

From: *History of Cuyahoga County 1879* by Crisfield Johnson

BROOKLYN TOWNSHIP HISTORY

Brooklyn Township, which joins the city of Cleveland on the west and south, is a part of range thirteen, in which it is township number seven. It included originally all that part of the territory of the city of Cleveland lying on the west side of the Cuyahoga river, which, along with what now comprises Brooklyn, was set off from Cleveland township to form the township of Brooklyn. Brooklyn's boundaries are the city of Cleveland and Lake Erie on the north, the townships of Parma and Independence on the south, the city of Cleveland and Newburg township on the east, and the township of Rockport on the west. It contains four villages, Brooklyn, West Cleveland, Brighton and Linndale, of which the former two are incorporated.

The Cuyahoga river skirts the eastern part of the township on the east, and separates it from Newburg. Its other water courses are unimportant creeks, which, though once valuable as mill streams, are now of no use for that purpose. The land is generally fertile and farms are valuable, especially near the Cleveland line, where attention is given to the cultivation of fruit and garden products; the former industry being profitably followed near the lake shore, and the latter near Brooklyn village.

In the division of the Western Reserve, as narrated in the general history, the greater part of Brooklyn, including the present West Side of Cleveland, fell to Richard and Samuel Lord and Josiah Barber, from one or the other, or all, of whom the early settlers purchased their farms.

EARLY SETTLEMENT.

A grassy slope overlooking the Cuyahoga River from Riverside cemetery, and known to this day as "Granger Hill," is the spot where the territory subsequently occupied by the township of Brooklyn received its first white settler. Granger was a "squatter" from Canada, but when he squatted upon his Brooklyn land is not exactly known. He was there, at all events, in May, 1812, when James Fish entered what is now Brooklyn Township, as the first of the permanent white settlers of that territory. Granger had with him his son, Samuel, and the two remained until 1815, when they sold their improvements to Asa Brainard and migrated to the Maumee country.

James Fish, above mentioned, had been a resident of Groton, Connecticut, and, having purchased a piece of land of Lord & Barber in the present township of Brooklyn, he set out from Groton in the summer of 1811 with an ox-team and a lumber wagon, in which rode himself, his three children, his wife and her mother. He journeyed west in company with a large party of pioneers, but the only ones besides himself destined for Brooklyn were his two cousins, Moses and Ebenezer Fish-the latter of whom made the entire trip on foot. Arriving at Cleveland early in the autumn after forty-seven days on the road, James Fish decided to pass the winter in Newburg while Ebenezer and Moses remained in Cleveland. Early in the spring of 1812 James went over from Newburg alone and put up a log-house that cost him just eighteen dollars, and in May of that year he took his family to their new home. Their log cabin was,

of course, a rude structure, and its furniture was in keeping with the house. The bedstead-for there was only one at first-was manufactured by the head of the family, and was composed of roughly hewn pieces of wood, fastened with wooden pins, and having in lieu of a bed cord a network made of strips of bark. This bedstead is still in the possession of Isaiah W., a son of James Fish, who resides in Brooklyn village upon the place originally occupied by his father. Isaiah W. Fish, just mentioned, was born in Brooklyn, May 9, 1814, and was the first white child born in the new settlement.

James Fish began at once to clear his land, but while waiting for a crop his family must needs have something to eat. Mr. Fish had no cash, and so he used to go over to Newburg two or three times a week, and work there at farming for fifty cents a day. Thus he managed to reach the harvest season, when from the first fruits of his land he secured a little money. It is, however, a question whether he could have carried his family through the winter, had it not been for the assistance of his wife who to her other duties added that of weaving coverlids, by which she earned a goodly sum, and in which she became so celebrated that she found the demand far beyond her power to supply.

