

A History Of Lowellville, Ohio

Any history written on any subject should be seen as one person's idea of what happened. Treat any history you read with a degree of skepticism: No one can see or assimilate all perspectives, and every one of us, no matter how inspired, is happily, imperfect. Imperfection when realized is good: one sees that one is incomplete without other people, other outlooks, open-mindedness and a sense of the legitimacy of every other person. My intention in the following was to select pieces of what others have written, have told me, or that I have seen. Please know that no one can demonstrate all that has happened, but I can with love for my community offer these pieces of information. Forgive the omissions; I know I've made many. This is my second attempt at a history of Lowellville, and it still isn't right, but it's getting there. Thank you to all the people who generously contributed ideas, writings, stories, and pictures.

According to John Loth of nearby Edinburg, Pa. the history of Lowellville begins with the Ohio Land Office, which was located on what is now called Washington Street on the south side of Lowellville. To his understanding this would have been the oldest building in Ohio. The Ohio Land Company was a business venture of free enterprise Virginians whose objective was to develop and make profit from this area extending from Little Town (Pittsburgh) to Cleveland to Chicago. Cleveland, at that time, was still a habitat for deer, beaver, and mink and Youngstown's population consisted on an abandoned trapper shanty. The Ohio Land Company's activity aroused the anger of Lord Hillsborough, which lead to the Proclamation of 1763. Lord Hillsborough was the British Colonial Secretary at that time.

During the American Revolution most of the Indian tribes were pro-British, except the Delaware who supported the cause of colonial independence. The Delawares spent a good deal of time in this area and at some excavations of their burial sites, particularly in the Edinburg area, contain colonial jackets, buttons and other artifacts.

In the Treaty of Paris in 1783, the so-called Old Northwest Territory became a part of the United States. Individual states (such as Connecticut) were asked to renounce their claims from ocean to ocean as stated in their original charters and to assign their claims to the national government. Sections of what is now Ohio were assigned to different purposes. The Western Reserve was part of a bargain to compensate soldiers who fought in the Revolution; the Firelands further west was assigned to settlers from Connecticut whose homes were burned by the British during the Revolution. By 1784 nearly all of the tribes had migrated westward to the Scioto, Muskingham and Maumee Valleys. Only a few individual Indians remained to observe the westward movement of white encroachment.

Although it is now remembered as part of a great steel area, Lowellville, lying along the banks of the Mahoning River, close to the Pennsylvania border, was once an American Indian paradise. The Indians, always desiring space and peace for their own culture were pushed farther and farther west, when the first European settlers encroached on this land we call Lowellville. A small tribe of Seneca Indians, forced westward, finally arrived at Pine Hollow, and the early 1760's saw a number of permanent lodges scattered through the hollow. According to their custom it was named Loe-la for a squaw, A-loe-la. This name was said by some to have been adopted by the early Americans and changed to Lowell. Delawares lived here, and A Light In the Forest is one book of many which tells the clashes of culture that occurred in this area. Indian burial grounds in the area just east of Lowellville glimpse at the way of life of these people. A decisive battle between these Indians and the Ligonier, Pa. militia is said to have occurred north of Lowellville in Coitsville; the militia of Ligonier, Pa. killed the tribe of Indians.

According to Clingan Jackson, retired writer for the Youngstown Vindicator and presently writer for the Youngstown-Warren Business Journal, from Edinburg across the hill was the main route of Indians into Ohio. They went from Edinburg to Cleveland. One of the first major tributaries of the Mahoning River where it crosses the Ohio line is Coffee Run. Coffee Run has two subsidiary streams: Tea Run and Whiskey run. If you go up along Whiskey Run you can see the old path the Indians took though the woods.

The Connecticut Western Reserve in 1786 consisted of a 500 mile square. (It was 3,840,000 acres.) The Northeast corner of the state was surveyed into Townships of 5 miles square. The manner by which Connecticut became in possession of the land in question was as follows: King Charles II of England, pursuing the example of his brother kings of granting distant and foreign regions to his subjects, granted to the then colony of Connecticut in 1662, a charter to all lands included within specific bounds. Geographical knowledge of this continent by Europeans was quite limited; therefore conflicting claims were frequently made and often the claims gave rights from sea to sea, although at that time no one had accurate maps of the area in question.

The English-Americans, claiming this land for their own, parcelled out tracts of land for settlement and development. Lowellville, as part of the Connecticut Western Reserve, was settled by first and second generation Europeans who had originally lived in Connecticut. Many of these people were well-educated and monied, accustomed to being able to wield some power. As people of the Puritan work-honor ethic, with English ideals of patriotism, education and religion, they left an indelible mark on the land and all of its people-including those of us who live here today.

The Houston family has been in Coitsville Township of Mahoning County since 1802. Some of the important work in developing the lands of that section in the early days was done by the Houston family. "It is also important to note that some of the fine moral and liberalizing influences of the community proceeded from the people of this name." The old homestead is three quarters of a mile north of Lowellville.

The founder of the family was William Houston, born May 1757 of Scotch-Irish parents, while they were visiting Ireland. He identified himself with the cause of the American patriots in the Revolutionary War, participated in many battles, was taken prisoner by the British and incarcerated on the prison ship, Dutton.

