

Amesville: Part of Ames Township

This was one of the four original townships into which the county was divided on its organization in 1805. The county included then more than twice its present area, and Ames comprised the territory which now forms the townships of Marion and Homer in Morgan county; Ward, Green, and Starr in Hocking county, and Trimble, York, Dover, Bern, and Ames in Athens county. The settlement of Ames was begun about a year after that of Athens, and the first settlers were judge Ephraim Cutler and George Ewing, with their families. In the summer of 1797 Ephraim Cutler, one of the original associates of the Ohio Company, finding that a considerable portion of his lands lay on the waters of Federal creek, in the sixth township, of the thirteenth range, and being desirous to visit them and fix their location, explored a way and cut a horse path through the wilderness from Waterford on the Muskingum, to what is now Ames township. He was accompanied and assisted by Mr. George Ewing, who, with his little family, had come from western Virginia to the Ohio Company's purchase in 1794, and had lived till the close of the Indian war in one of the block houses of the Waterford settlement. In the autumn of 1797 they made a second visit to and more thorough exploration of Mr. Cutler's lands. This time they were accompanied by Captain Benjamin Brown who had recently arrived in the colony from Massachusetts. Mr. Ewing and Capt. Brown each owned one hundred acres of land in the company's "donation" tract on the Muskingum, which they exchanged with Mr. Cutler for land on Federal creek, agreeing to assist him in forming a settlement. They found a fertile region, heavily timbered, well watered, and abounding in game. Traces of the buffalo and elk showed that they were not yet exterminated, and deer, bears, wild turkeys, and smaller game were found in great abundance. Wolves and panthers were very numerous, and continued for many years to be a source of annoyance and danger.

The result of their second visit to the valley of Federal creek was a determination to locate there. Mr. Ewing brought his family out in March, 1798, and settled on what is now known as the Thomas Gardner farm. It was nearly a year later that Judge Cutler and Capt. Brown brought their families over from Waterford. The domestic effects and portable property of the two families were loaded into large canoes and sent, in charge of Capt. Brown, down the Muskingum and Ohio rivers to the mouth of the Hockhocking, and up that stream to Federal creek, a distance

of about eighty miles. The women and children, on horse back, were escorted by Mr. Cutler through the pathless woods and over the hills to their new home. In a narrative written a few years later Mr. Cutler thus refers to this journey:

“I, with four horses, took Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Cutler and all our children to go twenty miles through an entire wilderness to our new home. Night overtook us before we were able to cross Sharp’s fork of Federal creek, and we were obliged to encamp. We experienced a very rainy night. The creek in the morning was rapidly rising. I hurried, got Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Cutler and the children, with the baggage and horses, over the creek, all except A. G. Brown (Judge Brown of Athens), then a child three or four years old, whom I took in my arms, and as I stepped on a drift of flood-wood, which reached across the creek, it broke away from the bank. We were in danger, but a gracious Providence preserved us and we got safely across. We arrived at our camp, near where we built our cabin, May 7th, 1799.”

Mr. Cutler settled on lands now owned by his son, Mr. William I’. Cutler, and Capt. Brown on the farm where Daniel Fleming now lives. In May, 1800, Silvanus Ames, afterward known as Judge Ames, came from Belpre with his family and settled near Mr. Cutler -on the farm which he occupied till his death in 1823.

Deacon Joshua Wyatt came with his family about the same time and settled on the farm in section 1 now owned by the heirs of George Wyatt. All of these men bore a large part in the early history of Amesville. Their wives, too, were persons of solid minds and superior culture. The writer remembers to have heard Mrs. Ames, who had been tenderly reared in the family of a New England clergyman, but whose energy and character were equal to any occasion, describe the hardships of her tedious journey from Massachusetts to Ohio, in the year 1799, which she made all the way on horseback, carrying an infant in her arms. Mrs. Cutler and Mrs. Wyatt were also women of great excellence; the former died in 1809, and the latter a few years later.

