

# Historic DeWitt

By Kenneth Coin

Chief Okemos

by KENNETH COIN  
Special Writer

Among the most well-known Indians of the mid-Michigan region was Chief Okemos of the Chippewa. Although he was a more familiar sight to the early pioneers of the Lansing area, he reportedly favored the hunting grounds of the upper Looking Glass river valley to that of the Grand.

On December 5, 1858, Okemos, along with the remnants of his once proud tribe of Chippewa, were at a seasonal encampment several miles upriver from DeWitt (near where Chandler Road crosses the Looking Glass) when the aged warrior took sick and died. His mourning tribesmen wrapped his body and placed it, along with his few other precious personal items which would be needed in the afterlife, upon a sled. Forming a procession, they began the long trip to the sacred burial grounds at Pe-Shimnecon (near the present city of Portland).

Many histories and personal essays have been written of the death of Okemos and the procession that followed. Some differ in

details but most agree on the basic format of the event. Judging from the numerous accounts which survive to the present it is obvious that the event, if not all the details, was unforgettable for those who witnessed it.

On the day following the chief's death the Indian procession came to the village of DeWitt. Here they purchased some additional items for their beloved chief that he would need in his afterlife: tobacco, gun powder and bullets. One account also states that they purchased a coffin. This was contrary to their usual custom but is very possibly true for many Indians had, by this late date, taken to the practice of many "white" customs. It is also possible that this was thought of by his survivors as a final honor or tribute to their former leader. Their purchases transacted, they again took up their trek down river towards Pe-Shimnecon.

They stopped that night at Wacousta. It is recorded that the sleigh which bore the body was kept for the night in the hotel livery barn. It is not recorded where the Indians themselves rested. The next morn-

ing the ponies were again hitched to the sled and the final day of travel was resumed.

At Pe-Shimnecon the mourning Indians were out of sight from the curious and watchful eyes of the white settlers and it is here that the stories, handed down from the early pioneers, ends. Undoubtedly a customary ritual was carried out by his tribe after which his remains were laid to rest in an unmarked grave in that sacred ground of his forefathers where the Looking Glass meets the Grand.

In later years Okemos' grave was marked but not unlike his place of death and place of birth, the exact location of his gravesite has been debated for decades. Perhaps it is fitting to the man, so much a legend to central Michigan, that the exact details of his life and death should remain shrouded in mystery.

For a more informative look at the life of Okemos, an excellent source is a small booklet entitled "Chief Okemos of the Chippewa" by Thelma C. Lamb, printed by the Friends of Historic Meridian in 1976.

Among the items that have gone the way of nickle beer and buggy whips are those great obituaries of yesteryear. One would be hard-pressed to pinpoint exactly when they met their demise but upon comparison, obituaries of even 40 years ago show a marked change from those we have become accustomed to; the abbreviated, compact and to-the-point obituary of today. The "Golden Age" of the obituary (if such a morbid subject can carry that title) was made obvious during the turn of the past century when local newspapers were filled with bold-print banners proclaiming the deaths of countless "pioneers." In those days practically anyone who lived past the age of 70 was deservedly or honorarily given the title of "pioneer" with captions like "Aged Pioneer Succumbs" or "Rites Given Sunday for Pioneer." My personal favorite is "Esteemed Pioneer Called Home."

The manner in which these obituaries were composed, although by today's standards are often viewed as long-winded if not altogether humorous, achieved somewhat the status of a fine art. They were filled with praise and glorification in describing the deceased's fortitude in conquering the rigors of pioneer life, and often approached deifying the deceased for the manner in which they faced their death.

Aside from all this, for

modern-day historians and genealogists, these oldtime obituaries more often supply information and insight into the life of one departed which modern obituaries ignore or fail to contain. The necessary criteria for a good oldfashioned obituary would include where and when the deceased was born, who his or her parents were, where the deceased lived as a child, education received (especially if it was limited to the country school followed by the school of hard knocks), where and when they married (and to whom), what accomplishments they achieved in their life, churches and social groups they were associated with, their selflessness to the needy and friendliness to the friendless, the exact (even if embarrassing) nature of their accident or fatal illness (especially the amount and duration of their suffering), the exact time and circumstances of their demise, date and place of the funeral, the minister's name and what his sermon contained, who sang and what was sung, an exhaustive list of survivors, all pall bearers, the numerous friends and relatives from out of town who attended, a description of the floral tributes, and often, a melancholy piece of poetry.

The following obituary exhibits most of these criteria:

M A R T H A A .  
WINSLOW TAYLOR.

Martha Amelia Winslow, eldest of three children of Wellington and Dolla Winslow, was born at West Bloomfield, Oakland County, Michigan, on December 15, 1845, and departed this life at her home in DeWitt, January 13, 1924, aged 78 years and 29 days. Her father passed away when she was a small child and her two little brothers passed away at a tender age and her mother passed away in May, 1875.

On December 16, 1869 she was united in marriage to Albert Taylor of New Hudson, Michigan. On Feb. 22, 1871 Mr. and Mrs. Taylor moved from Oakland County to their farm on section 18, Olive Township where she experienced all the hardships of pioneer life. To this union five children were born, Rollin, Bert, Nellie, Nettie and Belle, who grew to womanhood and manhood and all being present during her last illness.

Mrs. Taylor was a very capable nurse and went far and near administering to those who were sick. Her one sublime faith was to do all she could for those who were in distress. In her younger days she took a very active interest in the church, Sunday School and Aid Society of her respective community. Mrs. Taylor was a member of the Clinton County Pioneer Society.

Mrs. Taylor had been in ill health for several years but in her last illness was only confined

to her bed two weeks.

Besides her aged husband, she is survived by two sons, Rollin of Olive and Bert of DeWitt; three daughters, Mrs. Frank Norris of Olive, Mrs. Will Brinkerhoff and Mrs. Roy Gage of Lansing; two daughters-in-law, Mrs. Rollin Taylor and Mrs. Bert Taylor; eight grandchildren and three great-grandchildren and many friends.

The funeral was held at the Baptist church Wednesday, January 16, Rev. G.S. Northrup of St. Johns officiated. Mrs. Grace Coon sang three numbers. Mrs. Merle Kraas accompanied at the piano.

The pall bearers were Wm. Cole, Byron Blizard, Wm. Phillips, Willis McLouth, Jerome Dills and Frank Hurd. Interment was made in the DeWitt cemetery. The many beautiful floral offerings from the neighbors and friends from away testified to the true worth of the long and useful life that Mrs. Taylor had lived.

Relatives and friends from away to attend the funeral were, Lyman and David Taylor of New Hudson, Mr. and Mrs. Floyd Taylor of Jackson, Mr. and Mrs. George Gillett of St. Johns, Mr. and Mrs. Perry Gillett of Bengal and friends, Mr. and Mrs. Lutz of East Lansing, Mr. and Mrs. Chas. Smith and Mr. and Mrs. Charles Decke of Lansing.

## "Esteemed pioneer called home"

## Historic DeWitt Mark Woodbury By Kenneth Coin Pike

Mark Woodbury Pike was born in Rutland, Vermont, Sept. 9, 1799. Nothing is known of his early years but family histories relate that he was raised by Ephraim H. Utley. In 1818 Mark was married to Nancy Alta Cook (born Nov. 20, 1797 in Vermont) a daughter of Elisha and Abigail (Williams) Cook. The mother, Abigail, was a direct descendant of Roger Williams, founder of Providence, Rhode Island.

The Pike family remained in Vermont until about 1824 when they moved west to Belmont, New York where they remained for nearly fifteen years.

In 1839 the ever in-

creasing Pike family came to the wilderness of DeWitt and made a settlement along what is now Norris road. They erected a log shanty which was soon replaced by a more substantial log home. This second log home provided the Pikes and several other pioneer families with shelter and was not torn down until about 1915.

The Utley family, with whom Mark Pike was connected earlier in life, had already settled at DeWitt and many members of Nancy Pike's family, including her brother, Joseph Cook, were soon to follow.

Mark and Nancy had eight children, four of whom died at relatively

young ages. Of the eight: Mark Woodbury, Jr. remained at Belmont, New York (although some of his descendants later lived in DeWitt); James Green came to DeWitt in 1849 with his young family but died in 1864 leaving his seven children orphans; Nancy "Alta" married David Scott, Jr., son of DeWitt's founder; Elisha Cook followed his Scott family nephews to the wilds of Cheboygan County in the 1880's; Enoch died young; Joseph W. and William R. both followed the dream of the California gold rush but each died within a few years; Jacob Sidney (the youngest) was

somewhat a rover. He left DeWitt for Northern Michigan and New York State.

In 1855 there occurred a series of religious revivals in the DeWitt area, called "protracted Meetings." According to local and family sources, Mark W. Pike became obsessed with the fervor of the revival. A letter written that year by his nephew, Amori B. Cook, declares, "There has been a great revival in this neighborhood and I pray that it may do good. Uncle Pike is clear carried away with it. He feels good now, I tell you."

A g n e s P i k e Steinhardt, a great-granddaughter of Mark W. Pike wrote early in this century that he, "for some time went about the country, calling at school houses, asking to be allowed to preach. He was never



refused as nearly all the teachers were afraid of him. He would also stand on a knoll between the house and barn, gaze directly at the sun, and preach his sermons."

Nancy (Cook) Pike died April 10, 1864 and

Mark afterward lived with his daughter and son-in-law, David and Alta Scott, in the village of DeWitt. Here he died April 12, 1869. Both he and his wife, as well as most of their family, lie buried in the DeWitt cemetery.

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Downtown  
DeWitt  
1885

The Michigan Gazetteer of 1885 lists the following persons and partnership names among the businesses active in DeWitt for that time:

Jotham Averill, shoemaker. (His residence was at the northwest corner of Bridge and Dill).

Dr. Ambrose T. Bates, physician. (His residence and office were contained within the rambling old DeWitt House hotel on the southeast corner of Bridge and Washington).

N. A. Benner, restaurateur.

Carpenter and Walker, masons.

Arthur Cattermold, wagonmaker.

S. L. Fancher, painter.

Hudson Gillett, carpenter.

Samuel Hall, wagonmaker. (His residence, and perhaps his shop, was located in the vicinity of Dill and Locust).

Henry C. Hart, carpenter. (He and his wife, Maria, herself a dressmaker, lived in the older portion of the house now at the

southeast corner of Bridge and Clinton).

Horace S. Holmes, lumber manufacturer. (The Holmes' family farm and sawmill were on Norris road, north of Main).

David Huffman, stone mason. (His residence was on the northeast corner of Franklin and Clinton).

John E. Jayne, drug and grocery store owner. (Located west of the northwest corner of Bridge and Main).

Albert Lott, wagonmaker. (His residence was on the former Clin-

ton County Jail on East Washington Street and his wagon shop was on the northeast corner of Main and Scott).

Willis McLouth, general store.

May and Son, meat market.

Richmond Merritt, foundry owner. (This foundry was located for a time on the southwest corner of Jefferson and Bridge).

W. L. Osgood and Sons, flour mill. (This was the large mill located on the millpond east of Locust, between Webb and Dill).

Edward Pilbeam, blacksmith. (Probably located on or near the northeast corner of Bridge and Washington).

