

HOLLOW SCHOOL

An Old School And A Letter Written By A Teacher 146 Years Ago.

(Reprinted from an article in the New Holland Clarion of April 29, 1893.)

Over in Leacock township, along what is known as the Ridge Road, stands the Hollow Schoolhouse. Standing, as it does, on the top of a ridge, from which there is a magnificent view of the beautiful and fertile Pequea valley on the south and a portion of the equally fine Conestoga valley northward, the name Hollow seems very inappropriate, and only by going back to the early history of our county can we learn how the old Hollow got that name.

Hollow Schoolhouse was one of the first school buildings erected in this portion of Lancaster county. The first building was a humble log structure, which was built by Joseph Rutter on his farm which Conrad Rutter, his father, had taken possession of in 1716. This house was built at the foot of the ridge, about five hundred yards south of the present structure, and being located at a depression it was called Hollow School. There the ancestors of many of the dwellers of the surrounding section of the country—the Rutters, the Bairs, the Lightners, the Ellmakers, the Eabys and many others—were instructed in the three R's—readin', ritin', and 'rithmetic—and many were no doubt not infrequently subjected to corporal tortures according to the rigid discipline of the olden time schoolmaster.

We have before us now a letter written by one of these old-time teachers, James Caffrey, addressed to Nathaniel Ellmaker, which reads as follows:

“Sir: I have carefully looked over the plan you have prescribed to me as a Day Book and like it so well that I shall for the future, make use of none other.—I laid a plan for the year 1705* of keeping a Day Book and corrected the same in the year 1705* Both which I have Ime-

* It is obvious that this date is incorrect; it should be a year close to 1790.

diately laid aside When I had procured yours, for without flattery I think it is the best I have seen. I am sir,

Your very Humble Servant,

James Caffrey,

Hollow School, Aug't. 29-1790."

Although the ink is considerably faded, the paper is in good state of preservation, being a good quality of linen paper, unruled. The writing is a good plain hand, rather more angular in style than most of the writing of that period. The letter is now in the possession of J. Watson Ellmaker, of Lancaster City, formerly of Earl township, and a grandson of Nathaniel Ellmaker, to whom the letter is addressed. In a note accompanying the letter, Mr. Ellmaker writes that James Caffrey was the ancestor of the Caffreys still living in the neighborhood. He was married August 17, 1786, to Charlotte Rutter, a granddaughter of Joseph Rutter who built the first Hollow Schoolhouse. Rev. Illing, a Lutheran minister, who held services at the Hollow School at that time, performed the marriage ceremony and received fifteen shillings for his services.

For probably a century, or perhaps longer, the Hollow School was continued at its original site, until the year 1844, when under the free school system, a new frame schoolhouse was erected on the ridge, at the site of the present structure. This was a much finer building than the old log house, and, with its nicely plastered walls and smoothly planed desk and benches, was no doubt regarded a decided improvement over the old rough desks and slab benches. In that Hollow Schoolhouse, the writer spent very nearly all his school-going days, between 1850 and 1860, and Mr. Ellmaker was also one of the more than two score pupils who were on the roll of Hollow School during the same period. There are a number of readers of "The Clarion" who can recall those happy school days, when James McClurg, a fat and jolly Irishman, who always carried a cat-o-nine-tails while on duty in the school room; Wm. F. Johnson, an eccentric Englishman; Elias B. Weaver, subsequently a professor at Millersville State Normal School; Chiron T. Whipple and Emanuel H. Gingrich, were the masters at the Hollow.