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PERRY TOWNSHIP

To write the history of a single township may to some appear like a matter of small moment, while to others it is considered very desirable that some one should do so in each township of the whole United States. How else are the names, memories and deeds of our early settlers and friends to be preserved? And who is there that would not be pleased to look back, or to have his children look, upon some record of his early days, and of departed friends? And how else should strangers settling in a township so readily obtain knowledge of its affairs as by some such focal publication? Many historical facts, of vital importance to our people, are now living only in the memories of a few of our early settlers, who are drawing near the evening of life; their race will soon be run, and after they have passed from among us, these facts will be buried in the oblivion of the past, unless rescued now by the pages of history. The object of the following pages is to preserve for the people of Perry Township an imperishable record of these facts, and although they may not now realize the full importance of this step, their children and their children's children will fully appreciate the value of this work, which alone preserves to them an account of the customs and early days of their ancestors and the country they wrested from the savage grasp of the red man, when the "star of empire" reached this State in its westward flight. This township in form is perfectly square, being six miles on either side, containing thirty-six square miles, and is the full Congressional Township 5, Range 4. It was formed from the townships of Jackson and Madison in 1820, the order being issued by the County Commissioners March 7, and was named in honor of Com. Perry of Lake Erie fame. It is bounded on the north by Clay Township; on the east by Madison, on the south by Jackson, and on the west by Preble County. In appearance, its land was not the most inviting to the pioneer who sought land suitable for immediate cultivation, as they seldom, if ever, brought more than barely enough provisions to sustain them until a crop could be raised. There was very little ground here that would suit them, consequently, the major part of the township was not settled until all the side-hill land in the neighboring territory had been entered. The most of the country was level, and accordingly very wet, water standing in some places all the- year, but in the southeastern part and along the eastern line there was rolling and side-hill land, which was early and eagerly taken by prospecting settlers. The soil consists of a sandy clay on the higher ground, while in the flats it is a rich black alluvial, composed of the decayed matter of the forest. Underlying the most of the soil there is a thick strata of good brown limestone, very useful for building purposes. This has been quarried to some extent by citizens with variable success. About fifty years ago, Shank's Quarry at Amity was opened, and some good stone obtained, but it was not worked deeper than fifteen feet, as the water at that depth became a barrier to further proceedings. This stopped them just as they had reached the best of the stone. Another quarry was opened by Frederick Muhl shortly after this. His experience was about as Shank's, and his enterprise was blocked by the same unwelcome element. A ready market was found in the surrounding country for all the stone obtained, and large quantities of it might have been disposed of in the same neighborhood for a reasonable price, as the demand was

good. The timber of this part of the county is that usually found throughout Southern Ohio, viz.: On the high ground sugar, beech, hickory, walnut, ash and others, and in the lower land swamp maple, scrub oak, prickly ash, etc. The whole of the township was originally a dense forest, only broken by the channels of the creeks. These are quite numerous, and from their beds large quantities of gravel are obtained for macadamizing the highways. They also furnish a few very good mill-sites, some of which were early occupied by saw-mills. Along the banks of these creeks in early days a dense undergrowth of willow, prickly ash and spicewood flourished, making it almost impossible to cross only in the paths kept open by the wild animals as they came to drink. The name-bearing creeks are Wolf Creek, running across the northeast corner of the township; Bear Creek, running from the center to the southeastern corner; Little Twin, running from north to south, west of the center; Tom's Run, in the southwest corner, and Leslie's Run, which was so named because a man bearing the name of Leslie was drowned in it. These each have numerous branches, but of course they bear no names and play a very unimportant part in the township's history. The D., U. & W. Railway runs across the northeastern corner, and is the only railroad in the township. But with turnpike roads it is well supplied. Of these, the first one was the Eaton Pike, built in 1840. It is a part of one continuous pike extending from Cumberland, Md., to Indianapolis, Ind., and forms the southern boundary of the township. The next was the Wolf Creek Pike, built in 1848-49, and running from Brookville, in Clay Township, to Dayton. The first road in Pymont was the "old Sled road," built in the spring of 1812. The above dates are those of piking these roads; some of them were established before the township was formed. We see by the old records that the Dayton and Eaton road was established in 1805; a road from Salem south seventeen miles to Germantown in 1808, and others in 1811, 1812 1815 and 1819, until, now, the country is almost a network of roads.

