

## HISTORICAL SKETCH OF ASHLAND COUNTY

Ashland County, in the north central part of Ohio, is on the dividing ridge, or watershed, between Lake Erie and the Ohio River. Neighboring counties are Huron and Lorain on the north, Medina, Wayne and Holmes on the east, Holmes and Knox on the south, and Richland and Huron on the west. Ashland is a narrow county, only 15 miles wide, but its extreme length from north to south is slightly more than 35 miles. A population of 52,523, mostly descendants of people from Pennsylvania, inhabit the 421 square mile area. Ashland County honors Henry Clay by being named for his home in Lexington, Kentucky.

The land is divided into two principal slopes or watersheds by a range of uplands, extending into a northeasterly direction across the southern part of Clear Creek Township and the northern part of Orange and Jackson Townships. This ridge separates the streams flowing south to the Muskingum River and north to Lake Erie.

All of Ashland County was covered by glaciers. The line dividing the glacial plain from the glacial plateau runs east and west through the county. The surface in the southern part is hilly and rugged, in the northern, level to gently rolling. The Mohican River enters the county at Five Points and crosses Green and Hanover Townships to enter Holmes County. Most of the county is drained into this stream or one of its branches. Important ones, such as Black, Jerome, Muddy and Lake Fork, are fed by a number of small watercourses like Katotawa and Honey Creek. South of the divide the uplands slope gently to the south and provide excellent agricultural lands. Good farm lands are found along the streams in most of the western slopes of the county where the soils are clay, second bottom loam and rich alluvium. The middle and eastern ranges are much the same, except in Hanover Township. There the upland is more rugged, sandy and less productive. North of the dividing range, the land dips slightly to the north and has a stiff clay soil, ideal for pastures. This is a cattle-raising section.

Ashland County has five natural lakes; Spring Lake, Savannah Lake, Round Lake, Metcalf Lake and a portion of Long Lake. These lakes cover an area of 82 acres. Portions of two dams are located in Ashland County. Pleasant Hill Dam, containing 850 acres and Charles Mill Dam, containing 1350 acres with approximately one half of the area of these two dams lying within the county. Farm ponds cover several hundred acres in the county.

In the southern part of Ashland County is a forest section of approximately 10,000 acres, one of the finest reproducing timber lands in Ohio. The oak, pine, cedar, and hemlock trees which are permitted to reach maturity before being cut, produce top quality commercial lumber. This is a practical conservation policy.

The county is limited in its subsoil production. A narrow ridge of coal lies along the south line of Hanover Township. The Ohio gas belt runs through the county, which is practically exhausted and is now a principal storage field.

Geologically, Ashland County evidences an early emergence from prehistoric seas. Its soils and hills are probably older than the coal and limestone ages.

If these periods existed within the county, evidences of them were erased by the glaciers, or by the great northern seas which at one time flowed through the Ohio and Mississippi River valleys. That the great seas were here is proved by large deposits of ancient shells on the surface. The rock structure of the county is simple. The formations are of sandstone, freestone, fire clay and shale. They are an eastern continuation of those in Richland County. The freestone rocks are in strata, their beds ranging in thickness from three to twenty feet. The sandstone formation cropped out at a later period, and some is still found on the high land east of Ashland, commencing at Roseberry's Hill and extending south to Lake Township; also, on the elevated track of land running from Milton to Hanover Township. There were large quantities of this rock and it provided durable material for walls, bridges and buildings. The supply has been exhausted for commercial use.

The earliest known inhabitants of the region now comprising Ashland County inhabited the area soon after the glacier receded. Some were mound-building Indians, who left earthworks as records of their existence. In the northern section is a circular embankment, 2145 feet in circumference and containing an area of approximately eight acres. This formation, now known as Gamble's Fort, is covered with trees which are equal in size to the growth in adjacent forests. In addition, there are approximately 35 other earthworks in the county.

Successors to the mound builders were the American Indians. The tribes inhabiting this territory were the Wyandot, Erie, Mohican, and Delaware. The Delaware built a village near the Mohican River, prior to 1783, and named it Helltown. This tribe founded Greentown in 1783, aided by Thomas Green, a New England Tory. It flourished until destroyed by American Militia during the War of 1812. Many of the Helltown residents were Christians, having been converted by the Moravian missionaries, and when news reached them of the massacre of some of their Moravian Brethren at Gnadenhutten, they abandoned their town.

