

SOUTHINGTON

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 Southington Township and its schools.

Southington Township is one of the 25 townships located on the western side of Trumbull County, which is the only square county in the State of Ohio. Most of the earlier settlers, known as Yankees, were from Connecticut and settled about 1825. Some of the settlers were also Pennsylvania Dutch.

John Bolles, owning the largest portion of the township, named the area Bollestown or Bowelstown; and then this was changed to the name of Southington in 1817 by vote of the people.

Southington, in the beginning, was just a tiny portion of the wilderness owned by King James II of England. Later it was passed on to Charles II, who granted a charter to Connecticut in 1662. "This land grant included all lands between 41st and 42nd parallels of North latitude from Massachusetts on the east to the Pacific Ocean on the west." This excluded New York and Pennsylvania. Disputes naturally arose between New York, Connecticut, Virginia, and Massachusetts. It was not possible to come to some agreement until after a court was organized by Congress under the Articles of Confederation. In 1786, Connecticut was able to have a clear title and arrange for sale of the land.

Thereupon, the Connecticut legislature in 1786-1787 appointed a committee of three to sell the land at 50 cents an acre. The township agreed to sell townships that were five miles square.

However, each township to reserve 500 acres for "the support of the school forever," 500 acres to support of the church or churches, and 200 acres in fee simple to the first Gospel Minister who should settle in the township.

The Connecticut Land Company purchased all the Western Reserve Territory for \$1,200,000. One of the original members of the land company was Solomon Cowles, who invested \$10,000 in the company. Among those who had great influence on the township of Southington were Solomon Cowles, Ephraim Robins, Joseph Borrell, and William Edwards who purchased, sight unseen, Range 5, Township 5, which later became Southington.

First settlers arrived in June 1805 from Litchfield, Connecticut. They were Luke Viets, his wife Hannah Norton Viets, his father David Viets; Roderick Norton, age 22, and Horace Norton, seven years old; and James Chalker with his family. His wife, Mercy

Norton Chalker, stopped off in Warren to await the birth of their second son, Joseph. Two-year-old son Orrin stayed with his mother.

Ben Viets, Luke's brother, and their sister Polly arrived later. Polly married James Nutt of Vernon Township in February, 1807. They went to housekeeping in Southington.

Seth and Thankful (Ray) Hurd settled in the community on May 21, 1808. Of their nine children, their three daughters remained in Connecticut to complete their education and were to come to Ohio later.

In May 1808, Henry White and wife arrived on the 29th; and Joseph Rice and Elisha Brunson and their wives came on the 31st of July in 1808.

Other families prominent in the growth of Southington were William Ely, who laid out the center of town, Benjamin Hobart, Henry Hess, Samuel and Aretus Haughton, the Waldons, Joys, and Frisbees.

In 1834-1835 the Pennsylvania Dutch came -- David Palm, Joseph and Jonah Hoffman, George Flick, Samuel Stroup, Isaac Strock, Jacob Houck and many others.

These families proved to be the grass roots of future lineage in Trumbull County.

There is a First Settlers' Memorial Stone located at the side of State Highway 305 between the homes of Frances Viets and William Chalker. This honors the three pioneer families: the Chalkers, Nortons, and the Viets and was erected in 1936 by the fourth and fifth generations of these families. There is sealed behind a bronze plate historical material and articles of interest. It was opened in 1955 and will open again in 1980. Of note is the fact that the memorial was dedicated with these words:

They had faith in this wilderness. They believed in learning and in labor, in plain living, and in high thinking. They believed in law and order. Difficult times as they were, they did not indulge in a defeatist policy or one of surrender.

Life was not easy for the early pioneer. Woods had to be cleared; log cabins had to be built. Wolves, bears and snakes had to be conquered. Food had to come from what was available; such as, the under-side of the barks of trees, corn, potatoes, pumpkins, and later some fruit trees that would be available to plant in a clearing. Surely, they must have been helped by the Indians. Many arrowheads have been found in the county, especially in front of rivers. Indians were here, there is no doubt -- whether friendly or hostile.

