CHAPTER LIII.

HISTORY OF YORK TOWNSHIP.

THIS township was originally a part of Wood and Henry counties. These were organized from old Indian territory, by the Legislature of Ohio, in 1820, and named respectively, the first after the brave and chivalrous Colonel Wood, a distinguished officer of engineers in the War of 1812, and the latter after Patrick Henry, the celebrated Virginia orator in the Revolutionary period.

In July, 1835, the Legislature organized the county of Lucas from out of Wood, south of the Fulton line, and named the same after Governor Lucas, then chief executive of Ohio. York township was organized June 6, 1836, after the territory came under the control of Lucas county; yet no record is found in Lucas county of such organization; we find that the very early settlers went all the way to vote at what is now known as York Center. Its extent was north to the Fulton line, and south to the north line of Henry county, and west to the county of Williams, embracing all the territory of towns 5, 6, 7 and 8 east, and 7 north, and all of town 8 north, ranges 5, 6, 7 and 8 east. same year the organization of Swan Creek township gave to York its present eastern boundary. On March 5, 1838, the board of commissioners of Lucas county organized Clinton township from the western territory of York, which subdivision defines the present western boundary of York. On March 1, 1841, Pike township was organized by taking from York all of town 8 north, range 7 east, and one tier of sections from the north side of town 7 north, range 7 east, which defined the present northern boundary. As thus formed it remained untouched until the year 1850, when Fulton county was organized by the Legislature of Ohio, which gave to this county a strip two miles wide from Henry county, off of the north side, the length of Henry county. The strip of two sections wide of town 6 north, range 7 east, was attached to and became a part of York township, extending its southern boundary two miles farther south, which has ever since been the southern boundary of this township. All this territory lies wholly within the Maumee Valley. Nothing prominent marks its pre-historic period before the advent of the white race. It is said that the Indian never shed the blood of the white man within the limits of Fulton county. The township first began to settle with people of New England descent, and can be made to be one of the most highly cultivated and thickly populated townships of the county. In 1834 began the first white settlement of the township as now defined. The operations of the Indians were principally confined to the Maumee River, where the white man first settled, and gave but little attention to the interior. Perrysburg was the center of location for early immigrants, and from there they distributed themselves throughout the valley.

It was founded by the government as a point at the head of ship navigation, and began its existence in 1816. It was named in honor of Commodore Perry. At this time there roamed through the valley powerful tribes of Indians known as the Ottawas and Pottawatamies, but their number was much reduced by government removals to the West at different dates. In 1838 the last remnant of the once powerful Ottawas was removed beyond the Mississippi, at which date they numbered some interesting men.

Boundaries.—York township as at present formed, is bounded on the east by Swan Creek, on the north by Pike, on the west by Clinton, and on the south by Liberty township, Henry county. It is composed of sections 7 to 36 inclusive, of town 7 north, range 7 east, and sections 1 to 12 inclusive, of town 6 north, range 7 east, and contains parts of two Congressional surveys with forty-two full sections of land, or an area of forty-two square miles, embracing 26,-880 acres of land.

Topography.—The township in general is level. Its surface geology is referable exclusively to the drift. It has a beach of sand and gravel extending across it in a northeasterly course, leaving the township just north of Delta, a town situated on the Lake Shore Railroad, in the northeast corner of the township. South of this ridge the land is purely the black swamp deposit, and no spurs of sand leave the ridge upon its southerly front. Upon the north side a few spurs put out and overlap the lacustrine clays for some distance. In the north part of the township heavy spurs of sand reach southward from the "oak openings" of Dover and Pike townships, overlapping the heavy clays. There are no quarries of stone found in the township, and but few boulders. The depth of the drift forbids the hope that any may be discovered. Any amount of material exists here for tile and brick manufacture, which could be made to "pay" if properly developed. The average depth of the drift in this township is about one hundred and forty feet above the rock or water level of Lake Erie.

Timber.—The timber growth of York was dense and very tall, and presented all the varieties common to heavy level soils. Elm is found in abundance, together with basswood, and nearly all the varieties of oak; black and white ash exist in some parts; hickory, butternut and black walnut, some hard maple, and, in a few places, the beech may be found and a sprinkling of whitewood. The timber of this whole township, in its primitive days, was of a dense growth, the branches and foliage making it almost impenetrable to the sun, and its gloomy recesses remained unbroken until discovered and settled by the ever restless immigrants of the east and south.