In 1802 he came from Lancaster County, Pa. to Ohio, with his wife Jane, three sons, six daughters and two Negro slaves, Andy and Sally. He was a man of wealth and vision. The slaves soon attained their freedom. Houston bought a farm in Section 9, Coitsville Township, Mahoning County and lived there til his death in 1834. He acquired extensive tracts of land adjoining the state line and extending into Pennsylvania.

He served as Trustee of Coitsville Township, Justice of the Peace, ruling elder of the Seceder Church at Deer Creek.

David, second son of William Houston was born in 1788 and came to Ohio in 1802 with his father. He helped build the log house that was to be the home of the family and to clear the field for cultivation, since the entire country, at that time, was almost unbroken forest. In 1809 he bought the old farm on Government Lot #79 in Poland Township. He became owner of 1000 acres around Lowellville and some of that little city is built on property originally in his possession. His land extended to the Mahoning River.

His great boast was that he had a good orchard of grafted apples (Houston's Big Earlies) in contrast with most of the apples raised in the orchards of the neighborhood from natural or seedling trees.

David Houston was the great-grandfather of Mr. E. H. Yeo, Jr., who presently lives in the house built by David Houston; the house is presently the centerpiece of thousands of acres actively farmed by the Yeo family.

Business and commerce and the ability to sustain a way of life have been motivating forces throughout history, and the reason for society to form in one place or another, and so it was in Lowellville.

The Mahoning River was an avenue of settlement and exploration to the British colonials who paddled their canoes and poled their flat boats up the river toward what is now Youngstown for salt. The exact origin of the name Lowellville is not known.

Some people believe the above Indian derivation. Mahoning is an Indian word meaning "at the licks". The county of Mahoning was organized in 1846. For many years it was called McGill's Mills; then it was called Lowell, and for some time or reason in later years changed to Lowellville. Clingan Jackson says that the area on the "South" side of Lowellville was originally called Petersburg, the area west was McGillsville, the area east Lowell. In 1836 Petersburg, McGillsville, and Lowell united to make Lowellville. In 1936 there was a ceremony here for the 100th anniversary of the founding of Lowellville. Some say the town was named by the Lowellville Milling Company which opened in 1840. The village was laid out about 1836 by a Mr. Wick and others. The first store was opened about the same time by Calvin Bissel. The post-office was established as early as 1840 with S. H. McBride as postmaster. John McGill built the first grist mill; Robert McGill, the first saw mill. John McGill came here ca. 1830, buying up 200 acres facing the Mahoning River. The Hope Flour Mill was established by James Brown about 1857. Since all flour was sold in barrels, James Brown built a cooper shop where he made his own barrels. A tannery was started by Wilson and Crawford about 1844 and was rebuilt two years later by William Moore. Furniture was made by John Reed, the local cabinet maker. James McBride operated a blacksmith shop and made all the bolts used in the Lowellville lock. A planing mill was started by Lewis Drake in 1871, with Mr. Dickson taking over the management of manufacturing all kinds of house finishing lumber.

A drug store was started ca. 1862 on Water St. by J. A. Cowden, later operated by Frank Vaughn, bought in the early 1900's by Sylvester L. Burke, and operated by him and his daughter Nancy Burke (who married Charles Quinn, a mayor of Lowellville). The first decade of the 1900's also saw the W. J. Lomax Department Store.

Circa 1825 it was the custom of the farmers of the region to carry their product to Painsville or some port on the shore of Lake Erie and exchange it for fish and salt-salt being one of the necessities that was hardest to get. David Houston made many of these trips, when great hardships were endured from cold and storms and the very bad roads.

Buying and selling, building, surveying, mining, farming: all manner of business suited to the natural environment arose reasonably in Lowellville.

The advent of the canal was another important episode in the life of our town. In 1825 the General Assembly reacted to public sentiment and adopted legislation providing for the construction of navigable canals in the state. Between 1825 and 1847, the state constructed 813 miles of canals, through a loan of several million dollars from England and issuance of local bonds. The proposed Beaver and Mahoning Canal was revived in 1835 and capital stock of \$1,000,000 was issued. Investors excitement was apparent when all of the stock was subscribed in a short period of time. \$785,000 was taken by Philadelphia merchants.

Youngstown and Pittsburgh took the rest. The canal was opened in 1839. Aside from the fact of its business importance, it was a major factor in increasing the population.

Between 1830 and 1850 Mahoning County reported an increase in population of 20,000 or more. The 1840's marked a distinct second phase in America's Transportation Revolution. Prior to the advent of railroad competition interregional canals proliferated and were economically advantageous. In northeastern Ohio, The Mahoning Canal, which ran through Lowellville, was instrumental in bringing three major commodities into prominence in the canal trade: coal, dairy products, and wool. The Mahoning Canal moved from supplying to Cleveland a half million bushels of coal in 1845 to 3 million bushels in 1851, much of it from the Brier Hill district. This availability of coal allowed Cleveland to become a major fueling for steamboats on Lake Erie.