The township organized and it held its first election on June 12, 1817, at the home of John James. The first trustees were Joshua Osborn, Seth Hurd and Roderick Norton. The Clerk was Lemuel Frisbee. The Treasurer was Joseph Rice. Also, at this election,

the township received the name of Southington, then known as Bollestown. Since Farmington and Southington in Connecticut were the same distance apart, it was thought to be a good idea to repeat the same names in Ohio.

Previous to the year of 1817 the southern part of Windsor, with Mesopotamia, Farmington and Southington composed one election district or precinct. These elections were usually held in Mesopotamia. Also the same territory composed one military district, and they held their trainings alternately in several townships.

It is hard to tell how many voted in the early days, but in 1975 Southington had four voting precincts and 1,383 registered voters.

The first school building to be erected for school purpose only was completed in 1825. This was built by voluntary labor and voluntary subscriptions. The log building was later replaced by brick at the same site. Seats in the first school were half logs or puncheons, mounted on wooden legs inserted in holes in the logs. Desks were simple pieces of wood mounted to resemble a high bench. James Nutt continued his service as a teacher with a salary of \$300 per year.

James Nutt was also the first Justice of the Peace, serving for 21 years.

One of the early industries was the making of cheese. W.B. McConnell and Charles Harshman were the first developers of this industry.

Luke Viets established the first tannery and supplied leather goods and harnesses. Ben Viets operated a small turning shop to make wooden bowls, plates, mortars and other utensils. Water provided the power to be used and came from a small stream one-half mile south of the Center Road.

The first sawmill was located in the Northern section of the township and was owned by Sam Haughton. Another mill was opened later by Isaac Hurd east of the center on Dead Branch Stream. Ephraim Joy was the first carpenter, and a man named Knapp operated the first blacksmith shop.

In the early 1800's women's lot was a hard one. She would work from dawn until dark, take care of the children, care for the garden, if there was one yet; scare away the wolves and bears with the burning brands seized from the fireplace or a long-handled spoon with burning gunpowder to scare marauders away. She did her own baking with an iron kettle buried in hot coals, cooked huge meals on an open fire. She wove the cloth and made clothes and bedding for her family. The wool would be sheared from the sheep, carded, made into yarn or thread, and then woven into cloth. Chokeberries, walnut bark, Queen Ann's lace, and many other herbs would be used to make a solution to dye the material the color desired. Later, when barrels were available, they would be filled with wood ashes placed under a spout on top of a flat rock, and let drain into another container of water off the wood ashes. This would result in lye, which was used along with grease to make soap.

There was no professional physician in Southington until the 1830's. Appreciative citizens depended on Thankful Hurd, the township nurse. She developed many skills in taking care of the sick.

The first census in Trumbull County was taken in 1820. Only the head of the family was listed by name. Other members of the household was registered in certain age brackets as male or female. Southington was a remarkably young community. Only ten men appear in the 45 or over age group. One has to bear in mind some folks may not have been at home or living with others in the same household and so were not counted.

Education was considered one of the most important developments. Future school funds had to be provided for. It will be recalled that the Act of the Connecticut Legislature in 1787 set aside 500 acres of each Township in the Western Reserve. In May, 1795, a new law was passed in the Connecticut General Assembly which appropriated the proceeds from 500 acres in each township of the Reserve for a perpetual fund. The interest for this was to be applied to the support of the schools in Connecticut. Ohio did something about this.

Most of the State of Ohio had the benefit of the school lands under the Land Ordinance of 1785, the contracts that Congress made with the Ohio Company and with Symmes and his associates in 1787, and the Enabling Act of 1802 for the admission of the State of the Union. In brief, these legislative Acts gave one thirty-sixth part in each Congressional Township for the school. The State Legislature was to hold the title.

