

The History of Licking Township

From the Notes of Elma Cass, First Grade Teacher at Jacksontown and Hebron Elementary School.

This land where we are now standing didn't always look like this. At one time many thousands of years ago it was covered with water entirely. In every limestone and sandstone quarry you can see evidence of this, for those kinds of rock are only deposited in the bottom of a lake or sea. It must have been salt water that covered the land because there are now large beds of salt lying several hundred feet below the surface. Only short distances from here on Blue Jay road are salt water wells where Newark street workers get salt to use on icy streets in winter. Another evidence of a sea covering our area is seen in the fossils on the stones and gravel dug out of pits and quarries.

At a later time, known as the Carboniferous period, coal was formed. Still later came an immense glacier or ice sheet. This changed the lay of the land and general appearance of things. Most of our township lays in this placated area. As it moved over the northern part of Ohio in a south easterly direction the climate became warm enough to melt it. There it stopped and gradually moved back as it melted. This line is called terminal moraine and is marked with a line of hills. These are large mounds of rocks and soil that were dropped when the glacier melted.

Scientists believe there were several glaciers during what was called the Ice Age. But this great ice sheet previously referred to was the largest and reached the farthest south. It leveled the hills and filled the up the valleys thus making the soil deeper and more productive and suitable for farming. It was during this period that some rivers changed and flowed the opposite way. New rivers were created and our own Licking River was one of these. It is interesting to know that the Licking River and Licking Township got there names from salt licks present in the area. The Great Lakes in northern Ohio are a result of the gouging out by the glacier and the Big Swamp known to us as Buckeye Lake , often called big Pond or Reservoir was made this way. When the settlers began to arrive in Licking Township they found a number of mounds. They were made by the Moundbuilders which historians and archeologists agree were of the same race as the American Indians. They lived during a much earlier period, which greatly predated the arrival of the first settlers. Some of the mounds were look-out mounds, some may have been built for religious purposes of to represent certain tribes, but most of them were doubtless built for burial purposes.

The mound on the "Plank Road" between Newark and Jacksontown, on the farm of Mr. Taylor (across from the Cormican house) was of good size and when opened contained many things such as ashes, charcoal, flint, a broken pipe of soft limestone, a string of over a hundred native copper beads, seventeen human skeletons, six stone hand axes, a hatchet, flint scraper, many bone implements made from deer and elk

antlers, a whistle made from the tooth of a young black bear, shell spoons, pieces of a vase, a vessel of coarse pottery and various animal bones such as elk, deer, rabbit, wolf, woodchuck, and river mussels. This was also used as a "lookout tower" they think. You can see Buckeye Lake from the top.

The stone mound, about a half-mile south of Jacksontown, was very large, measuring 183 feet in diameter at the base, and when found by the early settlers, was between 30 and 40 feet high. Fifteen thousand wagon loads of stone was hauled out of it by forty-mule teams and used to build the north bank of Buckeye Lake . Some of the stone was used in cellar walls in homes of the neighborhood and the villages along the National Road . When the mound was torn down, it exposed twelve to fifteen small earthen burial mounds arranged in a circle. At least one skeleton was found in the stone mound.

The mound at Fairmont Church was a lookout mound and it was opened at one time but, I am told, it didn't contain much. A number of smaller mounds like this have disappeared because of plowing fields over the years. In 1860 a keystone, a small triangular shaped sandstone engraved on both sides with Hebrew letters, was found in a mound near Newark . A Decalogue tablet was also unearthed in this mound. The tablet contained an abbreviated form of the Ten Commandments copied almost entirely from Exodus 20 in the Bible. For years, it was regarded as a hoax, but two Hebrew scholars along with some scientists confirmed it to be true. This tablet is seven inches long, black limestone, and was found in a circular light brown sandstone box with a whitish cement at the edges. The "Holy Stones" (five in number) were found near the intersection of Rt. 13 and Interstate 70 and at another location in Madison Township are still a subject of controversy, but scholars now think that perhaps people from the Mediterranean sea area reached this country in the days of the mound builders. This was long before Columbus came and these people left their messages carved on stones found in the Adena Burial Mounds as well as on rocks throughout North America .