The Mahoning Canal also stimulated dairy production, carrying large quantities of cheese and butter bound for Cleveland and the Ohio River Valley. In the Connecticut Western Reserve area, the Yankee migration out of Connecticut had already established a specialty in dairy farming. Until the canal was built dairy farmers had to carry cheese by wagon; the canal began a golden age for Western Reserve dairymen. The canal provided to Cleveland twice the butter and six times the cheese it had received prior to 1851. Western Reserve farms also specialized in sheep raising. In 1850 Ohio was first in the Union in wool production. Much of that wool was taken to Cleveland on the Ohio canal for export. The Mahoning Canal provided competition to Cleveland, by connecting Pittsburgh, Pa. to the interior of Ohio. Pittsburgh was "the West's" leading manufacturing center and western terminus for the Pennsylvania Mainline Railroad. The canal reflected the growing farming business from 1840 to 1851: farm implements, hardware, machinery, wheat and flour (In 1839 Ohio's wheat output was first among the American states.).

Lowellville, a canal community, was a mirror image of the agricultural and economic conditions of Mahoning County at that time.

Within the last forty years U. S. Congressmen; including Michael Kirwin and James Traficant have championed the cause of a modern canal in this area.

Lowellville made its industrial debut in 1828. Coal was found in Mt. Nebo and shipped via canal to furnaces in the upper part of the valley. It seemed inevitable that a furnace would be built here because of the ideal location. All the necessary products, iron ore, coal and limestone were locally mined. So in 1844 the "Mary Furnace" was built by Wilkinson, Wilkes and Co. It was the first furnace in the U. S. to melt iron ore with raw coal. This furnace blasted iron for the Civil War, the Spanish American War, World War I, and World War II. The "Mary Furnace" was named for Mary Davis Mayhew. This furnace, according to Clingan Jackson, was the first furnace west of the Allegheny to

manufacture iron from ore and coal. The reason for this was that David Himrod (Himrod Ave.) had a charcoal furnace for iron production in Mercer, Pa. In 1837 there was a strike of charcoal handlers. He didn't know what to do because his furnace would be ruined without keeping heat up. So he threw in Brier Hill Coal and found he didn't need charcoal and from that came the "Mary Furnace". Others developed after that: the Anna Furnace, Struthers, and Himrod Furnaces, up the valley. A lot of industries up the valley contribute their existence to Lowellville. You can trace a lot of the development in the Mahoning Valley to the Capitol (Washington, D. C.). During the Civil War the price of iron shot up because they had to pay heavy prices for iron to keep the charcoal furnaces of Southeastern Ohio going. It allowed these furnaces operating up here, particularly, the "Mary Furnace", to produce iron and, make tremendous profit. The price of iron went up, I believe, eightfold. You can trace some of that capitol into what became Ohio Leather, General Fireproofing, The Ohio Works, and the Youngstown Sheet & Tube Company. The beginning of industrial activity in the Mahoning Valley was very much right here in Lowellville. The Meehan Boiler Works was quite important. It even did work in India, for example.

With the wane of the importance of the Pennsylvania and Ohio Canal, because of more efficient railroads, heavy industry in our area mushroomed. Early Lowellville businesses, ca. 1880 (besides those already mentioned) included dry goods stores, grocery stores, wagon shops, a drug store, an opera house, shoemaker shops, many taverns, harness shops, a hardware store and of course the mills and the furnace. In 1875 the first Bessemer steel in the valley was poured; this changed the basic industry from iron to steel, an industry which has pervaded the employment, education, and economic patterns and life styles of our area to this present day.

According to H. Thomas Hoffman, the Lowellville Bank was incorporated in March of 1906. Business was first conducted in May of 1906 following the appointment of H. D. Smith as President and J. L. Frech and J. E. Vogon as Vice Presidents.

Some of the original organizers were John Frech, W. J. Lomax, H. T. McCarthy, Robert Gray, Jesse Cunningham, A. J. Moore, J. F. Vogon and H. D. Smith.

The original building was completed at the end of 1906 on the same sight that the present building stands. The building was first remodeled in 1918 with rentable offices added. Secondly, with a more modern design in 1962, and expanded again in 1973.

Interest on savings was at 3%. In May of 1906 on one of the very first loans of the Mahoning Valley Distilling Co., whiskey was held in bond as collateral on a \$200.00 loan.

The Bank's assets were \$55,000.00 in 1906. In 1980 the

name of the bank was changed to Western Reserve Bank. Today it has assets of \$60,000,000.00 with three locations: the main branch in Lowellville, the South Avenue branch in Youngstown, and a branch at 80 Boardman-Poland Rd., Boardman.

Presidents to the Present:

1. H. D. Smith
2. L. H. E. Lowry
3. Robert Gray
4. W. J. Lomax
5. H. W. Williams
6. R. A. McBride
7. E. R. Merz
8. J. G. Starkey
9. Richard Elliott

The present Board of Directors are:

Daniel Becker
Richard Elliott
William J. Lomax, Jr.
James Mumaw
Joseph Sontich
Trude Spinosa
David Williams

A glimpse at the lives of specific families allows us to see some of the realities of life in early Lowellville.