A pioneer settlement is fortunate if its founders cultivate at the beginning a respect for law and order, due regard for the ordinances of religion, and a healthy desire for literary culture. These early influences seem to be permanent, and the character of a community for generations is often fixed for good or evil by the

forces dominant at its birth. Amesville, not less than the sister settlement at Athens, was favored in this regard.

“Schools of an elevated character,” says Ephraim Cutler, “were soon established. Two gentlemen, graduates of Harvard college-Mr. Moses Everett, son of the Rev. Moses Everett, of Dorchester, Massachusetts, and Mr. Charles Cutler-taught successively several years.

For some time the youth enjoyed no other means of acquiring knowledge. Mr. Cutler took the United States Gazette, at that time the only newspaper taken in the settlement; and that, except by fortunate accident, did not arrive much oftener than once in three months.” Steps were taken, at an early day, to form a circulating library. In 1803 the inhabitants of Ames assembled in public meeting to consider the subject of roads, which, having been disposed of, the intellectual wants of the settlement became a topic of discussion. They were entirely isolated and remote from established schools and libraries, and felt keenly the necessity of providing some means for their own and their children’s mental improvement. The establishment of a library was suggested, and all agreed that this was the readiest way to meet the case, provided funds could be raised and the books obtained. The scarcity of money seemed an almost insuperable obstacle. We can form little idea at this day of the almost total dearth of any medium of exchange which existed in our pioneer settlements. The little transactions of the colony were carried on almost wholly by barter and exchange in kind. Very little more produce was raised than each family needed, and, indeed, there was no market for any surplus. fudge A. G. Brown says that, soon after they settled in Ames, his older brother raised a little crop of hemp, which they tools in a canoe down Federal creek and the Hockhocking, and up to Marietta, where they succeeded in disposing of it for a small sum; and adds: “So scarce was money that I can hardly remember ever seeing a piece of coin till I was -a well-grown boy. It was with difficulty we obtained enough to pay our taxes with and buy tea for mother-as for clothes and other things, we either depended on the forests for them, or bartered for them, or did without.” In this great scarcity of money the purchase of books for a library seemed like an impossibility; but the subject was canvassed by the meeting, and it was resolved to attempt it. Before the end of the year, by dint of economy, and using every ingenious device to procure necessary funds, a sum of money was raised. Some of the settlers were good hunters, and, there being a ready cash market for furs and skins, which were bought by the agents of John

Jacob Astor and others, these easily paid their subscriptions. At all events, the movement was successful, and the money was paid in. Esquire Samuel Brown was just ready to make a business trip to New England. He was going in a light wagon, and took with him a quantity of bear-skins and other furs, which he designed exchanging in Boston for such goods as were needed in the settlement. The money was placed in his hands, and he was deputed to make the first purchase of books for the embryo library-the first in Ohio. He was furnished with letters to the Rev. "Thaddeus M. Harris (a gentleman of education and note, who had visited the western country a short time before), and the Rev. Dr. Cutler, who accompanied Mr. Brown to Boston and selected a valuable collection of books. This was the first public library formed in the northwestern territory, though not, as some have supposed, the first incorporated. The "Dayton library society" was incorporated February 21, 1805; a library "at Granville, in the county of Fairfield," January 26, 1807; one at Newtown, Hamilton county, February 10, 1808, and the "Coon-skin library," as it has been familiarly called of late years, was incorporated, under the name of the "Western library association," by an act passed February 19, 1810. But, that to Athens county belongs the honor of having given birth to the first library created in the territory of the northwest, does not admit of any doubt. The original record of the association is before us, entitled "Laws and regulations of the Western library association, founded at Ames, February 2, 1804."