Wm. M. Potter, lumber manufacturer. (This sawmill is believed to have been located in the neighborhood of Main and Wilson).

Dr. Richard Simmons, physician. (At this early date he rented a home and office at an unknown location. The 1880 census places him in the neighborhood of Jefferson and Franklin).

Norman J. Stewart, painter. (His residence was possibly the northeast corner of Madison and Market).

William Terbush, blacksmith.

Dr. George W. Topping, physician and druggist. (His spacious home was at 214 W. Main, the doctor's office was at

206 W. Main--now located at 109 N. Scott--and the drug store was then a portion of the home now at 202 W. Main).

Dey VanFleet, hotel proprietor. (He is believed to have been manager of the Clinton House in 1885).

E. F. Walker, carpenter.

Edwin D. Williams, carpenter.

O. A. Williams, meat market owner.

George William and John Tout, blacksmiths.

Addison A. Woodruff, owner of the general store. (Located at the northwest corner of Bridge and Main).

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Grand Army of the Republic, George W. Anderson, Post No. 58.

The following is the DeWitt post's application for charter:

DeWitt, Clinton County, Mich., April 10, 1882.

To: General B.R. Pierce, Department of Commerce, Commanding Department of Michigan.

Dear Sir:

We the undersigned honorably discharged Soldiers and Sailors of the Army and Navy of the United States, having served between the 12th day of April, 1861 and the 9th day of April, 1865, in the war for the suppression of the Rebellion, and eligible to membership in the Grand Army of the Republic at DeWitt, Clinton County, Michigan to be known as Geo. W. Anderson Post No. \_\_\_\_, Department of Michigan, and request that a Charter and necessary supplies be furnished for the same. Enclosed find Thirteen Dollars, Charter fee.

N.J. Stewart, Aug. 19, 1862, C, 157th N.Y.S. Vol. Inf.; E.H. Bedell, E, 23rd Mich. Infy.; Marion Case, E, 6th Mich. Cavalry; Nathaniel Black, I, 24th Mich. Infy.; Jacob Guisenhofer, G, 16th Mich. Infy.; Silas Newman, H, 2nd Mich. Cavalry; Theodore Steinhart, (?)Q, 16th Mich. Infy.; Edward Hewitt, E, 3rd Mich. Cavalry; John Morgan, 14th Mich. Infy.; Albert Lott, H, 27th Mich. Infy.; James Ledyard; Charles O. Cowen; Henry Moots; Wm. W. Shay, J, 7th New Jersey Infy.; Peter Blood, E, 8th Mich. Infy.; Charles W. Walker, H, 20th New York Cavalry; George Howe; James Hath, D, 6th Mich. Cavalry; Joseph Bushery; James A. Newman; Joseph Norris, H, 111th N.Y. Infy.; Orleans Smith, Aug. 14th, '62, H, 11th Mich. Infy.; Wm. Emery, Aug. 1st, '62, A, 25th Mich. Infy.; Chas. Stickles, H, 24th Mich. Infy.

The DeWitt post was organized on April 25, 1882. It was dedicated to a local man, George W. Anderson. He had enlisted for three years at the age of 28 in Company E, 23rd Infantry, on Aug. 11, 1862 at Saginaw. He was taken prisoner at Cumberland Gap, Tenn. in December 1863. He was held at Andersonville prison in Georgia where he died of starvation on June 27, 1864. He was buried at the National Cemetery there, grave No. 2546. His former home in DeWitt was at the northeast corner of Madison and Franklin Streets.

At the charter meeting of the post the following members were present to become charter members (April 25, 1882): N.J. Stewart, E.H. Bedell, Marion

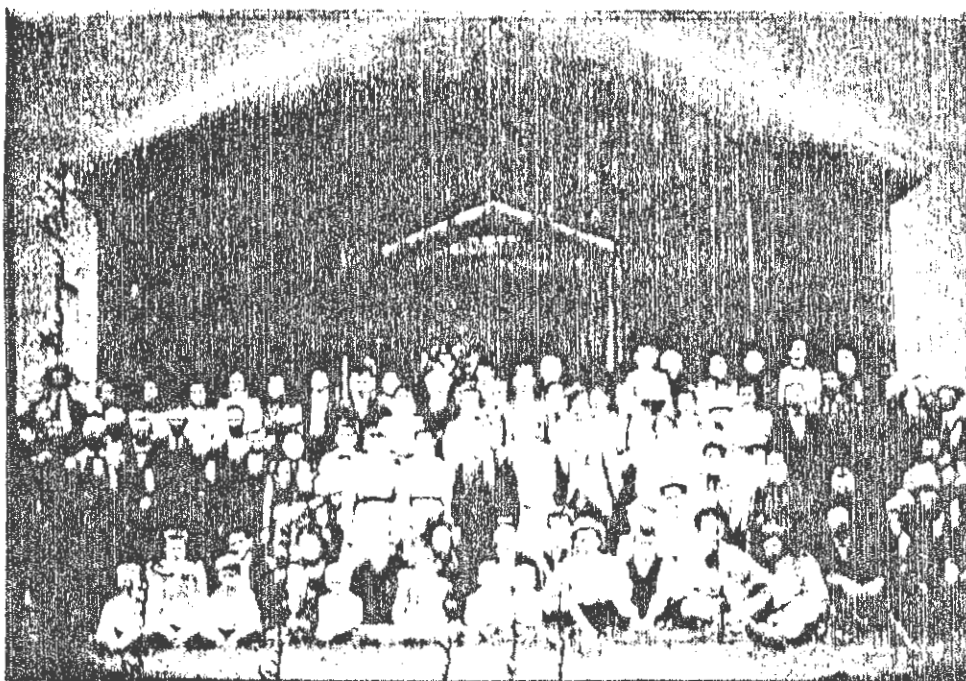
Case, Nathaniel Black, Jacob Guisenhofer, Charles W. Walker, Jerome Heath, James Hath, Theodore Steinhart, Edward Hewitt, Albert Lott, W.W. Shay, Albert Blood, Phinias Freeman and Milo Hewitt.

During their first year the post met at the Clinton House but in 1883 they acquired the hall there they would continue to meet for their remaining years. This hall, currently "Tommie's Pizza," is located at 121 W. Main. Besides the regular meetings which were held alternate Saturday nights, the hall housed the Women's Relief Corps. and the Sons of Veterans, two auxiliary groups of the G.A.R. Unfortunately, the records from neither of these groups could be located for research.

The roster of post commanders includes: N.J. Stewart 1882, J.H. Spring 1884, Allen Dryer 1885, N.J. Stewart 1886, Edward H. Bedell 1887, Edward Case 1888, Edmond Hewitt 1889, John Brink 1890, James Cortright 1892, Allen Dryer 1893, James Cortright 1894, Edward H. Bedell 1895, Edward Case 1896, Hiram Howell 1897, Henry P. Clark 1898, George W. Stimpson 1899, Allen Dryer 1900, James Cortright 1901, George W. Stimpson 1902, and J.W. Baldwin 1904.

Throughout its history, there were over 90 members of Post No. 58 and during its peak year of 1897, it had 55 active members. Although the post was centered in DeWitt, the majority of members were from surrounding farms in the townships of DeWitt, Olive, Riley, Watertown, Bath and Victor. Considering this plus the requirement for membership it is easy to understand why the DeWitt post came to an early demise: its





GRAND ARMY of the Republic members all got together for this photograph at one of their picnics, about 1890.

members simply became too old and lived too far away to continue active membership. Two letters survive concerning the final days of the George W. Anderson Post No. 58.

DeWitt, Mich. Dec., 1908

To: Comrade Fayette Wyckoff.

Dear Sir,

I send by beare \$1.75 per capita tax on 14 members for term ending Dec. 31, 1908. I also send charter &c. as at our last meeting held Dec. 26th, we as a post by unanimous vote decided to disband. Comrade R. Brink will explain the situation to you.

Yours in F.C.&L.

L.W. Baldwin, ex. Commander

DeWitt, Mich. Feb. 1, 1909

Fayette Wyckoff, Asst. Adjt. General

Lansing, Mich.

Dear Comrade,

Yours of the 29th at hand. In reply would say we have not disbanded yet. We have had one meeting since I saw you, but not enough of the members out to do anything. Every member was then notified by postal to meet the 30th of January, and come to a dicision in the matter. The weather was such that no one came out. Our next meeting will be held February 13, no preventing Providence.

Will let you know result of next meeting as soon as convenient.

Yours in F.C.&L.

Reuben Brink

It spanned only a little over 25 years and yet, while in existance, the George W. Anderson Post flourished as DeWitt's most visible symbol of American pride and unity during an era of yet unequalled patriotism.

# Early cabinetmakers

In its early years, DeWitt, not unlike other pioneer communities, relied heavily on its local carpenters and cabinetmakers to furnish settlers with sturdy furnishings for their humble cabins, cottages, stores, and public buildings.

For practical purposes, early settlers were rarely able to bring with them much in the line of furniture on their long and difficult treks through the wilderness to their new homesteads. Small cargo space in most wagons limited the settlers to only a few precious pieces; most often blanket chests and occasionally a cupboard, table, or chairs. The settlers's initial furnishings in their new homes were usually crude stools, stands, shelves, and bedsteads, constructed by the settlers themselves from fashioned logs or scraps of lumber.

As their income increased, as cabinetmakers came to the area, and as mill-cut lumber became readily available, these crude furnishings were replaced by more sophisticated items. The quality of the work done by many of the early cabinetmakers was often of surprisingly good quality.

Local softwood was sometimes used for common items intended to be painted or "grained" (a form of artistic painting intended to imitate more expensive hardwood grain), but for better furnishings, local walnut, maple, or cherry was preferred.

The following information of confirmed cabinetmakers (the listing is probably incomplete) was gathered from numerous sources, but mainly the federal census records, DeWitt township records, tax assessments, and state gazeteers (statewide business directories, published throughout the 19th century).

William Huggett, active about 1850.

David Groom, active about 1850.

John F. McKeen, active in the early 1850s. His adver-

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tisement in the *Clinton Express* (ca. 1853) reads: "Cabinet & Chair Maker; shop near the DeWitt Mills."

John Sands, active during the 1840s. His shop was located near the mill complex on Prairie Creek. In 1843, he was paid \$10 by DeWitt Township for crafting a desk. In 1848, he was paid \$5 for making a table for the township clerk.

Mountain Sprague, active in the late 1850s. The location of his shop is unknown, but his residence was at the southwest corner of Bridge and Washington. He listed his occupations as cabinetmaker, painter, and architect.

William Utley (or Wiley Utley?), active from the mid-1840s until after 1860. His advertisement in the *Clinton Express* (ca. 1853) reads: "Cabinet Maker, Main Street ... All kinds of Cabinet Work kept constantly on hand. Sash, Blinds, Coffins & c., made to order."

Addison A. Woodruff, active (as a furnituremaker) through the 1850s and into the early 1860s. In his early career, his shop is thought to have been located in New Albany. In later years, it was located on the west side of the north Bridge Street (now the Dance Hall Dairy). His residence was at the northeast corner of Main and Logan. He is believed to have been in partnership with his brother, Riley J. Woodruff, for many years.

