

Historic DeWitt

By Kenneth Coin

Last year DeWitt was in the news for the celebration of its sesquicentennial. We were reminded of Captain David Scott and his family; their tedious 6 day journey from Ann Arbor, and the first days at the Indian village of Wabwahnahseepee (Now DeWitt).

Now, one year later, what progress had taken place at DeWitt 150 years ago? The following were news items of 1834:

"Captain Scott, his wife Eunice and two sons David and Charles were living "comfortably" in a log house, approximately 25' x 25' located behind the current city fire station. This house doubled as a hotel/tavern to the many settlers following the Pontiac-Grand River Trail, merely a glorified footpath, which passed its doorstep. The cabin was called "Scott's" a name which also lent itself to the naming of the settlement.

* Twenty acres of Clinton county land were under cultivation. Captain Scott and his sons broke ground in July and the acreage was sown with wheat.

* Sylvester Scott, the Captain's eldest son, returned to the settlement in the fall with his wife, Sophronia and new-born son, George. Their homestead was located one half mile west of "Scott's". (Millbrook Meadows now covers the original farm.)

* A second family, unrelated to the Scott's, came to the settlement. The Chauncey S. Ferguson family carved out a homestead west of that of Sylvester Scott's in section #6.

* Autumn, 1834 saw the return of some Indians to their winter camp at Wabwahnahseepee. There numbers were reduced that year by an epidemic of Asiatic cholera transmitted to the interior of the territory by white settlers.

DEWITT--150 PLUS 1



Kenneth Coin is the author of a 13 volume DeWitt history series. It was printed last year and sold at the public library, which received all the profits from the sales.

Coin spent two years researching and writing the books. Sources included census records, and the state library, business records and township records.

Coin, of Scott Street, is a lifelong (27 years) DeWitt resident, and has also lived in his 130 year-old house all his life. He became interested in history "listening to older people when I was young."

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An often asked question about DeWitt is, "Where did they come up with the name DeWitt"?

When the territorial legislature passed an act on March 2, 1831 which erected our present county, they gave it the name of "Clinton". This was to honor DeWitt Clinton, a former mayor of New York City (1803 - 1812) and governor of the state of New York (1817-1821). Gov. Clinton was instrumental in the concept of the Erie Canal as well as other internal improvements within that state which allowed for a tremendous boom in commerce and travel, both in the state of New York and much of the midwest. Apparently the Michigan legislators, many of whom were natives of New York, felt that Michigan's debt of gratitude to this man could be somewhat repaid by the naming of a county in his honor.

When the first township of Clinton county was organized by the legislature on March 23, 1836, it continued the same theme by using Gov. Clinton's given name, DeWitt, as the name of the township. DeWitt was Gov. Clinton's mother's maiden name.

The records of Michigan's legislature do not indicate whether the use of the name DeWitt originated within the legislature or if it was the idea of the settlers of Clinton county. (DeWitt township originally encompassed the entire area which is now Clinton county.) In any case, it was obviously well received by the residents of this area for they quickly made good use of it.

By the end of 1836 a village, located on the south side on the Looking Glass river, was platted and recorded under the name of "DeWitt".

DEWITT--150 PLUS 1 **WHAT'S IN A NAME?**

When Milo H. Turner completed the construction of George Clark's hotel in New Albany (another platted village south of the river) in 1839 it was given the name "DeWitt Hotel".

In 1842 Capt. David Scott used both names by naming his platted village north of the river, "DeWitt" and for his famous hotel, also constructed that year, the "Clinton House".

It was common practice during the first half of the 19th century to name counties and towns in honor of politicians. The practice was not limited to place names but also to persons, as the given and middle names of many early settlers will attest.

Lovina (Knapp) Simmons who, along with her husband Atwell, was the first pioneer of Riley township (1836) was so taken with New York

governor, George Riley, that she named her only son George Riley Simmons. It was also at her request that Riley township, when organized in 1841, be named in Gov. Riley's honor.