Although Flint Ridge is not in this township, we all know where it is or have been there. This was neutral ground for the Indians who came from all over the United States for flint to make their arrow heads and tools. The flint found here is said to be the finest in the world.

When the settlers began arriving in 1801 in Licking Township , they found the Indians living here - three tribes of them in this area - the Shawnee , the Wyandotte , and the Delaware . The Indians had a camp in the farm marked on the map as belonging to J.R.Moore. There was also an Indian encampment in a large sugar grove near Hog Run where the Indians often made sugar. It could have been where Dawes Arboretum is now. Also Big Swamp or two lakes called by the Indians, Big Lake and Little Lake, were frequented by the Indians for fishing.

Also there was an Indian trail through the township and Reservoir coming from the Wakatomica, near Dresden, crossing the Licking River at the mouth at Bowling Green, running over to near Pickerington in Fairfield County. The Indians probably camped along this trail from time to time. This trail probably was a buffalo trail also, for near the pond was a salt spring where deer, buffalo, and other animals came.

A more permanent Indian town was located a mile or more above Johnstown on Raccoon Creek. The Indians called it Raccoon Town. They lived there until 1807 when Charles and George Green purchased the land and then occupied and cultivated it.

The trail I spoke of is no doubt the one followed by Christopher Gist. Gist was a famous woodsman and scout and had been hired by the newly organized Ohio Land Company over East to "spy out the lands". He is probably the first white man to pass through what is now Licking Township, the date being 1750 and a generation before the Revolutionary War.

Then following the war, the government sent surveyors to this area - Elnathan Schofield - he was to lay out a military tract for the people who fought in the Revolutionary War. The government had no money to pay the soldiers, so they were given land. This land was to be called The Military Tract. An imaginary line called the 40th parallel was drawn and it was close to Route 40. This line is about the north end of the Davis house - second house south of the school. North of this line was the Military Tract. Then south of this imaginary line was given the name Refugee Land. This land was for the people whose homes were destroyed during the Revolutionary War.

Many of the settlers arrived before Schofield had completed the survey. One hundred years later, in 1900, this map of governmental, showing Buckeye Lake was found in the basement of the State House in Columbus, signed by Elnathan Schofield, Surveyor and dated 1801.

By 1803, when Ohio was admitted to the Union, much of the land around Big Swamp had been cleared. The forests in this township were made up of oak, walnut, hickory, sugar maple, and beech.

On February 25, 1802, Benjamin Green acquired lands on Hog Run, later sold to Seven Robison and contracted with a large proprietor who had 2800 acres lying on both sides of Hog Run, west of the Plank Road. He located at the spring on his land, afterwards owned by J.R. and J.J. Moore, north of the residence of John Brumback. Other early settlers in the township were Phyllis Sutton, John Gillispie, Benjamin Green, John Stadden, Major Anthony Pitzer, John Swisher, and Stephen Robinson. (Sutton, Pitzer, and Swisher were noted on a map in 1801, but Mr. Swisher came a little later.) Mr. Swisher, having used all his money, bargained for a hundred acres for \$175 on which he built a pole cabin near Mrs. Green's house. He paid for it by bringing bushels of salt to market in Zanesville by horseback. There were no roads, so he followed trails through the woods. Later, he built a two room log cabin for he and his wife who was Mr. Green's daughter.

More settlers came to Licking Township and began clearing land and building homes with timber found on the land or making bricks from clay if it was available. After building their cabins, they began to think about schools and churches. The first school was located in the Green settlement about 1806 and taught by a Mr. Taylor.

We know that these first school buildings were built of logs or bricks with one room and fireplace for heat. Later the schools had a wood stove in the center of the room. The blackboard was simply a board or the plastering painted black. The children in pioneer days wrote their lessons on small slates. The slate pencil was cut from slate XXXX or a special red sand. If they couldn't get slate, a thorn was used to scratch on birch bark or a charred stick would write on anything.

Later if paper was available, bullets could be melted down and the lead could be used to mark with. The pens were made from goose feathers and they used pokeberry juice for ink. The books were horn books - similar to this reproduction I have, except they were protected by a thin layer of horn. The children sat on long, hard benches with straight backs, or at first they used split logs with no backs at all. Since children had to work at home, there was little time left for education and often the school term was only three months long and held during the winter. In fact, the pioneers felt all they needed was how to read the Bible, maybe the Almanac, to write, and to do ordinary sums.