Riley J. Woodruff, active through the 1850s. His early shop is believed to have been in New Albany. He possibly followed his brother Addison A. Woodruff, to the shop on north Bridge Street prior to his (Riley's) removal to St. Johns. His residence in DeWitt was at the northwest corner of Logan and Main. In 1854, DeWitt Township purchased a "library case and table" from him at a price of \$10.

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## Old store is still a part of DeWitt City

It has long been assumed that Capt. David Scott, DeWitt's first pioneer, overstocked his private provisions for resale to other early settlers and travelers and to some extent, the local Indians. But he has never been recorded in history as an actual merchant.

The first store of record at the Scott settlement was located south of the river in New Albany. It was started in 1838 by Milo H. Turner, an agent for George T. Clark, the owner and proprietor of that village. Originally, the store was housed in a log cabin, but within a few years Milo and his brother, Jesse F. Turner, constructed a larger, frame store building on Rochester Street (now Webb Street) directly east of the DeWitt Hotel. It was not until 1840 that a store was established north of the river.

About 1847, George T. Clark brought his family to New Albany and once established, he took personal control of his business interests.

Both George and his wife, Jane, died within a few days of one another in 1849 and their large estate was probated. The following is a small portion of the detailed inventory, taken by David Sturgis and Morris S. Allen, of the New Albany store. The complete inventory is on file at the Clinton County Probate Court.

|                        |     |
|------------------------|-----|
| 7 Curry Combs (6" ea.) | 42' |
| 3 Bed Cords            | 41' |

|                                 |         |
|---------------------------------|---------|
| 72 Martingale Rings             | 75'     |
| 72 Cut Nails                    | \$10.47 |
| 72 Wrought Nails                | \$7.90  |
| 46 Bottles Sassailla            | \$30.36 |
| 3 Toy Mugs/covers (9" ea.)      | 27'     |
| 3 Tea sets, common              | 75'     |
| 1 Tea set, Flowing Blue         | \$2.50  |
| 25 Blue Plates                  | 78'     |
| 9 Earthen Bake Pans (2' ea.)    | 18'     |
| 2 Vinegar Cruets (8" ea.)       | 16'     |
| 1 doz. Harps                    | 12'     |
| 19 Snuff Boxes                  | \$1.09  |
| 28 lbs. Beeswax (18" lb.)       | \$5.04  |
| 13 lbs. Deerskin                | \$7.88  |
| 6 lbs. Carpet Yarn              | \$1.13  |
| 2 Spittoons                     | 38'     |
| 60 lbs. Tallow                  | \$4.20  |
| 20 lbs. Tobacco                 | \$1.25  |
| 100 lbs. rags                   | \$1.50  |
| 1 jug, Castor Oil               | 19'     |
| 2,000 ft. pine lumber (7" ft.)  | \$14    |
| 6 silk flags                    | \$4.50  |
| 8 RobRoy Plaid shawls           | 38      |
| 190 straw and leghorn hats      | \$58.90 |
| 2 Stoga Boots                   | \$3.50  |
| 3 Muskrat caps                  | \$1.13  |
| 26 Palm Leaf Bonnets (1/2" ea.) | 13'     |
| 8 paper fans (3' ea.)           | 24'     |
| 1 doz. night caps               | 25'     |
| 14 taper lamps                  | \$2.19  |
| 7 candlesticks (8" ea.)         | 50'     |
| 2 lanterns                      | 75'     |
| 16 cotton parasols              | \$2.50  |
| 1 roll, Whalebone               | 75'     |
| 5 p r s. Moccasins (25' ea.)    | \$1.25  |
| 26 thimbles                     | 26'     |
| 3 Best Fur Hats                 | 56      |
| 9 hides                         | \$13.50 |
| 4 silk mourning hnkfs.          | 32      |
| 47 lbs. coffee                  | \$3.29  |
| 27 lbs. tea                     | \$10.80 |
| 3 candle moulds (24" ea.)       | \$1.44  |
| 1 lot fire crackers             | 19'     |
| 7 pair, skates                  | \$1.40  |

The inventory included a large assortment of apothecary supplies and a vast array of yard goods and sewing supplies. The stock from the store was purchased by local merchants located on the north side of the river at a much reduced rate.

The store building was then purchased by Parker Webber, a former miller from the Waterloo Joint Stock Co. of Wacousta. It remains uncertain whether he resumed the retail outlet, but it is certain that by the early 1860s, he had converted the former store building into a private residence for himself and his family. The same fate fell upon George Clark's old hotel and New Albany ceased to be a commercial competitor to the business section of DeWitt.

The old store building is still standing at 110 E. Webb St., the home of Lynn Edin and family.



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It has gone largely unrecorded, but DeWitt, in its early years, boasted a large assortment of boot and shoemakers. The federal census of 1850 lists 11 men in the shoemaking trade.

Many worked as independent craftsmen, plying their trade in small shops or within their homes. Others were employed in larger shops with several others of the same trade.

The earliest recorded shoemaker in the DeWitt settlement was George O. Wells who is said to have established a shop here as early as 1836.

The first shoemakers of record in Riley Township were a father and son team, Joseph and George Cook, who came in 1842 to the southern part of the township. George soon returned to New York state to set up a business in Livingston County.

A contemporary in DeWitt, Andrew Jackson Bement, wrote to George in 1848 and reported the following commentary on the state of shoemaking in DeWitt at the time:

"(Nelson) Alport of Lyons bought Capt. Scott's big house (the Clinton House) and came on and started a shoe shop down in that hole where (George O.) Wells used to work... Peck (a worker for Bement) got a little scared because Alport was going to have two or three journeymen (so) he thought I would have to give up the shop pretty soon. So, he left me and went to work for Alport, but he is pretty sick of it these days. He didn't get the cash every Saturday night as he did when he worked for me. There is now four or five hands at work in the said big shop. Alport has two journeymen that crack considerable on fine boots, but I don't think they are anything extra. If you should take a notion to come (back), I think that you could sell all the fine boots and womens boots and shoes that you could make. I should like first rate to have you come and just burst them on a fine boot. Your boots would sell here before any others. I suppose you know it, if you don't, I do."

The "Alport Shop" referred to here was located in the basement of the Clinton House at the southwest corner of Main and Bridge streets and is the largest shop recorded in DeWitt. The federal census of 1850 lists eight men working there.

The following information of the confirmed shoemakers in DeWitt prior to 1870 is hardly exhaustive, but it does give some overall view of the known shoemakers of the area.

Mortimer Alport, a son of hotel and shoe shop owner, Nelson Alport, is listed among the workers in the "big shop" in 1850.

Andrew J. Bement was one of the first in the area. He is known to have worked from the early 1840s through the 1870s. His shop was possibly located adjacent to his home on 207 E. Main St.

Tobias Foreman is listed between the early 1840s and the mid-1860s but the location of his shop is unknown. He was working at Alport's shop in 1850.

Jacob Francisco operated a shop south of the river, about 1860.

Matthew Huston, formerly of Shelburne, Vt., established a shop at an unknown location in DeWitt in 1848 and continued through the early 1850s. (His daughter, Eliza, later married John Hicks of St. Johns).

William Montgomery is listed at Alport's shop in 1850.

David Gould is also listed there at the same time.

Palmer Roberts started at a young age at the Alport shop (circa 1850) and went on to establish his own shop, possibly at or near his residence at the northwest corner of Main and Market streets, which he continued through the 1860s.

Jonathan Sweet started in DeWitt as a shoemaker in the 1850s, but by 1865 had become the town's postmaster, a position which he held until 1881. His residence was at 113 E. Madison St. and his post office (possibly the earlier site of his shop) was directly west of the Clinton House.

Walter Love and George Fedewa are both listed as workmen at the Alport shop in 1850.

Zacheas VanVolkenburgh is believed to have worked for both Alport and Matthew Huston during the late 1840s and early 1850s.

George O. Wells, the earliest known shoemaker in the county, was working at the Alport shop in 1850, but his earlier and later locations are unknown. In 1850 he was also the resident jailor at the county jail on E. Washington St.

Jonathan Averill, among the last of the "old time" shoemakers of DeWitt, was a relatively late-comer. He is first recorded in the late 1860s and is known to have worked through the 1870s. The location of his shop is unknown, but was possibly located at or near his home at the northwest corner of Bridge and Dill streets.

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By Kenneth Coin

The following essay was written by Agnes Pike Steinhardt, an early compiler of DeWitt area history and herself a Knapp family descendent.

Samuel Knapp, youngest child of Samuel and Polly (Hines) Knapp, was born in Richmond Township, Ontario Co., New York, April 12, 1810.

Lydia Maracong, eldest child of Joseph and Polly (Bowers) Naracong, was born in Richmond Township, Ontario Co., New York, April 16, 1818.

They were married by Olivet Adams, justice of the peace, at Honeoye, New York, Sept. 26, 1833. Soon after their marriage they came of Michigan to visit Samuel's sister, Lovina ... who had come to Michigan in 1832, locating in Washtenaw County. Samuel and Lydia returned to New York where they lived until the fall of 1843 when, with five children, they again came to Michigan to make a home. They first settled in the town of Atlas, Genesee county.

In April 1845, they came to Clinton County to the home of Samuel's sister, Lovina, who with her husband (Atwell) Simmons and two children had emigrated from Washtenaw County ... in 1836. Samuel had purchased 10 acres of land of his brother-in-law, Atwell, located in section 30 of Olivet Township. Upon this land he erected a log cabin. In the fall of 1845, Samuel moved his family into their new home.

On May 3, 1852, Samuel purchased 80 acres of land located in the southwest quarter of section 19 in Olivet Township of Levi Brown. He resold the old 10 acres to Atwell Simmons and built a good-sized square house on the newly-acquired farm. This house was constructed of logs with a large fireplace where the cooking and baking were done in pioneer style. Later, a lean-to was added to the entire length of the east side of the house, making a kitchen and bedroom. (This homestead was located at the present corner of Airport and Lehman roads).

In this home were born to Samuel and Lydia Knapp, two sons and a daughter making it a family of 11 children. But, sooner or later home ties must be broken.

During the Civil War, John, at the age of 25, bade his parents, sisters, and brothers goodbye and went out in answer to his country's call, never to return. He died at Bowling Green, Ken., in March of 1863.

From this home too, three daughters were carried to their last resting place. Sarah died of paralysis in March of 1862. Polly met a sad fate. She rode to DeWitt with a friend whose name was George Cook of Gratiot County. While he attended some errand, Polly was left sitting in the carriage. The horses became frightened and ran. Not having a hold on the reins, Polly could do nothing. When at the foot of the grade north of town (in front of the Post Office on Bridge Street) she climbed over the seat and jumped from the back of the carriage striking her head against a large stone. She died soon afterwards, Aug. 4, 1864, aged 19 years. Seventeen days later, Aug. 21, Mary, who had been stricken with diphtheria, passed away at the age of nine years.

In 1871 or '72 a new frame house replaced the log structure. The builder was John Madden. This house continued to be the home of Samuel and Lydia Knapp during the remainder of their lives.

During the earliest years, this couple endured many hardships of pioneer life and experienced many of the joys and sorrows which come to those who bravely strive to make a home and rear a family in a new land. Their declining years were quiet and peaceful, being cared for by their son, Ira and wife, who lived very near them. Samuel passed away in Dec. of 1894, aged 84 years. Lydia followed him 13 months later at the age of 78. All that was mortal of these noble pioneers was laid to rest in the DeWitt Cemetery beside their children who had preceded them.

