

Madison's Earliest Days  
1798-1826

By Charlotte Hall Kellogg  
(Given before the Fortnightly Club Feb. 1922)

The first settlement here was called Chapintown by a man named Chapin, who built the first cabin on the "Fisher place," east of town. He selected this site not because he liked the location particularly, but it would require the least labor to clear it. There weren't too many trees in the way. Not being a very ambitious person, he left in a few years. In the meantime other settlers coming in, the name was changed to Centerville.

The center of the township is at "Genung's Corners" a mile north of the village and the first town hall was built on the present site of the Onderdonk house, opposite the Baptist Church. But the south ridge was the trail the pioneer followed and taverns were built all along the way, so here was Centerville.

The first family to settle here permanently was that of John Harper, who came by boat on the Lakes from New York State in 1798 with his father's family. They landed near Driftwood at the mouth of Cunningham Creek. The others went on further and founded Harpersfield. In 1800, John Harper bought land now known as the Stephen Warner farm and recently purchased by Mr. Warren Cowdery. Mr. Harper married and in 1803, a son, Rice Harper was born and in 1805, a daughter. They were the first white children born in the township.

In 1807, a large log house was built west of the George Woodworth place, on the West Main St. by William Miller and his son. They opened a tavern and operated it while clearing their land. Sevilla, a daughter of Mr. Miller, later married James Woodworth and the property on which the house now stands, descended through her to its present owner, her son George.

The first wheat raised in the township was on a clearing on East Middle Ridge but from Middle Ridge on down to the Lake was a dense and unbroken forest.

There were thirty-two settlements on the Western Reserve in 1800. Centerville was one of these. By 1810 there were nine families in Centerville scattered along the trail between the "Turney Road" and "Brooks" or "Waterman's" corners, and soon they held preaching service in the home of Asa Turney at Turney's Corners.

Until 1811 Centerville was in Geauga County and to pay their taxes and transact business, settlers must go to Chardon, which was then a long and tedious journey, to be accomplished as one could afford, on foot, on horseback, or by ox cart. Geauga was the second county to be created on the Reserve and this was done in 1805.

Mail was carried over the trail between Buffalo and Cleveland by one John Metcalf, between the years 1808 – 1811. He performed this duty mostly on foot and missed but

few days in the three years. In 1811, the Commissioners of Geauga County ordered a part of Harpersfield and the township north of Grand River, to be incorporated as a separate township to be known as Madison. This name was probably given because James Madison was President at that time, or possibly for the reason that a number of settlers came from Madison, Conn. Be that as it may, the town has been Madison from that time, although the name Centerville clung to it for years after. At one time household goods that were shipped here from New York State were sent through to Madison, Wisconsin, because no town in Ohio called Madison was known to officials. These goods, by the way, belonged to Mr. Hubbard, father of Mrs. J. S. Wilcox.

Madison is the largest township in the state, containing nearly fifty square miles and is in the smallest county of the state. The large township is because of the two gores at the north and south ends of the township. The southern Gore is formed by the space between Grand River and the southeast end of the adjoining township. The Gore on the north is formed by the northeast end of the lakeshore.

The land surface of Lake County not being extensive enough to meet requirements, the survey was extended into Lake Erie far enough to make the required measurements for a county, thus giving to Lake County the smallest land surface of any county in Ohio.

Elections were first held in 1811, fifteen ballots being cast. The officers were Township Trustees, Overseers of the Poor, Fence Viewers, Appraisers, Constable, and Treasurer. Later, a Justice of the Peace, John Harper, was elected.

In 1813, an interesting incident occurred when Joseph Talcott and Gen. Abel Kimball were chopping trees in their adjoining sections. They heard strange and far off reverberations like distant thunder. They stopped in their work and looked about with feelings of almost fear. No sign of cloud or storm was in the clear sky. The far off and peculiar sounds proved to be the echoes of cannonading during the battle of "Perry's Victory" which took place as we all know on Lake Erie, Sept. 10<sup>th</sup>, 1813. A section of the tree these men were chopping on that day was kept by them and is still in possession of our townsman, Carl R. Kimball.