When Mr. Fish set out for Newburg on his periodical journeys, he left his family the sole occupants of a wilderness in which there were no residents nearer than Cleveland, and, knowing full well their fears and the good reasons for them, he returned to them faithfully each night, albeit, his trips were always made on foot, and covered ten long miles. Such trips, too, he frequently made on subsequent occasions, when, needing flour or meal, he would shoulder a two bushel bag full of corn, trudge to the Newburg mill, and get back with his meal the same day.

Mr. Fish was a great hunter and slayer of rattlesnakes, which were found in immense numbers, and occasionally reared their ugly fronts through openings in the rude floors of the settlers' cabins. It is told of one of Mr. Fish's farm hands in the early days, that on narrowly escaping the attack of a rattlesnake he joyously and thankfully exclaimed: "What a smart idea it was in God Almighty to put bells on them things!" Mr. Fish lived a useful and honored life in Brooklyn, saw cities and villages rise where once he trode the pathless forest, and at the age of ninety-three passed away from earth, on the old homestead, in September, 1875, his wife having preceded him twenty-one years.

Ebenezer and Moses Fish, who have already been mentioned as spending the winter of 1811-12 in Cleveland, followed James Fish to Brooklyn in the spring of 1812, and settled upon eighty acres lying just south of James Fish's place-Ebenezer locating on the north side of what is known as Newburg street, and Moses on the south side. Neither was then married, but, as both expected to be, they worked with a will to prepare their land for cultivation, both living in a log shanty on Ebenezer's land. Ebenezer was one of the militiamen who guarded Omie, the Indian murderer who was hung in Cleveland in June, 1812, as related in the general history. Both also served a few months in the forces called out to guard the frontier during the first year of the war of 1812. Returning to their clearings, they vigorously renewed their pioneer life. Moses was drafted into the military service, but he was far from being strong, and therefore Ebenezer went in his stead, serving six months and taking part in an engagement at Mackinaw Island.

After the war closed Ebenezer returned to Connecticut, where he was married and where he remained six years before resuming his residence in Brooklyn. There Mr. Fish has ever since lived, and in his ninety-third year is still a dweller upon his old homestead; the only one now living of the little band of pioneers who began the settlement of Brooklyn.

Of the children of Moses Fish, Ozias and Lorenzo reside in Brooklyn, while others are in the far West.

Following the Fish families in 1813 came Ozias Brainard, of Connecticut, with four grown daughters and four sons, Ozias, Jr., Timothy, Ira and Bethuel, of whom Ozias, Jr. and Ira had families. They settled on the Newburg road, near where Brooklyn village now is, on adjoining places, and all resided in Brooklyn during the remainder of their lives. David S. Brainard, a son of Ozias, Jr., now resides in Cleveland near the country infirmary. At this time, as will have been observed, Brooklyn Township was peopled exclusively by Fishes and Brainards, and it used to be a common story in Cleveland that "the visitor to Brooklyn might be certain that the first man he'd meet would be a Fish or a Brainard."

Ozias Brainard, Jr., put up the first framed dwelling in Brooklyn, on the place now occupied by his son David, and Asa Brainard raised the first framed barn, which is still in use on the farm of Carlos Jones, the erection of which, in 1818 or before, was the occasion of a hilarious celebration. Asa Brainard also built the first brick house in the old township of Brooklyn at what is now the junction of Columbus and Scranton avenues, where he opened the first public tavern in that township, about 1825.

The autumn of 1814 witnessed a large and important accession to the little settlement when six families, comprising forty persons, came thither from Connecticut within a week; thirty-one of them landing with the same hour. These were the families of Isaac Hinckley, Asa Brainard, Elijah Young, Stephen Brainard, Enos Brainard and Warren Brainard, all of whom had been residents of Chatham, Middlesex County, Connecticut. All exchanged their farms there with Lord & Barber for land in "New Connecticut," and all set out for that unknown land on the same day. The train consisted of six wagons, drawn by ten horses and six oxen, and all journeyed together until Euclid was reached (forty days after leaving Chatham), where Isaac Hinckley and his family rested, leaving the others to push on to Brooklyn, whither he followed them within a week.