Agnes Steinhardt

Jan. 24, 1938

The family of Samuel and Lydia Knapp included: William Henry Harrison Knapp (1836-1931), Huldah Ann Knapp Goodell (1837-1923), John David Knapp (1838-1863), Joseph Barney Knapp (1846-1927), Samuel Mark Knapp (1842-1922), Sarah Ann Knapp (1847-1862), Ira Monroe Knapp (1850-1924), George Washington Knapp (1853-1938), Mary Elizabeth Knapp (1855-1864), and Ezra Frank Knapp (1858-1919).

# Historic DeWitt

By Kenneth Coin

Monday, March 25, 1985

## DeWitt capital city?

A longstanding legend of DeWitt is that it was, for a brief time, the state capital of Michigan. The story itself is false but it has its origin in a very real and interesting facet of Michigan history.

The state constitution of 1835 mandated that a permanent site for the state capital was to be decided upon by 1847. This issue brought about one of the fiercest political battles in the history of the state. As the legislators battled the issue, countless towns and settlements all across the state vied for the chance to push themselves into the state limelight.

The house began the debate and subsequently voted on the following sites, all of which were defeated: Marshall, Jackson, Grand Blanc, Byron, Ann Arbor, Detroit, Dexter and Eaton Rapids. The settlement of Lyons at one point won by a vote of 30 to 28 but that vote was later reversed. The house finally passed the motion of the site of Lansing Township. It had been heavily promoted by landowner James Seymour, who had promised not only land for governmental use, but also agreed to build temporary buildings which he would inturn lease to the state.

After passing through the house, the bill was sent to the senate where even more sites were considered and voted upon. Jackson, Marshall, Lyons, DeWitt, Ann Arbor, Detroit, Caledonia Township (Shiawassee County), Corunna, Flint, Lansing, Eaton Rapids, Ingham and Albion were all voted upon. Some, including DeWitt, received majority votes but were later reversed. The senate, apparently tiring of the debate, finally approved the house bill designating Lansing as the new capital site in Michigan.

Although DeWitt's hopes of becoming the capital site did not materialize it should be noted that it did very well among a very select group of competitors. It lost by a vote of 9 to 12 and fared equal or better than the votes taken in Caledonia Township, Detroit, Ann Arbor, Corunna, Flint, Lansing (first vote), Eaton Rapids, Ingham and Albion.

An interesting sidelight of this story comes in the form of an anitue clock now owned by a lady in Kalamazoo County. It has been in her family for many generations and with it comes the family lore that it was won in a raffle during the mid-1840s by a member of the Keeney family. The raffle, it is said, was sponsored by a group of DeWitt citizens to raise funds to lobby for DeWitt's selection as the capital city. It is a very fancy clock with an equally fanciful tale. But what more precious as item could be chosen to open the pocketbooks of the citizenry than a timepiece. Clocks, during this era, were such a rarity in the DeWitt area that the majority of settlers could tell the hour only by watching the sunlight and shadow creep across their window ledge the hours being marked off by precisely placed notches.

I recently received a group of photographs from the family of Dyle J. Linn which are to be donated to the Faye Hanson Public Library. Can anyone help identify the men in these pictures?

Wesley Linn, an old time owner of a hardware store in DeWitt, is pictured above between two unidentified men. Below, Mr. Linn is seated at left with a mandolin, while the other gentleman is unknown. The photograph of the two muscians was taken by H.J. Newcomb, a travelling photographer who came to DeWitt on a regular basis and set-up his temporary studio at the Clinton House. He was also an experienced outdoor photographer as many of his known pictures of the DeWitt area will attest. Further information on this photographer and the existance of his negatives is also being sought.

April 1, 1985

## By Kenneth Coin

DeWitt's first public school (and the first in all of Clinton County) was located at the Goodrich neighborhood, west of DeWitt. It opened in 1836 on the homestead of Alanson Goodrich, presumably in a log cabin. The exact location of the building has been lost, but it was on the north side of Howe Road near the intersection of Schavey.

During this early period, the Goodrich homestead was on the north side of Howe Road and comprised much of the later Rhine Henning Farm (the house now owned by Ernest Snetting at 3440 W. Howe). This earlier homestead should not be confused with the more historically familiar Goodrich homestead of later years, located on the south side of the Looking Glass River, east and west of Schavey Road, which later generations would know as the Theodore Schoewe (later changed to Schavey) farm.

In 1836, there were few families living at the actual Scott settlement which was to become DeWitt and, when opened, the Goodrich School was more centrally located to the early residents of the area. Most of the early pioneers had chosen homesteads which lay to the west of Scott's.

Among the earliest families living in the neighborhood of Alanson Goodrich were: Sylvester Scott, Franklin Oliver, William W. Webb, Ephriam H. Utley, and Chauncey Ferguson.

This Goodrich School was formally listed as School District No. 1, but it is not known to have been limited to a specific geographic area. In fact, it has been recorded that the school was open to any child "willing" to walk the distance. Some settlers living too far a distance, but determined to provide their children with the best education possible, arranged to have their children live with settlers closer to the school.

As late as 1847, Amori B. Cook of Riley Township mentioned in a letter to his brother in New York that he was then living at the farm of William W. Webb and attending the Goodrich School. By the 1850s, most rural areas had been divided into school districts and the Goodrich School, deemed to be at an impractical location, was eventually discontinued.

The first (and only recorded) teacher at the Goodrich School was Miss Betsey Gooch who lived over five miles away in Watertown Township. Her parents, Benjamin and Lucy (Boynton) Gooch, had come to Clinton County the previous year. Several of Betsey's sisters are known to have been early teachers at other area schools and could possibly have also taught at the Goodrich. Betsey was later married to Dr. Seth P. Marvin, the first physician in Clinton County and later a prominent DeWitt citizen.

No description of this schoolhouse has survived, but it can be assumed that it was similar to the following description of the Simmons School in Riley Township in 1850, recorded by Ella R. Simmons.

"This was built without boards or nails. Logs were fastened together with wooden pins. A shake roof was bound on with poles. The door was made of an old dry-goods box in which the goods were packed when moving to this place. The floor was of split logs with a space in front of the fireplace filled with clay for a hearth. A plank across one side formed a desk and some rude benches served as seats."

William H.H. Knapp recorded of his experiences as a pupil in the first session of the Simmons School in 1846.

"The teacher (Miss Indiana Walton) had no timepiece, but took the time from the sun as it shone through a hole in the roof where there had been a stick chimney; the sun touching certain spots on the floor at a certain time."

## Historic DeWitt

By Kenneth Coin

On March 12, 1839, the state legislature passed an act organizing Clinton County. It also designated DeWitt as the seat of government or "county site," as it was often termed by the early settlers. This designation offered the Scott Settlement was a great advantage over the other settlements in the county for as the county seat, DeWitt was able to attract many lawyers, merchants, doctors, and craftsmen.

An early concern of the county government was the erection of public buildings to accommodate the business of the government. Within a year, proposals were made for the building of a combination jail and jailor's residence and for an office building. Monies were appropriated and the building contracts were let with a completion date set September or October of 1841.

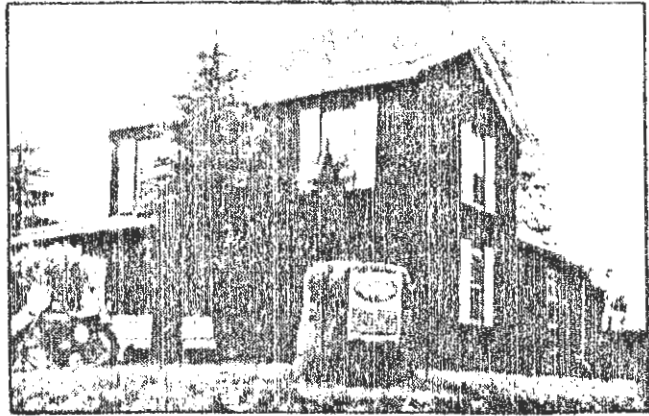
The contracts were originally awarded to William H. Utley, his bid being \$439 for the office building and \$1,078 for the jail and residence. The buildings were not completed by the specified time, however, and in March of 1842 the contracts were let to Seth P. Marvin. The land for both building sites was given by Capt. David Scott. In an attempt to fortify DeWitt's claim to the county seat, the captain stipulated in the deeds that the land was to belong to the county only so long as the county seat remained in DeWitt. Further, that upon the removal of the county seat, the building were to be removed and the land to revert back to himself or his heirs.

The jail (still located at 206 E. Washington) is a two-story frame structure, originally of a vernacular Greek revival design. The house itself was used as a residence for an official jailor (and family, as the case may be), while the jail cells were contained within the basement of the structure. The cells themselves were removed many years ago, but it is said that up until recent times there remained traces of their original position.

The county office building was given a more honored location, on the north side of the Pontiac-Grand River Road (now East Main Street) centered on Capt. Scott's "public square." When he platted DeWitt in 1841, Capt. Scott set aside this block, bounded by Main, Bridge, Jefferson, and Franklin streets, as a public square. The deed for this square remained in his name, however, so it was his to dispose of as he so chose. He did not deed over the entire square to the county, but only a small lot, barely large enough to accommodate the proposed office building.

The office building or "court house" as it was generously referred to by the citizenry, was a one-story frame structure of Greek revival design, about 30 feet wide and 18 feet deep. It sat away back from the street on a rather high incline. It was originally divided into two rooms (or so it has been recorded), each with its separate entrance behind an elevated porch. One of the rooms was occupied by the county clerk and register of deeds and the other by the county treasurer and judge of probate. It had windows on all four sides for it was then the only structure on the square.

Facilities for the county court, juries, and the Board of Supervisors were rented throughout DeWitt's term as county seat. From 1839 to 1847, space was rented from Capt. Scott, first at his building on the southeast



**JAILHOUSE** — This is the first Clinton County Jail, which was built in 1842 on a Washington Street lot donated by Capt. David Scott.

corner of Washington and Bridge and later at the Clinton House. From 1847 to 1855, the schoolhouse on West Washington Street was rented. In 1855, the Clinton House was again employed and, in 1856, C.M. Derbyshire rented space at an unidentified location. The old Baptist Church, currently Mrs. Ely's Collectables on North Bridge Street, was rented in 1857 and is now the only unofficial courthouse in DeWitt still standing.

In 1857, the county seat was removed to a new town called St. Johns and DeWitt's heyday as the center of Clinton County affairs came quickly to an end. The office building was immediately emptied, but the jail continued to serve its original use until 1862 when a suitable jail in St. Johns was completed.

Honoring Capt. Scott's provision in the original deeds to the county property at DeWitt, the jail and office buildings were transferred back to the Scott family, namely David Scott Jr. He sold the jail which was soon converted into a private residence, but retained possession of the office building. This building soon became the township hall of DeWitt. David Scott rented the building to the township for the usual price of \$1 per annum. This agreement remained in effect until 1895 when, after the death of Mr. Scott, the township decided to build a hall on adjoining property.

The old structure then fell into quick disrepair. The building, which had witnessed countless speeches, election returns, sheriff's sales, and the like, was torn down in 1925 by Glenn Cole to make room for the present cement block building which now houses O'Shaughnessey Chevrolet's body shop.