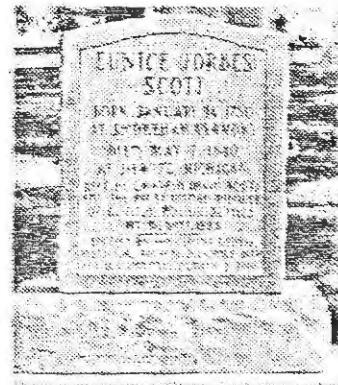
Courtland Hill, a native of Courtland Co., New York and an early settler of DeWitt and Bengal townships, named his son Clinton Hill.

Included among the roster of early settlers can be found names George Washington Knapp, George Washington Topping, Riley Woodruff, Millard Fillmore Pike, DeWitt Brinkerhoff, Andrew Jackson Bement, William Henry Harrison Knapp, William Henry Harrison Cook, Winfield Scott Dills, and DeWitt Clinton Chapin. Among the more unusual are: Martin Luther Knapp and Marcus DeLaFayette Cutler.

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It is often an unfortunate oversight of history and historians to shower an individual with esteem and gratitude for an accomplishment of historical significance while at the same time overlooking the spouse and



family which supported, encouraged or even contributed to the accomplishment. Such is the case of the family of Capt. David Scott, in particular, his wife, Eunice Scott.

Last year, on Oct. 8, to correct this situation, the Clinton County Historical Society dedicated a monument honoring the individual and supportive accomplishment of Mrs. Scott. Local history has not treated her fairly in recording her life and deeds. She died at an early date in DeWitt's history (May 7, 1840) and except for limited references to her in Scott family histories and local histories, very few facts are known.

She was born Eunice Forbes in Shoreham, Vermont during the Revolutionary War, on January 14, 1780. Her childhood years as well as the identity of her parents remains unknown. In 1801 she married David Scott whose own early years are as much of a mystery.

Following the War of 1812 (in which David Scott served and achieved the rank of Captain) the Scott family moved to western New York and settled a homestead on land known as "The Holland Purchase." This homestead, located in Genesee county between the present towns of Covington and LeRoy, had to be forfeited after many years of hard work and improvements because of a faulty title. With little compensation for their efforts the Scotts moved on, in 1825, to the territory of Michigan and settled upon a piece of wilderness land near Ann Arbor. Here they were to remain until 1833 when Capt. Scott, opting for another home in the wilderness, moved the family to Clinton County. Only a few months after the death of a daughter in Ann Arbor, Eunice was compelled to leave what little comforts in life they had achieved, as well as her only grandchildren and another young daughter, and again

Eunice Forbes Scott

break a trail into the wild forests of the frontier.

Eunice set up housekeeping in an elm-bark long house, on loan from the local Indians of Wabwahnahseepee. She remained there for one month until a log cabin could be built.

She probably lived more comfortably than many of the pioneer women of the area but her comfort was amid isolation. A doctor was a four-day journey to and from Dexter, Michigan, a preacher came only once a month, shopping was a week's trip to Pontiac, schooling was not to be had for her young sons. Indians were her closest neighbors and travelers were her closest friends. It was nearly a year before another white woman came to the area to live. It remains unknown what her attitude and opinion was of rustic life. Did she share her husband's enthusiasm for the wilderness or did she simply follow along as the dutiful wife, accepting it all as her lot in life?

Scott family records indicate that Eunice bore eleven children, only six of whom are known to have lived to adulthood. Of the six, one daughter died only months before the Scott's move to Clinton County and the eldest son, Sylvester, died a tragic death at DeWitt in 1838. Only four of the eleven

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By Kenneth Coin

October 5, 1833 was a special day to young David Scott. It was his family's first full day at their new settlement on the Looking Glass, and also his sixteenth birthday. What an adventure it must have been for this young man, living among the Indians of the wilderness. It is from his memory that much of what was recorded of the early years of Clinton County has survived to the present. He was often interviewed by historians of the late 1800's and an essay written by Scott was published by the Michigan Pioneer Society, of which he was an early member. The following is a small portion of that essay:

"While living there (the Indian Village of Wabahrahseepee) a party of Englishmen on their way to Grand River (now Portland) stopped over for the night with the captain (David Scott, Sr.). One of the party was taken sick and captain went to Ionia, about fifty miles by the (Grand River) trail, for a doctor. The man died soon after the doctor came and was buried in a coffin made of bark taken from the wigwam. The funeral was attended by Capt. Scott's family, the only white inhabitants of the county, the doctor and the hired man...