I chanced to mention the above story to one of our members, Mrs. Winans, and she remarked, "Well, that isn't so much, the Doctor and I were using a cross-cut saw on a fallen tree in our back yard when we heard the news of Dewey's victory in Manila Bay in May, 1898."

Three years after the incorporation of Madison Township in 1814, a Congregational Church was organized with nine members, at the log cabin of Lemuel Kimball who with his brother, Abel Kimball (grandfather of our Kimballs) came here in 1812 and bought the land now owned by the family. The two elm trees, which were planted by them in the front yard of the Kimball homestead, were both standing until a couple of years ago (1920) when one had to be felled. The other is still standing, strong and sturdy.

Many of our frame houses were built by Addison Kimball. These are all of one style of architecture, the one now occupied by Abel Kimball, the Edna Cutler house and all of those older homes built by him many years ago. The old frame railroad stations, few of which are left were all erected by Addison Kimball. He also built the first frame schoolhouse in the township.

To go back to the church organization, Miss Meroe Wood's mother, Mrs. Elisha Wood, used to keep open house on Sundays for the old people who liked to attend both the morning and afternoon services and were not able to go back and forth, even if there was time to go such distances as many of them came. She provided lunch for them during "Intermission" and they could have a good rest at her home. Rebecca Talcott, and many others, rode on horseback and toted three children to services.

A Sunday school was started five years later, in 1819, and held its sessions at the home of William Ensign, great grandfather of Mrs. Frances Ensign Fuller and of the late Caleb Ensign.

The very first schoolhouse stood on the corner of the "Common" across from where Roadside Inn now stands. It was built of logs in 1816, and was known as the Block Schoolhouse. Beginning in 1822, Methodist services were held in this building. This church was instituted by Harlo Bailey, father of the late Alanson Bailey. He was converted at a camp meeting in Concord Township and on returning home, immediately started to organize a church here. He was always a very zealous worker in the Methodist Church.

The Congregationalists held their services at different homes on the South Ridge till 1819, after which worship was conducted at the township center at Middle Ridge for some ten or more years. Then twenty-four members were dismissed from the church to form the Second Congregational Church of Madison. They held their services in a building, which later became a part of our present Town Hall.

Soon after the first settlers came, a Baptist Church was organized, but existed in the Village only a short time. Later there started the flourishing church now on the Middle Ridge. Mary Boynton Balch, grandmother of Will Balch, often rode five miles to church, on horseback and carried her baby. She solicited wool or funds for same, spun a great part of the yarn and wove a carpet for the church, the first one to be used by the Baptist congregation.

In 1815, a frame house was built on the Henry Ensign place, now Mrs. Gamble's, just west of the place where her house stands. This old frame house still exists in Miss Lora Tobey's backyard, and is the oldest building in the township. It will soon be a thing of the past. After its removal to the front of this yard, it was used by Mr. Luther Warner, grandfather of Jennie Gilbreath as a shop, later it was occupied by Dolly Ann Hitt, a peculiar and familiar town character, and still later used as a carpenter shop by our townsman Asa Childs. When Thomas Green of Thompson bought the land and built the house now owned by Miss Tobey, the old building was moved to its present quarters.

The house on West Main Street now owned by Earl Coulter is one of the oldest houses in town, and in its basement was held one of the earliest schools. Mary Crary was the teacher among the little scholars who received their first schooling from her were young Lemuel Kimball, Emeline Burr (Teachout), Mary Wood (Sloan), Ellen Wood (Ingersoll) and others.

A sawmill and gristmill had been erected at the River and James Ford, who later had a gristmill on the Dock Road, had the first store in the township. It was in a corn house on the farm of Jesse Ladd, now owned by Howard Wood. Mr. Ladd built the house in which Mr. Wood resides for a tavern and used it as such until 1827.

