

PIKE TOWNSHIP EAST SPARTA

Written by
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The beginnings of Pike Township and the town of Sparta, now East Sparta, were so intertwined that a single history covers both.

Pike Township was organized March 16, 1815. It included both present Pike and present Bethlehem Townships and was made up of an area which had previously been part of Canton Township.

The first election for township offices was held in April, 1815, at the home of Henry Bordner, and those elected were from both the Pike and the Bethlehem areas. The new township was named for General Zebulon Montgomery Pike, who was killed in the War of 1812 while in command of an expedition against York (now Toronto) in Canada.

The earliest known permanent settler in Pike Township was George Young. He was born in Hagerstown, Maryland, in 1780 of German parentage. At 19 he married and settled in a place of his own near his father. Later he and his family moved to Jefferson County, Ohio, and he worked at sharecropping when he could find employment.

He saved until he could buy two horses and a few farming tools, and set off, with his wife and child, seeking a place to settle. Their wanderings led them to Sandy Creek and Downing's Ford, and finally to Sulphur Creek, now Russell, located in the center of Pike Township.

A monument to George Young, was dedicated June 8, 1929, on the Kaiser farm on Briggie Avenue.

Young and his family lived on and farmed leased land until 1811 when he accumulated enough money to buy a quartersection and build a log cabin. In 1830 he built the first brick home in Pike Township on the corner of Downing and Briggie Streets.

During the War of 1812 Young was drafted three times, but managed each time to furnish a substitute. The standard price for a substitute was \$100. There is no record of who his substitutes were. While the soldiers were camped at Canton and at Wooster during the War of 1812, Young furnished them with beef cattle, most of them raised on his Pike Township farm.

For many years the descendants of George Young and the 19 children of his two marriages held family reunions, starting in 1889 and continuing as late as 1961. As of 1938 the number of descendants of this hardy pioneer was known to be 800.

Henry Bordner, at whose home the first township election was held, and Philip Seffert settled in what

was to be Pike Township in 1811. Both were chosen township officers in that first election in 1815. Jonathan Cable also came in 1811 and planted the first five acres of wheat in the area. His holdings later became the site of the U.S. Quarry Tile Company.

Piney Guest came in 1912 with his father-in-law, Benjamin Miller. Guest was the first justice of the peace elected in the township. He was an ordained Baptist minister, and did much of the early marrying in the area.

Other Pike Township pioneers were John Shutt and Jacob Kimery.

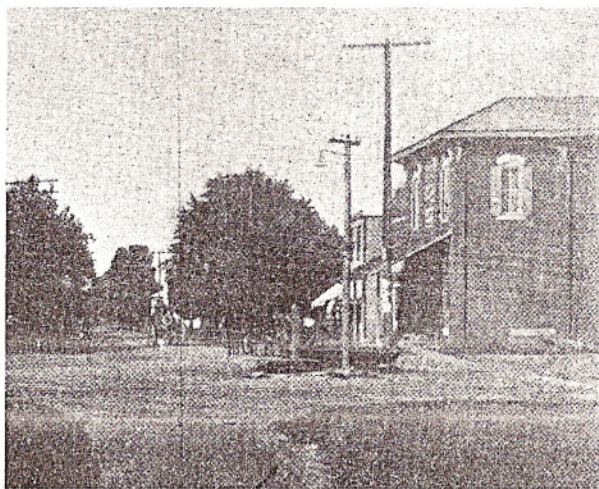
SPARTA FORMED

In 1814 a Quaker, Amos Janney, settled in the lower portion of Pike Township. He was a surveyor by profession but had an inclination towards business. He built a sawmill and a gristmill, the first in the township.

Janney believed that an influx of population into the area was coming and would support a town, so he surveyed and platted the village of Sparta. He recorded the plat at the Stark County recorder's office on March 22, 1815, only a few days after Pike Township itself was organized.

He called his village Sparta after the rival of Athens in the history of ancient Greece. In the original plat there were four street crossings at right angles. They were named for animals, Buffalo, Elk, Wolf and Bear.

Four years after the founding of Sparta there appeared in *The Canton Repository* (then *The Ohio Repository*, founded in 1815) an advertisement by Amos Janney. It was in the June 21, 1819 edition and



North Side of Square



Birds eye view of South Side of East Sparta

announced a new invention called friction rollers. This is the largely forgotten forerunner of Canton's great bearing industry.

Janney was active in the affairs of Pike Township as well as Sparta and was elected a township trustee in April, 1816. This was while Pike and Bethlehem Township were still operating as a single township during the first two years of their separation from Canton Township.

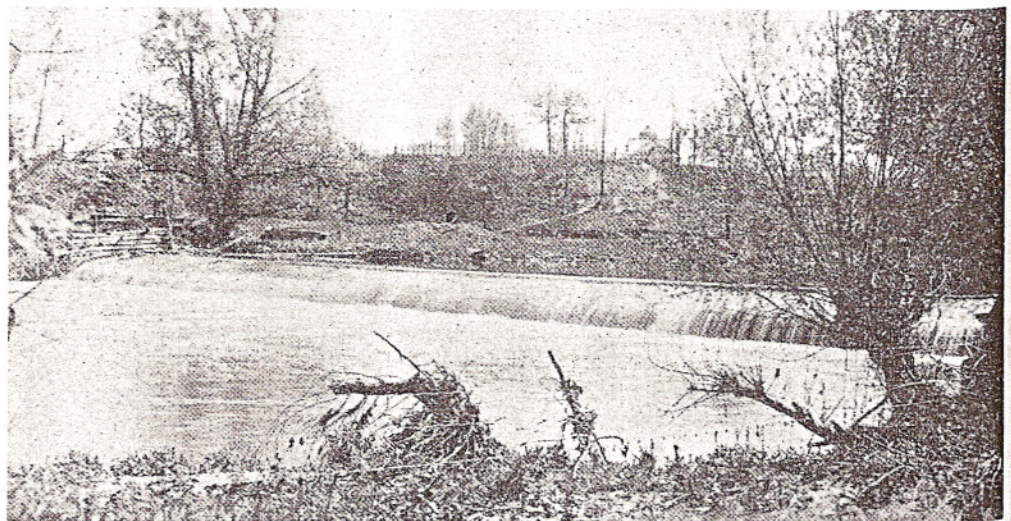
In its early days Sparta was merely a trading area with a flour mill, a bloomery and a sawmill. Later it became a most important manufacturing center in Stark County. The reason is that the roots of the steel production which developed in Stark County in the last quarter of the 19th century go back to pioneer days and the first foundry built by Luther Drury in Sparta.

Drury came to Sparta from Canada in 1819, with his wife, two children and a niece. He purchased land and built a "bloomery furnace" and forge to make wrought iron from the natural ore obtained from the vicinity of Slabtown (now North Industry.)

Drury sold the bloomery to James Hazlett in 1823 and returned to Canada with his family. Hazlett sold the forge to Janney, the town founder, in 1826, and in 1840 Hazlett purchased Janney's farm, mill and the bloomery, which he proceeded to close.

The earliest storekeeper was Abraham Cozier who opened a small store in 1820. He was notable in Sparta history for providing in his home the birth place of Sparta's two churches, the Methodist and the Christian. He closed his store when James Hazlett opened a much larger one on the Hazlett property.

At the opposite end of society from the churches were the taverns which got an early start in Sparta. Philip Weaver is credited with running the first saloon in 1826. In pioneer days Pike Township had more than its share of distilleries, saloons, drinking and law suits, but the excess produced reaction, and Pike Township residents voted the township dry and later prided themselves on having fewer criminals and less litigation than any other township in the county.



East Sparta Dam