

LIBERTY TOWNSHIP DISTRICT NO. 4 SCHOOL

Other names: Liberty School

Type: One-room (18' x 20')  
log schoolhouse  
built late-1827;  
One-room frame  
built circa \_\_\_\_\_;  
torn down 1885 or '86  
One-room brick  
built 1885;  
closed 1914

- AVAILABLE PHOTOS -
1. Harlan P. Knapp photo of frame Schoolhouse.
  2. Brick schoolhouse with class-1905 (DCHS)
  3. Brick schoolhouse with class - circa 1907 (JB)
  4. Class at riverbank -1910 (DCHS)

Location: 19-3-1 Lot 13  
(NW corner of 315 & Home Rd.)

11 householders in original 1826 district:

- |                      |                       |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| John Cole            | Andrew Lowrey (Lowry) |
| Joseph Cellar        | Josiah McCullough     |
| Thomas Cellar, (Jr.) | Josiah McKinnie       |
| James Gillies        | John Waggoner         |
| John Hardin          | ?                     |
| Samuel Hardin        |                       |

First School District officials (1827):

Directors: Robert McCoy Cellar, John Hardin, John Waggoner  
Treasurer: Joseph Cellar  
Clerk: Thomas Cellar, Jr.

Known teachers:

- |                         |                                   |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Eliza G. Harter         | Nell Wright                       |
| Allison E. Goodrich     | Alice Case Perry                  |
| Mary Rutherford Gray    | Jessie Youmans Goodrich           |
| Sadie Gooding           | Mila Griswold -- Mrs. H. P. Knapp |
| Nanna Stickney Taggart  | Mary (Marie) Morrow               |
| Christy Bale Schanck    | Fairy Heddon Pritchard            |
| Flo Merriman            | Della Weiser (190?)               |
| John B. Taggart         | Ethel Chambers Rodenfels (1904-5) |
| Lida Jackson            | Mrs. Vinton Rutherford (1905-6)   |
| Mary Griswold Coleman   | Ethel Van Fossan Dobbins (1906-7) |
| Sarah Jane Cellar       | Mary E. Wilson (1907-10)          |
| Frances Kenyon McKinnie | Helen Eliza Gray (1910) -- Mrs.   |
| Roxy Youmans            | James C. White                    |
|                         | Luella McFarland (last teacher)   |

The April 21, 1826 minutes of the Liberty Township Trustees defined the boundaries of District No. 4 as "including the first Section in Township 3, Range 19 U. S. Military Lands." In short, this was the 4,000-acre tract originally settled by Thomas Cellar and his family in 1802.

The following School District Notice dated August 5, 1827 verifies the activity taking place in this school district:

"In persuance of a previous notice given, the householders of School District No. 4 met and called to order when Thomas Cellar (Jr.) was appointed Clerk & Robert M. Cellar, John Harden and John Waggoner was chosen Directors and Joseph Cellar was chosen treasurer of said district. It was also agreed upon that the school house is to be set on the meeting house\* ground near the northwest corner in said district. Likewise it was agreed that the school house is to be eighteen by twenty feet on the ground and built of hewed logs.

The meeting adjourned until the 10th of this month."

This school district meeting was followed by a notice asking for donations of labor to build the school house. At the next school district meeting on August 10, 1827, "The people of school district No. 4 met to labor on the school house." An old record passed down through the Cellar family and last owned by Robert Powers ( ) of Delaware lists each of the men who worked that late summer and early fall to construct the new schoolhouse:

	Days Labor Performed		Days Labor Performed
Josi. McKinnie	25	James Gillis	13 1/2
Jn. Waggoner	11	R. M. Cellar	24
S. Harden	12	J. F. Cellar	44
D. Powers	3	G. Cellar	6 1/2
Jno. Lowry	3	James Cellar	19
Jno. Harden	28	Jos. Cellar	10
A. Lowry	9	T. Cellar	16
R. Lowry	4	James Gillies	37
B. Holbrook	2	John Lowry, Jr.	12 1/2

Although the building of a school house signalled the first recorded education in this district, it is universally understood that the early settlers ranked learning among the necessities for a whole and productive life. So, it is unfathomable that the earliest settlers in this district did not provide educational opportunities for their children from the time they first arrived in 1802 until 1827 when the first schoolhouse was built.

During that 25 year span, it is probable that one of the mothers or older daughters would gather the neighbor children together and teach them reading, writing and elementary arithmetic. As was the practice, these earliest teachers weren't paid in cash. Instead, they would receive services that they might not have had as much time to perform themselves such as baking, spinning or weaving.

With the coming of the schoolhouse came a more defined protocol. The school was open for two terms during the year. In the summer term, the younger children and any who could be spared from farm work attended. During the winter when farm work was at a minimum, the

\* Liberty Church

*High school  
teacher for 8 years*

older children and young adults attended. Because the construction of the Liberty schoolhouse was completed just before winter, it is assumed the first term taught in the new District No. 4 schoolhouse was in the fall-winter of 1827-28.