Water Supply.—The water supply is derived wholly from rain fall, which is insufficient in times of drouth. This rain fall is held in the quicksands underlying the sand and gravel ridges and sand spurs from the openings, and may be found by shallow diggings, deposited in sand or gravel beds permeating the lacustrine clays, over the blue or Erie clay of the whole valley; hence, in dry

weather the streams go dry and afford no water. The only unfailing supply of water is procured by the auger penetrating to the rock below, where an abundance of water is often found, and this, by the wind-mill, is utilized for farm and household purposes.

The streams of York township, excepting Bad Creek, have their source in the township on its northern and western border. Those with Bad Creek in the east run in a southerly direction across the township, while the balance run nearly a southeasterly course, and find their way to Maumee River. The course of the streams is marked with a gentle inclination of about three to four feet to the mile. The land of the northwest part is more elevated than in any other section of the township. Bad Creek has its principal source from Chesterfield, Dover and Pike, and affords an extensive drainage for the wet prairie lands lying in the openings and sand areas surrounding them.

Soil and Productions.—The black swamp clay predominates to a large extent south of the sand and gravel ridge of this township. It is, with a proper rainfall, very productive for all the general crops of this latitude. North of the ridge spurs put out and overlap the lacustrine deposits in many places, giving a very rich and productive soil, sufficiently mixed with the sand, gravel, and clay to make husbandry easy and profitable. The largest area of the township is of the lacustrine deposit, and gives to the farm lands but one specific soil. When properly managed it is capable of as heavy production as the majority of the soils of the county. These clay soils are homogeneous, with sand and gravel enough to render it arable and permeable. A few patches of unmixed clay may be found, some quite friable, but more commonly very adhesive and difficult of management.

Early Settlers.—The first settlement made in York township, as gathered from the recollections of those still living, was made by William Jones and family, in May, 1834. He settled on the northeast quarter of section eighteen. However, we leave the honor of being the first pioneer to be settled by the future historian. It appears that William, John, and James King came to this territory early in May, 1834, and they say, in a little historical sketch of their own, that when they came the only persons known to be in the woods (for then the woods extended north to the Fulton line, and west to Williams county), were Elisha Trowbridge and his brother, Willard, and a Swiss family named Schlappi. As the region was an unbroken and densely wooded forest, and with no roads, it was quite impossible to know the whereabouts and time of all new arrivals until a better acquaintance with the woods and territory was had. Mr. King settled on section twenty-four.

John S. Trowbridge settled in Fulton county, in this township, in 1834. He was from Saratoga, N. Y., and was born November 18, 1816. After coming to the valley he married Hannah Hampton. They have nine children. He is now a merchant of Delta. Cornelius Trowbridge came from Saratoga

in 1834. Alanson Trowbridge also came in 1834. A Mr. Hampton was, in that year, here looking for land. He took an entry of eighty acres made by William King, and moved upon it in 1834, cleared it and made a fine farm. William King and family settled in York township in May, 1834. He had a family—wife, three sons, one daughter, and his aged father and mother. They came from Londonderry, Ireland. On arriving at Manhattan they hired a team which took them to Providence, where they "put up" at the hotel kept by Manor, a Frenchman, with the expectations of going to Defiance, but, through the entreaties of Manor, King was induced to go some twelve miles north, to what was then called the Six Mile Woods, Manor accompanying him. Here they found William Meeker, who had settled in the edge of this woods in 1833, or the year before, now in Swan Creek, where they hired Meeker to show them some of the "bush" which Uncle Sam was selling for \$1.50 per acre. They then started from Meeker's cabin, and went on that line due west, to where the village of Delta now stands; thence they continued as far west as the center of York township. They then turned and went south one mile; thence east to the "oak openings," and located lands on section twenty-four. They then immediately returned to Providence. From there King went to the land office, then at Waupakonetta, on foot, which journey required three days travel. He says: "The roads were so bad that a horse could hardly make any headway. Mud and slush was nearly to the top of boots." The way to the land office was through a dense, unbroken forest, and in many places not cut out. The trees were blazed to mark the route. On his return he forthwith made the transfer of his family to his purchase on section twentyfour, and erected his cabin which became their home, rude as it was. The Doolittles settled near the center of York township, as also did Uriah Spencer, in 1835.

