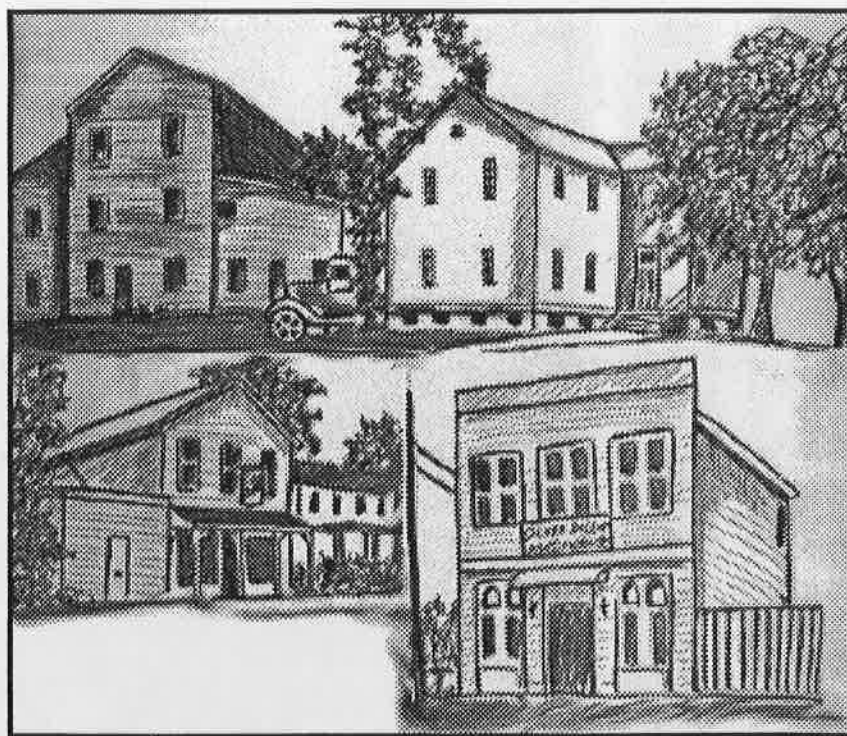


THEN & NOW

IN
CENTREVILLE - THURMAN
OHIO



This history has been written by topics and not chapters in order not to make it too long. The purpose in writing it is to preserve for future generations the history of events in the area and the effort that was made by the early settlers to establish a community of outstanding accomplishments and worth.

Compiled by
Olwen Williams

Acknowledgement



EIGHTEEN HUNDREDS TO NINETEEN NINETY-FIVE

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attracted by the land. Its quality and high elevation reminded them of that part of Wales from which they had emigrated. An abundance of Congress Land could be purchased for \$1.25 an acre - so the Welsh voyagers decided to settle here.

The county at that time was an almost unbroken forest with here and there a trail leading to the few scattered farms occupied for the most part by the adventurers from Virginia. The original band of Welsh consisted of seven related families and numbered thirty-five people including the children. The grandparents of Mr. Virgil Evans and the great grandparents of Leon Evans and Marie Evans Erwin were in the group.

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ESTABLISHING A HOME

After each family purchased their forty acres, which was the way the state had divided the land and probably all the immigrants could afford at the time, they went about the business of clearing the land for a building site. The location of this settlement was near the present U.S. Route 35, north of Centerville in the Cooper Hollow area. It was located in Raccoon Township, Gallia County at the time, but a few years later two sections of western Gallia County were added to Jackson County. So all of this band of Welsh emigrants became residents of Madison Township, Jackson County, Ohio.

Since the Welsh are by nature an industrious people, it was not long until each family had a cabin built. At first the one room log cabins had earth floors. They had a fireplace at one end of the room with a native rock chimney on the outside. A ladder led to the loft where the older children slept. The one window was covered with parchment paper. The heavy door, hung by pieces of leather for hinges, was fastened by a wooden latch. The latch was lifted by the latch-string which was a piece of animal skin.

The residents of each cabin were careful to pull the latch-string inside at night for the wolves could be heard after dark sniffing around the doors. When daylight came, the latch-string was put out again. It was from those pioneer days that the saying, "Put the latch-string out", originated.

On the heavy iron fire dogs or andirons over the fireplace were placed hooks of various lengths where as many as three cooking kettles could be hung at one time. Here all the cooking for the family was done throughout the entire year. Summer and winter the fire was not allowed to go out. No matter how warm the weather a glowing chunk of wood was kept buried in the ashes for matches were unheard of at that time.

