

Introduction

As this SHORT HISTORY OF LEESBURG has been out of print for many years, the Leesburg, Ohio Bicentennial Committee is endeavoring to get it back into circulation. We are therefore reprinting the original booklet compiled by J. Lester Seel of Hillsboro, Ohio without any changes – except for the cover. We are adding the official Leesburg Bicentennial emblem to the front cover.

As nearly as can be determined, the booklet was written about 30 years ago – in the mid 1940's.

We trust that as we celebrate the 200th Birthday of the United States of America, this booklet will help us remember the 174 years that the white man has been living in the Leesburg area.

THE LEESBURG BICENTENNIAL COMMITTEE:

Leesburg, Ohio 45135

July 1975

SHORT HISTORY OF LEESBURG

FORWARD

We merely hope, in publishing this little booklet, to provide a means of preserving a few more or less related items of interest to the residents of Leesburg.

We have sincerely endeavored to be accurate in compiling this material. Even so, there is always the possibility of error. In this matter we crave your indulgence.

The Compiler:

J. Lester Seel

Hillsboro, Ohio

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The first Quakers, or Friends, as we know them now, held meetings late in 1802. Bathsheba Lupton is accredited with being the founder of the meetings here. Jacob Jackson was their first minister. Mildred Ratcliffe, the famous Quakeress who later traveled all over the United States, succeeded Jackson. She left in 1816, finally dying in Brownsville, PA.

Other early preachers of the Friends faith were: Elger Brown, Haziah Green, Louise Ladd, William Thornburg, Joel Wright, etc...

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Hardins Creek was named after Col. Hardin of Virginia

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Lees Creek was named after one of Massie's assistants, who received land up the creek for his services.

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Bridgewater was named by Jesse Barrett for his assistance in surveying.

Harrison Ratcliffe is thought by some to be the first postmaster here. It is known definitely that Samuel Sanders was commissioned in 1816, and that he was obliged to keep the "office" in a drawer under a work bench in his cabinet shop. Later postmasters included Rebecca Sanders, Edwin Bruce, John Hewett, Jarred Johnson, R. B. Wailey, M. N. Poff, Silas Irions, C. M. Bentley, Christian Stevens, J. M. Keen, Jacob Hilliard and J. R. Ladd.

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The Methodists began in Leesburg proper in 1852. Matthias H. Cherry bought the plot of ground for the new church.

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The Seventh-Day Advent church was organized in 1879 – just after a protracted meeting. They recently sold their building to the Pilgrim Holiness congregation which is relatively new here.

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The Leesburg Bank was established December 14, 1876, as a branch of the Vienna Bank. Its officers were E. P. Johnson, President; M. Redkey, Cashier; John M. Hussey, Stephen Hussey, Charles Good, E. M. Woodbury, E. P. Johnson, E. Arthur, Ellis Good and J. H. Guthrie, Directors.

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Leopold Horst was probably the most painstaking Leesburg historian. He was in the habit of jotting down the reminiscences of the pioneer, and so saved many interesting facts from oblivion.

Mr. Horst was a man of fine culture, exemplary character, and of high worth as a citizen. He was born in Berlin, Prussia, December 21, 1817, and reared in the city of Potsdam, coming to Leesburg in 1859.

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Wm. Lupton built a sawmill on Lees Creek in 1805, buying property from Mr. Pope.

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Rebecca Johnson, Nee Walter, was the first to die so far as we can learn. She died in child-birth in the year following her marriage. A Mrs. Ballard died about the same time.

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The Baptists organized in 1841 thru the efforts of two exhorters, Samuel Mains & Wm. Shafford, from Greenfield. These men preached in an old bar-room.

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The first marriage in the township was that of Enos Baldwin and Sarah Hunt, on Sunday, November of 1804, at Wm. Lupton's. Both parties were Quakers.

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The first person buried on Pleasant Hill was a Mrs. Wilthong, grandmother of Addison Pavey.

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James Green was the first wagon-maker.

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Gersham Purdue was the first tanner.

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Isaac Pavey, who came to near Leesburg from Kentucky in 1805, was the pioneer Methodist in the vicinity; he was also the first clergyman in the county to be licensed by the court to solemnize the rites of marriage – 1808 – October term. He worked diligently to organize a church, and finally, largely through his personal generosity and energy, brought it to pass. The principal Methodists here at that time were Pavey, his brother Charles, Isaac McCoy, and John Raines, who was also influential in the early organization.

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Zephaniah Adams was the first tailor in embryo village.