A ledger in the store of Mr. Ford between the years 1818 and 1820 shows the following items:

Butter	\$ .15	Bbl. Pork	\$25.00
Loaf Sugar	.50	41 Cords Wood	17.94
1 lb. Pepper	.50	2 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub> Bu. Apples	6.84
1 lb. Tea	1.75	8 Yds. Gingham	4.50
1 yd Cambric	1.25		

A bushel of corn bought a pound of nails and it took six bushels to get a yard of calico. Luckily, women didn't require many dresses in those days, but they put more material into those they did have. A man exchanged thirty bushels of wheat for one of salt. Women spun, dyed and wove clothing material, and every thing required the utmost labor.

Cobs were burned in a kettle to get seleratus (sodium bicarbonate) to bake with and the women picked up bones to use in making soap. Corn was pounded in a hollow stump, burned out for that purpose, or men walked miles, carrying corn to get it ground for food.

Joseph Talcott, Mrs. Fred Walding's great grandfather, walked to Cleveland with a sack of corn on his back. He returned on the third night with the meal. His wife, at midnight, made a kettle of mush and they awakened their children who had gone to bed hungry for something beside milk, to partake of a full meal of mush and milk.

Wild beasts howled and prowled around the cabins and strict lookout must be kept at all times that they should not kill or carry off the live stock the settlers had. Also, the women and children must keep careful watch lest they too should be attacked; and we complain often of the hard times we have. Indians were often about, but molested no one, and the Indian women sometimes swung their profusion in the ravine east of the Edna Cutler house on East Main Street.

They had music in those days too. A singing school was taught by Joseph Talcott and very soon a band was organized which was the first in the county. Horace Ensign, Harlo Bailey, and Asa Turney were members.

A woman's society was formed also, in 1819, and called the "Female Education Society of Madison." Polly Kimball, Mary Ensign, Ruby Bissell, and Maria Bailey were among the members. From the secretary's report we read, "The Society agreed to purchase sheep, the avails of which to be used for the benefit of pious young men for the ministry." Another entry, "July 1823, the Female Society convened at the Block School House to pick the wool belonging to the Society. March, 1827, presented to Rev. Mr. Winchester with three yards of cloth as a compensation for his labor of love in our Society."

Joseph Talcott's son Asa, Mrs. Walding's grandfather, was married when nineteen to Caroline Newcomb, sixteen. They were called the "Babes in the Woods" which was quite literal. They commenced their married life in a log cabin where the Nickel Plate Station now stands.

In 1820 the Bailey house near Grand River, a large and elegant mansion then as now, was built by David Bailey, Newton Bailey's grandfather, and the first Fourth of July celebration in Madison was held there. The flag was raised, a pig was roasted and toasts were given.

Four years later, Jonathan Winchester became a regular pastor of the Congregational Church, and the first team driven on the Brooks road, now the "21 Road", hauled material for a well and a fireplace for the new ministers use. His log cabin was put up on that road a little below the railroad. His salary per year was \$91.00 in British money and \$273.00 in wheat and corn at the going price.

Rev. Winchester performed the marriage ceremony for many young couples and it was said he always kissed the bride. This was considered unseemly by some of his deacons and they called upon him to remonstrate. One of them asked him what he would do if he should marry a colored couple. He replied "I should in that case delegate the duty to one of my deacons."

Schoolteachers were paid with other work, with corn, calves or almost anything a person could spare.

On another Fourth of July in 1826, a seventeen year old girl, Orpha Hitchcock, mounted the rail fence and called to her chum, Polly Doty Wood, Mrs. Nellie Ensign's grandmother, who was married the year before at the age of sixteen, "This is my wedding day," and later in the day she and Squire John Kellogg were married, standing in his new covered buggy which was the first one brought to Madison, at the public celebration on the Park. The park then was a part of the space between the Bank and Mr. Lemuel Ritscher's home on East Main St.