It appears that the trustees of the township of Cleveland-to which the territory of Brooklyn then belonged-became alarmed at the avalanche of emigrants just described, and concluding that they were a band of paupers, for whose support the township would be taxed, started a constable across the river to warn the invaders out of town. Alonzo Carter, a resident of Cleveland, heard of the move, and stopped it by endorsing the good standing of the newcomers-adding that the alleged paupers were worth more money than all the trustees of Cleveland combined.

Isaac Hinckley settled in the southeast on lot seventy-nine, near where the line between Parma and Independence intersects the south lines of Brooklyn, in the heart of a thick forest, "a mile from anybody" as his son, Abel, now says. The first table the family used there was made by Mr. Hinckley out of an ash tree. Moreover, although he owned three hundred and sixty acres of land, he had no money to buy flour, and, being in great need of breadstuffs, he offered to mortgage a hundred acres of land as security for a barrel of flour. The Newburg miller, however, preferred the flour to the chance of getting

the land, for the former would bring money more readily than the latter. Nevertheless something to eat was procured in some way, for Mr. Hinckley lived on the old place until 1851, when he died at the age of seventy-eight.

Asa Brainard located near the site of the infirmary, Stephen Brainard on a place adjoining Mr. Abel Hinckley's present residence in Brooklyn village, and Enos and Warren Brainard near where the Wade House (on Columbus Street) now stands.

The first settlers upon what is now known as the Brighton side of the creek were also Brainards. Two brothers, Amos and Jedediah, with a cousin named Jabin, started with their families from Connecticut and traveled westward together as far as Ashtabula, where Jedediah, an old man of seventy, fell ill (in consequence, doubtless, of having walked all the way from Connecticut_ and died. Sylvanus, his eldest son, who had a family of his own, took charge of his mother and her children, and, with Amos and Jedediah, continued the trip to Brooklyn, where they arrived in the summer of 1814. Amos located about a mile south of what is now Brighton village, where he owned three hundred acres of land. Sylvanus and Jabin settled nearby.

Amos had three sons and one daughter, Amos B., William, Demas and Philena-all of whom save Demas died in the township. Demas is now a hale old man of eighty-eight, and resides on a farm a mile southeast of Brighton-the place which he made his home in 1818.

George and Thomas Aikens, brothers of Mrs. Amos Brainard, had preceded that gentleman by a year or more, and had taken up land on the Brighton side, but the Aikens family did not occupy it until sometime afterward. This land Amos Brainard cultivated for the Aikens, and on that farm, by Demas Brainard, the first ground was broken on the south side of the creek. Cyril and Irad, sons of George Aikens, lived on the place after a time. Cyril died there and Irad in Black River, whither he moved at an early day. George and Thomas Aikens resided on the Brooklyn side, near the site of the infirmary, where George Aikens, the grandson of the former George, now resides.

One of the stirring citizens of early Brooklyn was Diodate Clark, of Connecticut, who settled in the township in 1815, and was afterward a man of some prominence in its history. He was the first male school teacher in Brooklyn, and was a wide-awake business man. He eventually became concerned in large enterprises in Cleveland, where it is said he was the first to engage in the lime trade. He died on his old homestead in 1877.

James Sears, of Connecticut, settled in Brooklyn in 1817, and still lives-now aged eighty-upon a farm two miles west of Brooklyn village. He worked at first in Cleveland, and boarded with Asa Brainard. After a time he took up a farm and has lived upon it ever since.