## Historic DeWitt

By Kenneth Coin

### History of schools

Many early histories agree that the first village school in DeWitt was established in 1840. These histories also claim or elude to the fact that the first schoolhouse was built on the site of the present Fuerstenau Building on Washington Street. Several facts have recently come to light which contradict this old theory and thus, rewrite DeWitt's school history.

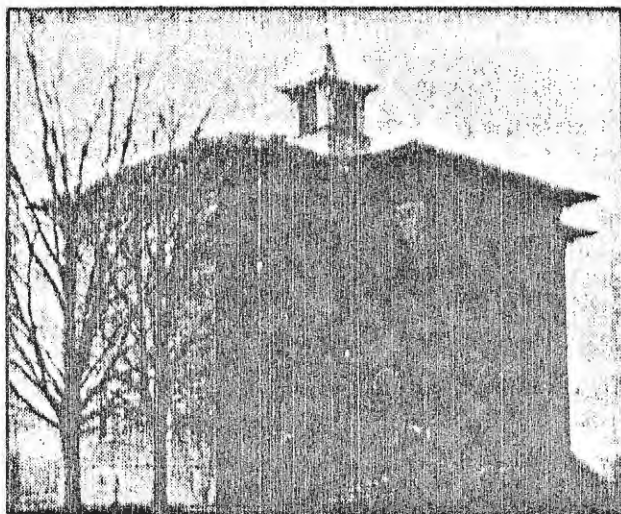
The full block on which the Fuerstenau School is located was designated for a school by Capt. David Scott's original plat of DeWitt in 1841. This block, however, was not donated by the Scott family, but rather sold by them to the DeWitt School District in April 1847 for the sum of \$75, seven years after the first school is said to have been established.

An earlier land transaction was made between the Scott family and the DeWitt School District, dated 1842, whereby a small lot (the east half of lot 374, block No. 48) on the west side of S. Bridge Street was purchased. This lot, currently vacant, is directly north of the old barn (formerly the Coverdale cheese factory) in the 200 block of S. Bridge.

This land record of 1842, while it does not establish where the first school was actually located, does indicate that the earliest village schools were not built on the same location as the present Fuerstenau Building. It might be assumed that the first village school followed the pattern of the early country schools in that it could have been located at various places wherever vacant space was available to be let or rented.

The fate of the Bridge Street School site remains yet unknown. The school district retained ownership of the property even after the "school block" was purchased in 1847 and the former site does not show up on the tax rolls until 1855, then being owned by Dr. Seth P. Marvin. It has been suggested and indeed it is highly possible that this Bridge Street School was the building which the village school district rented to Clinton County from 1847 to 1855 for use as a courthouse rather than the Washington Street School as has been assumed.

It has also been suggested through oral tradition of older residents that this Bridge Street Building was later used as a private school: DeWitt is known to have had several prior to the days of "country normal." These private or "select schools" supplied education beyond the eighth grade limit of the public schools and were actually open to boys and girls alike for a tuition. Some, like that of Mrs. Caroline Bement,



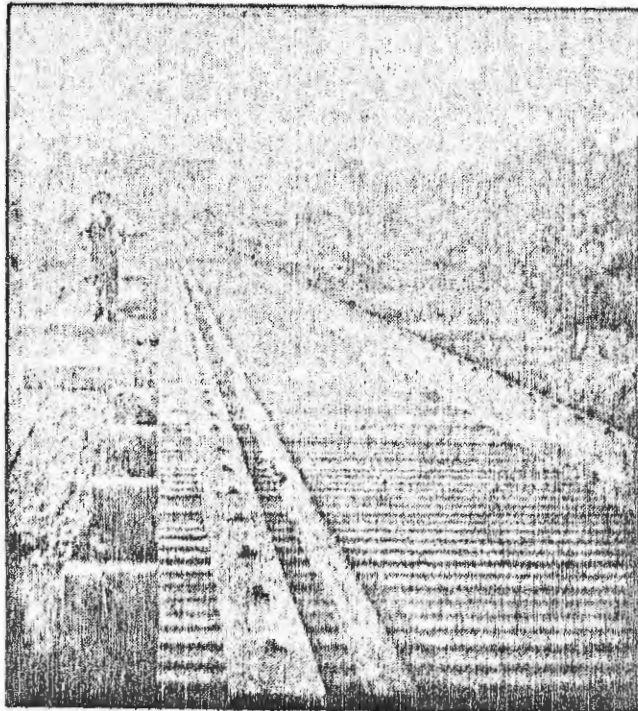
DEWITT UNION SCHOOL was built in 1870, but burned down in 1936. It was located at the site of the present Fuerstenau School on Washington Street.

remained long-running institutions and others, mostly forgotten, were rather short-lived.

The schoolhouse which was built on Washington Street (circa 1847) was a wood frame structure of with no photographs or descriptions that can be located. It served the village until 1870 when a larger schoolhouse was erected in the center of the block. This was a two-story brick structure of Italianate design with a bracketed hip roof topped by an ornate bell tower. It was used until 1936 when it was gutted by fire.



# First train in DeWitt



BRIDGE VIEW — From the top of the Looking-glass River Bridge, one could see the railroad tracks stretching toward the horizon.

April 22, 1985

## Historic DeWitt

By Kenneth Coin

July 22, 1901 was a historic day in DeWitt, for the first train ever arrived on the newly-constructed "Lansing, St. Johns & St. Louis Railroad." Although the original plan of connecting Lansing with St. Louis never materialized for nearly 30 years, this small electric railroad brought the modern age to the little hamlet of DeWitt.

The day was to mark an important turning point in DeWitt's history and it appears that the town feverishly anticipated the change that was about to take place. The festive occasion was recorded in the *Clinton County Republican*:

"The long-looked-for day, in the annals of DeWitt has at last dawned, and the first train of cars passed through the little village ... It was a 'Red Letter Day' in DeWitt history. The citizens welcomed the iron monster and its freight, by ringing the bells in the church and schools until the air reverberated with the sound. A delegation decked the engine with brooms, flags, hunting, and flowers. All were pleased to bid them welcome." For nearly two years a steam locomotive was used on the line until electrical lines and generator plants could be completed.

Dey Van Fleet (yes, Knight's brother) recorded the occasion with these photographs which, though they are now faded with age, offer us a rare glimpse of the first days of the "interurban." The captions of the pictures are Mr. Van Fleet's originals.

A special thanks to Gerald Pike for sharing these views with us. They will, no doubt, bring back many special and happy memories to a large number of older residents who fondly remember "the cars."

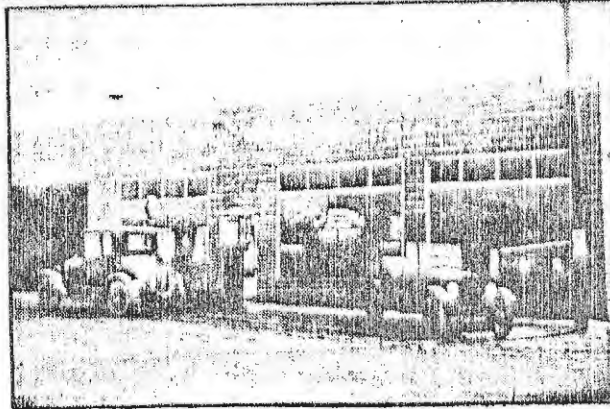
# Opinion

## Historic DeWitt

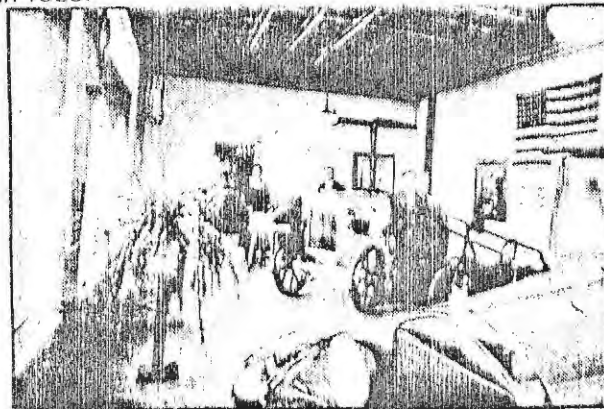
By Kenneth Coin

May 2, 1985

Apr. 29



TERRANOVA'S in downtown DeWitt was once a Ford dealership. This is what the building looked like in 1925.



THE INSIDE of the building was a showroom for "Pete" Griswold's Ford cars.

## Former dealership

Most people remember Terranova's Thrift Way before it was enlarged and many will remember when it was "Reed's." Some will recall when it was the Ford dealership, but probably few can remember back to when these photographs were taken. The year was 1925 and L.J. "Pete" Griswold had just recently purchased the Ford dealership in DeWitt.

DeWitt's first Ford agency was established about 1914 by Dyle J. Linn during an era when DeWitt still retained an abundance of blacksmiths, harness makers, feed barns, and livery stables. Linn remained in business until about 1920 and was then succeeded by the partnership of Pennell and Coverdale. They retained the partnership only a few years and sold out to Edward S. LaNoble.

LaNoble, a man more familiar to older Bath area residents, is responsible for constructing the present building at the northeast corner of Washington and Bridge streets. Although built mainly of block, much of the lumber used in the construction was cut locally and milled by Marc Cutler on his farm in Riley Township.

In 1925, the agency was purchased by L.J. Griswold who built-up a fine reputation as a dealer of Ford automobiles and Fordson tractors. He, with his later partner Ralph "Bill" Overholt, retained the dealership until 1955.

## Historic DeWitt

By Kenneth Coin



**FAMILIAR SIGHT?** — This is the view looking north on Bridge Street, ca. 1900. The rutted wagon path pictured here might look strangely similar to the current Bridge Street while construction is underway.

## Roads remembered

Have you seen what they're doing to Bridge Street? If you have, you may think, "what a mess." Yet, even in its present condition it probably would have been considered a blessed thoroughfare, equal to our newest freeway, to the first pioneers of Clinton County.

In the 1830s, the roads (if in fact they could fall under the category of "roads" by modern terminology) of Clinton County were merely openings cut through the forests and swamps. Tree stumps were seldom removed from the path for this process only lead to large ruts which could easily trip an ox or break the wheel or axle of a wagon. Detours around swamps, marshes or unfordable rivers were often measured dozens of miles and small sink holes, dangerous enough to swallow up a team of oxen, could appear seemingly overnight. Such was the state of the art for modern roads in Michigan territory of the 1830s.

The Pontiac-Grand River Road, among the most famous of early Michigan turnpikes, was often recorded with descriptions like those listed above. This road wound its way north and west from Pontiac to the wilderness of central Michigan and was the road used by most pioneers of this area in making their trek to the new lands of Clinton County. The road was cut, or at least marked, as far as the Indian village of Wabwahnaheeseppee (presently the site of DeWitt) in the summer of 1833 by a colony of settlers headed by Samuel Dexter.

This colony eventually landed in Ionia County where they founded the present city of Ionia. Their road followed an ancient Indian path which probably dated back countless generations. This road, later known as the Pontiac-Grand River Road (or trail) followed the route of the present Round Lake Road east of DeWitt. In fact, it still goes by the name of "Grand River" in Shiawassee County.