In 1826 provision was made for public sale of school lands, with the proceeds of these sales to be deposited in the Irreducible School Fund of the State of Ohio, with the interest to go to the schools. In 1917 after the last of the lands had been sold, the amount deposited to the Western Reserve schools was \$257,499.21. The money is invested in bonds by the Auditor of the State, and six percent interest is paid to the schools.

Really, Connecticut made us no gift of school lands; our school lands were granted by the Federal Congress, and the title of these lands was vested in the State Legislature.

Some of the early teachers included: William Knowlton; Sarah Hyde of Farmington; her sister Eliza, who married James Chalker, Jr. and was the mother of Newton Chalker; Homer Norton and sister Martha. Martha Norton was one of the earliest "certified" teachers in the township. Her granddaughter, Mrs. Howard Wise of Kent, owns her teaching certificate. It was dated October 28, 1854, and was signed by M. D. Leggett, H. D. Ranney, and Ira Hart. Subjects listed on it to teach were: Orthography, reading, writing, arithmetic, English grammar, and geography. She also had to sustain good moral character,

The early schools were held in cabins, and then in 1825 the first building was erected east of the center. Early sessions lasted during a winter term. The teacher's salary was \$10 a month, plus room and board at homes of her pupils taken by turns.

The schools were centralized in 1906 when a brick grade school was built. Southington's Town Hall was one of the last district schools. Typical of real Southington citizens in 1957, the Southington Community Club began a project to modernize the building and add to it. This was done by donations and lots of hard work.

In 1851 Farmington established an Academy, to which one of the Southington residents went, Homer Norton. Later Homer walked to Harpersfield in 1836 to become a student of Platt R. Spencer, who originated the famous Spencerian Method of Hand-Writing which is still taught today. Homer returned to teach in the schools and at home by tutoring.

Newton Chalker was another of Southington residents who went to Farmington Academy. He studied and taught by turns until he passed the bar examination. He had a burning interest in education. He became a very successful lawyer in Akron and later helped Southington to establish its first high school in 1907. He donated and endowed the high school. Many of the books from his original library are there now. The building, a beautiful yellow brick building with Ionic columns, was built to house a library, auditorium and classrooms. To further encourage education in the community, provision is made in his will to grant outstanding graduates of each class awards in money.

One can see the patterns of our society being laid down by our forebears, the early settlers, as to their attitudes toward the home, the school, and the church. These institutions were the very pillars of society. It would take a book to tell of all the ministers, teachers and professional people whose roots were laid down in this small community.

In relation to this fact, Cyrus Nutt, a son of James and Polly Viets Nutt was elected President of Bloomington College in Indiana and served until his death. Another was William Norton, son of Reverend Roderick Norton, Jr., and Caroline Pardy Norton, elected President of Cornell University where he served until his death.

Until the 1930's Southington was basically a farming community; strawberries and maple syrup were the cash crop.

Now most people work outside the community. However, there are quite a few small businesses located in the township. Since the new Route 422 has been built, good water has been found in abundance. Much building has gone on. The 1960 census listed 2,774 people; in 1970 it was 3,722. The 1980's should show a high increase. The enrollment at the school is over 900 pupils, with 42 teachers and a school nurse. At present an attempt is being made to consolidate with surrounding townships especially to the north.

The Volunteer Fire Department was organized in 1949, with George Culp as the first Fire Chief. Adelbert Smith is the present Chief. The Firemen's Ladies Auxiliary was formed in the spring of 1950 at the Town Hall.

Some of the small businesses are Excavating by Charles Baugher, Beauty Shop, Brockway Welding, Bosley Well Drilling, Filling Stations, Half-Way Restaurant, Chalker Auction Barn, etc.

And so we have the making of a small community over a period of 175 years, the laying of a good foundation for future generations based on the home, school and the church.