Jeremiah Gates, originally from Connecticut, made his home in Delhi, New York, in 1815, and in 1816 walked from that place to Brooklyn for the purpose of examining the country. Satisfied with its appearance he walked back to Delhi (having occupied six weeks in the entire journey), married there,

and in company with his wife, his brother Nathaniel, and another man (who soon returned east) set out for Brooklyn. A horse and wagon conveyed them to Buffalo, where they took a vessel and thus made their way to Cleveland. Jeremiah was too poor to buy land, and for the first two years after his arrival in Brooklyn worked in Philo Scovill's sawmill. In 1819 he assisted his brother Nathaniel in the erection of a sawmill at what is known as five-mile lock. In 1820 he bought a farm in Brooklyn and there continued to reside until his death in 1870. His widow survives him, and lives on the old place, in Brighton village, aged eighty-five.

Richard and Samuel Lord and Josiah Barber, of the firm of Lord and Barber before mentioned, removed to that part of Brooklyn which is now the west side of Cleveland as early as 1818, and resided there until they died. Edwin settled on lot ninety, in the southeast corner of the township, and devoted himself to farming and gardening, in which latter occupation he was especially successful.

Ansel P. Smith, who set up the first wagon shop in Brooklyn, came out from Connecticut, in 1830, with his brother-in-law, Timothy Standard, an old sea captain, and together they opened a store in Brooklyn village, the first one in that locality. After an experience of five years they gave up the venture - Smith going west and Standard back to Connecticut. After that, there was not much done in the mercantile line in Brooklyn village until 1843, when A. W. Poe opened a store and conducted it successfully for thirty years. A Mr. Huntington, from Connecticut, opened a store in Brighton in 1840, where John Thorne, a Frenchman, had previously started a blacksmith shop. Epaphroditus Ackley, a miller, settled on Walworth run in 1814, worked a while in Barber's mill, and moved away after a residence of some years. Asa Ackley, of New York, located at a later period near where the infirmary now stands, and opened the first blacksmith shop on the Brooklyn side.

In the foregoing sketch of Brooklyn's early settlement it has been the aim of the chronicler to treat principally of such incidents and persons as were identified with the first decade of the township's history. After that, settlers multiplied so rapidly that the newcomers obtained no distinctive place in the records of the time. Those who lead the van in the settlement of a new country usually form but a handful, whose numbers may be easily counted, and whose progress may be easily traced; and they, too, are the ones around whom settles the peculiar interest which always attached to the "pioneers" of a locality.

Brooklyn, being adjacent to Cleveland, shared to some extent the prosperity of that city, and its progress, after about 1825, was quite rapid. Although shorn of a large part of its original territory, by the annexation of the Ohio City to Cleveland in 1854, and by subsequent minor encroachments, it is still numerously populated, and is not only a prosperous but a quite wealthy township.

EARLY MILLS.

The first sawmill put up in Brooklyn township was erected by Philo Scovill, of Cleveland, in 1817, on Mill Creek, about two miles west of where Brooklyn village now is. Mr. Scovill not only furnished lumber to the early settlers, but also made window sashes and doors. Lord & Barber (the great land proprietors,) put up a similar mill there not long afterward, and about the same time a third sawmill was built on the

same creek by Warren and Gershom Young. In 1819 Nathaniel Gates built a sawmill on the creek, at what is known as five-mile lock.

The first gristmill in the old township is supposed to have been built by one of the Kelleys, of Cleveland, on Walworth run, near where the Atlantic and Great Western railroad now crosses that stream. The next one, known as Barber's mill, built in 1816, was run by Elijah Young for a while, and stood about a half a mile above Kelley's. There were some other establishments on Walworth run, but they do not concern the history of the present township of Brooklyn.

SCHOOLS.

Miss Dorcas Hickox, sister of Abraham Hickox, a blacksmith of Cleveland, taught school in Brooklyn as early as 1818, in the home of James Fish. She had eight or ten scholars, of whom Isaiah W. Fish is still living. Miss Hickox, who was probably the first school-teacher in those parts, taught but one summer. Who her immediate successor was is not clear, but it is moderately certain that Diodate Clark wielded the birch not long after Miss Hickox's time, and a famous pedagogue he was. After Clark, Stephen Brainard's place, and then Lyndon Freeman, of Parma, was for a while the leader under whom the aspiring youth of the day climbed the rugged heights of learning.

