and then they used the schoolhouse on Walnut Creek. About 1837, the congregation built a small frame building on the south side of Main Street. The land for this purpose was given to the church by Samuel Bacon and his wife, Elizabeth. This home served the church well for a number of years.

Halls' Register of 1848 lists the church at Bazetta as the largest in membership of the Christian Churches in Trumbull County. The congregation then consisted of 125 members. These were not merely names on a record, for in those days members were excluded for the "neglect of the church." Finally, this building became too small; and Samuel and Enos Bacon then gave the church the land where the present Christian Church building now stands and the land is now used for the cemetery. By 1853, the main portion of the present building was erected on its current location.

The Presbyterian denomination was more fortunate than the Baptist. This congregation erected a log church near where the first settlement was made. When the church was without preaching, it indulged itself in the reading of the Psalms. Twenty persons attended the meetings, including three girls, the number being occasionally swelled by the addition of a school teacher, who became at once an active member and a good object for criticism. The even tenor of this church's existence was broken about 1834 by the organization of a Cumberland Body that for a time attracted the members of the old church, but it afterward died a natural death. James Blair was one of the moving spirits of the work, being a man distinguished for vigor of character and considerable literary culture.

The Methodist Church was partially absorbed in 1828 by the United Brethren. In 1825, the Methodist Church was reorganized and established in a brick schoolhouse near the Casterline farm, under the supervision of Reverend Thomas Stubbs, of Warren, one of the last circuit riders.

The original class boasted six members: William Oatley, leader; Peter Hightree and wife; Joseph Marvin, Jr.; Miss Thayer and S.B. Freer---the latter becoming a

prominent minister of Indiana at a later date. The history of these churches is from the character of their members, the records of vigorous work, and a somewhat somber theology. Sometimes the solemn course of things were somewhat enlivened by wicked boys who threw dogs and an occasional pole-cat among the worshippers.

There was a sealed building with boards running up and down, located on Main Street, used for a hotel. It had a balcony on which the town boys stood to watch the bright band wagon in a parade on "Decoration Days." The old soldiers of the Civil War still had enough spring in their steps to march, and they were always well up in front. There were some young Spanish War veterans and the town band, as it was called. All would gather at the church for a service -- a prayer would be offered, a school child would haltingly recite Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and some high soprano would screech out, "The Star Spangled Banner." Some prominent citizen would give a eulogy; perhaps there would be a gun salute, and then all would go to the cemetery where flowers and flags would be placed on the graves.

The town school was finally moved to the corner of Mecca Street and Grove Street.

An Academy was also built on Grove Drive but later burned. A "good road" was routed through the town from Warren to Jefferson. More houses were built, and schools were enlarged and relocated. In 1868, the railroad came, built and organized under the same name of "The Atlantic and Great Western Road." A few years later its ownership passed to the Erie. With the railroad came more people, more money, and more commerce. A depot was built on Erie Street, and a signboard bearing "CORTLAND" replaced "BACONSBURG." There were four trains daily. Orrin Gates came with the railroad and stayed to become minister of the Disciple Church. It was he who named the town CORTLAND; and why, it is not recorded. In 1874, the town was incorporated. Situated on a trunk line railroad, being provided with fine water and surrounded by productive dairy farms, the town had many advantages over its neighbors. One weekly paper, The Cortland Gazette, Republican in politics, was edited by John Johnson. In later years, Carl Hadsell printed The Cortland Herald.

In the cheese season a Board of Trade, of which Thomas Rose was president, held daily sessions in the Gazette Building on Main Street. Here all the leading markets were bulletined from telegrams and large quantities of cheese were disposed of.

The Cortland High School occupied a fine site of two acres on School Street having been built in 1876, at a cost of \$10,000. The school drew its attendance from the entire township and had an excellent academic department. The enrollment was about 165, and Superintendent E.M. Wood was assisted by four female teachers. Charlie Hoagland was the janitor; and as he rang the large school bell, his crippled body would be pulled off his feet. As he rang the tardy bell, if he saw some child coming, he would ring the bell a bit longer, so he couldn't be counted as tardy.

In 1876, the population of Cortland was 516; and in the same year it expressed a desire for the removal of the County Seat to its own precincts. But this ambition was not granted, and the voice of the desire was hushed.

And so, gone are:

The long black stockings (hand-knit until you were fourteen); the blue serge dress and various colored percale pinafores; the four button arctics; the evening slides down the high school hill, youngsters AND parents, the hundreds of cans of fruit, vegetables, and meats in the dirt-floor cellar, along with countless jars of jams and jellies; the after supper real-life stories told by Mom and Dad around the hard coal burner; the mica "windows," red with the glow from hot coals, and the kerosene lamps remaining dark. Tales of sleigh rides, spelling bees, pot lucks in the village hall, band concerts in the Village Square, the Halloween pranks -- a wagon on a tool shed roof, the doctor's and dressmaker's signs switched.

But families were families then! Parents and children ate together at least two times a day, seven days a week; and evenings were spent together.

When the chores were done and supper was on
Each one was in his place.
Father, Mother and every child
And then 'twas time for Grace.
Today Dad's at the Club, Mom's bowling,
Kids scattered here and there --
Oh, they'll all get together sometime
But only the Lord knows where!

The script by Vivian Vera and Wilhemiena W. Viets, 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.