They didn't learn reading until they had learned to spell. Discipline was strict. Most teachers believed in the hickory stick - beating out the devilment and beating in the lessons. The schools were paid for by parents subscribing a certain fee for each pupil. When a teacher found enough subscribers, he would open a school. Since people lived a distance apart at that time, often the children had to walk long distances to school.

Teachers didn't receive much pay. Most of the subscriptions were paid in coon skins and other pelts, seldom in money or as part pay, the teacher "boarded round" in the community. This meant they lived with one family a while and then another.

The first school here in Jacksontown was a log school. It was located on the corner of the street that goes off of Route 40 - opposite the little store up here. It was a log building later covered over with weather boarding. Later it was torn down and a new house was built in its place. This is where McKinney's live now. (On Rt13 across from Jacksontown School's south driveway entrance.)

In 1832 a Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in Jacksontown, and two years later a church building of logs was erected on or near where the present church stands. A cemetery was back of it and later the bodies were moved to the hill a half-mile north of Jacksontown on the east side of 13. The cemetery property was then sold to the school where they built a two-room building. This was used for a few years, then two more rooms were added. Later it was used as a grange hall in 1913. Now it is pretty dilapidated. I am talking about the old building behind the Methodist Church. The eight grades occupied the downstairs and the high school was upstairs.

Another church, the United Brethren, built across from [1]this schoolhouse where there is now a vacant lot. Services were held there for several years and later used as a dwelling, and a few years ago it was torn down.

The Catholics bought some property here but never built.

Going back to pioneer days a man by the name of Asa Shinn held services in the home of Mr. Benjamin Green in the valley of Hog Run . The double cabin was of good size.

Mr. Green was tolerant of all religions and gave Mr. Shinn support and encouragement. In 1818 the “pioneer religious society” (that is what they called themselves) erected a log church near where Mr. Shinn organized it. It was later moved north on the farm of Mr. Benjamin Green from where it originally stood and was succeeded by a frame building which stands on the farm of Mr. Anthony Pitzer. The church is now known as “White Chapel” church. This was in 1845.

The Fairmount Presbyterian Church was organized in 1834 making it almost 150 years old. (These notes evidently were written in about 1984.)

The Friendship Church , commonly known as the “Hog Run Old School Baptist Church” is one of the early pioneer churches. It was organized in 1811. They erected a log building with a gallery running around three sides of it. Then in 1860 they built a good frame building at Van Burenton where the Plank Road crosses Hog Run. Within the last few years it has been torn down.

The pioneers of this part of the country needed a way to get to market to sell their produce. The trails were barely wide enough for pack horses and the people who used them got together to widen them for wagon travel. The road beds were not improved. There were many swamps and marshy places.

Loyd’s Corners was a little settlement of houses with a blacksmith shop and a buggy and wagon shop owned by Rufus Swinehart. It derived its name from Mr. Loyd who had the blacksmith shop. His home was in the house that Rea Strate lives (corner of Rt.13 and Dorsey Mill Road . [2]One time it burned and the neighbors all gathered in and made brick from the clay on the hill and helped build it up again. Before it was known as Loyd’s Corners it was known as Mechanicsburg.

Route 13 did not go clear to Newark then but ended before reaching there. It was known as Newark Street .

Another little village on the Old Plank Road was Van Burentown, or as some history books call it Van Burenton. It also has been known even today by the name of “Fleatown”. The name came about in this way. In the early days the pioneers hadn’t built any fences yet so they let their cows and hogs go where they may. A bunch of hogs wandered from their lot in Granville to Van Burentown staying all winter feeding off of beech nuts and acorns getting water from the stream nearby. The next spring the

owner discovered his stock. It had increased in number and was in good condition. Immediately the little stream was named "Hog Run" and settlers often thereafter called Mr. Ward, the owner of the hogs, Hog Ward. A man who was traveling through this part of the country stayed all night in one of the homes there. The next day he said the name should be changed to Fleatown because of the many fleas that kept him awake and it has been known as Fleatown ever since.