The Erskine family, headed by James Erskine born at Paisley, Scotland in 1825, is remembered for the Erskine Limestone Quarry just over the Pennsylvania state line, the Erskine-Guthman Department Store, the Brown-Bonnell Brick Plant, the Erskine Greenhouse, and the Erskine Trucking Company. Besides this, one of his children, Robert was a doctor who served Lowellville for many years. When Dr. Erskine died in 1933, he was a councilman of Lowellville. Clingan Jackson, who had just begun writing for the Vindicator, wrote the obituary and an editorial on him. Jackson was then asked to take Erskine's council seat and was later elected for another term. George Erskine, Robert's brother, owned a truck farm and greenhouse just west of Lowellville and was market master at the Woodland Avenue Market in Youngstown. He was one of a group of gardeners who organized as the Growers Market Company. In 1920 the company purchased three acres on Pyatt Street, which became the Pyatt Street Market. George Erksine married Anne Wright of Lawrence County. One of their seven children was Marcia C., the wife of Arthur Cunningham. Members of the Erskine family served Lowellville as mayor, township clerk, business people involved in mining, brickmaking (firebrick for furnace lining and blast furnaces), school board member, engineer, business organizer, merchant, and farmer.

Marcia C. Erskine Cunningham was wife of Arthur Cunningham and the mother of Ralph, George, Robert, and Murray. The Cunningham family has had a great influence on Lowellville, most recently with the contribution to the village of a gazebo in the

park. It was given by Charlotte Cunningham and her family as a memorial to her husband, Ralph, who died in 1988. The Cunningham-Yeloshin Funeral Home of Lowellville and nearby Poland was founded by Jesse Cunningham in 1896 along with the furniture store. The business was in place at 126 E. Water Street. Marcia Cunningham was instrumental in the starting of the Lowellville Christian Church.

The Erskines invited Harold Bell Wright to be a minister at the Christian Church. Wright worked for several years in the Erskine Quarry and was a prominent citizen of Lowellville for a time. He conducted an art school and was a painter. He lived with the Erskines for a time and was seen last by Lowellville people in a raft going down the Mahoning River with one of the Erskine brothers. According to Clingan Jackson, the next time he was heard of he was in the Ozarks beginning his career as a writer. He was the first writer in the United States to make more than a million dollars from his work. One of his paintings is in the Lowellville, Cunningham Funeral Home. He died in 1944 near San Diego. He wrote steadily from 1903 and some of his most famous books were "The Winning of Barbara Worth" and "When a Man's a Man".

Agostine Vespasian & his wife Antonini Carbon Vespasian and their nine children (Virginia, Maria, Carmen, Louise, Julia, Pasqueline, Adelina, Frank & Carmel) were the first Italian family to move to and settle in Lowellville. In 1893 Mr. & Mrs. Vespasian and daughter Virginia came to America from Riardo, Caserta, Italy to New York. When after four months, their house burned, they asked where might be the best place to make a living; he was told Ohio was the best place. So he simply chose the first little town of Ohio-Lowellville-and got off the train with his family and possessions at the Pennsylvania Station. Their first home was on Railroad St., then McGaffney, and than at Jackson and McGaffney, where he rented for \$10 a month. The nine children were raised there. Mr. Vespasian worked for \$1.00 a day for a while; he became a foreman making \$2.00 a day. This was not enough to make ends meet so his wife Antonini started baking bread for two stores three times a week, making \$1.00 a day (see next paragraph). They, according to Adelina Vespasian DiRusso, made a pretty good living. Mrs. DiRusso says that there were twenty-three saloons in Lowellville at that time and hotels on Water Street; everyone stopped in Lowellville on their way elsewhere. There was skating on the Mahoning River in the winter. Eventually the owners of the "Mary Furnace" built and sponsored a club house on River Road where movies were shown on Friday nights-movies starring Mary Pickford and William S. Heart. There was a playground there, and every day a lady came on the street car to teach crafts-clay work, basket making. "She was a short, chubby lady. We used to meet her at the street car and then go with her to get her tea. We were 8-12 years old. They had a May pole and all kinds of swings and contests. The children were always busy with Miss Morgan. "Mr. Vespasian arranged for his neighbor in Italy to come to this country. She married Peter

Perone, the founder of Mt. Carmel Club. Mr. Vespasian worked for forty-five years at Sharon Steel in Lowellville.

Adelina Vespasian in 1926 married Achille DiRusso who came to this country in 1932, at the age of 15, from Campo Bass, Abruzzi. Their life included many images of Lowellville: working at the steel mill, farming, raising three children, running a successful grocery store, and living through the depression. People who managed acceptably in the depression of the 1930's, did many of the same things the DiRussos did: working one day every three weeks for the county, raising chickens, having a garden (canning hundreds of vegetables each year), digging coal, getting \$2.50 and twenty-five pounds of flour a week from the government allotment. And during that time Achille played the clarinet in the Mt. Carmel band. Today DiRusso Sausage is famous in Ohio and Pennsylvania.