The only mail these early settlers had was at the river, which passed once a week to Fort Wayne, in the State of Indiana, and was carried on horseback. All the settlers, even in the Six Mile Woods, had to go from twelve to twenty miles to the river for their mail.

These families named, as far as facts can be gathered, undoubtedly were all that located within the limits of York during the year 1834. The settlement was begun so near the present line of Swan Creek township that, for the purpose of York township history, correct information is impossible, but the chapter devoted to Swan Creek will show the names of early pioneers and pioneer items; yet, at a very early period, all this section was York township. It is here proper to state that William Meeker was the first settler within the present limits of Swan Creek township, being found here in the woods as early as 1833, and, for authority, we will refer to the reminiscences of the life of Peter Manor, the Frenchman of the Maumee.

Settlers from 1835 to 1840. - John Murray and his wife, Mary Huffteller,

settled in York in the thirties; came from Pennsylvania and settled upon section twenty-six, cleared and improved a large farm, reared a family and died thereon.

Robert McClarren and his wife, Catharine Jones, came from Maryland and settled in York township, February 6, 1836; Catharine was a sister to William Jones the first settler.

Henry Fluhart located here in the very early days of the settlement of the township upon section seven. He was a zealous Christian and did noble work in aid of early missionary work. His latch string was always out to friend or foe. He, at a later period, moved to Missouri and has since died, but some of his family are residents of York; one son, James Fluhart, is editor and proprietor of the Delta *Avalanche*, published at Delta.

Abram Cole and family came to York in January, 1835, and settled on section twenty-five, the east half of northeast quarter.

Peter Wise, Gillman Cheedle, William Fowler, David Childs, Avery Lamb, John Batdorf, Bethuel Gould, Jefferson Van Vleet, Martin Butler, — Donaldson, Thomas Wardly, Charles Gray and William Fowler came in 1835. Gardner Tremain and his wife, Elizabeth, came to York in 1836, the former a native of Cayuga county, and the latter from Dutchess county, N. Y. They settled on section twenty-five and thirty-six. He died many years ago.

John Jones came with his father, William Jones, and hence may be considered among the settlers of 1834. He is still living, having attained a good old age.

John Batdorf settled upon section twenty-one, the same on which he now resides, and raised a large family. H. E. Whitney came at a very early date, and with his family settled upon section twenty-five.

James Trowbridge, wife and two children, left Saratoga, N. Y., July 4, 1837, and landed at Perrysburgh, in the Maumee Valley, July 17, 1837. His route of travel was from Albany to Buffalo, by freight boat on the Erie canal, and from there on Lake Erie to Toledo, O., on board of the boat, Commodore Perry. He found at Maumee an Indian camp, and government officers were gathering the Indians of the valley at this place, preparatory to moving them west.

The Indians were very peaceable and friendly. The same day, on arriving at Perrysburgh, he found a man by the name of Elijah Herrick (now a resident of Fulton township), who took him and family to the "Six Mile Woods," near where Delta now stands. There were no roads and the way lay through what was called wet prairies and sand openings. That night they all stayed at Swanton, fourteen miles from Maumee. In the morning they started for their home eight miles further west. They met with many difficulties in getting across Swan Creek. After crossing and traveling a mile or two they came to a thick wooded country where they found a few inhabitants and before noon got to their future home. This was on July 20, 1837. He says that at that time

it was twenty miles to a postoffice, twenty miles to a doctor and the same distance to a saw or grist-mill. The roads were nothing but Indian trails and cow paths. Some of the difficulties they had to encounter were amusing and many times dangerous. One very important undertaking at this time in progress, was the building of the canal up the Maumee, which gave an impetus to immigration that reached this territory and had its influence for the ultimate benefit of all.

In the summer of 1838 a dreadful epidemic broke out among the canal diggers and reached all the isolated settlers in the woods, ten or twelve miles away. During this siege of sickness there were not well persons enough to care for the sick. Eight persons died that summer.