John Kellogg came here in 1823 from Massachusetts walking the entire distance in about four months. He was one of the first Justices of the Peace and was called by his friends, "Honest Jack Kellogg."

On the Park was conducted military training considered so necessary in those days, and here the title of General was earned by Abel Kimball (Carl's and Abel's grandfather) as he rose to that rank in the militia.

Horace St. John's mother and her brother were told that if their behavior on Sundays was not quiet and good, the bears might get them. Therefore when a black bear was shot one Sunday morning and they were taken to see it, they were quite impressed with the certainty of the proximity of black bears on Sundays. Thereafter when indulging in some forbidden sport on Sunday they kept a sharp look out for those animals. It might not be amiss in the present day if a bear or two might be lurking round on a Sunday to remind us to "watch our steps."

The brick house, owned by Mr. St. John, on the corner of Main and Lake Streets, was built by Mrs. Bollard's father, Samuel Stratton, who came here in 1829 via the Erie Canal from Troy, N. Y. to Buffalo. Thence across the Lake on a steamer, the "Peacock" to Fairport, then by stage to Unionville, then back to Madison. The brick for this house he made himself, having a brick kiln in his meadow and the house was built by his own hands and such help as he could get. The corner or upright part was used as a store by David Paige (later Judge Paige) and the east part was used as a residence.

The Cutler house next to the brick house was built by Addison Kimball for Samuel Stratton and his bride to be, Miss Roxana Miller, but Squire Burr's log house was burned down just at this time and Mr. Stratton allowed him to bring his wife and family of ten children or thereabouts to the new house, and live there till another place could be provided and until his own marriage should take place. Not long afterwards this was happily accomplished.

We have tried to tell some of the events most interesting to the members of our Club, and this takes us to the Madison of 1826.

Madison's Earliest Days  
1826-1852

By Nellie Chase Ensign  
(Given before the Fortnightly Club Feb. 1922)

The wild Indians and bears had disappeared from Madison, clearings were being made, logs were burning day and night filling the air with smoke and the few frame houses looked strange beside the log cabin, but in these primitive homes there were brave hearts and high ideals.

In those days cooking was done in kettles, suspended by hooks, attached to a crane, in the fireplace and once a week the brick oven was heated for the family baking.

In 1830 a newly arrived Massachusetts family, named Williams, were to have a log house raising and the invited guests came early and worked with a right good will until they learned no liquor had been provided, then nearly every man refused to work. They were informed refreshments had been provided and that they would receive compensation but they still refused and were finally told they might go. The next day help came from another settlement, and this house was the first raised in the vicinity without liquor.

As late as 1838 millinery shops were unknown but the supply was brought from an eastern city and sold in the dry goods stores.

A Mrs. Lois Norton Hull was the envious owner of a green silk calash (now you men are not supposed to know what a calash is.) It is a bonnet. She brought it from Connecticut and she intended to return East, so a neighbor wished to buy it. Carrying the treasure to her home she duly placed it on the woman's head. The baby lying in the cradle began to scream. The more the mother tried to soothe it the more it cried until the discovery was made that the love of a bonnet caused the fright. The disappointed woman abandoned the purchase.

A blacksmith shop, for shoeing oxen, stood where the Bank is located, and was in charge of Mr. Talcott, probably the great grandfather of Mrs. Fred Walding. On account of the animal's divided hoop two small iron shoes were used on each foot. The oxen were lifted in a frame by a pulley, to be shod, as they could not learn to stand on three feet, like a horse.

Among the enterprises there were a carding mill, a cloth-dressing mill, the Madison Woolen Mills (where the Basket Craft is located) and a chair factory on the northwest corner of the Park. This building is used as a residence on River Street, next to the Congregational parsonage.

There were four tanneries, one owned by Elisha Wood on Main St. (back of the residence) another located just west of the grade school bridge on Main St. and owned by

Lewis Parker, one south of town on the Dudley Bailey farm, near the residence of the grandson, Newton D. Dailey and the fourth was in Unionville (Madison Township) the property of Mr. Truax.

