

HAMMOND-CRANZ FARM

The Hammond-Cranz house has been remodeled and rebuilt several times. The original structure on this site was a one-room log cabin built in 1810 by a squatter, Gibson Gates. Further evidence of the cabin's location has not been documented or identified.

Jason Hammond, brother-in-law to Jonathan Hale, came to the valley in 1810. The Hammond and Hale families were the first landowning settlers in the township, and among the first in the Cuyahoga Valley. The Hammond family landholdings were extensive. Jason Hammond purchased 1,100 acres in 1810 from Thomas Bull, an investor in the Connecticut Land Company.

In 1826 Jason divvied most of his land between his brother Calvin and his sons Horatio and Theodore. His other son Lewis lived on what remained of his father's estate, and later took over ownership of the land upon his father's death in 1830. According to county tax records, Lewis built a house on these lands in 1833 or 1834. However, evidence for this date conflicts with secondary sources that say that Jason Hammond built the rear wing of the house between 1817 and 1824, and that Lewis completed the main portion between 1836 and 1838. Whatever the truth, the house is not listed in the tax records until 1834.

Upon his father's death Lewis Hammond brought Shorthorn cattle and Merino sheep to the farm. Over the course of his lifetime he owned a sawmill, flour mill, and woolen mill. Lewis died in 1849 and his wife followed him a few months later, leaving their eight children orphaned. Lewis' heirs maintained control of the property until 1864, and began to sell off portions of the lands. In 1855 they sold 137.78 acres for Lot 29 to John Bennage. In 1862, Henry Howe bought 17 acres from Lot 30 (Now Old Tail School and the Howe Meadow areas).

In 1864, the farm was purchased by William F. Cranz. Cranz had emigrated from Germany with his family when he was fourteen years old and settled in Winesburg, Ohio. In 1864, Cranz and his wife Mary purchased what was left of Lewis Hammond's land, including the house and 123.34 acres of Lot 30. The Hammonds then moved on to Illinois. The Cranz family remained on that property for more than sixty years.

William built the bank barn in 1885. In 1895 he transferred 9.49 acres in the northwest corner of Lot 30 and 0.51 acres of Lot 29 to his daughter Kate. This is the property that runs up the left side of Ira road. The remaining lands, the house, and the buildings he bequeathed to his son Eugene F. Cranz who inherited the farm upon his father's death in 1898.

Eugene was a model of the successful and innovative nineteenth century farmer. Like most farmers of this new breed, he attended college (The Ohio State University) to prepare himself for his agricultural career. When he began farming he was an active member of his community and statewide agricultural organization, such as the Grange and Masons, at one time serving as secretary of the State Grange. Eugene Cranz was most renowned for his horticultural experimentation and conservation advocacy. His efforts in this area began as early as the 1920s, and Eugene was very influential in spreading conservation practices through Ohio. He was also one of the first men in the state to become involved in the reforestation movement. He promoted fencing cattle to keep them out of wooded lots, as well as planting

trees to replace those cut down when the land was first farmed. In November 1949, his farm was dedicated as Ohio Tree Farm Number 81.

Eugene, along with his son Harmon, continued to till and run the land well into the twentieth century. Upon Eugene's death in 1951 the land transferred to his son Harmon Craz. Harmon lived on the family farm until the 1970s. Attending Ohio State, he had a lifelong interest in aviation and for many years maintained a plane which was housed in the south barn. Harmon and his wife Ethel Gourd were married in 1959. They had no children and they retired to Florida in the 1970s after deeding the farm to the Ohio Masonic organization, in which they were both very much involved. The Ohio Masonic organization then sold the property to Cuyahoga Valley National Park.

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