"The captain and two sons, Sylvester and David, went to Ann Arbor for seed wheat with ox teams; not having bags to put the wheat in, it was put loose in the wagon box. On the way home the wagon got mired down crossing a swamp and we had to spread out our blankets and carry the wheat in pails from the wagon and put it on the blankets and when we got the wagon out, loaded up again...

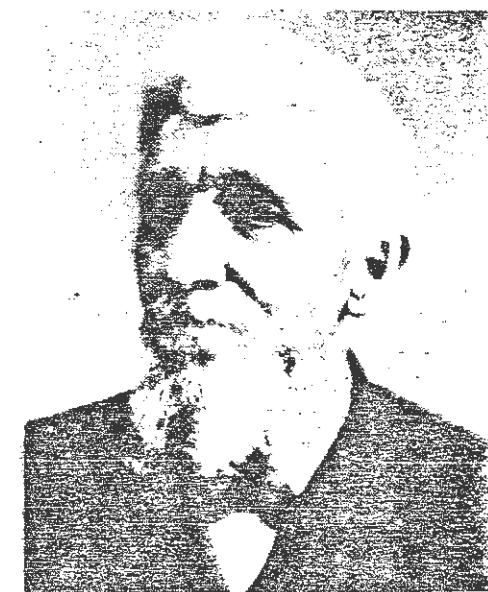
"(A) trip to Pontiac with ox teams took about ten days and as there were no settlers, save a short distance northwest of Pontiac, we had to camp out nights. We put the bells on the oxen and let them feed, but kept a good lookout for them or we might be short a team in the morning...

"The land located by Captain and Sylvester Scott in the year 1833 was the terminus of the oak land west in Clinton County. Their land bordered on the timber land west and north. About half of their purchase was rose willow plains with spots of grass. Most of this land had been cultivated by the Indians and the corn hills were plainly visible. In the breaking up of the ground many relics of earthen ware and of

David Scott, Jr.

stone axes, pipes, and arrowheads were found. Later, when some of the streets in the village of DeWitt were graded, several skeletons of Indians were found."

David Scott, Jr. was born in Wyoming Co., New York on October 5, 1817. He was married in DeWitt in 1840 to Nancy Alta Pike, a daughter of Olive Township pioneers, Mark W. and Nancy (Cook) Pike. David and Nancy had two sons, James Knox and Mark Pike Scott, both of whom became early settlers of Rondo (near Wolverine), Michigan. David was the last surviving offspring of David and Eunice Scott and throughout his long life he witnessed the great change that took place in the DeWitt area. He was a civic and social leader of the community and county for many years, as well as a generous benefactor. David, his wife Nancy, and his second wife, Mary (Gibson) always found room in their home at 609 W. Main for local orphans and displaced children. David died on March 17, 1895 while visiting his niece, Agnes Pike Fair, at Knoxville, Tenn.



CORRECTION:

Several weeks ago I stated that George Riley had been a governor of New York. The fact remains that Lovina (Knapp) Simmons did name both her son and the township of Riley in honor of George Riley but it is incorrect that he was a former governor of New York. The source of this information was an exhaustive family history written by a former DeWitt historian, Agnes Pike Steinhardt. Mrs. Simmons' source was her grandfather, George Riley Simmons, himself. Apparently he was of the mistaken belief that he had been named for a former New York Governor. Who was George Riley????

Historic DeWitt

It was a hot time in the old town that night

By KENNETH COIN
DBR columnist

As hard as it may be for some people to believe, it has been 54 years since DeWitt's "big fire."

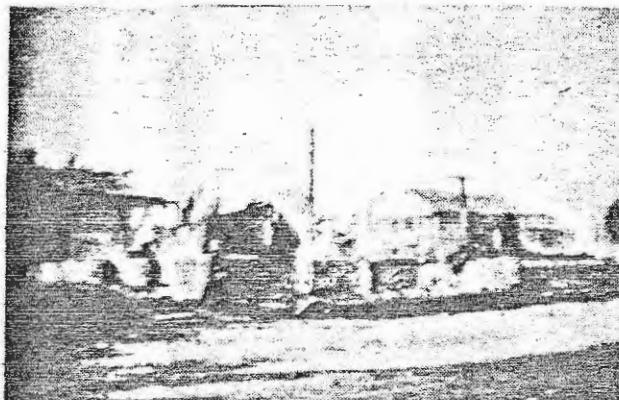
It was a frosty October 21st in 1930 when close to midnight the entire town sat up in bed and said, "What's going on out there?" A fire of unknown origin was quickly engulfing the historic Clinton House on the southwest corner of Bridge and Main.

