The Legacy to the Inhabitants of Burton Township

In 1795 a group of land speculators formed the Connecticut Land Company and purchased the Western Reserve from the State of Connecticut. The Land Company then purchased from the Indians their rights to that part of the Wester Reserve east of the Cuyahoga River. In the summers of 1796-1797 the land was surveyed and divided into townships of about 5 square miles each. The survey of this wilderness cost the lives of seven men.

Upon completion of the survey the Western Reserve was ready to be divided up by the company’s shareholders. The 7th township in the 7th Range was acquired by 9 of the shareholders for $12,900. The 41st Parallel formed the southern boundary of the Western Reserve. Ranges ran north from the 41st parallel starting at the Pennsylvania border at five mile intervals. Townships were then laid out within each range also at a five mile intervals starting again at the 41st parallel and running north. The Township was named Burton, after the son of the largest shareholder. The new owners had the Township itself surveyed and divided it into 100 great lots of about 160 acres each (10 lots across and 10 lots down). This densely forested territory was at that time inhabited by Indians, bears, wolves, panthers, deer, elk and rattlesnakes. The Indians were friendly at this time but in 1812 went west to join the British and after the war never were to return.

In June of 1798, seven men and one family with five children arrived in the township by way of what is now known as Fairport and pitched their tents on the northern part of Great Lot 11. In the next few days they cut a road and built a cabin on the southeast side of Great Lot 35 for the first family (Umberfields). Thus was the Township of Burton founded.

Five years later (1803) there were 85 residents (34 men, 16 women, and 35 children) living in 22 log cabins and two frame houses scattered, for the most part, throughout the upper part of the Township. At this time the inhabitants decided the Township should formalize a Center (village) but a little south of the originally proposed site (Great Lots 25, 26, 35, 36). The eight men and one woman who owned Great Lots 35, 36, 46, and 47 agreed, and donated the necessary land for the Center’s roads and a public square. These owners were Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Umberfield, Titus Street, Andrew Hull, Simon Rose, Amoriah Bears, William Law, Turhand Kirtland, and Ben Doolittle. Accordingly, on October 5, 1803 the owners executed a deed, the body of which herein quoted…

The Legacy

“…for a valuable consideration received to full satisfaction of Ephrain Clark and the rest of the inhabitants of said Burton do give, grant, bargain, sell and confirm unto the said Ephrain and the rest of said inhabitant to them and their successor as inhabitants of said Burton forever the following tract or parcels of land situated in Burton beginning on the line that runs north and south through the center of said Burton at the southeast corner of lot No. 25 thence south on said line to the south line of lot 45 and to be four rods wide and also to begin at the southwest corner of lot No. 35 thence east by said south line to the southeast corner of lot No. 36 to be also four rods wide on each side of said line, also from the center of the intersection of these two tracts or roads forty rods north and fifteen rods south and 15 rods east and fifteen rods west of said line make fifty five rods north and south and thirty rods east and west for a public square and also three roads to be laid out east and three west and three north and three south of the center of the intersection of the two first mentioned roads, each road to be four rods wide and to be forth rods asunder from the center of each road and to extend so far as to intersect the outside road on each angle or 120 rods each way from the center line. To have and to hold the above granted and bargained premises to them the said Grantees and their successors forever to their own proper use for the purpose hereinafter mentioned said lands are conveyed to use and improvement of a public square and public highways only and to be and remain for their use, and in case said proprietors shall cease to improve them for said public or to apply them to any other purpose they shall revert back to the Grantors in the same manner and proportions as each of the Grantors now hold……”

Epilogue

In 1871 the residents of the Township, wishing to build a Township Hall on the north side of the Square, voted to relocate the two main roads running through the Square. The hall soon proved to be too small and was sold and moved to become the livery stable for the old hotel. The present Hall was then built on Spring Street facing West Park.

In 1895 when the Center (Village) was incorporated, the township residents living within one quarter mile of the village’s out boundaries, joined in asking to be included with the village. The petition was granted and the village became a mile and one half square. In 1912, by another petition, the outer residents asked to be returned to the township and the village reverted to its original and present size of one square mile.