With the opening in the 1830s of the DeWitt area and all points west, the Pontiac-Grand River Road was extended further west, beyond DeWitt, to Wacousta, Portland, Lyons, and so on, eventually ending in Grand Rapids (or Grand Haven as some sources claim).

Exactly where and how this road passed through DeWitt remains somewhat of a mystery, at least to this

writer. It is known that upon entering DeWitt from the east there existed for many years a sharp southern turn near the site of the present City Hall. There, a road went south to cross the Looking Glass River and intersect with the present-day Dill Road at a point somewhere east of Prairie Creek.

This could indicate that although a branch of the Pontiac-Grand River Road did lead into the present town, the main thoroughway bypassed the Scott settlement by going south and then west, a theory which is substantiated by legal descriptions of land south of the river along Bridge and Webb Streets which cite "the Pontiac-Grand River Trail" as a landmark or boundary. Land descriptions of the same period, however, also note the present west Main Street as the Pontiac-Grand River Road. It has been theorized (and in fact seems the easiest solution) that there were probably two routes of the road between DeWitt and Wacousta; one that lay to the north and one to the south.

In regards to Bridge Street itself, it seems only fitting that this street should now be selected for such tremendous improvement. According to Capt. Scott's plat of 1841, Bridge Street was to be the major avenue bisecting the village. It was laid out 99 feet wide opposed to the 66 feet of all other streets. His reasons for this are now unknown but it must have seemed odd to some at the time, for in the 1840s Main Street was already the most-often-used street in the settlement.

It is believed that it was shortly after the plat was completed that the crossing of the Looking Glass River was moved from its former site further upriver to the present location. The natural lay of the land indicates that the grading down and building up, necessary on both banks for a feasible crossing, could not have been an easy feat given the tools and technology available to the still isolated settlement. The antique debris found in the road bed, especially on the northern bank, clearly show that anything and everything possible was used to fill in the grade on more than one occasion during its long history of improvements.

May 13, 1985

# Historic DeWitt

By Kenneth Coin

## Family histories

Last week when I received my copy of the *DeWitt/Bath Review*, I opened first (as I always do) to this article to allow the mistakes that I made a chance to jump out and slap me in the face. (Nothing ever looks incorrect until its too late to change it). Secondly, out of habit, I turned to the obituaries. Having an interest in local and family histories, I was both surprised and fascinated with what I read.

There were the obituaries of four long-time DeWitt area residents, three of which were born here in the last century. The combined ages of these four octogenarians equaled about 350 years. A tremendous amount of life, most of it spent here in the DeWitt area. What a fantastically interesting yet diverse story the combined memories of these four could have produced.

Perhaps their stories have been recorded for future generations; if not on paper then maybe, for the time being, in the minds of their children, grandchildren, nieces or nephews to be added to the folklore and family history within their own memories. I hope so, for the common old tombstone inscription "Gone But Not Forgotten" reads true only so long as the stories of their lives remain fresh, to be retold and appreciated by future generations.

I consider myself fortunate that I knew all four of my grandparents very well. I am lucky, too, that I can remember three of my great grandparents, though my memories of them are much more fragmented. My most vivid recollection of two of them, Carl and Minnie Staub, centers around an old glass candy dish which my mother now owns. I can never look at it now without my minds not flashing back to an evening long ago when I was no older than four and my grandparents took me to visit Carl and Minnie.

The memory comes to light in the living room of their small farmhouse north of DeWitt with the four grown-ups deep in conversation of things far beyond my comprehension. I was bored. All at once, Minnie picked up that candy dish, snatched off the lid and displayed before me a marvelous selection of identical, pink, after-dinner mints. The dish wobbled and shook as its weight was nearly too much for her arm, tiny and frail, barely larger than my own.

"Would you like one?"

I answered with a sheepish "yes."

"If you like them, then why won't you take one?"

"Cause my momma will get mad," I sulked.

Then, Carl spoke up. He gazed about the room as he said softly, "It's okay, your momma's not here."

I replied indignantly, "But someone will tell her."

With that, my grandparents began to chuckle and both Carl and Minnie fell back into their respective rocking chairs in gales of laughter; Carl throwing his enormous hands up into the air and Minnie nearly losing control of the candy dish. After a concerned effort by all to convince me that not one of them would tattle, I was given not one, but two pink mints.

Now, the moral of this clever story is that if you're cute as a shoe button you can get two pieces of candy instead of one. More importantly, the moral to this long operation is that even the simplest of tales are worth recording and preserving for future generations. It is said that history is only as interesting and accurate as those who record it and history has little else to offer if it is not an interesting and accurate account of those who lived it and formed it. In regard to family histories, it is stories like these (though granted, perhaps more interesting than my example) that put the bark and leaves on an otherwise barren family tree.

I hope that when I am 85 (mind you grandma — I'm not saying that you're old) I will have a great-grandchild that I can tempt with a colorful pink mint. And if they should ask me if I ever had great-grandparents; firstly, I trust that I will have enough sense left to say "yes;" secondly, I hope I still remember this story of Minnie and her mints as vividly as I do now. Maybe I should write it down somewhere. "If a tree falls in the forest and there is no one there to hear it, does it really make a sound?"

May 20 '85 ?

# DeWitt Grange played vital role

## Historic DeWitt

By Kenneth Coin

For farmers, the month of May has always been a busy time. Years ago, many DeWitt area farmers took a relaxing break from their duties to attend the May meeting at the grange hall on N. Bridge St. This May meeting was historically one of importance to the DeWitt Grange for it was then that it annually played host to Pomona, the County Grange.

Pomona was founded in 1879 as a county-wide association of granges. Its purpose was to oversee and coordinate the business and activities of the separate granges of the county.

The Grange as a whole played a vital role in the economic, social and political history of Clinton County for nearly 100 years.

The following poem was written at the turn of the century by a local resident, Estella (Cook) Dills and was read by her as a welcoming address to Pomona in DeWitt.

"Worthy Master, Brothers and Sisters,  
In behalf of "Clinton County Pomona Grange," I would say:

We know we are welcome with Hickory today  
For have we not thrice heard them say  
By the hearty hand clasp and cordial word of greeting  
That Pomona was always welcome with her May meeting."

Story

I will read to you a little ditty  
'Tis not very sound, neither is it witty.  
The topic is nothing new or strange  
Just a few words about our "County Grange."  
We meet for pleasure with work bent on,  
From all the corners of "Old Clinton."  
And clasp the hand of those who would be strange,  
Were it not for meeting in "Pomona Grange."  
I wish that all the Patrons I can see,

Would come and take the Fifth Degree;  
Another link higher that binds in a happy band,  
To educate the farmers of this broad land.

"This world is too dark, this life is too short,"

To not be in Pomona Court.

Our officers are good and true,

We selected them with care.

Our Master and Overseer, as you can see, are quite a handsome pair.

Our Worthy Lecturer, Sister Charity (Pearce) when she rises to her feet,

To announce the program, we know it is complete.

The Steward that's found within our rank,

Has an honest face, for is he not always Frank?

Our Asst. Steward we think him quite a "feller,"

He can drive the goat clear round the room when ass'd. by Sister Chilly.

Our Worthy Chaplain of Bath, Sister Dryer (Frances?),

Asks blessings on our Grange of the Master Higher.

Then there's our Worthy Secretary, Sister Dills (Abbie),

Keeps the records and writes receipts to pay off bills.

While our Worthy Treasurer, Bro. Jones (Charles) of Bengal,

Says, "Here's your cash, just hear the silver jingle."

I hope that from the fold none will stray or roam,

For our gate is guarded with strength and nerve, you all know Jerome (Dills).

We have Goddesses Three, I wish each would take her place,

Thereby filling the positions with dignity and grace.

For do they not preside over cereals, fruits and flowers?

All necessities in these beautiful homes of ours.

And now as we separate and mingle with the world again,

Let us remember the precept of our order; be honest, be just with our fellow men.

And in eating, drinking and language, intemperance avoid,

Thus, keeping ourselves unspotted by deeds that are noble and good.

## DeWitt's history of Memorial Day

### Historic DeWitt

By Kenneth Coin

Memorial Day, or Decoration Day as it was originally called, was established shortly after the Civil War and was first observed in Charleston, S.C. on May 1, 1865 in remembrance of those, both north and south, who gave their lives in that war. The concept was repeated in Waterloo, N.Y. on May 5, 1866 and by 1868, the observance of "Decoration Day" was officially recognized by the Grand Army of the Republic.

Decoration Day in DeWitt in the late 1800s was observed with a memorial service at either the Methodist or Baptist Church. This was followed by a parade and march to the cemetery where a military observance was conducted. The services and parade were organized by the GAR post and its auxiliaries, the Women's Relief Corps and the Son of Veterans. The present monument in the DeWitt Cemetery (thought now weathered and deteriorated) honoring the unknown dead was erected by the GAR post for Decoration Day services.

The day was also often celebrated with ice cream socials, picnics and perhaps a dance or horse race.

The following list is of the known veterans of the Civil War buried or memorialized in the DeWitt Cemetery. Although the list was compiled by comparisons of headstone names to military rosters of Clinton County, membership lists of the GAR and several family genealogies, it is probably incomplete. The section letters are identified with "A" being the northernmost section. An \* denotes that the soldier is believed to have died in the war.

Name, outfit, section:

Alward, Henry, Co. B. 3rd Mi. Cav., C; Baldwin, Thomas W., C; Bedell, Edward H., Co. E 23rd Mi. Inf., C; Bates, Ambrose T. (Dr.), C; Blood, A., C; Blanchard, John G., B; \*Blizzard, Oliver, Co. G 23rd Mi. Inf., died Bowling Green, Ken., 1865, E; \*Bond, Henry W., Co. G 23rd Mi. Inf., died Nashville, Tenn., D; Brink, John H., D; Brink, Reuben, Co. A 9th N.Y. H.A., D; Bronson, J.W., Co. I 8th Mi. Inf., B; Butterfield, DeWitt C., Co. H 24th Mi. Vol., C; Clark, William, D; Cole, Monroe, D; Cook, George M., Sgt. Co. F 28th Mi. Inf., C; Cole, Charles E., B; Collins, John, E; Charles F. Cummings, C; Davison, Joel, Co. B 184th Ohio Inf., C; Day, Charles?, C; Emery, William F., Co. A 23rd Mi. Inf., C; Foster, William A., Co. H 3rd Mi. Cav., D; Freeman, Abigail, (campwife), B; Freeman, Phineas, Corp. Co. B 3rd Mi. Cav., B; Bigson, James, B; \*Goodrich, David, Co. C 5th Mi. Inf. (died Washington), E; Edmond, Hewitt, Co. E 3rd Mi. Cav., D; Holley, Ralph W., Bat. E 1st Regt. Lt. Art., B; Hoople, Leander, Co. H 24th Mi. Inf., E; Howe, Geo. W., Co. D 14th Mi. Inf., B; Howell, Hiram, B; Hubbard, J.S., Co. B 186th N.Y. Inf., A; Jayne, John E., D; \*Knapp, John D., Co. G 23rd Mi. Inf. (died Bowling Green, Ken.), D; \*Lee, Adelyer, E; Loft, Albert, Co. H 27th Mi. Inf., E; \*McPherson, Joseph M., Co. G 5th Mi. Cav. (actual burial uncertain), C; Marshall, John C., D; May, Jessie, Co. A 21st Mi. Inf., C; Miller, Jonathan, Co. I 1st Mi. Art., B; Miller, Daniel, Co. B 3rd Mi. Cav., B; Moses, Bryon A., Co. A 23rd Mi. Inf., B; Newman, William R., Co. E 1st Mi. Light Art., C; Norris, Joseph H., B; Norris, Silas W., C; Pearce,

