

HUBBARD

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 Hubbard Township and its schools.

Stepping briskly along the narrow trail through Tylee's Woods, Joel Smith tugged his gray knitted cap down over his ears.

These woods were only a small portion of the extensive acreage belonging to Samuel Tylee, a Connecticut surveyor and land agent for Nehemiah Hubbard. In 1800, Hubbard, an adventuresome merchant from Middletown, Connecticut, had purchased for \$20,000 that section of the Western Reserve which would six years later be designated Hubbard Township, an area of approximately 15,274 acres. Although the village established in 1803 was named "Hubbard", neither Nehemiah Hubbard nor any of his family ever lived there. It was Tylee who was the first settler.

The wind this morning was strong and cold and carried a definite threat of snow. Joel Smith could feel the damp chill penetrating his thirty-six-year-old bones, especially the spot on his right leg, injured years ago in a fall from a horse. Breaking his stride to spring across a small stream, he felt a momentary stab of dull soreness in his leg when he landed on his right foot.

It was December 26, 1810; and Joel Smith was headed toward the little school-house in southwestern Hubbard Township where he was the schoolmaster. John Gardner, a farmer, had donated space on his property for the erection of the simple one-room structure of rough-hewn logs. More settlers, many from Connecticut and some from New Jersey and Pennsylvania, were establishing themselves in this wilderness. Three schools were presently in operation. Besides the one where Smith was in charge, there was one in Hubbard Village and another in the southeastern part of the township, near the Pennsylvania boundary.

Eighteen students were enrolled in Smith's school this year, but at the moment the schoolmaster was not thinking of his pupils. He was reflecting on yesterday, Christmas Day. Sarah Frazier, the wife of Samuel Frazier, was certainly a good cook.

According to his teaching contract, the schoolmaster was to live 27 days in the home of each of three families during his school term. The home of the Fraziers and their five children was second on his list. Mrs. Frazier had made Christmas the kind of special holiday it should be with a fine dinner -- a roast of venison, baked squash, and even a dessert, "a spicy raisin cake sweetened with honey." Commodities such as raisins, sugar, and spices had to be brought up from Pittsburgh by pack horse. Therefore, sweet foods were not served very often.

But Sarah Frazier's talents were not reserved for the holidays alone. Her everyday fare was outstanding as well. She could take two tough old squirrels, skin them with a few fast flicks of her very sharp knife, simmer them a half a day in the stew pot; and they'd come out tasting as good as chicken.

Joel Smith's first 27 days of boarding with the Cleaver family hadn't been so comfortable. Young Maggie Cleaver, besides being an inexperienced cook and housekeeper, had two babies to tend, the elder not yet three years old. Somehow, the cornmeal cakes she baked on the hearthstones for his breakfast seldom turned out well. They were either scorched and hard or only half-baked and raw in the middle. Even though living with the Fraziers meant a longer walk to school, he didn't mind.

Coming out of Tylee's Woods he could see the Gardner cabin less than half a mile away. The schoolhouse was not far beyond the cabin. Nearing the schoolyard, the schoolmaster was rather surprised to see no sign of his students. Usually many of his charges would linger outdoors until he announced the start of classes. The children of farmers and woodcutters, they were hardy and active, rarely intimidated by unpleasant weather conditions. Nevertheless, thought Schoolmaster Smith, that wind is sharp today....my hands are almost numb. I suppose they're all waiting inside.

Moments later, as he reached the door and pushed against the latch, he was stopped short. The door held firm against his weight. Impatiently he threw himself against it the second time, bruising his forearm in his efforts. It was like trying to walk through a stonewall!

"What's the matter with this door?" he shouted. "Open it at once!" he cried.

An excited chorus of giggles, shouts and laughter from inside the walls greeted his words. "No school today! You're barred out, teacher! You can't come in. Barred out!" More laughter and commotion.

