



# Clinton County Trails

Published Quarterly, December 1994

Volume 9, Number 4

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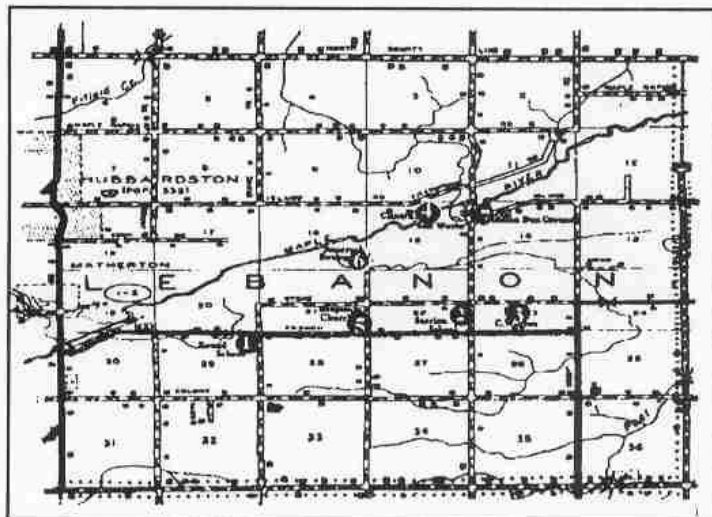
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## NEWSLETTER

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## LEBANON TWP.



- 1 - Round School
- 2 - Sessions School
- 3 - Charles Warren Res.
- 4 - Clinton County Salt Works
- 5 - Benjamin Church Res.
- 6 - Tamarack Swamp
- 7 - Old Indian Burial Ground

*This map shows approximate locations to points of interest referred to in the following articles about early Lebanon history.*

## LEBANON FIRST KNOWN AS WANDAUGON TOWNSHIP

*Ref: Clinton County Republican-News Centennial Edition*

The third township to be organized in Clinton included the entire northwest one-quarter of the county and was originally designated as Wandaugon, from the Chippewa Indian language meaning "salt springs." Within one month after the act of creating Wandaugon (April 2, 1838,) the settlers put pressure on the legislature, to change the name to Lebanon. However the omission of a short phrase, "the county of Clinton which is embraced in" was left out, and the name Wandaugon remained until the next legislature went into session a year later.

One of the biggest promotions in early Clinton County was the **Clinton Salt Works Company** in Lebanon Township. When it collapsed the thud was

heard throughout the state.

The company actually was based on the results of a scientific survey which showed salt springs existed along the Maple River in Lebanon.

The salt company was incorporated in 1837 under a special law passed by the legislature; and from there a village was platted and a bank was formed. On April 3, 1838, the legislature incorporated the Clinton Salt Works Company with **Robert S. Parks, Sawson S. Warner, Charles Hubbell, Thomas B. Andrews and Calvin C. Parks** as the principal stockholders. A village known as **Clinton Salt Works** was to be located in section 15 of the present township. The company erected several frame buildings in 1838, platted their village and founded the **Clinton County Salt Works Bank**. The capital of the bank was to be not less than \$50,000 and not more than \$100,000.

And that was the financial rub. When the village died in infancy and the bank soon failed, some people lost heavily, and long had a "salty" taste in their mouths from the disastrous financial venture into production of salt for commercial use, and further losses through the collapse of the **Clinton County Salt-Works Bank** during the "wildcat" banking period of the 1830's.

Rumor held later that the bank's only specie was a bucket of silver coins owned personally by one of the directors, **Moses Dean**, of Maple Township in Ionia County. Other stories held in subsequent years that before **Dr. Houghton** (state geologist) made his survey of the river, some of the incorporators of the salt works sank a barrel of salt in a hole at the bottom of the Maple River. Whatever the fact, both the bank and the salt works soon failed, and thus ended the manufacture of salt in Lebanon Township.

The first settler recorded was **Daniel**

**Barker**, a native of New England. He had first moved from the east to Washtenaw County. In May, 1834, he settled in sections 30 and 31. By Christmas he had 25 acres under cultivation and purchased 80 acres in section 20, giving him a total of 230 acres in three sections. In June, the following year he became the father of twin daughters, who became the first children born in Lebanon. On November 6, returning from Ionia where he had gone to buy flour and other supplies for the family, he drowned in attempting to cross the Maple River. He was but 30 years old at the time.