Perry Township in politics is slightly Democratic, the vote being 235 Republican and 315 Democratic, thus giving to the Democrats a majority of eighty votes. There is but one voting precinct, "Election Schoolhouse," as it is called. This township began to be settled ten or twelve years before it was made a separate body politic, mostly by people of German descent, from Pennsylvania, and a better class of people cannot be found. They are plain, frank, honest and religious, and the embodiment of health, strength and energy. Indeed, just such people as are best capable of coping with the many obstacles encountered in subduing a wilderness. If they had to fight, they fought. If they met obstacles they overcame them, and the more and greater the barriers, the more determined they seemed to press on until they reached the land they sought, and now many of them who came here penniless, have, by industry and frugality, left their children large, cultivated farms, furnished with all modern improvements. Little do we, the children of civilized prosperity, realize the manifold hardships overcome by our fathers when they planted their standard in the forest of the Miami Valley, and reared their primitive cabin in the haunts of savage men and beasts. The first death and burial was that of Mary House. The first grist-mill in Perry Township was built by Andrew Clemmer, on Tom's Creek, in Section 32, which was erected about 1816. The first blacksmith was Samuel Rodeheffer. He had a small shop, and did work for himself principally, but worked for others when they wanted it. The first schoolhouse was a small, unchinked log cabin, in the northern part of Section 29. It was taught by a German named Miller. It was at that time in Jackson Township, none other being in that section of the country, and thither the youth of the surrounding settlements would come for twelve or thirteen weeks in the year. It was kept up by subscription, \$2 being paid by parents for each scholar. This was paid in money, produce or board, as Mr. Miller had to "board round"

among the neighboring settlers. Speaking of "neighboring," reminds us that that word had a different meaning seventy years ago from the meaning of today. When John was told to go to neighbor --'s to borrow his iron oven, or to get some salt, it meant generally for him to go from six to ten miles through forests and over creeks, guided only by his idea of the direction. And one old father tells us that the boys did not grumble then when sent miles on an errand half as much as they do now when they only have to cross one field to get to the neighbors. The next schoolhouse was built in 1814, about three-quarters of a mile west of the present residence of Jacob Shank. This was to have been built -on land adjoining Mr. Shank's farm, the logs were hauled and the house partly built when some dissatisfied neighbors objected, and had it moved up the creek. A schoolhouse was built in Section 36, about a quarter of a mile east of New Lebanon. Jacob Diehl went to school there as early as about 1823. Teachers, Robert Scatton, John H. Holsniiller (a German). These subscription schools continued regardless of the various school laws enacted in the State from time to time, nor did they disappear until the new law became a fixed fact, the township districted and houses put up by the State. At present there are eight school districts, with a schoolhouse in each, and two in District No. 6. The house in Pymont has four rooms, and cost \$4,000. The other eight cost in the aggregate \$14,000. They are all brick, with one exception, which is a frame in District No. 6. There is from eight to nine months of school held in each per annum. When we see an old man with no education we pity him, for we think of the very few advantages available in his day; but when our children see any of us uneducated, what will they think- of us when they see by the pages of history that every hillside in our fair land is dotted with schoolhouses, and learning is free as the air we breathe? The first church of which we can find any record was organized about 1824. It was called the Presbyterian and Lutheran Congregation. In 1825, William McCormick gave nearly two acres of ground in Section 11, to be used by them as a burying ground and churchyard, and shortly afterward a church was built thereon by the congregation, numbering in all about thirty-five members. The first Trustees were: John Cox, John Venus and Obediah Reinhart. They were also among the first members. In October, 1838, another church was commenced in Section 2. It was of the German Baptist denomination, and still exists. The ground was donated by Peter Berst, who gave a little over an acre and a half. Some of the first members were Peter Berst, Elizabeth Berst, Samuel Muncy, David Kreider and John Munich. The two latter, with Mr. Berst, were the first Trustees. In the same year Samuel Muncy donated another piece of land in the same Section to them. In 1841, D. A. Riggle, D. Spellman and Hezekiah Tobey, acting as the first Board of Trustees of the Bethel Congregation, received a lot from Michael Tobey on which to build a church, which was done in the year following. In 1850, the Lutherans, United Brethren and Methodists built a little frame church on Bixler and Shank's farms. There were about fifty of them in all. This church was in Section 13. In 1860, the Lutherans bought a lot of Bixler's heirs and built a brick church at a cost of \$2,000, in which they still worship. There are now seventy-five members. In 1880, they bought six and twelve one hundredths acres of ground for \$612 (across from the church), of Adam Harmon, which they converted into a graveyard. But few bodies have as yet been interred there, the first burial being that of a daughter of Rev. Graws, a Lutheran minister at Brookville. In 1872, a German Baptist Church was built on the Eversole farm in Section 35, for the accommodation of a few of the older members of the neighborhood who could not travel so far to church, the ground being donated by Mr. Eversole. There are other churches in the township, built recently, with no regular preaching, of which we give no history. Of those in Pymont we will treat under that head.