Apart from the villages of Brooklyn and West Cleveland-which manage their own school affairs-the township has now five school districts and six schools, with an average attendance of one hundred and seventy-two, out of an enrollment of two hundred and sixty-four scholars. The number of teachers employed is seven, and the yearly expenditure for school purposes about \$3,300. The members of the board of education are Frank H. Chester, Carver Stickney, Henry Perrin, Claus Fiedmann and J. Featherstone. The value of school property in the township districts in 1879 was \$13,500.

Brooklyn village, which under the union school law has managed its own school affairs since 1869, has a fine brick school edifice, in which there rive departments, including a high school. The daily attendance of pupils averages one hundred and seventy-six and the teachers-including the superintendent-number five, to whom \$2,400 are paid yearly.

The village of West Cleveland has three school-houses-on Detroit Street, Jones Street, and McCart street-with five schools and five teachers. The attendance averages nearly three hundred, and the cost for school support is nearly \$4,000 yearly. The present board of education is compiled of Messrs. Alex. Forbes, M. B. Nixon, G. B. Mills, W. P. Ranney, A. W. Fairbanks and Oliver King.

WEST CLEVELAND.

The village of West Cleveland, with a population of one thousand five hundred, joins the city of Cleveland on the west, having its northern front on Lake Erie. That portion of Brooklyn was not settled until a comparatively recent date, and had at first nearly all its habitations along the line of what is now Detroit Street. That thoroughfare is still the main avenue of West Cleveland. It stretches, within the village, two miles and a half west of the city limits, and is embellished with many handsome suburban residences of Cleveland merchants. West Cleveland was incorporated in 1870, as a defensive measure-

so it is said-against a prospective absorption by Cleveland. As the village records, down to a very late date, have been lost, we can only give a list of the mayors and clerks, as follows: 1870 - mayor, H. W. Davis; clerk, Charles M. Safford. 1872 - mayor, S. F. Pearson; clerk, Charles M. Safford. 1874 - mayor, William Mitchell; clerk, Alfred Lees. 1878 - mayor, L. H. Ware; clerk, John Hawley.

Although the village is quite populous, it is so closely allied to Cleveland in a material sense that it is simply a city suburb. Its inhabitants are mostly engaged in business in the city, and attend religious worship there. There is no religious organization in West Cleveland, and but one place where religious services are held-a mission chapel where Sabbath meetings are maintained under the auspices of the Young Men's Christian Association, for the benefit of all denominations.

THE INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL FARM,

This is located on Detroit Street, in West Cleveland, and covers sixty-one acres, upon which there are substantial buildings. In 1868 the widow of Simeon Jennings gave to the Children's Aid Society of Cleveland eleven acres of land and the buildings upon it, to be used as an industrial school farm. The society obtained by donations sufficient money to purchase fifty additional acres, and since that date the place has been devoted to the noble purpose of providing for destitute and homeless children, training them in useful knowledge and eventually placing them in comfortable homes. During 1878 the children received numbered one hundred and forty-seven, of whom eighty-eight were placed in good homes. The average number of children in the institutions is forty.

CEMETERIES.

The first burials in the old township of Brooklyn were made in a lot near the present graveyard on Scranton avenue, in Cleveland. These burials were four in number, and the next one-that of Mary Wilcox, mother-in-law of James Fish, was made in 1816, upon a half-acre lot owned by Mr. Fish. That lot Mr. Fish subsequently donated to the township for use as a public graveyard, and it is now a part of the Scranton avenue cemetery. The four graves above referred to were obliterated long ago, and occupied it is thought, a spot of ground now traversed by the avenue. The next public burial ground was laid out in 1844, east of the Methodist church in Brooklyn village. There are now six or seven burial grounds in the township, including Riverside cemetery, a sketch of which will be found in the history of Cleveland.

Transcribed by Laura Hine