Another large Indian village, established near the present site of Jeromesville by Mingoos under leadership of Chief Mohican John, became known as Mohican Johnstown. The tribe also established the village of Mingo Cabins a mile northeast, on the east bank of Jerome Fork. These villages were visited by Major Robert Rogers and his famous Rangers in 1761.

The Greenville Treaty in 1795 left the Indians with northeastern Ohio, including what is now Ashland County as a hunting ground. They reigned supreme over the territory until 1805 when the white settlement began. When white men began to infiltrate, the red man's hostility was aroused toward the invaders of their domain. This situation was aggravated by the War of 1812 when Great Britain encouraged Indian atrocities in her fight with America. Massacres were committed in and around Greentown, which was definitely pro-British. The commander of the American troops at Mansfield received

orders to evict the inhabitants of the village before more outrages were committed. Consequently the Mingoies abandoned their homes under escort of soldiers. Their village was set afire.

About five miles north of Greentown lived the Zinner (Seymour) family and their neighbor, a German named Martin Ruggner. A party of Mingoies cruelly massacred Ruffner and the members of the Zimmer family, who were in the cabin. This act aroused the entire countryside; all outlying districts were warned to seek protection within the block house. After a few days, James Copus, another early settler, returned from the block house with his wife, their seven children, and a protective detail of nine soldiers. Early on September 15, 1812, while the family prepared breakfast and the soldiers washed at a nearby spring, a band of Indians attempted to storm the cabin. Copus and several soldiers were killed, but after five hours of relentless fighting, the red men withdrew. Seventy years after this affray, September 15, 1882, two monuments were dedicated on the site of the massacre.

Meanwhile, people were settling permanently in Ashland County. One of the first was Alexander Finley, who in 1790, came to what is now known as Tylertown, about five miles north of Loudonville. In 1810, James Loudon Priest, of Crawford County, Pennsylvania, settled with his family on the banks of Lake Fork. Priest and Stephen Butler platted the village of Loudonville in 1814. In that year Vachel Matcalf and Amos Norris arrived in what is now Orange Township and bought land adjoining the present village of Nankin. They were probably the first settlers of the township. Many other pioneers cleared land of the Black Fork of the Mohican, among them being Nathan Odell, Joshua Cram and John Newell.

At the end of the War for Independence, several states continued to claim titles to territory north and west of the Ohio River. Virginia and Connecticut acquired their titles by colonial charters. In 1784 Congress asked the states having territorial claims in the Northwest to cede all lands to the national government as an aid in the payment of debts incurred during the Revolution. Virginia relinquished her claims in that year and Connecticut tendered all her territory except 12 counties in northeastern Ohio which came to be called the Connecticut Reserve. All the territory now comprising Ashland County was included in the claims of Virginia except Troy, Sullivan and Ruggles Townships which were part of the Connecticut Reserve.

Prior to 1805, all territory of present-day Ashland County was used by the Indians as free hunting ground. Part of the area remained in their possession until 1818, when it was purchased by the United States Land Office at Wooster, Ohio. In 1796 it became a part of what is now Wayne County, Michigan, with its seat of justice at Detroit. Twelve years later various sections of Ashland Territory were made a part of Knox County with the seat of government at Mt. Vernon. The following year Huron County was formed, with jurisdiction over part of what is now Ashland. In 1822 Lorain County was formed and in five years it annexed two future Ashland Townships.

On February 24, 1846, the general assembly passed a law creating Ashland County. Vermillion, Montgomery, Orange, Green, Hanover, parts of Monroe, Mifflin and Clear Fork Townships were taken from Richland County; Jackson, Perry, Mohican and Lake from Wayne County; Sullivan and Troy from Lorain County and Ruggles from Huron County. The last three townships belonged to the Western Reserve, and their inclusion in Ashland County was bitterly opposed as the “rape of the Firelands.”

Upon agreement to donate \$5,000 and suitable land for public buildings, the village of Ashland was selected as the Ashland County seat in April 1846. It received 680 more votes than Hayesville, which was the nearest rival. On April 17, 1846, the first county election was held. Josiah Thomas of Orange Township, Edward S. Hibbard of Hanover Township and Abmer Grist of Ruggles Township were elected as the first board of commissioners. The first grand jury, convened May, 1846, included Hugh McGuire, Daniel Carter, Sr., George Buchanan, Christopher Mykrantz, Christian Miller, Thomas Smith, Samuel Burns, Daniel Campbell, Andres Mason, Michael Myers, John Smurr, George McConnell, James Boots, Michael Riddle and John Naylor.