EARLY SETTLERS

Who the very first settler in this township was it would be difficult, if not utterly impossible, to say, as men would sometimes settle within what is now the limits of the township, and not being perfectly satisfied, would move a little in the direction of some settlement without those who had afterward moved into the township knowing anything of their having resided there. There were others here of whom we can say no more than that they were here and about the time they came. With this understanding that we give, generally speaking, the first settlers, without committing ourselves as to the very first, we proceed. Among the first to enter here were four families named severally Widenbicht, Cumright, Spitler and Swank. They came from Pennsylvania, and each of them entered a quarter section of land in the eastern part of the township, near the center. They were men of family and brought their families with them. They reared their little three-sided log huts within neighboring distances of each other, and while clearing the land for the future crop, lived principally on venison and wild turkey, with which the forests abounded: Especially was it so with the deer, which were so tame that they would come up to the cabins and gaze in innocent wonder at its occupants, but the gun of the woodman soon taught them a lesson that seemed to effectually satisfy their curiosity, as they began to seek the deeper solitude of the forest, shortly after he made his appearance. In 1805, John and Christian Wogoman, natives of Pennsylvania, settled in the southeast part of Perry Township. John's wife died in 1835, after which he went to reside with his son John, in Madison Township, where he died about 1844. The latter was but eight years old when his parents came to this county, having been born in Pennsylvania in 1797; he grew up and married Mary Burkett August 13, 1818, who bore him seven children, six of whom are now living. She died March 2, 1881, aged eighty-seven. He died on his farm in Madison Township March 13, 1882, in his eighty-fifth year. Christian Wogoman died on his farm in Parry Township, he also leaving a son John, who was a small boy when his father came to Ohio. Here he grew to manhood and married Sarah Weidner, of Virginia, and daughter of David and Mary Weidner, also early settlers of Montgomery County, where both died. Of this union nine children were born, the mother dying about 1842. He was again married to Mrs. Susanna Bilheimer, who also died, when he took for his third wife Mrs. Catherine Barks. He moved in an early day to Madison Township, but about 1850 returned to Perry, again removing about 1871 to Jefferson Township, where he and wife now reside.

Henry Shank, Sr., was the next on the ground. He came in 1807 from Virginia, and entered a half section of land just west of the present farm of his grandson, Jacob, upon which he built a cabin sufficiently large to accommodate his family of six boys and six girls. Three of the boys died, and the rest of the children married and settled around the neighborhood. Jacob Shank, grandson of Henry, Sr., was born in Virginia, February, 1784, and in 1808 came with his father to Perry Township, who purchased part of the half section originally entered by Henry, Sr. They came over the mountains from Carroll County, Va., in big wagons, in the fall of the year, and occupied the cabin built by the elder Henry the year previous. In 1810, Jacob married Elizabeth Noffsinger, a native of Pennsylvania, whose parents were pioneers of Madison Township, and by her had twelve children, seven of whom are living, viz.: Daniel, Samuel, Susanna, Henry, Eliza, Catherine and Elizabeth. His wife died January 10, 1862. He was drafted into the war of 1812, but by some means escaped from going. He is still living and is the oldest man in the township, and probably in the county, but he has almost reached the goal of human existence. His form is bent, his breath short and his vitality nearly gone. It was with the greatest difficulty he could give