Ralph Woodruff and Donald Brainard were early at the scene and were able to successfully rescue the old inn's sole occupant, "Blind Pete" Abramson. Don Reed, also early at the scene, was quick to sound the alarm for help.

Volunteers tried in vain to confine the fire to the hotel but the intense heat soon spread the flames to buildings adjoining on the west; Judd Spayde's meat market, Peter and Glenn Halterman's new barber shop and another building.

A slight breeze from the southwest sent embers north across Main street to the general stores of C. Harry Moon, Charles Smiley and Herman Lietzke. The heavy frost extinguished most but it was not long before small fires began igniting on the roofs and porches of these stores. By early morning the fire had also spread to the southeast corner, to the drug store of Melvin Brooks.

Attempts were made throughout the night to rescue valuables from many of the buildings. The first effort was in removing the billiard tables



BEFORE THE FIRE If you were standing in the doorway of what is now Sam's Kitchen, this is the view of the opposite side of the street on October 22, 1930.

from Abramson's pool hall, located within the landmark hotel. Unfortunately, the tables carried across Main Street to "safety" were later consumed by the burning store buildings. The post office, then located directly west of the Moon store, was hastily emptied but ironically this building suffered only minor scorches.

The iron safe from the Brook's store was among the few articles from any of the buildings to be saved. The destruction was a double hardship to the Moon, Smiley, Lietzke and Brooks families as their homes were all located on the second floors of their stores. Marie Moon was distraught that

the flames were consuming her brand new modern bathroom which had a bathtub and everything.

Fortunately, by dawn the fire had been contained. Throughout the following days scavengers had little luck finding anything amid the rubble worth salvaging. Agnes Steinhardt was able to locate the bronze plaque which had been erected on a boulder in front of the Clinton House in 1913 by the Clinton County Pioneer Society, commemorating Capt. Scott and his first settlement in Clinton County. The old hotel had been the last of Capt. Scott's buildings to survive. It is said that negotiations had been underway with Henry Ford for its removal to Greenfield Village.

Efforts to rebuild following the fire were slow, as the country was then in the midst of the great Depression. Money was scarce and most store owners had only a minimum of insurance. Peter and Glenn Halterman set up a temporary barber shop in their home on south Bridge Street and Harry Moon was quickly back to business as usual in a rented garage behind the post office with what little inventory he had saved. By the middle of November Moon began construction of a new store at the same location (114 W. Main). Judd Spayde began construction at about the same time and, like Moon, he chose to rebuild with cinder block and brick. Herman Lietzke followed soon after with a new building on the same order as Mr. Moon's. The remaining sites were cleared of their rubble but were to remain vacant for many years to follow.

Most all of the buildings destroyed had been built in the 1840's and 1850's in the then popular Greek revival style. With their passing, DeWitt lost most all of its original, quaint, country charm.

Historic DeWitt Old photos more than snapshots

By Kenneth Coin
DBR Columnist

Among the tragedies of DeWitt's 1930 fire, the destruction of Harry Moon's general store is one of the most ironic.

Moon was born in DeWitt in 1880, a grandson of early DeWitt pioneers. As a young man he took an interest in the art of photography, a hobby he would continue to experiment with for several decades. Throughout the years his camera captured the image and soul of the community he knew so well.

He opened a general store on west Main street about 1913. This was during the era of the wonderful postcard craze of the early years of the 1900's. Moon produced a number of his views of DeWitt for resale within his store. A number of these cards (though very rare) have survived but it is those which he produced in limited numbers, often for friends or family members, that have become unique and cherished keepsakes. Most of these surviving photographs are still owned by his family or by collectors but there are a few among the collection of postcard views at the DeWitt library.