Catharine Moyer, in her historical reminiscence says, "I landed at the mouth of Swan Creek, May 14, 1838, and, to get to land had to wade through water enough to sail quite a boat. But that was nothing to riding over corduroy roads, and the kind of bridges in use at time, with a six months old baby in my arms. The shaking and rocking did not soothe the child much. So I had to get out and walk when I came to a good place. We stopped on the route out at a cabin for water, and they had to strain it to get the 'wigglers' out of it before offering it to drink. I was thirsty and drank, regardless of the wigglers. I took my supper that night at the cabin of Gardner K. Tremain, and from there, the next morning went to the cabin of Abram Cole and stayed until we built a place of our own. After many trials incident to a pioneer beginning, we cleared our land, got a fair start on the road to a good and easy way of living, when my husband went to Delta and worked as a blacksmith. Again in 1849 he went to California and there died."

Mrs. Moyer, in her recollections of those early days, further says: "I do not understand architecture very well; but our house had a shake roof, boards for floor below, and two boards for chamber floor; we took one of them for a door in the fall; a two-legged bedstead, a chest for a table, a log sawed out for windows, a blanket for door, shakes for pantry, and one side of the house for a fire. People said we were quite well off. We lived in hope; we had to wait until we could prepare ground. In the spring I hoed up some dirt around the house and planted twelve hills of corn. I never felt so rich in all my life, as I did when the corn came up. I have planted and raised bushels, since, yet nothing ever gave me the joy that I experienced in raising that twelve hills. It was my first, and on my own land. I taught school and took my pay in produce."

W. King says: "On the 21st of June, 1834, shortly after I was settled, we were visited by a terrible cyclone, which swept the woods from west to east. Its track was about two miles wide and thirty miles long. Its duration was about twenty minutes, and almost destroyed the forest; everything was a wreck in its path. It came just at sun setting. The day had been calm and

sultry. When the storm came it was accompanied with wonderful electrical disturbances, heavy thunder, a great volume of rain and total darkness. The shanty was saved, amid the falling and crashing of timber." Mr. King thought it safer to plant himself at the foot of a patriarchal oak, which was twisted off, a few yards above his head, and carried away. The fallen timber was piled around the shanty, but none fell upon it. A horse that was tied near the shanty, was also saved. It required, of the settlers, eight days of steady work to cut their way out of this windfall.

William Fowler, sen., came originally from Cumberland county, Pa., in 1828, to Fairfield county, O.; and in August, 1835, with his family, came to Fulton county. With him were three sons, who may be considered pioneers of that age. They were William, Thomas and Robert. William Fowler, sen., located his farm in York township, where he died many years ago.

General Remarks.—Many of the old pioneers that first entered York township were obliged to cut and clear away miles of timber, to get to their lands, and each gave to the public from twenty to thirty days hard work, for a few years, to clean and cut out roads. They conquered all obstacles, by their courage and ambition, and by their own steadfast purposes and personal exertions, have finally succeeded in owning a fair property.

One of the characteristics of these old-time settlers was, that they generally managed to have enough to eat and wear, such as it was. They liked to hear the trees fall, and see the light from the burning log heaps and brush piles, at night. This was one of their greatest enjoyments, and they always lived as though the life of a pioneer was a glorious one; and many of them, still living to-day, look back to the old times with longing, and would love to live them over again.

Other Settlers.—Stebbins R. Stebbins came to York, in 1844; George Wright came in 1847, and settled upon section 7; he was a native of England. William Markle and wife, from Pickaway county, came in 1844; Elija Smith and his wife, Eliza, came in 1849. Mr. Smith was from the State of New York, and his wife from Seneca county, O. They settled upon section 26. Alfred B. Gunn settled in York, in 1844. At that time he was in Henry county, and became a resident of Fulton county April 1, 1850, when that part of Henry was made a part of Fulton county. He was one of the delegates to the convention that established the boundary line of Fulton county. He settled upon section 12, town 6 north, range 7 east. He has been twice elected commissioner of this county, and served a period of six years; was one of the commissioners in locating the court-house at the place where it now stands, in He has long since passed away, but his homestead remains in the family. He was a very influential man and a good neighbor. He lived a life worthy of imitation.

Samuel and Elizabeth Biddle settled in York township October 13, 1842.