The next known record is that of a meeting a year later on August 22, 1828 where "the same householders of school district No. 4 met according to previous notice and elected James Gillies John Harden & John F. Cellar Directors for said District and Thomas Cellar Clerk."

Records have yet to surface to document the year that the log schoolhouse was replaced by the frame one. We do know that from 1830 the frame school was the site of most Liberty Trustee meetings and all township elections. The frame schoolhouse had a large, round stove, glass windows, two doors and two vestibules. Between the two entrances was a small room used by the local Grange. By this time, the teachers were afforded the benefit of a painted wood blackboard, and the children used individual slates. In 1848, the enrollment was 50 students.

Rather than try to capture in my own words the daily routine in this frame schoolhouse, I would be hard pressed to describe it better than one of the school's own pupils, Mrs. James E. Taggart (Lucy Knapp). Mrs. Taggart attended Liberty School circa 1876-1890. At age 71, Mrs. Taggart recalled her school day experiences and put them on paper for a presentation to the Delaware County Historical Society. Her paper, dated November, 1943, is reproduced verbatim:

"The early days of Liberty School District No. 4 are obscure. No one seems to know when the first school house was built. It must have been of logs, and knowing the respect the early settlers had for learning, we can guess that the families coming to this community in 1801-1802 and 1803 did not let their children go unschooled. However they may have had a school in the woods as they had church services in the summer. We do know that there was a summer term for the younger children for many years after school houses were built. Older ones, even young men, attended school in winter.

The log school house was followed by a frame building where Mrs. Fred Gooding and I began our education. Then about 1885 or 6 came a brick school which we thought very fine and which finished us off. This brick building was used for perhaps 30 years, as it was torn down in 1914, when we could not muster even 12 children to attend school.

Returning to the early days when young men attended during the winter term, I wish to say that I never heard of any rough house, of locking out the teacher, or other pranks which seem to have been prevalent in some communities.

Some recollections of the way school was conducted in my day may be of interest.

There was always a chapter from the Bible read by the teacher at the opening of school in the morning, followed by the Lord's

This material can be used in class.

prayer in unison, all pupils being expected to participate. As there were all ages from 6 to 18 represented, our teacher was busy all day hearing oral recitations and all studying was done against this background. However, we were accustomed to this, and our books usually stayed at school the entire term and we were not troubled by homework.

A bucket of water with a dipper in it sat in the entry and there we all slaked our thirst. Once during each of the four periods of the day some pupil was permitted to "pass the water." And when the supply became low two pupils were allowed to go to the source for a pail of water. This was considered quite a desirable chore and sometimes was almost a "date" as a boy would ask to go for water and then select his favorite girl of the moment to go along. The two had to go some distance down the hill to the north and to the river's edge where there was a wonderful spring. When the river was in flood and spring covered, then, even better they must go to the nearest neighbor's well and so were free from school's restraint for nearly twenty minutes. If the boy were very gallant he carried the water and did not allow the girl to help, but usually it was a ~~Katy Lee and Willie Gray act~~ and the bucket swung between them. The teachers of that day were certainly kind and liberal minded in that they did not require the water to be carried during our play time.

All pupils brought lunches; tho some few had lunch boxes, the usual receptacle was a small tin bucket with a tight lid.

The games at the noon hour varied with the season. Ball games were usually in order both boys and girls playing. Blackman, prisoner's base, crack-the-whip, tap-the-rabbit and drop the handkerchief, each had its turn. When the grave yard had a new board fence with a flat board on top, we used to mount at the double gates and walk that fence entirely round to the gates again. We all went barefoot until we entered our teens, when the weather warranted. In winter we all wore high shoes and for snow we wore "artics" over them. The covered bridge over the river was a favorite place for a rainy day playing, and the deep dust, which was always there must have permeated our clothing to the despair of our mothers.

The hill in front of the (Grange) hall (which was constructed later) was much steeper then and was ideal for ~~coasting~~ <sup>skating</sup>; while the river was loved for wading in summer and skating in winter. There was a thicket along the Knapp bottom field where we went for flowers in the spring and for long wild grape vines which we used for jumping rope. We also made trips up the run, past the stone quarry for flowers and pawpaws. Playing in the leaves was another pleasure for October days. We had no play equipment furnished us and we surely needed none. I still feel sorry for children who had no river, no covered bridge, no thicket and no big stony bottomed run near their school.

Again I say we had kind teachers for it seems to me they let us wander far and wide, only requiring that we get back on time. When we were on the river skating, the bell would be rung five minutes

early to give us time to get skates off and back up the hill on time. In my memory school was all sunshine with never a cloud but others perhaps will not agree with that.

Mr. Dow Anderson and his sister, Miss Jennie, then lived just north of the schoolhouse. Dow kept one fat horse, still fatter little dog, a good cow and a wonderful garden. When the school boys played ball, the sphere would more than occasionally go flying into Dow's garden and how he would grumble while a boy hunted through his vegetables for it. Miss Jennie kept pencils and writing paper to sell to the school children.