Ashland County men distinguished themselves admirably during the Civil War. An entire unit, later known as Company B, 16<sup>th</sup> Ohio, was organized in answer to President Lincoln’s first call for 12,357 men from Ohio. Lorain Andrews, of Ashland, was said to be the first Ohio volunteer for the Union Army.

Agriculture has remained the primary industry of Ashland County since the days of the earliest settlements. Corn, wheat, oats, potatoes and hay were the major crops grown by the pioneers. About 1817, the production of maple sugar attained large proportions. Prices were low, but the great quantities made possible a fair profit. Jonas Crouse, Abraham Huffman, and Elisha Chilcote each produced from 1800 to 2500 pounds annually.

Farming expanded in Ashland County until the 1930’s when prices and the amount of crops raised decreased considerably. In 1920 the county had 2512 farms with total value, including buildings, of \$22,624,276. Among crops grown were wheat, 465,322 bushels; barley, 2812 bushels; buckwheat, 1259 bushels; and potatoes, 75,420 bushels. By 1930 the number of farms had dropped to 2143 with a total value of \$13,333,032. In that year 459,503 bushels of wheat, 2786 bushels of barley, 7202 bushels of buckwheat and 108,172 bushels of potatoes were harvested. In 1940 the figures were wheat, 459,602 bushels; barley, 1999 bushels; buckwheat, 1900 bushels; and potatoes, 65,007 bushels. In that year there were 2336 farms with a total value of \$12,191,434.

Agriculture is still an important part of the economy in Ashland County. In 1969, the gross farm income was \$14,307,595. Over 80 percent of this gross is derived from livestock and livestock products.

There are now 1476 farms with an average size of 139 acres. Of the 271,104 acres in the county, 75.7 percent, or 205,226 acres, are still in farms. The acreage in farms divided up is as follows: cropland 141,178; pasture 22,516; woodland 34,263; and miscellaneous 29,814.

Recent years have seen a rather distinct surge in the prominence of dairy farming. In 1940 there were about 2,000 dairy cows. Today there are 11,129. Dairy products now account for 42 per cent of the farm income. Other livestock with some economic importance include: beef, hogs, poultry and sheep.

The acreage of crops is determined to a large extent by the needs or suitability of the land. The major crops are: corn, hay, wheat, oats, and soybeans. Small acreages are devoted to barley, potatoes, rye, spelts, and sorghum. Crops sold for only 25 per cent of the income – most is fed to livestock. There is some commercial production of fruits and vegetables.

Lack of a favorable water route minimized the profit obtained from industry and agriculture in early Ashland County. The only method of transportation was by large wagons over the road from Wooster to Mansfield, from Mt. Vernon to Huron, Huron to Lake Erie and Mansfield to Ashland. Around 1817, flatboats were built at Perrysville and Loudonville to be sent down the Mohican River and on to New Orleans. Water transportation did not become readily accessible, however, until the building of the Ohio and Erie Canals. Farmers were able to ship their produce down the Mohican River to Brinkhaven, the terminal of a lateral connection with the main canal.

The first railroad in Ashland County was built in 1849. It extended from Mansfield through Perrysville and Loudonville to Wooster. The Atlantic and Great Western, now known as the Erie-Lackawana, was built through the county in 1864. It made Ashland an important pioneer railroad center. There are three railroad companies now operating within Ashland County, the Penn-Central, running across the southern part of the county; the Erie-Lackawana, routed across the center part; and the Baltimore and Ohio, which crosses the northern section.

The manufacturing centers of Ashland County are Ashland and Loudonville. In 1972, 60 diversified industries and manufacturers employed over 6,000 workers. Miscellaneous retail and business establishments employed several thousand more. The City of Ashland, founded in 1815 as Uniontown, is laid out on the Main Street plan with residential streets running to the outskirts at right angles. It is on the New York to Chicago line of the Erie-Lackawana Railroad and is served by bus line. Interstate 71 has an interchange within three miles of the City of Ashland. U.S. Highway 250 runs through the city, as do state routes 58, 60, 96, and 511. Ashland's largest industry is the F.E. Myers & Bros. Company, which manufactures water systems, pumps, hand and power sprayers. Other industries include: manufacturers of druggist and surgical rubber goods; foam rubber products; malleable iron pipe fittings; castings; copper fittings; letterpress and offset printing; toy balloons and rubber toys; livestock and poultry health products; leather sportswear; precious metal plating; vaults; latex compounding; bakery

products; printing plates; modular housing and precision bearing products. Ashland is known as "The Balloon Capital of the World".