the writer hereof the above facts, and ere these pages reach the reader's eye, he may have entered that last long sleep, which knows no waking in this life. About the time he came here, another man and family, named Heeter, arrived. They also came from Pennsylvania, and entered land three miles southwest of Shank's. Peter Swigg had come a year previous, and settled one mile due west of Shank's farm. These men all brought families of no small size, as they ranged from six to fifteen in number. They built rude, half comfortable cabins, and commenced at once their battle with the monarchs of the forest, which every pioneer had to fell and clear from off the soil before planting his small crop, after which the birds and squirrels would have to be continually watched to prevent the destruction of the winter's bread. George Brumbaugh, of Pennsylvania, came to Montgomery County about 1807, bought a farm in Section 36, Perry Township, which had about six acres cleared. He was married in 1815, to Elizabeth Vaniman, daughter of John Vaniman, of Madison Township, who bore him two children--Samuel and Catherine, the former of whom lives on the old homestead. George Brumbaugh was in the war of 1812, and died in 1848, his wife surviving him and dying in 1871, aged eighty-two. John Granger, who was born in New Jersey in 1766, removed to Maryland, where he married Miss Barbara Redman, by whom he had eleven children, five now living. Mr. Granger and family settled in Perry Township in 1809, where his wife died in 1847. She was born in Maryland in 1769. After his wife's death, he moved into Clay Township, where he died in 1853. His son, George, was born in Perry Township, September 5, 1810, and is now a resident of Clay Township, whither he removed after his marriage with Elizabeth Reichard, of Preble County, Ohio. Jacob Wysong, of Virginia, came to this township prior to the war of 1812, and here he died; his son, Valentine, was born in Perry during that struggle against English oppression, and spent most of his life close to his birthplace, dying in Miami County in 1876. He married Lydia Barnhart, daughter of David Barnhart, of Maryland, who was also a pioneer of this county. Of this union seven children were born, five now living. John Diehl, another early comer, was born in Pennsylvania in November, 1789, and came to this county in 1806 with his father, Jacob, who settled in Jefferson Township. In 1813, John married Susanna Miller, daughter of Isaac Miller, and moved to a quarter section of land in Section 35, Perry Township, which his father had entered, which he cleared up and lived upon until his death, August 26, 1874, aged eighty-five. He was the father of ten children, viz.: Aaron, Jacob, Samuel, Abraham, John, Eli, Noah, Adam, Elizabeth and Hannah. During the war of 1812, when he was but twenty-two years old, he left home and engaged in transporting provisions and munitions of war from Cincinnati to the different military stations in the North and West. Andrew Clemmer, a native of Pennsylvania, who was married in Virginia to Salome Black, of that State, settled in Section 32 in the fall of 1814, and there his son, George L., was born in June, 1815, who is now residing in Miami City. Andrew erected the first mill in Perry Township, and lived and died in this subdivision, leaving many descendants, who are worthy citizens. John King, with his wife Mary, natives of the "Old Dominion," settled in Section 20, in the year 1815. Virginia again responded in the persons of John and Susanna Venus, who came about this time. They had nine children, six of whom are now living Elizabeth, Margaret, Sarah, Susan, Harvey and Lavina. Mrs. Venus died in May, 1861, aged seventy-nine, and her husband, September 6, 1862, in his eighty-first year.

Another of Perry's adopted children was Daniel Mundhenk, who was born in Germany in 1777, emigrating to this country in 1807, and landing in Philadelphia, after a stormy voyage of three months' duration. He came to this State and township in 1817, and entered 160 acres of land in Section 5, upon which he built his cabin. He was one of those sturdy, energetic Germans

