

DeWitt-- Yesterday and Today

By Faye Hanson

The first roads through this part of Michigan ran through DeWitt. The Grand River Trail followed the north side of the Looking Glass River from its junction with the Grand in Portland, Ionia County, through southern Clinton County, through DeWitt village to Laingsburg, and continued from there through Indian villages in Shiawassee, Genesee and Oakland Counties finally connecting Clinton County with Pontiac and Detroit. Another trail led through central Clinton from Maple Rapids to the present site of DeWitt city, then Scott's tavern, crossing the Grand River trail and the Looking Glass River and was lost in Ingham County. This was many years before Lansing came into existence. The Pontiac and Grand River road was one of the most prominent of these primitive highways. This route lay from Pontiac to Ionia and crossed Clinton County from its eastern to western line. Its course ran as follows: from Pontiac westward in Oakland County to Hillman's Tavern in Tyrone Township of Livingston County, on through Shiawassee County striking Byron, Fremont, Hartwellville and Laingsburg; into Clinton through DeWitt and Wacousta terminating by way of Portland in Lyons, Ionia County. Parts of this first road are incorporated in Round Lake Road. This is why it doesn't run in a straight line. When the road enters Shiawassee County it is called the Grand River Trail. The Grand River Turnpike (old U.S. 16 and Grand River through Lansing) was not opened through Clinton, Watertown and Eagle Townships until 1854.

Judge Samuel Dexter from New York State brought in pioneers to colonize the Dexter tract in Ionia County and they passed through DeWitt in May, 1833. They went westward from DeWitt village and traveled in a northwesterly direction through what is now Riley, Bengal and Dallas townships on to Lyons, this is still called the Dexter Trail and may be taken from Pratt Road to Lyons if you would like to follow in the steps of early settlers of this area.

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THE ADVERTISER
Thursday, Apr. 4, 1974

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Back in 1853 DeWitt had a newspaper called The Clinton Express. At this time DeWitt was still the county seat.

Quoting from the November 19, 1853 issue: The Clinton Express will be issued every Saturday, at the village of DeWitt, Clinton County, Michigan, by Milo Blair. Terms: one dollar a year in advance, taken at the office or sent by mail. Delivered by the carrier, one dollar and fifty cents.

County officers at the time were: Adam W. Partridge, sheriff; Stephen Pearl, Treasurer; Joseph H. Adams, Clerk; Seth P. Marvin, Register of Deeds; Randolph Strickland, Prosecuting Attorney; Courtland Hill, Judge of Probate; David L. Daniels, Circuit Court Commissioner; Orville B. Ingersoll, Surveyor and Mark A. Child, Coroner.

One of the ads reads: Miss Ann Cain would respectfully inform the ladies of DeWitt and vicinity,

that she has just received a full assortment of Fashionable Bonnet Trimmings, and trusts she will be able to give satisfaction to all who may favor her with their patronage.

Another ad: The subscriber would inform young Ladies and Gentlemen of the village of DeWitt and vicinity that he will give lessons on Penmanship, to all who may favor him with their patronage. His system of writing has been tested and approved, in the most fashionable Cities and Villages throughout the United States, and he will warrant satisfaction to any subscriber who will pay him \$1.00 for 12 lessons. School to commence on Monday evening, Nov. 14 at 6½ o'clock at the School House in the village. No admittance for spectators. M. Sprague.

MARRIED: In Olive on the 18 inst. by Uziel R. Owen, Esq., Mr. Harvey Wilcox to Miss Eliza C. Ernest, all of Olive.

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This is not the complete class of 1957, and the fellows were really goofing off as Hawk, Gross, Korte and Parker did not wear glasses. If you will look closely they are wearing the same pair worn by Dave Richmond who did wear them. Also the fellows have necklaces on and this was long before it was fashionable for guys to wear beads.

From left to right Alexander Kloster, class advisor; Jane Miller Thill; Roy Korte; Sue Holiday; David Richmond; Nancy Couzzins Page; Bob Hawk; Gary Parker; Ruth Raby; Jerry Gross; Marilyn Kruger; Sue Thomas Lusty; Gretchen Kiebler Coe; Linda Hanson Allen; Sue Buys Spagnuolo; Carol Corp; Carolyn Phelps; Lois Collins; Judy Brainerd; Margie Ward Lotre and Carol King Mohnke.