In 1900-1922 in their back yards, the Italian immigrants built ovens. The bake ovens were used for baking bread for their families and boarders, also for various businessmen. Three of the first Italian women, Mrs. A. Vespasian, Mrs. V. Leardi, and Mrs. L. Pisconi when baking bread for businessmen, would use 100 pounds of flour which would produce enough loaves to fill the oven. The loaves were large, round loaves weighing two to four pounds each and retailed at 20 cents per loaf. In addition to bread, the ovens were also used during Easter and Christmas at which time Easter Bread and other fine pastries were made. To heat the ovens, split railroad ties, drift wood picked up along the river bank, and other fallen trees were used. Also, when the women baked bread they made what today has become famous among Americans, the now world-loved "PIZZA".

At the beginning of the 19th Century as the result of the many blast furnaces steel mills, coke plants and ovens having been established between Youngstown, Ohio and Pittsburgh, Pa.; three railroad companies which later became known as the Baltimore and Ohio, Pennsylvania Railroad and the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie R. R. embarked at purchasing and obtaining by eminent domain, property for a right of way on which their tracks would be built, which included Lowellville. In addition to the tracks, the railroads also built passenger depots with freight houses attached. Since in the early days of railroading all train traffic was directed and dispatched by telegraph operators, in addition interlocking plant towers were erected for use in directing trains into passing sidings so that first class passenger trains could overtake trains moved onto the passing siding. Some railroads also erected telegraph towers. For years the railroads maintained passenger train depots to handle commuter train services between Lowellville, Cleveland, and Pittsburgh. The Pennsylvania and the P. & L. E. R. R. also handled U. S. Mail service. For years, the B. & O. R. R. ran its first pullman train, on the rear of its observation platform was an illuminated circular sign reading (Capitol Limited) and the P. & L.E. R.R. handled passenger cars which became sections of the Empire State Limited and 20 Century Limited. For years the

businessmen sponsored an outing to Cedar Point and return at which time many Lowellville citizens traveled by special train on the Pennsylvania Railroad. The Pennsylvania Railroad Depot was the scene at which time relatives of Italian immigrants and friends assembled to be present for the arrivals and departures back to Italy. In addition to the railroads, Lowellville residents had the use of the old Mahoning and Shenango Valley, an electric street car line which ran between New Castle, Pa. and Youngstown, making stops at various spots along the entire route.

Today, if one simply drives from one end of Wood Street to the other, one can see the years-long commitment of the Lowellville people to organized religion.

The western-most of the church structures is the Methodist Church building. In the year 1837 a society was formed and a small Methodist church was erected in the year 1840. This was the first church in Lowellville. This developed under the leadership of J. Bissell. Years later when the church burned, a new one was built about the year 1888. A. J. Billingsley was the first pastor. When an entire city block, which included the church, was completely destroyed, a new church was built in 1918. The present minister is Robert Amey.

The present structure of the First Presbyterian Church of Lowellville is at the corner of Wood and McGill Streets. Historically, the Lowellville church is the product of a very American situation; division on the issue of slavery. Early in the nineteenth century there was strong anti-slavery sentiment among northern churches-particularly the Quakers, whose settlement was very close to Lowellville. Just prior to the Civil War years (1861-1864) many churches divided along the issue of slavery. A pervasive evangelistic spirit strengthened and polarized peoples' ideas. The Free Church people, of various denominations in the area, who differed from their churches on the question of slavery, withdrew from neighboring congregations, and in 1850 succeeded in erecting a church building in Lowellville on the southeast corner of Wood and Second Streets. After the slavery question was settled, most of the Free People returned to the sects to which they originally belonged, leaving an entirely Presbyterian congregation. Today the church is part of the rule of the Eastminster Presbytery. The Reverend Hugh Gunn is the present minister.

The following are excerpts from, "A Historical Sketch of the First Presbyterian Church". First, we'll consider the origin of Lowellville: Gen. Wayne's treaty with the Indians after the battle of Fallen Timbers resulted in 25,000 square miles of land north of the Ohio River being opened to emigration, and, as land could be bought cheaply, many pioneers from Pennsylvania and New England took advantage of the fact. Among these were the McGill brothers from Pennsylvania.

Bridle paths had to be cut from one log cabin to another, through the dense forests inhabited by wild beasts, so that

Lowellville grew slowly and was surpassed by Poland, which had no hills to combat, and by other towns near-by. Some will scoff at the idea of wild animals being abroad near Lowellville, but the Mahoning histories all give an account of the hunter who shot three panthers in one day at McGill's Dam not far from Nebo. Ever since, that gully has been called Panther's Hollow. One skeptical historian ended his account with this, "It may be so or may not be; I tell it was 'twas told to me." And so do we! The P and O canal gave Lowellville an impetus, although before the canal's completion it had been platted as a village (1836) and its name of McGillsville changed to Lowellville, a great industrial city like the latter. In 1840 Lowellville had no Presbyterian church. The religious history of Lowellville is connected with the Mahoning U. P. Church founded in 1798 as an Associate church. From this church came Rev. James Duncan who founded the Associate church of Poland Center (now the Poland Avenue U. P. Church of Struthers); and also, he founded the Associate church at Liberty. Rev. Duncan soon had all three congregations under the jurisdiction of one session composed of the following men: William Gailey, William Houston, Samuel McBride, James McConnell, and Robert Walker.