In May of 1837 three brothers, **John, William and Andrew Vance**, of Starker, Yates Co., N.Y., were next to settle. John bringing his wife and two children, and the other brothers, unmarried, were all successful in farming.

**John** became outstanding in Lebanon's development, parlaying his original purchase of 40 acres into holdings of 894 acres, in addition to 300 acres given his children. He too active part in organizing the township government, serving 11 years as supervisor and holding several other positions.

Another resident of Starker, **John Vance's** brother-in law, **John A. Millard** settled in Lebanon in July of '37. In succeeding years farms were occupied by the families of **Dr. Norton H.** and **Miner Y. Beckwith, Alonzo D. Brewster, Charles Sessions, James W. Tabor, Harvey Waterman, Russell Smith, Martin Yetter and A. Warner.** Tabor, in 1840, owned the entire section 18.□

## RECOLLECTIONS OF WESLEY E. WARNER

**Wesley E. Warner** was born 11 October 1853 in Lorain County, OH. He came to

Lebanon Twp. with his parents (**Charles J.** and **Angeline J. Warner**) about 1855. He married **Celia B. Burnett** of Gratiot County on 4 September 1883. He died at age 77 in July 1931 and is buried in Sowle Cemetery.

Mr. Warner worked as a teacher from 1872 until he purchased the *Maple Rapids Dispatch* in July 1885. In the last year of his life he wrote several articles for The Clinton County Republican-News in which he described incidents in the early life of the northeast section of Clinton County. Those articles follow:

*11 February 1931*

During the summer of 1855 the Round Schoolhouse district was organized. The school board remodeled a log shanty which had been used by workmen to wire barrel staves in during the previous winter, and **Mrs. Angeline J. Warner** (the writer's mother) was hired to teach.

In the quietude one day a black snake was discovered lying full length (4' 2") in the crevice between two logs about 6' up and above some pupils as though inspecting their work. The pupils were marched out, and two large boys killed the reptile; but strange to say, at the first disturbance of his snakeship, it jumped from its position on the log and landed near the center of the floor at the feet of the boys, then recoiling, lunged at one boy's face and nearly hit him. The school went along as before.

Mention of the above snake's attending that school, recalls that about 50 years ago, the school board hired **Elmer Rogers** to teach a winter term. He tackled the job, but after a month those pupils who did not like him had most all quit school--no compulsory law those days. He had only one pupil each day for a week, then she quit and the board locked the door. Mr.

Rogers went to the school house each school day during the life of his contract and remained about an hour, then returned home. The residents of the district enjoyed making fun on him. At the close of his contract he called for his pay, but the board refused to cash up. He placed the matter in an attorney's hands and got his pay. The board did not laugh. Mr. Rogers is a prominent lawyer in Chicago now and chuckles over his victory in that case.

Some years ago every male citizen was required to pay a poll tax or work a day on the highway. A few dishonest men would refuse to pay or work. **John Pinkney**, an Englishman who lived on the Island many years, was elected path-master. He summoned one fellow who boasted of never having paid a poll tax. As he did not appear, Mr. Pinkney called him into court and he paid with costs added. Mr. Pinkney was getting after others when it was discovered that he was not naturalized, hence could not hold office.

*5 March 1931*

The schools in the Sessions district, No. 3, Lebanon Township, had not been a success for several terms on account of four pupils from a family who resided there then, but have since passed to parts unknown. I heard the director of that time about 40 years ago say that those pupils seemed to be determined to run the school as they pleased or break it up.

He hired a **Mr. Taft** to teach the winter term of 1859-60, and told him that the board wanted him to teach a school for the whole district and not for the troublesome family only. The school had been run by them long enough; the board would stand back of him.