From the limited number which survive it is assumed that Moon's collection of views of the business district of DeWitt was among the most comprehensive and detailed ever taken by a single photographer. It is ironic that the collection of the business district, which he so carefully documented for posterity, should be destroyed along with the buildings it intended to preserve.

At the time of the fire, Moon had his collection of prints and negatives stored in a darkroom in the

rear of his store. The darkroom and all of its contents were completely destroyed by fire.

Old photographs are fun to look at. They offer us all a quick and nostalgic trip into the past, often into our own personal past, jogging our memories and sometimes renewing some forgotten sense or emotion. They can act as an effective back-up system for our memory, reminding ourselves of things we should not have forgotten. On a larger scale, old photographs can be an invaluable resource to historians and genealogists, supplementing clues and stating a fact.

By itself, a photograph never tells a complete story. Grouped together, they are like pieces to a giant jigsaw puzzle, the more you put together the more complete the picture becomes. When photographs such as Harry Moon's become lost, destroyed or removed from the area to which they pertain it means that the same number of pieces are separated from the puzzle.

If you have photographs of the people, events or places of DeWitt's past, you may want to consider donating them to a local repository for current and future generations to enjoy and learn from. Both the Faye Hanson Public Library and the Archives of the Clinton County Historical Society (located in DeWitt Township Hall on Brook Street) are currently establishing collections of local history related photographs and would be happy to accept your donations.

Remember, a photograph, to be of historical importance, may be nothing more than a snapshot of Uncle Otto behind the wheel of his new Model-A. It too has its portion of the story to tell.



Lorna (Woodruff) Shipley and Ralph Woodruff in the back yard of their parents' home at 409 W. Main. Says Ralph, "I never liked that horse. I was more interested in automobiles but my dad thought I should have a horse." Photo c. 1913.

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In the earliest years of DeWitt's history, a major highway thru Michigan territory was routed by way of the Scott settlement. By the late 1830's, the Pontiac-Grand River Road (now Round Lake Road/Main Street) was carrying an enormous amount of traffic between Grand Rapids and the capital at Detroit. Captain Scott, who early on realized the responsibility as well as the profit in providing travelers with food and lodging, seemed in a perpetual state of building and expanding to keep abreast of the increase in traffic.

In 1841 (some sources date it at 1839), Scott began construction of a large wood-frame building on the southwest corner of Main and Bridge, adjacent to the Scott's large log home which had served for a time as a hotel. The new structure measured 44 x 64 feet with the longest dimension running north and south.

A sailor named Gerry has been credited as the actual builder, although many carpenters were probably required to fashion and place the massive beams, sills and timbers. Local oak and black walnut for the framework was sawn on the south side of the Looking Glass at the mill of Judge Hiram Wilcox. The siding and finishing lumber was hauled by ox teams from Flint. The hotel was completed by late 1841-early 1842. The framework sat atop a high stone wall basement. The first floor contained the principle rooms; parlors, dining rooms, and a large tap or barroom. The second floor was reserved for guest rooms and apartments. The third floor was dominated by a 19 x 64 foot ballroom with adjoining coat rooms. In all, the hotel is recorded as containing 35 rooms plus "closets and commodious halls."

It is not recorded where Capt. Scott's design for the Clinton House originated. It was built in the then popular Greek revival style of architecture, accented by massive door trim of classical order. The architecturally unique feature of the hotel was the incorporation of four gables, opposed to the common practice of using only two. This unusual plan offered the third floor both light and ventilation from four directions.

From the time of its completion, the Clinton

Clinton House hotel

House dominated as the visual and social centers of the young community. Organizations of all forms frequently used the ballroom as a meeting hall and the holidays were often celebrated here with dinner and dancing. When county court was in session, the hotel did double duty, lodging persons involved with county government plus often acting as one of Clinton County's unofficial courthouses.

Captain Scott's youngest son, Charles, became the actual owner of the inn as well as successor to most of the Captain's large land holdings within the village. When Charles Scott chose to sell the "Big House" (as it was locally known) in 1846, it was widely reported that his father was furious. A letter which survives from that period states, "Charles Scott has sold the Tavern to Milo Turner and the Captain is as mad as you ever see anything and swears that he will never leave the house till he is carried out."