They came from Pennsylvania, "the land of the Quakers." They raised a family of five girls and three boys. In his lifetime, Mr. Biddle was one of the foremost men of the township; he settled upon section 17, on lands that were entered and improved by Uriah Spencer, one of the first settlers. Mr. Biddle died February 17, 1867, and his wife in 1877. When Mr. Biddle settled in York, 1842, there were but three school-houses in the whole township, and log buildings at that. The township then was not as large as at present, yet children found their way to what few schools there were.

The first school taught in this part of York was by Miss Sophronia Fluhart. She taught a winter term of six weeks and three days, at a cost of sixtytwo and one-half cents per week, and boarded herself at home. This school was kept in a cabin owned by Samuel Biddle, near the York and Clinton line, east of Wauseon. Calvin Biddle, son of Samuel, settled in York in 1842. He came with his parents from Pennsylvania. He has been twice married; his present wife was Margaret Todd.

Mark Berry, from Wooster, settled here in 1843. Stillman C. Biddle settled in York, 1842. He came with his parents when but a small boy, and, undoubtedly, as a barefoot boy, of that period, is able to give a very characteristic description of pioneer days. He now resides upon section 17, and is one of the foremost men of York.

Abner P. Brainard settled in York, in 1846. John Harrison came in a very early day and settled upon section 17. The only crops of these days were wheat, oats, corn and potatoes, and in this township a crop of the finest quality was sure to follow. This was a wonderful encouragement to the early settlers. There was no trading point of any account except Maumee, where all business was done. The building of the Air-Line Railroad, in 1854, seemed to change the very face of nature, and was the pivotal point in which pioneer life suddenly vanished, and a general traffic in every product that could be gleaned from the land, jumped into life.

The history of these and others, that might be given, serve as a type of a generation who will soon be gone. They are crossing over the river. Many of these old pioneers have lived to see the sunshine of a better Christian civilization; the forest displaced by wide areas of improvements; by towns and cities filled with churches, and the whole country dotted over with school-houses; and railroads, where was once the Indian trail. It was in these homes that many of the present generation received their early training, by the side and upon the lap of that mother, whose influence was felt and fully appreciated.

Roads.—The first road opened in and through York township was laid out by one, Captain Williams, with chainmen and axmen, and Judge Ambrose Rice, of Perrysburgh, as surveyor. The road extended from Maumee, by the way of where Delta now stands, west to West Unity, Williams county. It was surveyed in August and completed about the first of September, 1834, and is now called the State road.

Post Routes.—The first post route established was from Toledo via Delta, west to West Unity, in 1838, running upon the State road.

Post-Offices.—The first post-office in the township was York Center, two and one-half miles west and one mile south of Delta. In 1838 there was a post-office established on what is now the farm of the Hon. S. H. Cately, in Swan Creek, which answered well for York township. William Meeker was the first postmaster, and in naming it, misapprehending its meaning, supposing it signified "fertile valley," gave it the name of Delta. It was in 1842 moved to the village of Delta, and became a post-office of York township, and so remains to this date. Beta, a post-office upon the south side of York, became as such in 1850, by the acquisition of territory from Henry county. Plattstown post office was established in 1886. This comprises the list of offices of the township. York Center was discontinued some years ago.

Physicians.—The first physician of the township was Erastus Lathrop, who settled near Delta and died very soon after the village was located. He was a member of the Baptist church and sometimes preached for the society.

The medical practitioners of the township have centered in the village of Delta, from which point they practice over a large area of the surrounding county, and are William Ramsey, S. P. Bishop, John Odell, John A. Wilkins, and O. P. Fletcher.

Educational.—The first school-house built in the township stood upon the farm of Willard Trowbridge, one mile west of Delta. There are, at the present time thirteen sub-districts and one graded school for Delta, all in a very flourishing condition.

Churches.—The first church built in the township was by the Presbyterian society of Delta, and at date, the township, including Delta, has eight houses for public worship located as follows: Four in Delta, one each on sections eleven, twenty-nine, thirty-one and thirty-four, embodying in faith all the principal denominations of the county.

Steam Mills.—Outside of the village of Delta there are four steam saw-mills, employed for the use of the lumber-producing interest of the township. No grist-mills were ever run in the township; the only one erected is at Delta, a roller process mill, doing a large and profitable business, both in home and foreign trade.