The preamble to the articles sets forth that, "considering the many beneficial effects which social libraries are calculated to produce in societies where they are established, as a source both of rational entertainment and instruction, we, the subscribers, wishing to participate in those blessings, agree to form ourselves into a society for this purpose, under the title of the Western library association, in the town of Ames. Furthermore, at a meeting of the said association, at the house of Christopher Herrold, on Thursday, the 2d of February, 1804, agreed that the following articles be adopted as the rules of the society." The shares were \$2.50 each, and each share paid a tax of twenty-five cents a year. Among the founders and original stockholders, whose names are subscribed to the articles, were the following, viz.: Ephraim Cutler, four shares; Jason Rice, two; Silvanus Ames, two; Benjamin L. Brown, one; Martin Boyles, one; Ezra Green, one; George Ewing, one; John Brown, Jun., one; Josiah True, one; George Ewing, Jun., one; Daniel Weethee, two; Timothy Wilkins, two; Benjamin Brown, one; Samuel Brown, 2d, one; Samuel Brown, Sen., one; Simon Converse, one; Christopher Herrold, one;

Edmund Dorr, one; George Wolf, one; Nathan Woodbury, one; Joshua Wyatt, one; George Walker, one; Elijah Hatch, one; Zebulon Griffin, one; Jehiel Gregory, one; George Castle, one; Samuel Brown, one, etc. Among the subscribers in later years appear the names of Dr. Ezra Walker, Othniel Nye, Sally Rice, Nehemiah Gregory, Thomas Ewing, Jason Rice, Lucy Ames, John M. Hibbard, Seth Child, Ebenezer Champlin, Elisha Lattimer, Cyrus Tuttle, Pearly Brown, Robert Fulton, R. S. Lovell, Michael Tippie, James Pugsley, and others among the early residents of Ames.

December 17th, 1804, a meeting of the shareholders was held at the house of Silvanus Ames, and Ephraim Cutler was elected librarian. It was also "voted to accept fifty-one books, purchased by Samuel Brown."

At the annual meeting held at the house of Ephraim Cutler, January 7th, 1805, the committee reported that they "have received pay for thirty-two shares, amounting to \$82.50, of which they have laid out \$73.50 for books." For this year Benjamin Brown, Ephraim Cutler and Daniel Weethee were elected the committee of managers, and Ephraim Cutler librarian. "Voted that the thanks of this association be transmitted, post paid, to the Rev. Thaddeus M. Harris, for his assistance rendered in the selection and purchase of the books which constitute our library." The list of this first purchase of books is before us. It contains "Robertson's North America;" "Harris' Encyclopedia," 4 volumes; "Morse's Geography," 2 volumes; "Adams' Truth of Religion;" "Goldsmith's Works," 4 volumes; "Evelina," 2 volumes; "Children of the Abbey," 2 volumes; "Blair's Lectures;" "Clark's Discourses;" "Ramsey's American Revolution," 2 volumes; "Goldsmith's Animated Nature," 4 volumes; "Playfair's History of Jacobinism," 2 volumes; "George Barnwell;" "Camilla," 3 volumes; "Beggar Girl," 3 volumes, &c. Later purchases included "Shakspeare;" "Don Quixote;" "Locke's Essays," "Scottish Chiefs," "Josephus," "Smith's Wealth of Nations," "Spectator," "Plutarch's Lives," "Arabian Nights," "Life of Washington," &c. In 1807 John Brown was elected librarian, and William Green, Thos. M. Hamilton and John Brown managers for one year.

In 1808 George Walker, Benjamin Brown and Samuel Beaumont were elected managers, and George Walker librarian. In 1809 John Brown, Benjamin Brown and Seth Fuller were elected managers, and John Brown librarian. In 1811 (under the incorporating act) Silvanus Ames, Ezra Green and George Ewing were chosen

directors, Seth Fuller, treasurer, and Benjamin Brown, librarian. In 1812, '13 and '14 the same officers were re-elected. In 1815 Seth Fuller, Geo. Walker and Ezra Green were chosen directors, John Brown, 2d, treasurer, and Benjamin Brown, librarian. From 1816 to 1820 the directors were Seth Fuller, Josiah True and Ezra Green. Benjamin Brown was librarian during 1816 and 1817, and Dr. Ezra Walker during 1818 and 1819.