Husted?, C; Pattridge, Alonzo?, D; Pierce, George M., D; Randall, Abraham?, C; Reed, ???, A; Rouse, Henry, Pvt. 30th Mi. Inf., C; Shay, William H., Co. I 7th Regt. N.Y. Vol., C; Sibley, Levi W., Co. C 96th N.Y. Vol., C; Stickles, Charles, Co. H 24th Mi. Inf., A; Stickles, Joseph R., Co. M 7th Mi. Cav., B; Stewart, N.J., Co. C, 157th N.Y. Inf., C; Stimson, George W. Co. H 11th No. Cav., C; Stowell, LeRoy B. Co. C 2nd Mi. Cav., D; Thorp, Richard, Co. D 14th Mi. Inf., C; Tubbs, James, B; Tucker, Homer, Co. E 78th N.Y. Inf., C; Tucker, Joseph S., Sgt. Co. I 10th Mi. Cav., A; Wager, Andrew, Co. H 107th N.Y. Vol. Inf., B; Walker, G.W., Co. H 20th N.Y. Cav., D; Webb, Frank, Co. H 27th Mi. Inf. (musician), C; Wells, George P., Pvt. Co. G 15th Mi. Inf., B; Wetherell, John, Co. B 8th N.Y. Cav. Vol., B; White, William, Co. F 7th Mi. Inf., B; Whitney, Ezra P., C; Williams, J. Edmond, D; Yeoman, Benjamin F. Co. H 27th Mi. Inf., D; Young, G.W., Co. C 197th Ohio Inf., C.



## DeWitt Cemetery a historic site

### Historic DeWitt

By Kenneth Coin

If last week you visited the DeWitt Cemetery, you were probably unaware that you were at one of Clinton County's most historic sites.

The DeWitt Cemetery, possibly the oldest in Clinton County, is believed to have originated as the private cemetery of the family of DeWitt's founder, Capt. David Scott. However, it may in practice have been used by the public at the Scott settlement.

On July 19, 1841, Capt. Scott deeded a small plot of ground, which included the Scott family lot and several other known graves, to the township of DeWitt for use as a graveyard. This original portion of the present cemetery is roughly the front (or west) two thirds of sections D and E. In 1845 additional land was purchased from Ephriam Utley. By this purchase, section C was acquired and the two original sections were extended east to their present limits.

The following are some of the eminent pioneers buried in these three sections:

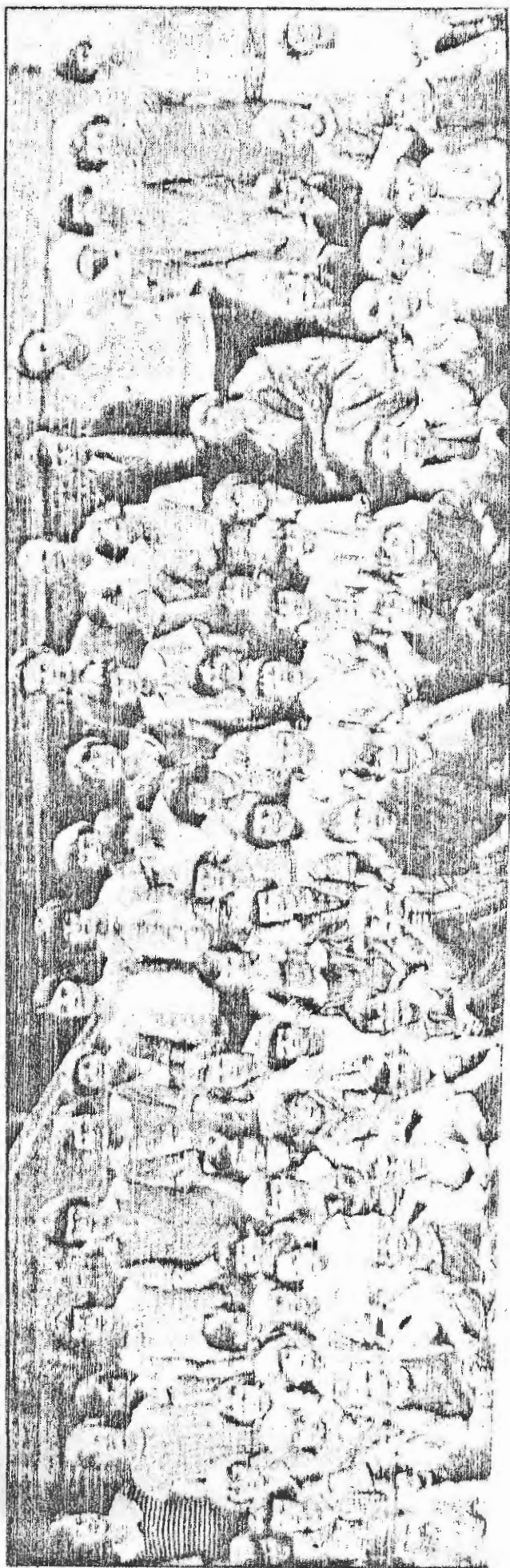
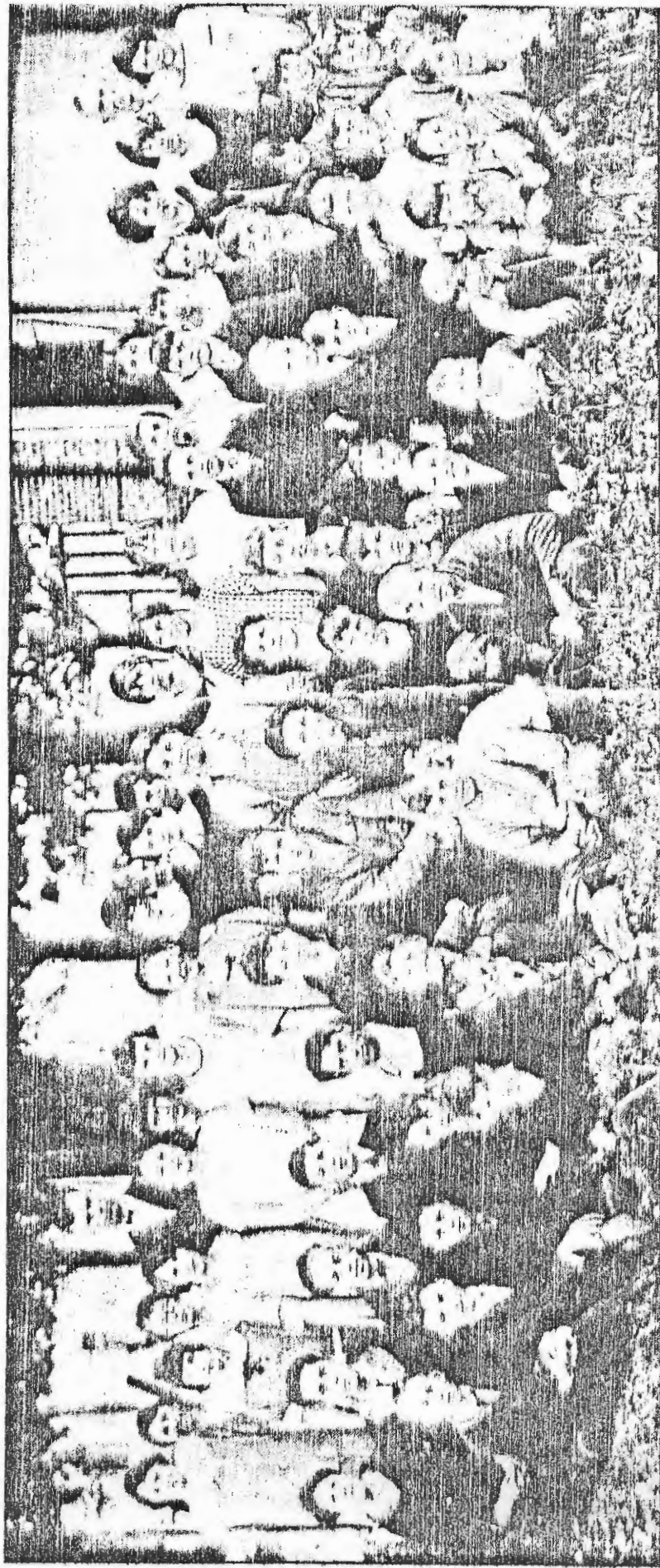
Section C: Henry Chappel, a veteran of the War of 1812 (originally buried in the Goodrich Cemetery on Schavery Road.); Jedediah (Tyler) Flewelling, "A real daughter of the Revolution; Her father Capt. Abram Tyler and her grandfather, Col. Abraham Tyler, aide to Washington, served from Bunker Hill to Yorktown;" Linus and Betsey Gillett, early settlers of Olive Township, 1840; Sylvester Scott, son of Capt. David and Eunice Scott; Sophronia (Cooley) Scott, the second woman settler of Clinton County; David Scott Jr., son of Capt. David and Eunice Scott; William W. and Esther (Utley) Webb, settled in DeWitt, 1835; Frank Webb, leader of DeWitt's Civil War coronet band (entertained President Lincoln in Washington D.C.); Orange Sink, died in 1938 at age 106; James Sturgis, pioneer merchant of DeWitt.

Section D: Alexander and Soloma Calder, earliest resident landowners of Olive Township; George T. and Jane Clark, owners and proprietors of New Albany Village; Mark W. and Nancy (Cook) Pike, early settlers of Olive Township; Hiram Wilcox, first associate judge of Clinton County and builder of Clinton County's first sawmill; Atwell and Lovina (Knapp) Simmons, first settlers of Riley Township, 1836; Charlotte (Herrick) Cook, early settler of Riley Township, 1842; Dr. Hiram Stowell, first probate judge of Clinton County; Obed Strickland, progenitor of the Strickland family of Clinton County; Randolph Strickland, pioneer attorney of DeWitt, state senator (1860-64) and Rep. in Congress (1860- ); John M. Apthorp, early settler of Riley Township; Samuel and Lydia Knapp, early settlers of Olive Township, 1855; Addison A. Woodruff, early DeWitt and New Albany caninetmaker; Rowland S. VanScoy, early DeWitt pioneer, legislator and wealthy landowner of Maple Rapids; and William and Mahala Utley, early DeWitt settlers.