Milo H. Turner, a developer of New Albany (south of the river) during the 1830's and 40's, retained the hotel for only a year before selling out to Nelson Alport (sometimes spelled Allport) of Lyons, Michigan. Alport, besides operating the hotel, opened a shoe factory in the basement level of the building where George Wells had formerly run a shoe shop. The federal census of 1850 lists eight shoemakers working in the shoe factory beneath the Clinton House, including Alport's son, Mortimer.

In 1853, the hotel was sold to David Olin who is more often noted as a builder than that of a hotel proprietor. Among his building credits is the old Baptist church on north Bridge Street (now Mrs. Ely's Collectables). It was during Olin's ownership that the popularity of the Clinton House as a hotel reached its peak. Several stage lines brought coaches of travelers into DeWitt daily and, adding to this, the temporary influxes caused by the business of the county government, the hotel found itself in constant demand. Much of this demand was, however, to come to a quick decline with the removal of the county seat to St. Johns in 1857.

Historic DeWitt Clinton House hotel

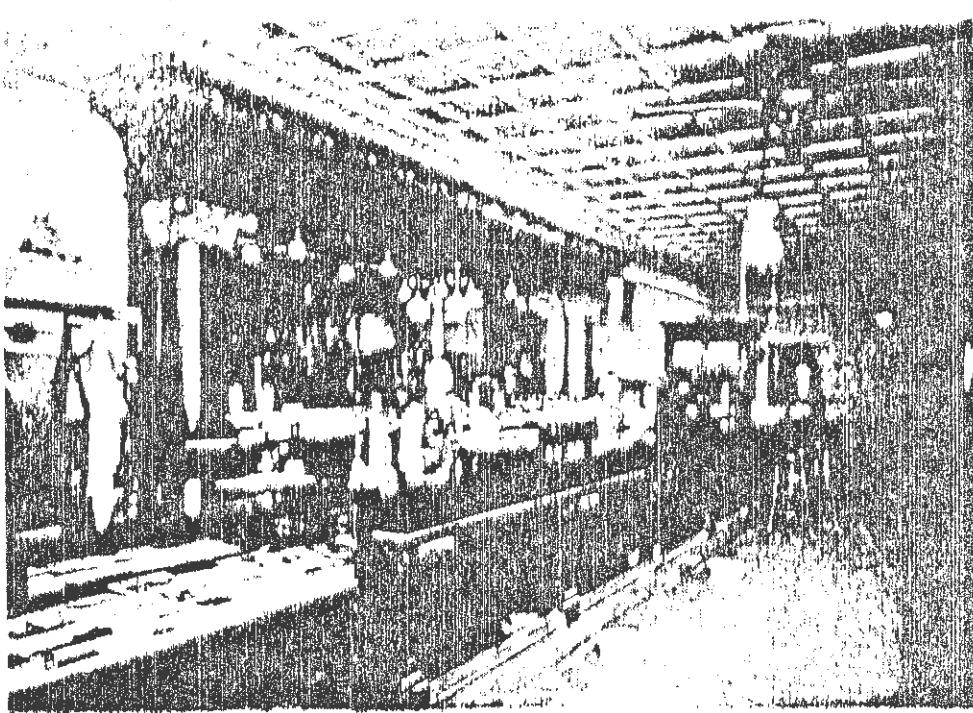
By Kenneth Coin

Part II

By the mid-1860's, the Clinton House had become a losing proposition. Business was low and the few lodgers at the inn were mainly travelers along the stage route between St. Johns and Lansing.

Aaron Norris purchased the hotel in the mid-1870's and over a period of years he redirected the Clinton House from a rambling "white elephant" into a lucrative business. Norris, along with his resident innkeeper Robert Durham, concentrated more on the restaurant trade and tried to promote the hotel's dance facilities. In the post-Civil War era, DeWitt area residents were enjoying a change in their lifestyles which allowed them greater freedom of movement with more spare time to devote to their social lives. Hence, many new social organizations were organized in the DeWitt area during this period and the Clinton House was often used either for the group's regular meetings or for sponsored social events.