A word about the "Woodland" farm owned by Mr. Brombeck then bought by Mr. Dawes in 1916. He modernized the fine old farm house, built a pioneer log cabin out of the beams of the old barn, repaired the blacksmith shop, reconstructed the old rail fence, cleaned up the spring house and began to invite people to plant trees. He developed a fine herd of Holstein dairy cows, his orchards prospered, and for a while he made his own maple syrup by tapping the maple trees. Sap was gathered with horse drawn sled and it was boiled down just as it is done at the Arboretum each spring.

This is a true story that happened during the Civil War. A man was sitting in a chair in one of the inns in the area when he was shot. He had quite a sum of money on his person at the time. The amount was around \$200, which he had borrowed at a bank. That was a pretty good amount in those times. He was going to buy some land and send for his family, but never got the chance. No one knew who shot him or where the money disappeared to.

Years ago three physicians located here. One was Dr. Atwell who was also a surgeon. There was also a dentist here.

There were several places of business in the early days. Since I couldn't find my old map of Jacksontown, I can't tell just where they were but among them was the "The Orr Shop", "O Steadman Shoe Shop", and a third shoe shop. O. Steadman was known as a "maker of boots and shoes". Samuel Gilliland was a maker of harnesses and saddles. James Neal was a dealer in Family Groceries and also Post Master. For years there were two groceries they also sold dry goods, shoes, tools, hardware, etc. One of these stores was in the lot between Freeman's and the filling station. It was torn down lately.*

Later a house for the storage of ice was built; also a Meat Shop was opened carrying a supply of fresh meats. The Meat Shop was originally the Band House where the members of the band met for rehearsal.

Park Dennis was a maker of farm wagons. There was a cooper shop, two blacksmith shops, a leather tannery and a machine shop where farm machinery was made. There were also several saloons.

The building covered with green shingles on the southwest corner of Route 40 and Route 13 was used as a store and a saloon in Civil War days. Whiskey was pumped up from barrels on the cellar. The hole is still in the floor where they had the liquor but now is covered over. The hooks upon which the signs of each particular

business was painted on the outside of the house for many years but I see they have been taken down.[3]

Rural mail service was established in 1896. The route started from Thornville but the merchants were against it. They were afraid it would hurt their business by keeping the rural folks at home.

The Pony Express was established for the purpose of carrying valuable letters, drafts, mail packages and important news. Its speed was more than ten miles an hour while the stage coach carried the heavier mail and its speed was only five miles an hour. The pony Express stations where exchanged horses were Brownsville , Linville, Etniers, Luray, and Etna.

The big brick house west of our high school on Route 40 owned by Charles Davis was built before the National Road was put through. They thought the road would go south of where it is now so they built the front of the house facing south and part of the house we see as we go along 40 is the back of the house . If you take binoculars over the road to Harbor Hills opposite it, you would be surprised how differently the front of the house looks.

This is a short history of our own Jacksontown and vicinity.

Elma Cass

Bibliography: Brewster's History of Licking County

Hill's History of Licking County

Cummin's History of Ohio

Rosenbloom and Weisenberger's History of Ohio

Kathleen Brown's History of Ohio

Interviews with Mrs. Osborn. Mrs. Long, Fannie Davis, and Dwight Wince

Morris Shaff's book of Etna and Kirkersville

[1] This schoolhouse seems to refer to the present Jacksontown Elementary School . Murry Fulk purchased the property and tore the church building down. At his death the lot was purchased and now has a home built on it.

[2] Rea Strate's house at Loyd's Corners was torn down to construct the improved intersection of Dorsey Mill Road and Rt. 13. The house on the north east corner of this intersection is still owned by William Swinehart, a descendant of the owner of the Swinehart's Carriage shop. A rendering of this structure is shown in the Historical Sites section of the web page. The shop was located on the south west side of the intersection, but all of this structure plus several later built houses has been demolished for other land usages.

[3] The old building with the green shingles has been torn down to make way for a dog grooming business.

The building that was on the lot between Freeman's and the filling station was the original Larason's Store which originally sat closer to the national road and was moved south in order to build the filling station. It was the residence of Fred and Ethel Baker for years before being torn down. Several interesting pictures are available of the original building and are shown in the Historical Sites Section.

The author of this narrative Elma Cass regretted the loss of her old map of Jacksontown and if it is possible to retrieve a copy of this map the locations of many of the businesses will be added to this section.