A somewhat fanciful account of the formation of this library has heretofore appeared in print styling it the "Coon-skin library," and stating that the first purchase of books was made wholly with the furs and skins of wild animals. Some hunting adventures supposed to have occurred in the pursuit of skins are given, and the founders of the library appear rather in the light of literary Nimrods, with whom the chase was an intellectual pastime, and every crack of whose rifles brought down a volume of poems or history. The account we have given is the correct one, our facts having been obtained from one of the surviving founders, and from the records. Certainly some coon skins were sold to raise money by some of the subscribers; and doubtless some hemp, grain, deer or bear-skins, and whatever else would fetch a price; but the sobriquet of "Coon-skin library" was only invented comparatively a few years since. The literal truth about this event is sufficiently interesting, and that we have given.

We have given considerable space to an account of the formation and early history of this, the first public library formed in the state of Ohio, because of the interesting nature of the event, and because nearly all of the founders of the library have descendants still living in the county, who will read with pride of the part their ancestors took in establishing an institution which worked such great and lasting good. The library received additions from time to time, until there were finally accumulated several hundred volumes-a considerable library for the place and period. Many years later it was divided, and part taken to Dover township (where some of the original stockholders lived), where it formed the nucleus of another library, which was incorporated by an act of the legislature, passed December 21, 1830. The portion retained in Ames township was sold by the shareholders in the year 1860 or 1861 to Messrs. J. H. Glazier, A. W. Glazier and E. H. Brawley, and they afterwards sold it to Mr. William P. Cutler, of Washington county (son of Judge Ephraim Cutler), who still has it in his possession.

In the year 1798 Samuel, John and Thos. McCune, three brothers, and David, Jacob and Peter Boyles, came from Pennsylvania and settled temporarily on the Hockhocking, on what is now N. O. Warren's farm, where they remained till 1802, when they removed to the township of Ames and settled within half a mile of the present village of Amesville. George Ewing, Jun., brother of Thomas Ewing, married a daughter of this David Boyles. The three McCune brothers, as also two of the Boyles brothers, were strong, athletic men, and great hunters, sometimes killing, it is said, twelve or fourteen deer and three or four bears in a day. John McCune was something of a mechanic, and used to repair the guns of his neighbors. On one occasion a man brought his gun to be mended and borrowed McCune's gun to use in the meantime. Before repairing the gun McCune went out with it to kill some game. Coming unexpectedly on a bear, he tried to shoot it, but the gun failed to go off, when the bear, as if seeing his advantage, made for the hunter. McCune, unlike his gun, went off. He ran as fast as he could for some distance, the bear closely pursuing, and McCune trying every few rods to fire his gun, which, however seemed to like the situation, and refused to be discharged. After running about half a mile, a neighbor's dogs came to his assistance, and Bruin was driven off but not killed. Wolves were, of course, very abundant at that time, and killing a wolf was a common occurrence. The wife of John McCune seeing something pass the door of their cabin one evening which she took for a dog, set their own dog upon it, and, at the same time stepping out of the door, found it was a large black wolf. Arming herself with a pitchfork that stood within reach, she and the dog kept up a running fight of several rods and finally killed the wolf.

John Boyles and John McCune, while hunting one day, came upon a mother bear and two cubs. Boyles fired at and wounded the old bear, and then, wishing to see his dog kill one of the cubs, laid down his gun and hissed his dog on to attack the cub-the old bear and other cub beating a retreat. Boyles, becoming interested in the fight between his dog and the cub, had approached near them, when he was disagreeably startled by seeing the old bear return, brought by the cries of the cub, and place herself between him and his gun. He was preparing to make the best battle he could with his hunting knife, when McCune, hearing his call for help, hastened to the spot and dispatched the bear by a bullet from his rifle. The sons of the McCune brothers still live in the county, and, like their fathers before them, have been famous hunters and contributed much toward ridding the settlement and eastern part of the county of the wild game and "vermin" that so

annoyed the early settlers. Jacob McCune, one of the sons of John McCune, a few years since, on the occasion of a squirrel hunt, killed in one day one hundred and three grey squirrels, and Samuel McCune, his brother, killed eighty-three.