who have done so much in building up and developing the great West. Mr. Mundhenk was married three times, the first time in Germany, again in Philadelphia, and again in the Western country. By these marriages he became the father of the following children: Augustus and Lavisca by the first wife; Daniel, Henry, Frederick, John, Mary Ann, Michael, Joseph and Charles by the second, and Caroline by the third. These children are married and settled in the neighborhood. In 1834, Mr. Mundhenk built the first steam saw-mill in the township. It was run by Frederick, as engineer, and stood on what is now Lucy Johnston's place. In 1846-47, they put up a steam grist-mill on the present site of James King's farm. This mill is being 'run now in Clay Township, to which place it was moved in 1863, having been sold to a man named Wortz. Mr. Mundhenk died in March, 1859, leaving a large family of children behind to mourn his loss. His son, John, was the only one of his boys who served in the war of the rebellion. He enlisted as a volunteer private, and it is said valorously fought for the cause of his country and the people's government. Henry Snyder, a son of the Empire State, came in 1815, and entered a small piece of land where Johnsville now stands, or near the present site of that town. In the year following, to-wit, 1816, Abraham King, a native of Ohio, moved to Section 21, where he commenced cutting down and burning the timber, then so plenty, now so scarce. The people then did not trouble themselves with the query of to-day, " what shall we do for fuel when the woods disappear?" We have now arrived at a period in the history of this township when settlements were comparatively easy, with roads cut and cultivated farms adorning almost every section; yet it was several years afterward that all the wet land had been drained and put under cultivation. We might go on and give other names of men of a later day, but our pen must stop somewhere, and we will make that place just after the following list of later settlers : Abraham Neff settled on Section 38 in 1818 ; Joshua Mills, of New Jersey, in Section 8, in 1819; George Bowser in Section 34, in 1819; Mathias Earnst, of Maryland, in 1823; a man named Replogel in 1815, and Andrew Simmons three miles north of Johnsville.

PYRMONT.

This is a town of about 300 inhabitants, and is located in Sections 7 and 8, in the northwest corner of the township. It was laid out by Daniel Mundhenk May 25, 1835, and named in honor of his native village in Germany. The first house was erected by Christopher Syler, a blacksmith, who had a shop where Henry Taylor's residence now stands, and his house directly across the street from it. The first death in town was Job Hamilton, who was severely injured while shoeing a horse, and died from the effects. The first store opened was in 1835, by Joseph Mixwell. The post office was established about 1840, Jesse Harper, or Joshua Rankin, being first Postmaster. The first religious sect organized in the town was a society of Methodists, numbering thirteen members, who formed themselves into a congregation, and in 1836 built themselves a church, which was rebuilt during the year 1872. The congregation once was large and prosperous, and did a good work. The next, and only other society in the town, was the United Brethren. In 1847, they, twelve in number, formed themselves into a church society, and, two years thereafter, built a small and unimposing house of worship, in which they conducted their meetings until 1866, when the old church was razed, and a larger and more commodious building erected, in which the people of this denomination now worship. They hold their meetings regularly, and continue to increase in numbers steadily. Many of the members of both of these churches are from among the farmers of the surrounding country, and from them they derive a large part of their support.

NEW LEBANON

This is a town of about 200 inhabitants, lying on the southern line of the township, along the Dayton and Eaton Pike. It was platted June 3, 1843, by Jacob Grice, and an addition in Jackson Township the same day by John Brouse. An addition was also made by John Weaver in 1854. In the days of stage coaches, this pike was one of the great thoroughfares of the country, and New Lebanon, being a station on it, was a place of no little importance. Here the horses were changed, while the driver from his high seat looked patronizingly down on the bystanders and loungers, who looked up to him as a man of more than usual importance, as he saw all the outside world of which they knew nothing, only as he condescended to tell them. He was the "lion" of the day; nothing was too much trouble when he wanted it done. There were also relays of horses kept here, which were used in what was called "the express," a line of messengers on horses, kept going at a breakneck rate of speed all day and all night. These messengers carried important mail matter and small packages that were of importance.

That was in the days of no railroads. Things are changed now; the stage coach no longer comes lumbering up to the New Lebanon House, but in its stead, a wagon is run daily from Dayton to Eaton, not deigning to stop at this quiet wayside town, unless there is a passenger to get off. The first house built here was by Samuel Ludy, in 1838. It was a log house, in which he kept a store. The logs were hewed and work done by Aaron and Jacob Diehl. The post office was established in 1842. Lorenzo Vence was the first blacksmith. He came in 1844. The town was incorporated in 1878, and N. S. Price was elected Mayor. The present incumbent of the Mayoralty, and the only other than Price, is O. F. Edwards. There has been a hotel here since 1840, when there were but two or three houses here. The first landlord was a man named Goode. John Andrew Gebhart is the present proprietor. He is a man whose name should appear in the history of the township, as he is assuredly one of its characters. He is a relic of coaching days, having been for a long time a driver of one of those lumbering "land ships," and is in all a singular character. With this town we close the history of a township now peopled by an industrious and intelligent class of people, who owe all that they have to the energy and enterprise of those who first started the wedge of civilization in the Western country.