He tackled the job and had things running nicely two or three weeks when he decided to stop a bad habit; viz, he

instructed the pupils that when school opened in the morning, noon, or recess (We had recesses those days.), they should get a drink, then warm themselves and be ready to take their seats when he gave the order--and not huddle around the water pail which always sat on a long bench that ran along the side of the school room. The test soon came. At first school call Mr. Taft took a stand between the stove and the water pail. As he said, "Now, take your seats," all pupils but one went to their seats. That one was **Jane**, the oldest pupil in school and oldest of that peculiar family. She made a rush for the water pail, but Mr. Taft with a wave of his hand, said, "Take your seat." With an angry whirl she took her seat.

Some time later her geography recitation (she being the only member of that class) was called. She boldly informed Mr. Taft that she had not got her lesson. "Very well," said he, "get it, and I'll hear it later." Some time elapsed when Jane wanted to be excused and go home. Mr. Taft inquired about her lesson. She declared she hadn't got it. He told her to get that lesson, and he would hear it; then she could go home. She put on her wraps which hung on the wall near her seat and declared she had a toothache and was going home. He declared she must have that lesson first. She started for the door, but he stopped her. She called to her brother nearby to open the door for her, but the brother told her to go to her seat. Instead she clutched both hands into Mr. Taft's curly hair and appeared to have the best of him. He put both hands on her shoulders and pushed her off and she had both hands full of his hair. She was about to clutch him again when he struck her over the head with his ruler, which flew into pieces about the room. He then caught her by the shoulders and giving her

a wrench and a swing around him dropped her on the floor and her feet had knocked the water pail off the bench. He lifted her out of the water and ordered her to her seat where she sat the remainder of the day with her wraps on. Mr. Taft sent for the director who listened to his report of the doings, then asked the girl if she had anything to say, but she kept silent. The director told her that she must obey the rules if she intended to attend the school, otherwise she must take her books and remain at home for the school board would stand back of the teacher.

The next morning the director and the father of the girl both appeared at the schoolhouse before Mr. Taft came, and the girl's father said he came to whip the teacher. The director told the father he need not wait for he would have to whip him before he whipped Taft; that the board would stand by the teacher, and if he did not want his children to obey rules, he must keep them at home for we were going to have a school for the whole district, and not for his family only.

It is almost needless to say that the father did not whip the teacher, but kept his children at home and the school went on to a successful finish.

The second battle in district No. 3, Lebanon, was much less formidable, and occurred about 10 years later. Strange to say, the youngest son of that peculiar family was the instigator and had passed his school age, but came to school to have a good time and create trouble. The board ordered him sent home and those who were influenced by him in mischief to be whipped if they did not obey the rules. No trouble in that school after that. The late **Sidney Goss**, a 200-pound farmer, was the victor this time. The school took a forward step to No. 1 position where it has since remained.

A **Mr. Evans**, a resident of the district, wrote a few stanzas on this event. I can recall but one as follows:

He seized her by the shoulders,  
Gave her such a wrench;  
Her heels knocked the water  
Pail and all, off the bench.

*26 March 1931*

The site of the Clinton Salt Works is located on the west end of the Island, one mile north of the Sessions Schoolhouse in District No. 3, in Lebanon Township, and about one mile northwesterly of the big mill. Salt water issues from the ground forming a small pool--or it did 70 years ago when the land was covered with timber, and numbers of deer came there to get a taste of the salt water and would lick the stones thereabouts. Many hunters watched for and killed scores of deer at that point. They gave it the name of "Deer Lick," and later it was called "Deer Lake."

At that early day **Orey DeLong**, a farmer, claimed to own that land and endeavored to get enough others to join with him in attempting the manufacture of salt at that plant, but he did not succeed.

*23 April 1931*

Three-quarters of a mile north of the Benjamin Church in Lebanon near the center of the township, is a cedar and tamarack swamp. Sixty-three years ago **Herman Sprague** bought the cedar timber on eighty acres of land which lies mostly in that swamp. He then contracted with the Detroit, Grand Haven, and Milwaukee Railroad, as it was called then, to take all the cedar fence posts he could deliver at Fowler station. He set a number of men busy in the winter cutting fence posts and placing them in convenient piles for drawing out to higher ground.