This script by Marceline Stevens, 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.

GUSTAVUS

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

Gustavus Township, located in northeastern Trumbull County, was named for Colonel Lemuel Starr's son, Gustavus, after the colonel purchased the rural area in 1800. Josiah Pelton, a Connecticut farmer, was the first settler to arrive; and later his son Jesse and his bride, Ruhamah DeWolfe, who were married in 1802, arrived. They had the township's first birth, which sorrowfully became Gustavus' first death. Elias Pelton, a brother of Jesse, was the second to arrive; he and his family became residents of Gustavus. Their daughter, Barbara, was the first white child to survive; and her brother, Storrs, was the first white boy born in the township.

It is interesting to know that Josiah Pelton, the original settler, Jesse Pelton, Josiah's son, and Fensard Pelton, grandfather of Mrs. Florence Pelton Lucas, are all buried in the Gustavus Cemetery. Mrs. Lucas's father, Eugene Pelton, is still living at age 96.

As the settlement expanded, many buildings were constructed, including the Empire House, which was one of the best known buildings, and a stagecoach tavern with several adjoining houses. Calvin Cone was Gustavus' first justice of the peace and later became a state senator, while Riverius Bidwell walked barefoot from house to house collecting taxes and walked to Columbus to deliver the money. He was also the first postmaster.

In the early days of the township, several sawmills, cheese factories, machine shops, blacksmith shops, tanneries and other shops lined the dirt roads. William Roberts, who came from Connecticut in 1816, was a shoemaker. Mr. Dyer had a woodworking shop where he specialized in making wooden troughs for sap to use in the maple sugar industry. Most farmers kept sheep to help clear the brush from the land and to make a little money. Gustavus Township inhabitants showed much interest in raising and showing ponies and riding horses.

A history of Gustavus would be incomplete without mention of the part that Gustavus people played in the Abolitionist Movement. Obadiah Gildersleeves came to Gustavus in 1804. He obtained permission for the court to drop the last part of his name, and his descendants have always been known as "Gilder." He had eight children when he arrived, and the ninth born afterward. Mrs. Gilder drove wagonloads of slaves to the lakes, where they made their escape. The Underground Railroad for north-bound slaves was very active in the township with the Hezlip-Selby-Bingham-Kimple House one of the main stations.

Religion began in the home of Jesse Pelton with Reverend Thomas Robins preaching the first sermon. He was sent by the Congregational Missionary Society of Connecticut. He, with Joseph Badger, Mr. Osgood, and others, preached at intervals until 1809 when Henry Cowler, a Congregationalist from Austinburg, preached through the summer in the home of Jesse Pelton, who also provided most of the pay. Through the labors of these men, brave for toil and bold for the truth, conversions and revivals prevailed, reformation progressed, and a Methodist Episcopal Church was established. A Congregational Church was organized in 1825 with James Badger as the first minister. His salary was \$200, \$50 of it being supplied by the Missionary fund. The Bible, presented by Josiah Pelton to the church, bears a date 1792 and was printed in Edinburgh, Scotland. When this revered old book was displaced by a new one of a modern type, it was returned according to his request to one of his descendents. Through the cooperation of the churches in the community, Gustavus has held Fourth of July festivals since the first one in 1800.

The Elias Pelton family, whose daughter and son were born in 1803 and 1805, is credited with having the first school in the township. Miss Roxy Brockway was the teacher of this school, which was for the benefit of the Pelton children.

The first public school was kept in a new log barn belonging to John Lane, one and one-half miles northeast of the center. Miss Sally Wakeman, the teacher, was paid seventy-five cents per week. Many of the children found their way to school through the woods by means of blazed trees. The parents paid the teacher because there was no public school money until 1804.

School books were scarce until Dr. Naphtali Streeter made a trip on horseback to Pittsburgh in 1908, where he bought Webster's Spelling Book, Columbian Orator, English Reader, and Elements of United Knowledge. He bought these books back to Gustavus.