Loudonville, on the Mohican River, was founded in 1814 by James Loudon Priest. It is platted similarly to Ashland. Each year thousands of tourists are attracted here because of near-by Mohican State Forest Park and Pleasant Hill Dam, an Ohio Flood Control project.

With the founding of manufacturing plants and the general development in industry, banking institutions were established in Ashland County. Their expansion parallels that of industry. Following the President's bank holiday of 1933, the banks of Ashland, as in other counties, were strengthened by consolidation. There are now four national and four state banks in the county. Ashland is the home of the national banks: National City; First Merit; Bank One; and Huntington. The four state banks are Wayne Savings, Sutton, and Farmer's State Bank located in Ashland and The Farmer's State Bank located in Loudonville.

Pioneer Ashland County Schools were supported almost entirely by subscriptions among the parents. Settlers were not numerous enough to make possible any considerable remuneration, consequently teachers were underpaid and schools lacked proper equipment. At first a few pupils gathered in the cabin of an interested pioneer for instruction by voluntary teachers. Most of these were women from Pennsylvania, New York and Maryland. The first schoolhouses made of round logs, were erected by citizens of the district. Some of the earliest teachers were Mrs. John Coulter, Mrs. Patrick Elliot, Sage Kellogg and Robert Nelson. Schools of the county are now divided into two districts. Hillsdale in the south and Mapleton in the north part of the county. This does not include Ashland and Loudonville. Loudonville is an exempted village district and Ashland is a city district.

Among the institutions of northern Ohio devoted to higher education is Ashland College. Founded as the Ashland Academy in 1841, it flourished under the direction of the Reverend Robert Fulton, Professor L. Andrews, and Reverend Samuel Fulton. The Academy has a splendid reputation and students from every part of the state attended. When the union school systems was adopted for the county in 1850, the academy grounds and buildings were purchased by the county and merged with the new school system. The Ashland College was chartered in 1878 by authority of the German Baptist Brethren. At the end of 10 years, the institution was bought by the progressive branch of the church and reorganized and incorporated as Ashland University, with the privilege of conferring university degrees. In the Articles of Incorporation for Ashland College, it states: "To authorize Ashland University to use the word college interchangeably with the word university in its corporate name."

Degrees conferred by the liberal arts college are: Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Fine Arts, Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Science in Education, Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and Bachelor of Music. The degree of Bachelor of Divinity is conferred by the Ashland Theological Seminary.

The campus now has 34 buildings on 70 acres with a valuation of 34 million and had an enrollment of 2360 students in 1972.

Ashland County has many of the recognized religious denominations. First to be established were the First Methodists, who built a church in 1823. The church of Christ was organized in 1836; Trinity Lutheran, 1839; First Presbyterian, 1841; St. Edwards Roman Catholic, 1871; Salvation Army, 1885; Congregational, 1889; Church of the Brethren, 1914; First Church of Christ, Scientific, 1920; Church of the Nazarene, 1935; Church of God, 1938; Calvary Church, 1939 and St. Matthews Episcopal, 1957. Other denominations throughout the county are the Brethren Conservative Dunkards, Disciples of Christ, Evangelical Synod of North America, United Lutherans Joint Synod of Ohio and Northern Baptist. Today there are 32 churches located in the city of Ashland and several more located in other sections of the county to care for the religious needs of the people.

There are several interesting historical sites within the county. In the city of Ashland are the Hubbard Homestead, once a noted station on the Underground Railroad, and the Johnny Appleseed monument. The small stones in this monument were collected by Ashland County School children, whose nickels also paid for its erection.

Ashland County has produced many famous people; The Studebakers of Pleasant Ridge, founders of the great automobile factory bearing their name; Perry Township was the home of William B. Allison, United States Senator from Iowa and Edmund G. Ross, Senator from Kansas. Charles F. Kettering, the noted inventor and scientist, was a former native of the county. Doctor Mary Fulton, pioneer missionary in China, Dr. Joseph E. Stubbs, noted education and one time president of Nevada State University, and Peter S. Grosscup, United States Circuit Court Judge, were also former citizens of Ashland County.