Three teams with sleighs were kept busy much of the winter hauling those posts to Fowler, a distance of nearly eight miles. This continued for two winters and part of the third. During those winters there were heavy falls of snow. Sometimes the snow was too deep for convenient hauling of those large loads of posts which were piled on sleigh racks with stakes at least six feet high.

About that same time, **George Cuddleback** erected a mill and factory at Fowler for manufacturing wooden bowls, and he scoured Lebanon selecting the finest maple trees he could buy to supply his mill and factory. Many farmers would not sell such trees as they wanted them for making maple sugar each spring. However, he got a good supply that kept his bowl factory busy several years and made lumbering business for farmers brisk to get their logs to that factory.

*4 June 1931*

The road running north from the corners east of the Sessions school house to Maple River passes across bottom lands to the top of a big hill, then across the west end of the island, down another big hill to a bend in the river before reaching the bridge. The main road across the island east and west meets this road at the river bend. This side hill bounded by these roads is of deep sand, and no heavy timber grew on it at the time now referred to, but it was thickly covered by a heavy growth of oak scrub, hazel brush, and huckleberry bushes. In this comparatively secluded spot of several acres was the old Indian burial ground which the red-man had used from about 100 years ago down to the several years this side of the close of the Civil War.

About those early years **Dr. Jeffers** located in the old village of Matherton and

was a son-in-law of the late **Asaph Mather** better known as "Square Mather." He resided in the first house north of the old water grist mill about 50 years. He had a large "bung" eye, possessed a rough, unseemly exterior, but had a true heart and a jolly disposition. He was idolized by his hundreds of patients in Lebanon and North Plains [Ionia Co.] Townships. He always rode on horseback--never in a sulky or buggy, and his faithful steed would canter along for miles at a time.

A large barn frame was being raised on the angling road 2 miles north of Pewamo. They used hand spikes, props, pike-poles, and log chains those days for that work. The last bent had just been placed on its feet when a 20' pike-pole tipped over to the ground, striking a man, crushing his skull, and he went to the ground unconscious. They were hurrying to get a man after Dr. Jeffers when lo and behold, here he came on the angling road. They hailed him. He examined the patient and called for a sharp quinlet. The head carpenter produced one. Doc bored into the piece of skull and pulled it out into position. The patient opened his eyes and smiled. "There," Doc said with an oath, "He'll get well." Doc left a mixture of medicines to put on the bruise, jumped on his horse and sped away.

Doc had a physician friend who wanted a human skeleton, and they arranged to procure one. One night his friend came with horse and Democrat wagon, and they drove to the burial ground described above, 8 miles away. They located a grave and began digging the sand out. Finally, the shovel struck the skull of the skeleton. Then Doc hooked under the lower jaw with a hog hook he had taken along, but the skeleton would not move; so he dug more sand out and tugged at it again, but couldn't lift it. He became impatient and

began to swear. His friend got into the wagon and drove several rods away, fearing somebody might pass by and discover them at their shuddering job. Doc kept shoveling and tugging until the coveted prize was brought out. They loaded it into the wagon and drove to Matherton, then arranged for Doc to go the next night and help to unload, pack, and embalm the skeleton.

Doc would relate this experience occasionally and laugh heartily about the temerity of his friend, but never a word did he drop as to who his friend was nor where he resided.

The old burial ground indicated that evidently more than one grave had been robbed of its occupant.□

## EARLY CHIPPEWA VILLAGES

According to Indian legend, the earliest red-men in Clinton County as well as central Michigan were members of the powerful **Sauks**. But for some unknown reason the territory of the **Sauks** came to be claimed by the **Chippewa (Ojibwa)** nation. The **Chippewas** in the north agreed with a branch of the tribe in southeastern Michigan to launch a full-scale war against the **Sauks**. In this plan they were joined by their northern Michigan neighbors, the **Ottawas**.

The **Chippewas** were extremely superstitious. The chief myth to which they were addicted centered around the evil spirits of the departed **Sauk** warriors who had been murdered by **Chippewa** warriors when they won control of Clinton County.

Even long after the white man arrived, the **Chippewas** believed mysterious **Sauk** spirits walked in the forest to seek revenge. At the slightest hint or sign that something might be wrong, a whole **Chippewa** camp would flee to the winds, leaving their