Realizing the possible profit of dinners and dances, Norris began building a reputation for the Clinton House as one of the finest entertainment spots in central Michigan. It became especially popular during the winter when nearly every weekend, given good sleighing snow, hundreds of merrymakers from St. Johns, Lansing, Grand Ledge, Laingsburg, and all points in between, would organize sleigh caravans to DeWitt's grand old hotel. Once there they would pack the inn's dining room and feast on its famous oyster dinners. Later, it was up to the third floor ballroom where kerosene



The interior of Joe's Tavern, ca. 1910.

lamps and candles would flicker while the fiddles would cry to the beckoning

dance caller, "Dancers, fill the floor!" Children were often brought along, but by the time the dancing started, they were usually put to sleep in the halls and coat rooms. It is also recorded that the women brought along a change of clothes, the finer dress being reserved for after dinner.

The Clinton House retained its popularity up into the early years of the 1900's, to the ownership of Joe Bard. During his ownership, the old inn was greatly updated with "modern conveniences" and the name was changed to "Joe's Tavern." But social lifestyles were changing also. The opening of the St. Johns to Lansing interurban in 1901 and the coming of the automobile age aided in offering

DeWitt area residents easier access to larger towns with various and newer forms of entertainment.

In 1908, Clinton County "dried up" with the passage of county-wide prohibition (this was done prior to national prohibition). It did not bring about an immediate end to the hotel/tavern, for the tavern could still sell tobacco and non-alcoholic drinks, but after several years with the dim hope of the law being repealed, Joe's Tavern ceased to operate.

Dances continued to be held on a somewhat regular basis up into the early 1920's, but the dance caller's beckon fell on fewer and fewer ears. Most dances were now being patronized by a younger crowd with a preference for the dances being held at the Woodman Hall on East Main Street, the Merle Beach Hotel at Muskrat

Lake, or the Grange Halls of DeWitt and Olive.

The ballroom of the Clinton House was used for a time as a skating rink, but at the time of the 1930 fire that leveled the hotel, only the first floor was occupied.

The rich history of this pioneer inn is so intertwined with that of the DeWitt area that it is often hard to separate the two. For nearly a century it was the firm belief that Capt. Scott's Clinton House was DeWitt and that DeWitt was the Clinton House.

Historic DeWitt

By Kenneth Coin

Letter from a Union soldier

Joseph Cook, one of the early settlers of Riley township, watched three of his children go off to war in the early 1860's. Among them, George, his eldest son, served as a drum major for the 27th New York Volunteer Infantry (his drum is now in the collection of the Michigan Historical Museum where it was on display for many years); William H.H., his youngest son, served in the 3rd Michigan Cavalry; and a daughter, Abigail, served as a camp cook and laundress for the 3rd Michigan Cavalry (of which her husband was a corporal). Needless to say, the Cook family, especially Joseph, was kept busy throughout the entire war with correspondence between family members, as the vast amount of surviving letters from this family will attest. The following is an edited version of Abigail Cook's (Mrs. Phinias Freeman) first letter to her family in DeWitt from the army barracks of Camp Benton, Missouri. Against her father's wishes, she had boarded her husband and brother's troop train as it passed through St. Johns on its way to the south.

Camp Benton, Mo.
Dec. 5, 1861

Dear Father, Brother and Sister,

I rather think you would like to hear from one that is in the land of cotton. I am writing on a camp kettle, my desk is the camp chest.

We arrived in camp Sunday morning and it is the first chance I have had to write and it is after nine.

We left St. Johns Thursday night, Saturday night in St. Louis (Missouri), quite a distance from home. Had a very good journey. Citizens all through treated the soldiers first rate. At Owosso they had a supper of crackers and cheese, coffee and bier (sic.) at eleven p.m. in Detroit, breakfast at Adrian. At White Pidgeon we saw a hundred

soldiers. At Elkhart two ladies treated us with all they could, wish and cheered for the Union to a man.

It does not seem as if I was seven hundred miles from home in the land of Secesh. Their regiments left camp yesterday and there are twenty thousand here now. It is a great thing to see them out on dress parade. It is a fine day, seems more like a summer day than winter.