There were six distilleries and the product of the still was used as a sort of legal tender as there was no money.

No enterprise contributed more to the settlement and development of the township (especially the Northern part) than the iron furnace at Arcole.

Providence had provided immense deposits of iron ore along the bog or wetlands of the North Ridge. The Erie Furnace Co. and later the Arcole Furnace Co. manufactured pig iron from this ore. Two hundred houses, a post office and a store that annually invoiced \$150,000 (one hundred fifty thousand dollars) of stock operated in connection with the company. Due bills from this store answered the purpose of money. When the land was drained for settlers the ore ceased to exist.

Bailey Bros. Shipbuilding Co. found this township a profitable location while the oak timber remained for use. A pier extended into the lake, at the Dock, and a lighthouse was erected. The first boat launched was the Caroline E. Bailey, named in honor of Mrs. Winan's aunt.

While Col. Robert G. Ingersoll's father was Parson at the Bell Meeting House (Congregational Church North Madison) he applied for a divorce from his wife and during his trouble there was a hearing before Squire Burr (grandfather of Mrs. D.D. Smead). The door had been left ajar, not accidentally, by one of the ten children and during the hearing they heard this complaint, "My wife's apple dumplings are hard enough to shoot a dog with."

Madison was located near the Underground Railway System. In 1841 two brothers and a sister, runaway slaves from Kentucky, were visiting (from Oberlin) at Dr. Merriman's one and one half miles west of town. One of the slaves was overtaken, while driving, by the owner's son and a professional slave catcher and taken before Judge D.R. Paige at Bliss Tavern. Word was immediately sent out and old and young men drove into town in wagons, excited and determined no slave should ever be taken from Lake County. The slave was returned to the two men but in Ashtabula County they were arrested for assault and battery. After much scheming the slave was spirited away and landed in Canada where he was followed by his brother and sister. This brother was the real George Harris of Harriet Beecher Stows "Uncle Tom's Cabin".

In 1842 Grandmother Wood (wife of Elisha Wood Sr.) and Mrs. Nancy Kimball Paige solicited labor and funds to level the Park (a hill) to set out shade trees and build a fence for protection against cattle, pigs, and sheep which were allowed to roam the streets at will. The eastern part of the Park was reserved for a cemetery but never so used.

The little red schoolhouse was located on the M. E. Church site but was moved a few rods south of the Madison Grade School and is owned by the Board of Education.

The High School Building was moved to a street south and used for a dwelling.

There was also a well-known and prosperous Seminary at the Middle Ridge.

As our ancestors were New Englanders the early teacher was probably not confronted by some of the problems of the Southerner. A lecturer who taught school among his own people in the Tennessee Mountains said some funny things happened. Hearing a boy say "I aint gwine there." He said to him, "That's no way to talk. Listen. I am not going there; thou art not going there; we are not going there; you are not going there; they are not going there. Do you get the idea?" "Yes sir, I gets it all right. They aint nobody gwine."

Madison was on the direct stage route from Buffalo to Cleveland. The stage was drawn by four horses and a loud trumpet blast told of its approach.

The Bliss Tavern (on the site of the Mercantile and Kimball Bros. Stores) was one of the first frame hotels. This hotel (where we are meeting tonight) was built in 1849, by Harrison Wheeler, and occupied the following year, and has been known as the Wheeler House, Covell's Exchange, Madison House, Temperance Hotel, Park House and Roadside Inn.

In 1852 people turned out to see the first locomotive and cars pass through Madison on the single track, Cleveland, Painesville, and Ashtabula Railroad—now the New York Central Railroad.

How wonderful the changes, since seventy years ago  
When girls wore woolen dresses and boys wore pants of tow,  
When shoes were made of cowhide and socks from homespun wool,  
Children did a half days work before they went to school.  
The world and it's way, the night and the day, the work and  
The play, have all turned round, since seventy years ago.