

A History Of An Old Frame Grist Mill Converted Into A Schoolhouse

and of the

Ancient Durlach Schoolhouse

by

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It is beginning to be more and more the custom of holding annual reunions at rural schoolhouses in our section of the county. On Sunday afternoon, August 18th, 1935, the pupils who attended the Durlach School half a century ago held a reunion at the new Clay Schoolhouse to pay tribute to their teacher, Mrs. Stella M. Stauffer Hurst.

Mr. C. B. Snyder acted as chairman. The speakers were E. Paul Burkholder, Superintendent of Public Schools of Sussex County, Delaware; Prof. Herbert H. Beck and C. H. Martin of the Lancaster County Historical Society; Rev. Arlington Gerhard of Philadelphia; Rev. John B. Bucher of Ephrata, and the writer. Talks were also given by teachers who served at the old and the new Clay Schoolhouses. On such occasions, it is customary to give a history of the school and of the schoolhouse. On this subject I addressed the gathering.

It is the history of an old frame grist mill in Clay Township converted into a schoolhouse in the pioneer days, and of an ancient rural schoolhouse in the same township, known in my school days as the old Durlach Schoolhouse, concerning which this paper is written.

PIONEERS SETTLE ON LEGAWI CREEK

Among the early pioneers who cleared the unbroken wilderness was Peter Wealand, who erected a frame grist mill on a small stream, passing through Clay Township, called "Legawi" by the

Indians, meaning the middle, and now called Middle Creek.

On November 30th, 1750, he obtained a land grant for fifty acres of land in the neighborhood of what is now the village of Clay, title to which was not granted until twelve years later, due to a dispute as to who had the equitable right to the tract.

His deed is dated September 18th, 1762, and is recorded in Record Book H, page 110. The grantor was John Hostetter, son of Oswald Hostetter, a land speculator. John Hostetter had agreed in writing to lay out fifty acres of land to Michael Shenk, who transferred the agreement to Peter Wealand, before the tract was laid out and confirmed to him. This transaction brought about the dispute.

In the meantime Wealand cleared the land, erected a frame grist mill and a house, planted an orchard, and made other improvements. The tract is described in the deed as being partly in Warwick Township, partly in Elizabeth Township and partly in Calico Township.

According to the deed, it was originally a part of a 2000-acre tract for which a land warrant was granted to Charles Jones, the elder, and Charles Jones, the younger, by William Penn, on September 27th, 1681; said tract to be taken up in the Province of Pennsylvania.

On November 4th, 1711, the tract passed to Eastor Shippen and her husband Edward. By will of Eastor Shippen, dated August 4th, 1724, it passed to Edward and Joseph Shippen, her sons, who divided said tract. By indenture, bearing date December 6th, 1740, Joseph Shippen and Joseph Shippen, Jr., conveyed a part of the tract to Oswald Hostetter, from whom it passed to his son John.

GRIST MILL CONVERTED INTO A SCHOOLHOUSE

The earliest record of a building in the neighborhood of what is now Clay, used for school purposes in the pioneer days, was that old frame grist mill erected by Peter Wealand.

One of the early pioneers, who became a land owner at the little "Legawi Creek," was Jacob Erb; a man of good judgment, and of a progressive spirit. The children of the settlers in that

vicinity were growing up without any educational instructions, except such as was imparted to them at home.

On February 10th, 1783, according to Record Book U, page 404, Jacob Erb became the owner of the tract on which the grist mill was erected, as well as one hundred and sixty-eight additional acres of land belonging to Peter Wealand.¹ He converted the mill into a schoolhouse,² and built a new mill on the site where the present mill now stands, erected by Michael S. Eberly in 1875, and now owned by his son, Lewis G. Eberly.

The old frame grist mill stood one hundred and fifty yards south of the intersection of the Lititz road with the Sproul highway at Clay; thence sixty-five yards westward, across a small field, to the tailrace.

This is not only tradition, it is an established fact. The absolute truth is that even to-day there exists evidence to support the fact. The timber which formed the frame foundation for the old style, undershot waterwheel is still visible at the bottom of the tailrace. On the west bank of the race is further evidence, partly under ground; it is part of the remains of the foundation wall of the old mill in the form of stone. Another piece of evidence was an old stone pile, now removed, which for many years marked the spot.

THE ANCIENT DURLACH SCHOOLHOUSE

Such a primitive educational facility, as an old grist mill, did not for a long time satisfy the pioneers, who dwelt in that vicinity.

The number of school children increased, and it demanded a more substantial building for school purposes for the coming generation. The subject of a structure for school became the general topic of discussion among the settlers, which brought about the erection of a schoolhouse.