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LIFE IN THE WELSH SETTLEMENT

The luxury of matches, metal hinges, glass windows, even wooden beds were to come later. However, the God-loving emigrants gave thanks daily for their humble home and varied blessings. Every family had brought with them from Wales a Welsh Bible which was read morning and evening in their family devotions.

The mournful cries of the wolves by night added to the homesickness of the newcomers. The difficulty of conversing with their English speaking neighbors added to their problems. However, they had made their decision and America was now their home.

Gradually they acquired sheep and other animals to go about the business of farming. They split logs into rails and built stake and rider fences to enclose the newly acquired animals. Fields were cleared and the rich new ground produced an abundant yield of oats, beans and corn.

Gallipolis was their nearest market where they sold oats for eight cents per bushel and pork for one and one half cents per pound. Oats and beans became their most salable crops which were shipped down the river to the southern plantations.

When the men were busy farming, the women would ride horse back to Gallipolis to sell their produce. Buckets full of butter were packed in saw dust and placed in each end of a gunny sack which was strapped on the horse. The Welsh lady would ride on a side saddle with a large basket of eggs on her lap. At three cents a dozen she would exchange the eggs and butter for commodities needed in the pioneer home. In later days the eggs and butter were marketed at Centerville or Oak Hill.

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FOOD FOR THE PIONEER FAMILY

At first they crushed the corn into coarse meal which they made into bread or corn pone. Sometimes the meal was boiled and served with milk. This was called mush. Some of the corn they made into hominy which became a staple dish on their tables.

It was not long before water mills were used for power to grind the grain. There were two of these located on Symmes Creek. After the days of the water powered mills, horses were used to provide the power for grinding the grain. Soon the residents started growing potatoes and sugar cane. The cane they made into molasses.

The woods were abundant in wild game, so the pioneers did not want for meat. Later they raised hogs which they butchered and cured the meat with salt for use in the winter time. They marketed the extra if there were any beyond the family needs.

Wheat, oats and rye would be roasted until black and crisp. It was then ground and prepared for beverage. Later green coffee beans were brought into the settlement in coarse hemp bags which held two or more bushels. These had to be roasted before they were ground. Later the coffee beans already roasted were sold in pound packages. The most well known brand was that of Arbuckle Brothers. The package had a coupon on the side which all housewives kept and exchanged later for some needed commodity such as handkerchiefs or pocket knives.

Soon each family had in their possession a coffee grinder. Since the Welsh

had been taught to keep the Sabbath Day holy, the coffee for Sunday was ground on Saturday night. If the housewife forgot, there was no coffee for Sunday.

They made tea from various herbs and roots. Probably the most popular was sassafras. Finally tea, as they had known it in their native country, was imported and even today tea is the most commonly used beverage with the Welsh.

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SPRING WATER and SPRING HOUSES

The territory selected for the Welsh settlement afforded many springs which welled up from limestone. The settler located a spring on his forty acres before he built his house on the hill above it. That necessitated carrying the water uphill and the milk down hill to the spring house which each farmer built as soon as he could afford it. The cool water circled the crocks of milk and kept the milk cool and sweet. The housewife skimmed the cream from the milk, churned it into butter and stored the butter there; so, the spring house had many important uses in the pioneer home.

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THE EVANS CEMETERY

Where there is life, sooner or later there will be death. Pioneer life was rough. There were no doctors to attend the mothers at birth, so infant mortality was high.

A plot of ground owned by John Jones (Tirbach) was set aside for a burial place. According to the records on the stones, William (the son of John and Mary Evans) was laid to rest there in June 1820 at the age of three years.

John Jones and his wife Eleanor are buried there but they have no markers. Their three daughters Mary, Susannah, and Jane and their sons-in-law John and Evan Evans lie there - also three children of John and Mary Evans. Lewis Davis and his wife and other members of that pioneer band rest there. In all there are forty-five to fifty people buried in that cemetery which represents four generations descended from the original settlers. The last burial was that of Margaret, the wife of Timothy Evans, who died in 1912.

This cemetery is located on the Cooper Hollow Road (County Road 5) about two miles from U.S. Route 35 and is maintained by the Madison Township Trustees.

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THE YOUNG BECOME ADULTS

Timothy Jones, the son of John Jones (Tirbach) was a young man of energy and enterprise. He worked hard and acquired much land which included the land where Centerville now stands.

In 1821 he married Hannah Williams when she was seventeen years of age.