Rev. Duncan was a notable character of his time. To illustrate the improvement in ministerial ethics since his day: It is said that it was "no uncommon thing for him to stop in the middle of his sermon and take a bite from his plug, giving it a twist with his hand, and, thus refreshed, to complete his preaching."

Residents of Mahoning valley and of Poland Township worshipped in these churches and in the Poland Presbyterian Church established in 1802, but they found it increasingly difficult. The people living on the north side of the Mahoning River had to ford it in order to attend their place of worship. We read of the infant Margaret Lowry (great-aunt of the late L. H. E. Lowry of the church) being swept, due to a horse's stumbling, from her father's arms in mid-river, carried down the Mahoning and deposited amidst some brush from whence she was extricated like a female Moses, not much the worse for her experience. And too, during Rev. Duncan's pastorate, the congregation having no church building worshipped in the homes of the people in the winter and sat on logs amidst the trees in summer. If lengthy sermons caused sleepiness they could only fall from the log to the ground, being more fortunate than Eutychus, who being weary from St. Paul's long preaching had a fall from the 'third loft' to the earth!

The congregation thought that the difficulties and inconveniences resulting from attending these churches were too many and wished to establish a more convenient meeting place, so that, when dissention arose in these churches over negro slavery, many of the opposers seceded. The Poland township seceders held their first meeting in 1848 in the Lowellville school house on Jackson Street. This was the beginning of the church in Lowellville. Later the meetings were held in Liggett's warehouse

on Canal Street. In 1849 the church was formally organized as the Lowellville Free Presbyterian Church with Rev. John Whitham as first pastor. Leading members at the time of formation were Elias King, James S. Moore, and the four Johns: McFarland, Hunter, Porter, and Book. These early fathers of the church were of Scotch origin, men of intelligence and sense and occupied a large place in the History of Mahoning County.

In Rev., Whitham's pastorate the first church building was raised in 1850 at the corner of Second and Wood Streets. Rev. Whitham was succeeded by Revs. Bushnell, Bigham and McElheny, consecutively, as Stated Supplies. Little is known about these early pastors excepting the fact that Whitham, Bushnell and Bigham became U. P. ministers. The McFarland brothers, David Arrel, William Watson, John Hunter, and the Wright brothers were among the prominent abolitionists in the vicinity who gave adherence and support to this Free Church at that time. The Wright brothers used their residence as an "Underground Station" for fleeing slaves and would pass them on to the next station until they at last reached Canada and freedom. The barn which they also used as an underground station is still standing on the Wright farm, a monument to abolition principles. At the close of the Civil War and the abolition of slaves (1865) the Free Church was disbanded and most of the congregation united with the New School Branch of the Presbyterian Church which was formed with J. Franklin Hill as Stated Supply. James Hill, his son, was the first young man from the church to embrace the ministry as a profession. Rev. Johnson was pastor for a short time as Stated Supply. Then alas! All religious services ceased and the church became dormant for a while. During this lethargic period a Union Sunday School was conducted by Messrs. Darrow, Ferree, and Weller—all influential men in the church. In 1876 the church was reorganized with Rev. J. C. Kreuzsch as Stated Supply for Lowellville, Coitsville and Hopewell churches.

Succeeding ministers were Rev. J. H. Jones (1882), Rev. Robert Stranahan (1889), and the Rev. Elmer E. Patterson (1894).

We wish to mention the intelligent, God-fearing men who served as its Elders and Trustees in its early history. The record book names the following: Messrs. Arrel, Book, Clark, Davis, Houston, King Lomax, McCombs, McFarland, McClelland, Moore, Montgomery, Porter, James and David Pence, Robinson, Smith, Truesdale, and Weller. The first Corporate Board of Trustees was chosen in 1897 and consisted of the following: Miss Mary Arrel, Mrs. Lovinah Davidson, Mrs. Andrew Houston, David A. Pence, and John R. Ross.

Rev. Harvey's successful pastorate ended with his resignation in 1903. At that time the congregation numbered 97 persons. Rev. J. C. Graham succeeded Rev. Harvey and preached faithfully until 1906, when Rev. W. D. Harrell became pastor. He remained until 1909. Rev. Harrell was folled by Rev. J. M. Kelley, who was Stated Supply until 1911. During his pastorate the present parsonage was erected on a lot presented by the late

Mrs. Mary Jane Cowden Freely. The cost of constructing the parsonage was about \$3600.00.

Rev. Robert Humphries was called to the church in 1912. In 1917 a disastrous fire, origin unknown, destroyed the church and the Methodist church standing side by side. Not much of account was saved. With characteristic zeal, the congregation appointed a committee to select a site for a new church. They selected the site at the corner of Wood and McGill Streets. The new church was completed in 1919. This beautiful structure is built of native limestone from the Arrel Quarry presented by the Misses Arrel. The church was finished at the stated time at a cost (excluding the stone) of \$15,000.00 including lot.

Dr. P. B. H. Smith was active in securing pledges for the Pipe Organ. He and his committee were so successful that the organ was ready for use at the Sunrise Service on Easter Day 1927. On March 1, 1919 the active pastorate of Rev. Humphries ended. During his ministry the church membership had increased to 200 members.