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John Henley came in 1828 and later engaged in the manufacture of old-fashioned (then new) toll-clock cases. He also engaged in undertaking.

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Samuel Terrill made nails in 1814.

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The first military company – 1807 – for protection.

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The Masonic Lodge was established in the house where Shepley Holmes later lived; later they used a hotel room, starting February 7, 1842. Still later, they established an elegant hall, about 32 x 70 feet, that cost, furnished, around \$2000.

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Alba Lodge, I.O.O.F., was established by Grandmaster J. H. Wheeler, June 24, 1858.

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The first school-house was at the mouth of Huff's lane, taught by Cathrine Borum. Two buildings, the "old white school" and the "old brick", were used until 1867, when the erection of a fine central building began. John Milner contracted the brick work; R. B. Wailey, the wood work. The cost of the complete unit was near \$10,000. The first superintendent was John W. Smith. John R. Horst and the Misses Laura Hodson & Lenna Simpson assisted. The Board of Education: N. H. Chalfant, E. P. Johnson, and H. S. Grove.

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Universalism was quite popular in Leesburg as early as 1835. Their first minister was a Rev. Weber.

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The first physician here was Dr. Havilah Beardsley. He began his practice in 1816. After him were: Drs. Doodridge, Jacob Wright, -Bradbury, -noble, Sylvester Hinton, Rool Beeson, Hannibal Beeson, A. J. Dunlap, George Dunlap, Isaac S. Wright, M. Holmes, Sr., Edwin Bruce, Samuel Hopkins, Thomas E. Johnson, etc.

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The first child born in the township was Isaac N. Walter, son of John Walter. He later became a preacher of the New Light faith.

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The second child born was William Horsman. The birth occurred under a shelter between two fallen tree trunks; not quite as satisfactory as our modern hospitals today. Death in infancy was very common.

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John M. Keen came in 1816 and engaged in cabinet making. He later kept a hotel for 30 years.

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Eli Watson came in 1835 and became interested in store keeping. Like all others in business, he took, in payment, almost everything except money – produce, ginseng, etc...

E. P. Johnson came in 1845, and Jacob Hilliard in 1830.

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The first tavern proper was kept by Joseph Bentley. Mr. Bentley kept hotel here from 1814 until his death.

The next hotel was opened by either Jonothan Ladd or Lucinda Hutchins, in the west end of the village.

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The steam flouring mill, situated near the railroad station, was built in 1832 by John C. Batton. It was later owned by Jonothan Ladd.

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Leesburg was early famous for its flouring and woolen mills. David Swain built a carding mill on Lees Creek in 1822, and ran it by water and horse power.

Wm. M. Hardy began roll-carding and fulling in 1832. He used a little horse mill. Hardy later built quite a factory. In 1840 he put in a sixty spindle machine, known as "Billy & Jenny", and a few years later changed to the "Jaw Jack".

In 1854 the old machine was replaced with a 160 "roller jack". By 1855 he was making stocking yarn, satinets, jeans, tweeds, cassimeres, flannels, blankets, and had a very large business. About this time, he sold out to his sons: Geo. T., Aaran B., and Noah W.

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John Keen was postmaster in Leesburg during Lincoln's administration.

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Practically all early settlers around the village were Quakers, or Friends.

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The first settlers in the vicinity that we have record of were Nathaniel Pope, John Walters, and James Howard, in the spring of 1802. The journey here was with difficulty, cutting the way thru dense woods. When they camped at last, Howard kindled a fire for the evening meal. It was the first white man's fire in what is now Leesburg. The next morning, the three men took their axes and went forth to fell logs for houses. Pope cut down the first tree. Howard was the first to get his house up.

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Pope sowed the first wheat in the township, and the first in Highland County, around the spot where the old brick school building now stands.

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On the evening when Pope finished his first wheat harvest, they celebrated with the first feast and merrymaking of its kind in our vicinity.

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IF YOU WISH TO GO UP, GET DOWN

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This is the oldest town in the township, the older part being laid out by "Governor" James Johnson, March 2, 1814. Gersham Purdue was present at the little meeting of citizens who gave the town its name, and was first to write it down on upon paper after it was adopted. Some say the town received its name from the creek which flows by it, but others declare it was named in honor of Leesburgh, VA. The title to the land was at first disputed, and this doubtless prevented Leesburg from becoming a town of still larger proportions.

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Nathan Butler was the first chair maker in the village.

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John R. Poff was the first cobbler.

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It isn't enough to get a steady job; the fellow himself must be steady.