The first schoolhouse was built on the premises of Riverius Bidwell in 1813. Soon after, Esther Bidwell, Riverius Bidwell's sister, became the first teacher. Children from the center, nearly three miles away, came to her school. In a letter written home on September 21, 1813, she describes the school building as a house without windows or chimney and added, "It grows dark in my hut." She had started teaching nine weeks before, with 25 pupils, 11 of them learning to write, children and parents both engaged. She was concerned that there had been only four sessions of three months each before this and no school for two years. She hoped that they would never be as indifferent about schooling as in the past. Lucy Case was also mentioned as a beloved teacher in this school.

Every few years the districts changed. More were added, at one time, there were ten. There were nine when the schools were centralized, consisting of seven districts, one sub-district, and the high school at the center.

Early in April of each year, three directors were elected by each district. The directors hired the teachers and maintained the buildings. Later these directors were

replaced by a Township Board of Education, one elected from each district; later still, this was changed to five members elected at large.

The nine district schools were located as follows, according to one authority:

- No. One - Barclay L. York's tenant house
- No. Two - Hayes Road and Pearl Street
- No. Three - Center. O. White's house
- No. Four - West of Dilworth. D. Brainard's house
- No. Five - Canfield Road. A. Bonar's house
- No. Six - Sadler Road
- No. Seven - West of Center. M. Smith's garage
- No. Eight - York Street. L. Spring's house
- No. Nine - Pearl Street. L. Runkle's tenant house

New Englanders could be traced across the country by the academies they erected. In 1841, Reverend Benjamin Fenn promoted interest in an academy for Gustavus. Buell Barnes, a local resident, was in the State Legislature at that time, and he secured the incorporation papers. Shares of stocks were sold for \$10 each. A large two-story brick building with a belfry was erected in 1843 - 1844 on the west side of the village square, south of the site of the present Federated Church. School started in the fall of 1844. The Academy flourished for about 40 years, and many graduates went on to college for higher education. In 1881, a two-story boarding house was built at a cost of \$2,300 to accommodate out-of-town pupils.

When the academy had outlived its usefulness, the Board of Education purchased the building for \$2,300, and the old high school was held here through the 1890's. One year it was held in the then-new Town Hall when the Academy building was condemned as unsafe for use.

An early teacher was E.J. Southwick, noted for his thoroughness in teaching higher arithmetic (or mental arithmetic) and advanced grammar. Other high school teachers were A. P. Bacon and G. P. Gillmer who taught one year in the old building and one in the town hall. Charles Merwin was another high school teacher.

It was largely enough through the effort of G. P. Gilmer and C. G. Williams, Clerk of the Board of Education, that the people decided to centralize, bringing the children from all the districts into a new central building which was built west of the

Center of 1898, at the cost of about \$4,000. This consolidation brought Gustavus the honor of being the first township in the United States of America to have a centralized school.

In 1960 Gustavus School consolidated with Kinsman, Vernon, and Hartford Schools. The high school students were transported to Kinsman, and a part of Kinsman's grade pupils were brought to Gustavus. The consolidated schools were appropriately called "The Joseph Badger Local Schools" for the circuit-riding minister who served the Gustavus Church from 1825 to 1835.

Gustavus Township is justly proud of its people who have become prominent in many occupations. They are represented among artists, inventors, teachers, public officials, armed services, preachers, health services, agriculture, and all other contributing fields of employment. They reflect the spirit of their pioneer ancestors. These Connecticut pioneers spent six or more weeks traveling from their homes to this new township of Gustavus. Often they had to build bridges and repair roads in order to proceed on their way. They journeyed westward in their wagons, pulled by ox teams. They ate and slept in these wagons with the goal of a new home urging them onward. Trumbull County is richer for having Gustavus as one of its townships.

This script was prepared by Sarah May Thompson, 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 woman educator.