Rev. J. K. Boston was extended a call to the church in 1919. Rev. H. Lewis Meyer accepted a call to serve in 1924. This very active and vigorous man of God was always willing and anxious to incite the people to action and no longer had the congregation time or opportunity to go "dormat". Rev. Meyer's pastorate ended in 1944. Rev. David King Kerr accepted a call to the church and was installed as pastor Feb. 25, 1945. During this ministry the membership had increased to about 450 members.

Since the installation of the pipe organ the organists have been: James Badal, Lilliam Hailstone, Samuel Badal, Jr. Hiram Baird, Alice Ricksecker, Miss Dolores Burns (Mrs. Wm Quinn), Mrs. Ralph Freed, Jr. and Sally Meehan. The Senior Choir, The Junior Choir, and The Cherub Choir were under the direction of Mrs. D. L. Metzger and contributed actively and richly to the life of the church. Her daughter-in-law, Debbie Metzger has the position today.

Other ministers included Robert Gillogoly, Scott Cupp and Carol Hornbeck served the church.

The Lowellville Christian Church, at the corner of First and Woods Streets, was constructed in 1888. A congregation was organized by the James Erskine family as early as 1876 under the evangelistic ministry of Reverend Beaulieu, with twenty-seven charter members. It was remodeled in 1922 and in 1964. Harold Bell Wright, author of *The Calling of Dan Mathews* and many other novels, was one of its members. The Reverend Owen D. Fitch has been pastor for the past forty-three years. Other ministers were; Messrs Barnes, Allen, and Huber.

According to the church history of Mrs. Mary Moore, the church celebrated its centennial in 1988. The church is actively working toward future development, both in its ministry and its

physical plant. Most recently, a parking lot and a foyer have been added along with a facade renovation.

Eastern-most is the Roman Catholic church, Our Lady of the Holy Rosary. Its congregation was established in 1867 as a mission church by The Reverend John Begel, founder and chaplain of the then-just-settled congregation of French nuns at Villa Maria, Pa. The first church for this congregation was erected ca. 1888 through efforts headed by The Reverend Nicholas Franche. About twenty families comprised the then mostly Scotch-Irish immigrant population who had come to work on new railroads, escaping the famine in their home countries. In the 1890's there was a major influx of Italian immigrants, many of whom worked the mills and quarries, peopled the town and dramatically expanded the congregation. The church building was expanded to meet this need. That building was razed in July, 1968, and the present structure was dedicated November 1, 1969 under the leadership of the Reverend William J. Witt. The Reverend Ed Gretchko is the present pastor.

Other churches presently part of the community are the Jehovah's Witnesses, whose Kingdom Hall is on W. Liberty at the beginning of the bike path, and the Assembly of God congregation whose new church is in Coitsville on Route 422.

Besides the churches, the school has been the major stabilizing force in Lowellville, involving the total community in one way or another. The first school was located at Stop 24 in West Lowellville. It was made of logs. Later schools were at the foot of Bedford Hill, and at the former site of the Cunningham Furniture Co. (First & Water). A four-room building was built on the present (McGill, Grant, and Walnut Sts.), and burned in 1904. An eight-room building was erected, with two additions added. The present South Side School was built to replace the old one. Lowellville High School, founded in 1876, is one of the oldest high schools in northeastern Ohio.

According to a booklet loaned to me by Raymond Curry Sr., Manual of Public Schools, Lowellville, Ohio, 1907-1908, those who taught in the first Lowellville School (1833 at Stop 24) received the munificent salary of five dollars per month and the privilege of "boarding around." The teaching staff of 1907-08 were Helem James, Mary Cowden, Gertrude Reese, Ibbie Dickson (she was one of two people in the first L. H. S. graduating class of 1885), Edyth Ferguson, Margaret McCabe. According to policy during that school year, no home study was required or expected of pupils during the first three years of school. As far as directives on reading, teachers were admonished that there are three purposes in reading for pupils: a) Get the thought, b) Hold the thought, c) Give the thought.

The course of study dictated the use of Cyr's Readers, Penniman's Practical Speller, Harvey's Grammar, Walsh's Arithmetic, Steadman's Writing, and during the once-a-week 15 minute physiology-hygiene class, grades 1 through 4, children were

to learn about health and cleanliness and temperance. "Students should be seated so that their feet rest upon the floor."

And of course in high school, composition was required for four years. It was to consist in the study of Description, Narration, Exposition, and Argument.

In 1885 the first school savings bank in America was established in the schools of Long Island City. In 1904 Supt. E. L. Rickert introduced the savings bank into Lowellville Schools. In 1908 \$834.47 deposited by 112 investors was transferred to the Lowellville Savings and Banking Co. from Pittsburgh Bank for savings.

1907-08 was a time in which phone numbers had two digits, and in which Lowellville Telephone Central was given instructions not to call the school buildings during the time school is in session.

The following is a list of Lowellville alumni from 1885 through 1900 (A class was not graduated every year).