As the school sat in the same grove as the church we sometimes found life complicated by the fact that we had to miss our recess for fear of disturbing a funeral service. If the deceased were anyone we knew we could get permission to leave school and attend the funeral, but I do not remember that we abused that privilege. We often played in the graveyard, and we lost all the awe that some feel for such a spot. There was at least one tombstone topped by an open book and this afforded boys a place to stand and preach.

Where the hall now stands was then a sand pit and from it sand was sold by the local grange. This pit was a fine place to play. The grange had possession of the small center room in the front of the schoolhouse which was kept locked and how we wondered what mysterious things were stored within besides the goat. We took for granted there must be a goat to ride. The grange built the hall in 1893 and used it for some years but finally disbanded, and the church acquired the building for a song.

The building of the brick schoolhouse was a time of jubilee for us in our last days in the frame building, and I'm sure the building of the hall must have been almost as exciting.

The 1913 flood destroyed the fine spring which had furnished water for so many years for the school.

When the winter ice broke up, if school was in session, our teachers would always dismiss us when the crash-and-grinding noises floated in telling us in the schoolroom that the ice was going out. We would stream out to the river bank and full of excitement watch the huge cakes rise on end and battle with each other in their race downstream.

In the summertime we picked and ate the wild gooseberries that grew on the river bank. They were covered with prickly spines, both the bushes and the fruit, but we ate them.

Several times a year the big boys would spend their noon hour on a trip to the cave, then a hole in the hillside on the first farm to the south, coming back with their shoes and clothes smirched with clay. Now that hole marks the Olentangy Caverns, its face lifted and with dry paths and electric lights and a beautiful picnic grounds adjoining.

During the winter the schoolhouse was used on Friday evenings for the Literary Society when spirited debates took place with dialogs and recitations thrown in for variety. Music by the neighborhood string quartette and group singing were also added. These meetings gave the young people a glimpse of parliamentary law and added to our social life. George Colflesh and John B. Taggart were the best in debate."

To this paper, Mrs. George L. Pugh (Ruby Case), who attended Liberty School a generation after Mrs. Taggart, added, "...there was a cloakroom each side of entry, one for girls and one for boys, where our coats and lunch boxes were kept. If we did not bring our lunch out by the stove in cold weather we would have to eat a frozen lunch. Our wraps and hoods were cold to put on at the end of the day."

From another paper written by Mrs. James E. Taggart in April of 1942, she relates an interesting story. "In the days we call early, there were usually several old maids in any community and this was no exception. Miss Sarah Gillis, called Aunt Sally by the whole neighborhood was the earliest and was famous for her quick wit. Later my Aunt Sarah Cellar, her cousin Sarah Jane Cellar, Miss Jennie Anderson (first house north of Liberty Church) and Miss Clara Harter were the maids. These were the salt of the earth, but Miss Sarah Jane made a mistake which clung to her name and is not yet forgotten. She was teaching in the local school and was a most determined teacher; it was learn or else -- a small boy named Solomon Boyd had difficulty in distinguishing between the small printed letters "b" and "d". She bore down on him and he soon lost the ability to distinguish anything. She was sure he was just stubborn and proceeded to whip him so cruelly that the older pupils were horrified and his body carried the marks for days. His parents were indignant and took the case to court with the result that her teaching days were over, except for teaching in Sunday School. My earliest recollection of her in Sunday School is when she was in charge of the primary class as she was for years. She also helped to bring up her brother's family of four boys and I'm sure she never was cruel again."

As mentioned before, the one-room frame schoolhouse, which obviously held many memories -- both good and bad -- for the community, was replaced by a new, brick school. According to the journal entry of Ebenezer G. Taggart (1836-1907), on Thursday, May 28, 1885, "Mr. A. J. Harter and self were down to A. E. Goodrich in the evening to see G. B. Goodrich about the building of new school house in sub-district No. 4."

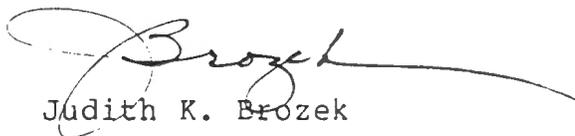
This new brick schoolhouse was similar to the many other little red schoolhouses which were built in the county in the late 1800's -- a few of which still remain. Old photos show that it had a front door protected from the weather by a shingled overhang. The door was flanked by 4-over-4 paned windows protected by metal grating. The schoolroom was large enough to accommodate as many as fifty pupils at one time; but the average was nearer forty.

By 1914, the number of schools in the township had increased to the point where the enrollment at Liberty dwindled below the required

number of twelve students. According to law, the school had to be closed. Based on their proximity to other schools, the Liberty pupils were divided up between Powell, Hyatts and Orange.

In 1953, after 39 years of this arrangement, the older students of District No. 4 along with their peers from the other districts were consolidated into the new Olentangy High School on Shanahan Road.

This report, which will be incorporated in full or part in a book about the Olentangy River Valley in Southern Delaware County, is presented in preliminary form. Further research may result in corrections and/or additions.

  
Judith K. Brozek

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