The earliest record of a school building, in what is now Clay Township, is that of the ancient Durlach Schoolhouse. Unfortu-

¹ See History of Lancaster County, Ellis & Evans, p. 908.

² Ibid, pp. 702-3.

nately, all the old minutes and records were destroyed by fire on a Monday night, the latter part of April, 1922. They were in possession of Samuel E. Forry, a director of the Clay Township School District, and son of Zacharias Forry, whose house became ablaze, and without having any consideration for us, the fire consumed the records.

THE ILLIG TRACT

According to Record Book P, page 425, Jacob Mast and his wife, by a certain patent or grant, dated April 15th, 1749, bought from Thomas and Richard Penn, two hundred and fifty acres of land for 400 pounds, in the neighborhood of the tract on which the Durlach Schoolhouse stands.

In the recital of the deed, the tract is described as adjoining land on the south of Martin Weidman, on the west of Wendel Labor, on the north by vacant land, and on the east by land of Jacob Eberly, lying in the district of Cocalico.

The tract extended as far north and beyond the road leading from Clay to Durlach. On May 20th, 1749, it passed to John Weidman. On October 15th, 1790, he bequeathed it to his daughter, Margaret, and her husband, George Illig. They were a public-spirited couple.

In 1757, Elizabeth Township was formed, and the tract became a part of that township.

LAND DONATION BY GEORGE ILLIG AND WIFE

Around one family, who became interested in the erection of a building for school purposes, hangs a tale, which has become a historical fact. That is, the story of the land donation by George Illig, and Margaret, his wife, on which the ancient Durlach Schoolhouse was erected.

The beginning of the schoolhouse dates from 1800. On May 15th, of that year, according to Record Book Q, Vol. 3, page 329, George Illig of Cocalico Township, and his wife Margaret, for and in consideration of the payment of five shillings, conveyed seventy-five perches of land, being a parcel of the two hundred and fifty acres mentioned aforesaid by deed to John Erb and Jacob Eberly,

of Warwick Township, in especial trust and confidence for the Menonite Society, and to Christopher Mill and Jacob Weidman, Jr., in especial trust and confidence for the Lutheran Society, for the use of a school, and for no other use whatsoever. The consideration of five shillings named in the deed of trust is equal to about sixty cents in our money, and was a sufficient amount to make the document legal.

The said seventy-five perches of land were granted to the trustees and to the survivors, or survivor of them, their successors, and assigns as shall be appointed forever in especial trust and confidence for the use of the two said societies.

The stipulation in the deed of trust, pertaining to the filling of a vacancy in case of death of one of the trustees by the surviving trustees, was fully complied with.

The stipulation in the document, prohibiting the benefit of educational facilities to other than the two societies mentioned therein, was so modified that children of any denomination could attend school.

The stipulation in the document referring to holding the premises forever for the use of a school was changed by the spirit of the times, and by the increase of school population. In the Fall of the year 1905, the old schoolhouse was abandoned. Teaching of school then began in the new Clay Schoolhouse erected by the Clay Township School District, a mile east of Clay, at the northeast corner of the first crossroad on the Sproul Highway.

In the recital of the deed, the parcel or tract of land is described as follows:

“Beginning at a stone of Jacob Weidman’s land, thence extending by same north thirty degrees east thirteen perches and six-tenths of a perch to a stone, thence by land of said George Illig north eighty-eight degrees west thirteen perches to a stone; thence by land of the aforesaid Jacob Weidman south twenty-seven degrees east thirteen perches and six-tenths of a perch to the place of beginning, containing seventy-five perches of land, strict measure, being a part of a larger tract containing two hundred and fifty acres.”

The aforesaid tract or parcel of land can be reached by turning left at the first crossroad, a mile east of Clay, on the Sproul High-

way, where the new Clay Schoolhouse now stands; thence four hundred and thirty-seven yards north by east. At this point the byroad makes a sharp turn directly northward. From that point it is one hundred and twenty-five yards eastward through a field. The tract of land, and the narrow lane which led to the schoolhouse, are now under cultivation. It is a mile and a quarter east of Clay, and two and a half miles west of Lincoln.

CHANGE IN NAMES

We, as school children, always knew the building as "The Little Old Schoolhouse in the Lane." In olden times it was familiarly known as the Illig and the old Houck Schoolhouse, the latter being the name of a family which at one time resided in the building.