Some of the Present Inhabitants.—Some of the principal land owners, noted for enterprise, who are likely to lead in the industry of the township, are Frank T. Blair, Daniel Harmon, John McQuillen, William Ramsey, Norman Munger, Silas B. Skeels, Jacob Koos, Matthew Lutton, J. B. Fasbaugh, Daniel Eberly, Phillip Boyce, A. Berkebile, John Harrison, George Seible, Valentine Emerling, William Trowbridge, George Orndorf, Jacob P. Garman, Stillman C. Biddle, Calvin Biddle, Samuel G. Aumind, Frank Briggs, Jacob Huth, Cornelius Trowbridge, Richard E. Terwilliger, C. Harrison, J. Berkebile, John Batdorf,

A. E. Bradley, J. Pontius, Reuben Bond, Samuel McLain, William Struble, J. Leist, N. Biery, George W. Tabor, A. B. Thompson, Charles Cullen, Charles W. Hatton, and J. M. Longnecker.

Aside from the agricultural industry of the township, all the competitive industries that once existed therein have taken leave, and now only exist in the villages.

Delta, a large village of this township, is endowed with no natural facilities for manufacture or commerce, but simply has a good farming country around it, and is only good for the production of food, and whatever will forward her agricultural interest is of vital consequence to all. As Delta is a rival to the other towns of the county, and possibly the oldest of all, it is one of the very few that has come to us alive from the wrecks of city booms of early days.

This village was not planted by some shrewd speculator, nor were its advantages heralded throughout the land by flaming hand bills; it was of spontaneous growth and seemed indigenous to the soil, and grew apace with the improvements of the country. This site was trod over by the white man as early as in 1834, and up to 1838 the land hunters did not seem to have any idea that there would be a town where Delta now stands. Two families then were living on the bank of the creek: James McQuilling on the south side of the State road, and G. B. Lewis on the north side. Both were farmers. McQuilling owned and run a saw-mill, a water-mill, and Lewis opened a temperance tavern. He kept a little tea and tobacco for sale, and on Sunday always had preaching in his house, so his was a dwelling, tavern, store and church. This was really the first beginning of business in Delta.

A Mr. Kenyon built the first house, a frame, and up to 1839 George Wood and wife composed one fourth of all the residents of the village. This house was afterward sold to Doctor Lathrop, who had just married his second wife, but in a few months from that time they both died. J. T. Gates and George Wood became the owners of the Lathrop property in 1841. In this year the village received an accession to its population in a very old fashioned way. All its previous increase had been through immigration, but this was by the birth, in October, of Mary Augusta Wood, who made her debut as an actor on the world's great stage, and on which she has continued to act for forty-six years; during this time she has visited the principal towns in Europe and America, and has given the former an opportunity of talking with a native American in their own language and on their own soil, and showing to the literary men and women of England, France, Germany and other countries, that a person may be born in the wilds of Ohio and be their equal.

The first church in Delta was the Presbyterian of the old school. It was built on Adrian street at a very early date. Since that time the society has built a new one on Main street a fine structure.

James Trowbridge kept the first store, but the pioneer store that prepared

was elected but was displaced by the court, John M. Palmer, judge). George Taft was commissioner by appointment; Octavius Waters was elected representative in the State Legislature one term, two years. John A. Wilkins was elected and served one term as State Senator. Octavius Waters was prosecuting attorney two years; William H. Gavett prosecuting attorney four years, or two terms; Alfred B. Gunn served two terms, or six years, as commissioner of the county; Frank T. Blair two terms, or four years, as sheriff; Thomas Kelley five years as county treasurer, and eight months as auditor, by appointment; Silas B. Skeels one term of three years as infirmary director; Samuel G. Aumend one term of three years as infirmary director, and in the fall of 1887 was re-elected for a second term; M. H. Butler was the first school examiner; next, Holmes Smith, by appointment, served several years as school examiner of the county; A. B. Thompson also served as commissioner.

Population.—York has shown steady and a very healthy increase in population. In 1840 it had 435 and the last census of the United States had, excluding Delta and corporation, a population of 1,714, but with Delta added it numbered 2,572.

Pages 562-573

HISTORY

OF

HENRY AND FULTON COUNTIES

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS AND BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

OF SOME OF ITS PROMINENT MEN AND PIONEERS
EDITED BY

LEWIS CASS ALDRICH

D. MASON & CO., PUBLISHERS

1888