The year 1805 was a year of unexampled drought, and a scarcity almost amounting to a famine prevailed through all the settlements of this region. The inhabitants of Ames and Athens townships lived almost exclusively during the winter of 1805-6 on the meat of deer, bears, &c., and were compelled to go to Lancaster and Marietta for breadstuff.

In 1806 or 1807 Joab Hoisington settled in the township, and in 1807 Azor Nash, an eccentric character, well known here in early times. Elijah Latimer and Obediah Clark came about the same time. The latter, who married a sister of Thomas Ewing, had been a fifer in the army, and used to play the violin at the country dances in Ames.

The first school taught in the township was in a cabin on the old Cutler place, in 1802, by Charles Cutler, a graduate of Harvard college, and eminently qualified for teaching. At an exhibition given at the close of the term, when the children recited dialogues or other pieces committed for the occasion, Thomas Ewing and John Brown, two of the pupils, spoke the dialogue of Brutus and Cassius, from Shakspeare. In 1804 a log school house was built on Silas Dean's place, near the present village of Amesville, and close by the site of the late George Walker's store. Moses Everett, a graduate of Harvard, taught the first quarter in this house. General John Brown taught here in 1807. The next school house was built in 1811, on Silvanus Ames' farm, and for several years served as a meeting house and school house for the settlement. Sophia Walker, then recently from Vermont, taught the first quarter in this house, and Dr. Ezra Walker, her father, taught tier, in the winter of 1811-12.

An incident connected with early preaching among the pioneer settlements may be mentioned. A neighborhood in the lower settlement in Ames township, in which 'Squire John Brown lived, secured the services of Elder Asa Stearns, a Free Will Baptist, to preach for them once a month during the year, to be paid with three barrels of whisky. Mr. Stearns had an arrangement with Ebenezer Currier, at Athens, to take the whisky and allow him therefor twenty-four dollars, to be credited to him toward the farm he had bought of Judge Currier. The contract was

faithfully carried out on all hands, Elder Stearns visiting his little congregation every third Saturday of each month during the year, at the end of which he received his salary in whisky and made the transfer of it as agreed to Judge Currier.

The Rev. J. H. Hopkins, an early resident of Ames, says: "Among the pioneers of Methodism here were Gulliver Dean and wife, Mr. Haight, Judge Walker's family, the McCunes, &c. The class formed at Ames, early in this century, was ministered to at first by Mr. Austin Thompson and Mr. Dickson, local preachers, and the Rev. Messrs. Ferree, Baker, R. O. Spencer, Henry Fernandez, and Abraham Lippett, Athens circuit, preached to them. A great many years ago, when William Miller first published his lectures on the prophecies concerning the second coming of Christ, some of our people became very much alarmed to think the end of all things was so near. There was one old sister, quite a good woman too, no doubt, but possessed of a large share of credulousness, and consequently ready to gulp down almost anything that came from the mouth of Mr. Miller touching the signs of Christ's coming and the end of the world. She awoke one winter night, the weather extremely cold; quite a deep snow had fallen, and the roads and sledding were fine. The wind was blowing hard, and a lot of old clap-boards that had been loosely thrown down near the house, were flapping and making quite a noise. She shook the old man and told him to arise, for the day of judgment had come, or at least that Gabriel and his angels were at hand. The old man raised himself up a little and said: 'Old woman, what put this into your head? you are always anticipating some wonderful event.' 'It must be so,' was the reply, 'for I have been listening for some time to the rumbling of Gabriel's chariot wheels.' The old man told her just to lie down and be quiet, for said he, 'Gabriel is too wise a creature ever to come to our world on wheels, while the sledding continues as good as it is now.'"