Joel Smith paused. "Barred out?" Yes, he understood that phrase. Barring out the teacher was a prank that school children sometimes attempted, usually on the day following Christmas. In fact, some years earlier, when he'd been teaching in Warren, his students had tried it. But at that time, getting it open was merely a matter of a few good hard shoves on the door to dislodge the bench the children had placed in the doorway.

But evidently his pupils in this school were more clever; in fact, he could guess who the ringleaders were -- those six or seven teenage fellows who weren't particularly interested in book learning. Big boys they were, too, and taller than he by several inches. Yet what Joel Smith lacked in height he compensated for in determination and agility.

Having decided to waste no more time struggling with the door, Smith remembered the window openings on either side of the schoolhouse. Running quickly to one and then the other, he was dismayed to find that they, too, were firmly barricaded.

What should he do next? He certainly wasn't about to let these young pranksters get the better of him.

Seizing a rail from a nearby fence, he began digging out chunks of the mud and moss mixture between the logs, hoping to force an opening large enough to slip through. However, a few minutes of frantic labor convinced him that his efforts were in vain. The little building was only four years old and well constructed. It was time to find someone to help him.

Hurrying to the Gardner cabin he called, "Mr. Gardner, could you help me? Those young rascals have barred me out of the school!"

"Well....you don't say! What can we do?"

"Get your axe and come with me, Mr. Gardner. If we cut a hole in the roof, we can get into the loft. And when we're in the loft, all we have to do is tear up a few of those loose boards that are laid across the beams. I'll show them it takes more than a barred door to keep me out!"

Ten minutes went by. A flurry of vigorous hacking had produced an opening in the roof big enough for the men to crawl through. At the same time, the noise and excitement in the schoolroom increased, overpowering the chopping and thumping of the two men overheard.

At last success seemed in sight. Enough planking had been pulled aside to allow the men to lower themselves into the schoolroom. But just as they were about to descend, four husky boys grabbed the heavy wooden table Smith used as a desk, hoisted it onto their shoulders and pressed it solidly against the hole in the planking.

Frustrated and angry, the schoolmaster leaped onto the table and jumped up and down with all his strength. In the midst of the uproar he thought he heard someone shout, "One...two...three." At the word "three" the boys suddenly released the table and leap aside. Down to the schoolroom floor plummeted Schoolmaster Smith, landing in a most ungraceful sprawl.

Attempting to regain his dignity, he arose slowly and brushed off his clothes. No bones appeared broken; but by tomorrow he'd have some colorful bruises, he was sure. Straightening up to his full five feet six inches, he addressed the turmoil surrounding him in his severest tones. "Take your seats at once! Classes will begin immediately!"

"Oh no, Mr. Smith! No school today! No school today!"

Before he could say another word, he was swiftly picked up and carried out of doors. The schoolhouse door slammed with a bang, and he could hear obstacles being placed against it on the inside.

John Gardner, who had slipped out almost unnoticed, was waiting for him. "Might as well give up, Mr. Smith," he grinned. "Looks like school's out for today."

The dejected schoolmaster nodded silently and set off towards Tylee's Woods, not wanting to risk any further embarrassment. A few snowflakes swirled downward through the bare branches of the hardwoods as he quickened his stride. But his thoughts were outracing his feet. Distressing questions confronted him: How would he approach his students tomorrow? And that hole in the roof -- what would the school supervisors say? Would he perchance lose a day's salary?

A sharp pain in his right leg interrupted his worries. His plunge from the loft had scraped off the skin from his shin to his knee. And now that he'd looked at it, it seemed to hurt even more.

But the sight of the Frazier's cabin was coming into view cheered him. He was almost home. Maybe Sarah Frazier would give him some lard to soothe his scrapes and bruises and a woolen rag to wrap around his throbbing leg. This was a good day to rest by the warm hearthside. And perhaps there'd been some leftover venison for supper...

The script by Arlene Rohrer, 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.