Class of 1885: IBBIE DICKS
WILLIAM L. ERSKINE

1892: OLA NELSON SHONTZ
ESTELLA JUSTICE DICKSON

1898: EMA SERONSEY
CHAUNCEY FENTON
IDAH PETTIGREW
CLIFFORD BAKER
GEORGE BATTEIGER
DALE MOLLENKOFF

1900: ANNA JOHNSTON HOGUE
MARIAN MACNEIL
AUDLEY LINDSAY
THOMAS VARLEY
RALPH WYMER
DANIEL BAKER

In 1852 David Houston assisted in the founding of Westminster College at New Wilmington, Pennsylvania, and his children were among the earliest students there. He offered the trustees of that institution a tract of land north of Lowellville and extending to the borough limits, but his offer was refused because of the presence of saloons in Lowellville.

Lowellville's close proximity to the Greater Youngstown area provides its residents and businesses excellent commercial and industrial services. Lowellville has direct access to Youngstown via S.R. 289 and easy access to U.S. 224 and I-680 which, in turn, provides access to S.R. 11, I-80, I-76 and the Beaver Valley Expressway. Rail service is provided by the Conrail, Chessie, Pittsburgh and Lake Erie Railroads. Lowellville

residents enjoy a fine public school system supplemented by the Mahoning County Joint Vocational School. Its best products have enriched and continue to enrich the storehouse of capable, talented, dedicated and proud people, which is the present area of Lowellville. Youngstown State University, located six miles northwest, offers undergraduate and graduate studies in the arts, sciences and engineering. It has also developed associate degree programs in most technical fields.

Through the philanthropic generosity of John Stavich and the Stavich family of Struthers, a bike path exists approximately along the former street car path, beginning just west of Lowellville on Route 289, and terminating twelve miles east in New Castle. The effort was pioneered by the Lowellville Business Association.

The natural beauty of the heavily wooded hillsides that extend down to the Mahoning River provides a balance to the industrial influence of the valley. Residents can enjoy picnicking, hiking and fishing in a natural surrounding within minutes of their homes or jobs.

Today Lowellville's gastronomic delights draw people into town. Carchedi's Restaurant on W. Water St. founded in November 1963 by Irma and Joseph Carchedi is operated today by Irma Carchedi. The restaurant is known by people far and wide as a place to get great Italian food. Geno's Restaurant on E. Water St. has also enjoyed great success and patronage. The Village Cafe and Melillo's Tavern have long been part of the Village. Ross' Market and Giovanni's gas/service station on Wood St. also serve the Village. Newly established consumer businesses include King's II Bakery, Eugene's Pizza, Sweet 'N Natural Bakery, The Water Street Wash, Turn of the Century Gift Shop and Bill Robb's Ice Cream and Pine Hollow Water stores. Of a commercial nature the following businesses have been of great benefit to Lowellville: Rex Machine Co., Falcon Foundry, Aluminum Color Industries, Mahoning Valley Pattern Works, Insulated Glass Specialties, Conti Plumbing, and Yeo Farms.

This accounting of Lowellville's origins and its people has been compiled from many sources contributed most generously by the people of Lowellville and people whose interests and relatives have been part of Lowellville. These are a few of those people.

Charlotte Cunningham, Poland, Ohio
Steve Conti, Lowellville
Adelina DiRusso, Lowellville
Mr. Yeo, Lowellville
Harry McBride, Lowellville
Sherry Gizzi, Lowellville
Mrs. Claudia Pickens, Gahanna, Ohio
L. Deonofrio
Al Russo, Lowellville
Gertrude Struble, Poland, Ohio
Derek Donatelli, Lowellville

A paragraph about my recently deceased husband, Lawrence Leo Meehan Jr. When I asked his friend, John Miklandric, who said the eulogy at the grave, if he knew some phrase that Larry used that said a lot about him, he laughed. He said all he could think of was Larry saying, "The closer to the falls you get, the harder you paddle." He certainly did paddle. In 1988 Larry called Jan Hudach, an artist for the Youngstown-Warren Business Journal, to do a painting of his vision of the Water Street/River Front development. It has been shown in the Western Reserve Bank, in Geno's Restaurant, and in several places in town. It has become our vision. Some of the idea of restoration has already taken place. With the co-operation of Mayor Alfred Russo and council, local business people, County Commissioners Leonard Yurcho, Thomas Carney and John Palermo, the Western Reserve Bank, Bill Malson of Mosure & Syrakis, architect David Van Galen and County Program Administrator, Ralph Menzer, the project began, received loan funding, was developed, argued over and Phase I completed. Money was spent on this investment, and contracts signed. Phase I included architectural and historical analysis, purchase and unfurling of awnings, exterior building repairs, painting, roofing, acid washing, planting, cement work, changes in traffic flow, fountains, a newly painted "Mail Pouch" sign, benches, a new American Legion Memorial, and a gazebo in honor of Ralph Cunningham. None of this was here two years ago. This doesn't happen by just thinking about it. Larry made it happen. He paddled hard before the falls. He loved Lowellville and its people and knew they deserved the best he could give. He was 46.

Respectfully,
Sarah (Sally) Anne Crespy Meehan
4 E. Wood Street
Lowellville