In early times much attention was given to militia organizations. The first organization in the eastern part of the county was made at the house of Judge Ames, in 1803, when Silvanus Ames was elected captain, Josiah True, of Dover township, lieutenant, and Samuel Brown, of Ames, ensign. The first company muster in the same neighborhood was in 1804. At the next election of officers, in 1808, John Brown was made captain and George Ewing lieutenant. John Brown was subsequently advanced to major, colonel and brigadier general, to which last position he was elected in 1817, the brigade being composed of Athens, Morgan,

Washington, Meigs, Gallia, and Vinton counties. The first battalion muster was held at Athens in 1805. Another was held a short time afterward on Esquire Daniel Stewart's place in Rome township, and a third on Wm. Henry's place in Canaan. Regimental musters were held annually for many years at Athens, and Colonel Jehiel Gregory, of Athens, was the first colonel; after him came Silvanus Ames, Edmund Dorr, John Brown, Charles Shipman, Calvary Morris, Absalom Boyles, Nathan Dean, Ziba Lindley, Jun., Charles Cutler, Jonas Rice, and Amos Thompson.

General John Brown was lister of lands for Ames township in 1807, in connection with which he recalls the following anecdote. As his quaint style can not be improved, we give his own words: "In 1807 I was elected lister (an office somewhat like the present assessor) of Ames township, which at that time was about thirty miles east and west, and twelve or fourteen miles north and south, while the inhabitants were few and far between. In discharging that duty I learned how hard it is to levy taxes so as to give satisfaction to all. At that time the tax on all horses three years old, in April preceding, was forty cents per head; on all cattle three years old ten cents. The great difficulty was to settle as to age. Some would not tell, some would prevaricate, sometimes the man of the family was not at home, and the woman did not know, &c. One old lady I found fully posted. I had looked about the place and found they did work with two yoke of cattle; but the woman said these were 'late calves'-would be three years old during the summer. There were several cows evidently giving milk, but, somehow, none but the bell cow was old enough for me. Out of a lot of three or four horses only one was three years old. I quizzed the old lady about the singularity of nearly all the colts and calves in the settlement coming after April. 'Ah,' said she, 'you are a single man and young yet, but you will learn that Providence arranges these things.' That was a clincher, and I left."

The same year the county commissioners appointed him collector of the resident land tax, and the following is a copy of the land tax duplicate as levied by him that year for the whole township:

- [Residents Lands, Ames Township, 1807](#)

The first election for township officers in Ames was held June 1, 1802 (nearly three years before the organization of the county), at the house of Silvanus Ames, and resulted as follows:

- Ames Township Town Officers 1804-1868

The original township of Ames contained three hundred and sixty square miles—more than one fourth of the territorial area of Rhode Island. By the formation of new townships and counties at intervals during forty years, her extensive domain has been reduced to six miles square—the limits of a regular surveyed township. Ames has not kept pace with some other parts of the county in population, being now ninth in that regard; but in respect of the character of her population, business enterprise, moral and educational movements, etc., she is second to none.

Amesville, handsomely located and well built, is a thriving and interesting village. One of the best academies in the county is located here. It originated in a meeting of the citizens held in November, 1852, to consider their educational wants, when George Wyatt, Robert Henry, J. T. Glazier, James Patterson, and A. S. Dickey, were appointed a committee to report a plan for organizing a seminary. They reported on the 25th of that month, and this action was followed in due time by the incorporation of “The Amesville Academy.”

The school has been exceedingly well sustained, and is one of marked usefulness. Its teachers have been Mr. J. P. Weethee, from 1854 to 1856; P. B. Davis, from 1856 to 1858; A. C. Kelly, from 1857 to 1858; Mr. McGonagle, from 1858 to 1860; E. P. Henry, from 1860 to 1861; J. H. Doan, from 1861 to 1862; J. M. Goodspeed, from 1862 to 1864; Miss L. M. Dowling, from 1864 to 1866. The present teachers are the Rev. H. C. Cheadle, principal, and Miss M. G. Keyes, assistant, under whose management the school is growing in popularity and usefulness.

The population of Ames in 1820 was 721; in 1830 it was 857; in 1840 it was 1,431; in 1850 it was 1,482; in 1860 it was 1,335.