Later the name Durlach was applied to it. Durlach is a name brought from across the sea by early settlers who came from Durlach, Baden, Germany, and settled in that vicinity.³ The Durlach Post Office dates from 1840.⁴ It was kept in the house of John Elser, who resided along the highway, a short distance east of Clay. Harrison Elser was the postmaster. In 1863, it was removed to what is now the Durlach Post Office, with Samuel Eberly as postmaster.

In 1853, Clay Township was formed by a division of Elizabeth Township. This placed the schoolhouse in Clay Township. On July 26th, 1893, the Clay Township School District bought a tract of land from Benjamin Donmoyer, and built an additional schoolhouse in the township. This schoolhouse is about a mile farther north than the old Durlach schoolhouse, and about a half mile south of Mount Airy. They named it the Durlach Schoolhouse, and applied the name Clay to our schoolhouse.

BRANCHES OF STUDIES

The books and necessary school supplies were furnished by our parents, and we were never overstocked. Reading, writing and

³ See History of Lancaster County, Ellis & Evans, p. 700.

⁴ Ibid, p. 705.

arithmetic were considered the most important of our studies.

Our school textbooks were:

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| Spelling | Swinton's and Westlake's 3,000 practice words. |
| Grammar | Raub's, followed by Dr. E. O. Lyte's Grammar and Composition. |
| Arithmetic | Brooks', followed by Raub's. |
| History | Barnes. |
| Geography | Mitchell's. |
| Penmanship | Payson, Dunton & Scribner's National System, and Spencerian System of Practical Penmanship. |
| Readers | The American Educational Readers, Fourth and Fifth. |

EARLY AND LATE TEACHERS

To write a history of the ancient Durlach Schoolhouse without mentioning the names of the school teachers who taught therein would make it incomplete. I will therefore mention the names of the teachers who have come before me, and the years, as near as possible, in which they taught. One of the earliest teachers, who taught for a long time, was William Spera. He was followed by:

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| Daniel McCurthey | |
| John Adams | |
| Harry Garman | |
| Nathan Wolfskill | |
| Levi W. Mentzer | |
| Isaac Erb | |
| John B. Erb | 1853 |
| Phoebe Coates | 1854 |
| Mr. Robinson | 1855 |
| Jacob Buchter | 1856 |
| David Spangler | 1857 |
| John Elser | 1858 |
| Maggie Houck | |
| Wayne Houck | |
| John Roeher | 1873-4 |
| Daniel B. Gratz | 1875-6-7 |
| Ellis Bard | 1878 |
| Sue Andes | 1879 |
| George Lawrence | 1880 |
| Jennie Grosh | 1881-2 |
| Allen P. Miller | 1883 |
| Stella M. Stauffer | 1884-5-6-7-8 |
| Ina Robinson | 1889 |

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|----------------------|-------------|
| Nettie Greene | 1890-1 |
| Clara Hoffman | 1892 |
| Cameron E. Lane | 1893 |
| Merka Seidel | 1894 |
| Joseph Forney | 1895 |
| Scott Killian | 1897 |
| J. L. Dry | 1898-9-1900 |
| Elizabeth Burkholder | 1901 |
| Mohler Good | 1902-3-4 |

As before stated the original trustees were John Erb, Jacob Eberly, Christopher Miller and Jacob Weidman, Jr. In 1885, they were Jacob Hackman, Jacob S. Brubaker, Jacob Romig and David Miller. In 1900 they were Henry Romig, Amos N. Landis, J. W. Bucher and Zacharias Forry.

On March 17, 1906, according to Record Book K, Vol. 18, Page 176, the trustees of the private School District, created by George Illig and Mary, his wife, sold the property to the Clay Township School District. At that time the trustees were Henry Romig, Amos N. Landis, Zacharias Forry and Michael S. Eberly.

At the Centennial Anniversary held in 1900, it was stated that the Durlach Schoolhouse was the oldest building of its kind in Lancaster County, and, it is claimed, in the State, that had been in continuous use for educational purposes.

The idea of the celebration in 1900 was made popular through the efforts of Hiram E. Steinmetz, of Lititz, a member of the Lancaster County Historical Society, and Prof. J. L. Dry, the teacher of the school.

The centennial was one of the biggest events in the history of Lancaster County schools, and was attended by over six hundred people.

Instrumental music was furnished by the Lincoln Military Band. The vocal music was under the direction of S. G. Hipple, a teacher in the township. Rev. Beerman, of Hopeland, opened the exercises. Addresses were made by Dr. N. C. Schaeffer, State Superintendent of Public Instruction; County Superintendent M. J. Brecht, Hon. J. A. Stober, a State Senator, and Prof. J. L. Dry, teacher of the school. The speakers dwelt chiefly upon local education history. The exercises were closed by Rev. J. C. Liebensperger.