I am quite well, Phinias and Henry (Wm. H.H. Cook) are complaining some. Henry was on guard last night but I hope they will not get sick. Two were taken to the hospital out of our corps. I hope this will find all in good health, both temperance and physical.

I enjoy myself first rate in Co. B besides myself. One of them is first rate.

I can't write much more tonight for it is almost ten and I have to get up in the morning.

Father, I hope this will find you well. I would like to see you but I am a great ways from home. But you will think of me and not blame me for going with Phinias, will you? For he is near and dear to me.

Write to me dear father, won't you?

Amori and Amina (Cook) you will write to me soon, won't you? I want both of you to write and write all the news you can. Kiss your little girls for me, don't let them forget Aunt Abbie. How I wish I could see them and all the rest of you.

Write and I will write once a week. I am going to write to sister Charlotte (Mrs. Moses Newman). I must bid good night and go to my bunk and rest my weary self and may God bless you all with health and prosperity.

A. M. F.
(Abigail M. Freeman)

Historic DeWitt

By Kenneth Coin

Civil War graveyard

The letter reproduced last week of Abigail Cook Freeman showed a lighter side of one person's experiences during the Civil War. Her brother, George H. Cook, related a much more depressing and surprisingly frank attitude towards his experiences and the war in general. It was written shortly after he had received word that their younger brother, William H.H. Cook, had died of disease at New Madrid, Missouri.

"Camp near Harrison's Landing on the James River
Charles Co., Virginia
Friday, July 25th, 1862"

Dear Father,

...I have seen some rather hard times within the last four months but the seven days of marching and fighting from the Chickahominy to the James River was the hardest time I ever see, but I have passed through so far safe, sound, and well, for which I hope I am thankful. I cannot describe to you the scenes that I have passed through for I have seen about enough of this war. My patriotism (if I ever had any for this war) is about played out. The state of things now existing in our country is bad and it is hard guessing at what the results will be.for I can't help but think that the Rebellion is stronger than it ever was before.

The color bearer of the 27th is W.H. McMahon of Co. G...he

carried them at the battle of Gaines Mills and brought them off with 22 ball holes through them. Men can stay at home and sit around bar-rooms and stores and talk about fighting very comfortably, but when they come to go in where the bullets and shell and grape-shot fly like hail stones it is altogether different.

There is a large old brick house near the landing, the place, it is said, where President Harrison was born...A short distance below the landing is an old burying ground, which before our army came here must have been a very nice place....There are many old graves in the yard. I see one that dated back as far as 1656. I saw one slab that covered the grave of a Lieut. Col. of the Revolution and it is said that one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence is buried in that yard...Some of the graves have a square piece of mason work built up three or four feet high and a stone slab laid on top but most of them, the slab is laid over the grave even with the top of the ground and are so covered with dirt that I could not read them. The yard is filled with noble shade trees and large old grape vines...and make the nicest shade you ever see. But some of our army officers have converted it into a horse stable.

The yard was full of horses, many of the

slabs that covered the graves are broken and torn from their assigned places and some of the slabs are thrown from the mason work and the brick scattered over the yard thereby destroying the mark to that sacred spot where some relative or friend was buried. Large portions of the wall...is thrown down. The large gate that hung between two stone posts is torn from its hinges and destroyed and the yard is full of filth. Now if there is a spot on earth that should be preserved and kept sacred, it is the resting place of the dead, and the officer that ordered or allowed this graveyard to be used for a stable is not fit for any officer, neither is he a man possessed of the principles of humanity. None but a black-bellied Republican or a black-hearted abolitionist would be guilty of such an act.

Now I don't know but I am wicked, I suppose I am, but if there is a right and wrong side of this I sometimes think that the North is just as likely to be on the wrong side as the other. I am not Secest nor in favor of this Rebellion but I like to see men act like men and not like heathen. When the rebels left Yorktown I supposed then that it would be an easy matter to take Richmond but I have altered my mind since then. They have more men in the field than we have and I find it is of no use to believe what we read in the

paper concerning the war for there is but very little truth in them. But, enough of this, I fear that you will get out of patience before you get to read it all.

"G.H. Cook, 27th Regt.,
N.Y. Vol.
to his father, Joseph
Cook
Riley, Clinton Co., Mi."