Section E: David Olin, pioneer builder and veteran of the War of 1812; Col. Thomas Lee, veteran of the War of 1812; Capt. David Scott, first settler in Clinton County, founder of DeWitt, and veteran of the War of 1812;

Eunice (Forbes) Scott, first woman settler in Clinton County; Charles Scott, son of Capt. David Scott and Eunice Scott; Betsey (Gooch) Marvin, teacher of the first school in Clinton County; Seth P. Marvin, member of the first family to settle in Watertown Township and first clerk of Clinton County; Enos Silsbee, veteran of the War of 1812; Amarilla Pearl, wife of Stephen Pearl, one of the first settlers of northeast Clinton County; George Riley Simmons, member of the first family to settle in Riley Township; Barna Allen, veteran of the War of 1812; Andrew J. Bement, pioneer shoemaker of DeWitt; Caroline Bement, pioneer teacher of DeWitt and proprietress of "Bement's Select School"; Alanson and Sarah Goodrich, settled DeWitt in 1835; Jonathan R. and Aurilla Pearsall, settled DeWitt in 1836, and were "parents" of the DeWitt Baptist Church; King (supposed surname), English land prospector, first recorded death in Clinton County (actual burial site unlikely).

Unfortunately, the sexton's records of the DeWitt Cemetery were apparently lost many years ago. In the early 1930s, a concerned effort was made by several people to record all the marked and unmarked graves within the cemetery but information of many sections, especially these three are now (and will probably always remain) incomplete. As for the many plots of unmarked graves, we will probably never know whom, if anyone, lies buried there, nor what roles they played in the development of Clinton County.



# Old school picture donated

## Historic DeWitt

By Kenneth Coin

This photograph of the DeWitt Public School, 1924, was recently donated to the Fay Hanson Public Library by Robert and Margaret Moots. Don Reed and Ruth Overholt (both pictured) spend many hours this past winter wracking their memories to put names to these faces of 60 years ago. A special thanks to all.

Front row (seated, left to right): Clarence Day, Roy Shafley, Erwin Rossow, Richard Courtland, Harrison Pitchford, unidentified, Howard Hiatt, "Frankie" Rose, ? Phillips, Louis Brya, ? McPrangle, Max Ellwanger, ? Rossow, Thomas White, unidentified, Albert Tolksdorf, ? Rossow, unidentified, ? Rossow, Charles Surratt?, Francis White, Raymond Kussmaul, unidentified, Richard Henning, Dyle Cole, Ford Schavey, and John Reush.

Back Row (seated): Victor Ward, Hershal Parks, unidentified, Donald Burke, Norman McConnell, Warren Drake, Andrew Tolksdorf, Donald Reed, Carl Grinold, Robert White, Randolph Lietzke, Ralph Hayes, Eleanor Smalley Brainerd, Ruth Marzke Overholt, Dillma Todd, Virginia Todd, Elsie Robb, Donna Rose McCrum, Margaret Tolksdorf, Olive Bedaine, Florence Brink Lavender, Gertrude Voisnet, Evelyn Drake, Bernadine Voisnet, unidentified, Arlene McPrangle, Edith Robb, and Iva Hayes.

Middle Row (seated): William Robb, Francis Brya, Lyle Norris, Victor Voisnet, Stewart White, unidentified, Durward Ward, Francis Klaver, Francis Brainerd, Kenneth Reed, Arnold Tucker, Lorrie Schavey, ? Howe?, Evelyn Courtland, Dorothy Pitchford, Roberta Moon Reed, Ida Ryckman, Phyllis Henning, Marie Klaver, Virginia Heatt, Reva Norris, Delma Young, Virginia Surratt, Marguerite Klaver Dulman, Serena Lietzke, Leota Tucker, unidentified, Eleanor Voisnet, unidentified, Robert Hammond, Nathan Pitchford, and Earl Kussmaul.

Back Row (standing): Reva Waiver Vail (teacher), Nellie Travis (teacher), unidentified, Sadie Jones (teacher), Mildred Locher Kowalk, Clarence Feurstenau (principal), Evelyn? Wood, June Jackway?, Ruth Kowalk Wakefield, Iva Tarrier, Florence Baldwin Beardsley, Eleanor Moon McKinney, Helen Reed Spayde, Elizabeth Tolksdorf, Donald Brainerd, Msrget Drake, Marjorie Florian Hepfer, Aames? Robb, Lester? Bixby, Nina White, unidentified, Robert Post, Alice? Robb, Oliver? Bixby, Leone

Smalley Brooks, Evelyn Brainerd Cutler, M.D. "Johnny" Smith (janitor), Cecilia Reust Miller, Mable Brinkerhoff Lee, Violet Becker Hill, Esther Lerg Kramp, Lila Harter, Rachel Brink, June DuVaul, Vivian Pierce, Christine Dyer, Esther Hammond Ferguson, Evelyn Welton Scott, Lucille Drake, Anna May Reed, ? Howe, Marie Tolksdorf, Joyce Carey, Kenneth Becker, Irene Bixby, unidentified, Leo Spayde, Mildred Bedaine, Gertrude Brink Gregoty, and Lois Keck Brinkerhoff.

# Historic DeWitt

By Kenneth Coin

June 17, '85

## One man's junk...

Ever since childhood, I have been fascinated by auction sales. Over the years, I have attended more than I can recall, some good sales, and some not so good.

Two weeks ago, I attended one close to home that I rate among the best. If there were an award to be given annually for "Most Interesting Auction," Doris Steinhardt's and Esther Kramp's sale would surely be a contender. What started out as merely clearing some "old junk" out of their barns and granaries turned into a rare occurrence where generations of accumulation (that delicate, selective art or pack-rattery) were put out on display for auction.

At this particular sale, there were many items which, because of their obvious association to some old DeWitt families, I took particular interest in. Other items, whose former owners remain anonymous, were interesting in their own right because of their chance survival or their particular statement of another era when the everyday workings of life were so different from the present.

A crazy quilt, embellished with the fancy stitchery of an unknown seamstress, was an explosion of colors with its bright technicolor silks. It was never intended for warmth like an ordinary blanket, but offered it anyway with artistic workmanship and vivid handcrafted homeliness.

A trunk, whose original owner "Agnes Pike — DeWitt, Mich." was inked onto one of the wooden slats, was among several other trunks in various states of repair. Agnes, besides being a descendent of several area pioneer families, was one of the earliest DeWitt residents to take an active interest in researching and recording local history.

Another trunk, covered in thick leather and obviously well used, had a faded paper label tacked onto its lid which, though barely legible, read, "P.O. Freeman, Co. B, 3rd Mich. Cav'y., Camp Benton, Mo."

There was a large assortment of cabinetmaker's tools which once did service to early DeWitt craftsmen and an ancient harnessmaker's bench, well worked by unknown hands, which was probably retired to the barn when "grandpa" decided to sell the horses and join the modern age of the automobile.

A large wooden chest, bigger than a breadbox but smaller than a blanket chest, sat on one of the jewelry wagons (that's auction lingo for flat-bed wagons, used to display that doesn't go somewhere else) amid boxes of nails, screws and an infinite amount of spare parts. On the lid of the chest was painted "Wm. H.H. Knapp" and on the inside was inked the date 1853 and a message from William Henry Harrison Knapp, "This box was made by Joseph Naracong Sr., my grandfather."

Nearby was a pair of candlestick phones. Their obvious absence of dials brought to mind a time not long passed, when DeWitt residents had to "ring up" Gerda Rogerson at the telephone office in order to place a call.

There was an abundance of old cloth feed bags, personalized by the stenciled names of past owners: W. Ellwanger, F. Steinhardt, Schneeberger, and H. Bauerle.

A handfull of old wooden yardsticks, advertising glive-

# AUCTION

Having sold my farm, I will sell at public auction at the place 3 miles north of St. Johns on U. S. 27 and 1/2 mile west of 8 miles north of Lansing on U. S. 27 and 1/2 mile west, or 2 miles north of DeWitt and 1/2 mile east of

## Thursday, March 9

Commencing at 10:00 o'clock sharp, the following described property:

### 7 Head of Horses

Saddle mare, 16 yrs. old, weight 1500  
Black mare, 9 yrs. old, weight 1500  
Brown mare, 10 yrs. old, weight 1600  
Pair bay geldings, 10 yrs. old, wt. 2000  
(leave good work horses)  
Barn mare colt, 3 yrs. old, wt. 1600  
Bay mare colt, 2 1/2 yrs. old, wt. 1250

### 7 Head of Cattle

Holstein cow, 9 yrs. old, due March 30  
Guernsey cow, 6 yrs. old, bred Sept. 27  
Holstein cow, 3 yrs. old, bred Sept. 23  
Jersey cow, 3 yrs. old, bred Sept. 17  
Jersey cow, 4 yrs. old, milking, open  
Jersey bull, 6 months old  
Guernsey cow, 8 yrs. old, milking, open

### BAY AND CHAIN

300 lb. bar chain  
78 1/2 yds.

### FARM EQUIPMENT

Deering binder, 6 ft. cut  
Deering mower, 6 ft. cut  
International cultivator  
Superior grain-tender unit  
New local manure spreader  
McCormick-Deering 3-section drag  
McCormick-Deering walking plow  
Burch wagon, bus, flat rack  
(ABOVE TOOLS NEARLY NEW)

Steel wheel farm handy wagon  
New flat rack  
Set heavy Harrison sleighs  
Blag Oliver sulky plow  
Oliver 40 walking plow  
2-section spring drag  
2-section spike drag  
John Deere dump rake  
Keystone side rake  
John Deere hay loader  
Steel hand roller  
Cultivator—double

### DISC HARROW, LANSING

1-horse wooder  
Miller Bean pulley  
John Bean barrel sprayer  
3 walking cultivators  
Tornado mowers  
Fanning mill  
2 new heavy brass-trimmed harnesses  
International manure spreader

### MISCELLANEOUS

60 grain bags  
Two 10-gallon cans  
1 1/2 ft. x 10 in. covered gas engine  
3 sets bay nicks  
Fence digger  
50 cedar barrel posts  
Shovel  
Forks  
Nack yoke  
Sweepers  
Chains  
1 horse collar  
2 bu. shelled sweet corn  
Crucial saw  
Hulling corral  
Oliver alfalfa press

### HOUSEHOLD GOODS, ETC.

Photograph  
4 dining chairs  
Beach wicker  
Wood heating stove  
100 records  
Cracks

Terms: Cash

No goods to be removed until auction for

## Carl E. Staub

L. J. CARPENTER, Clerk

TOM BARNETT, Auctioneer

always, brought \$8. Someone in the crowd asked, "Why would anyone pay that much for a yardstick when you can get them free at the lumberyard?" Now, while I can't argue with that logic, I must say in my own defense, I would have to drive to a lot of stores until I found another one which advertised "Eldridge Hardware — Builders' Hardware, Glass, Paints & Oils, Stoves, Tinware — DeWitt, Mich."

We often harken back to bygone years (although I think the younger people are more prone to harken; the older people already lived it and known that it wasn't all that its now cracked-up to be and scarcely worth harkening back to) when life, in retrospect, appears to have been much simpler. But one good look at the array of time-consuming and back-breaking farm implements which cultivated the fields of DeWitt in the past century was enough to jolt me back to the present with a better appreciation for the blessings of modern agricultural technology.

Auctions can be fun, exciting, and free (if you keep your hands down). They usually draw a substantial crowd which can generally be divided into four groups:

- Group One can't believe the prices are so high; "Who in their right minds would pay that kind of money for that old junk?"

- Group Two (the sentimentalists) can't believe the prices are so low; they'll pay any price.

- Group Three thinks the prices are about average: "I paid less for mine, but I've seen them go higher."

- Group Four, well, they really have no opinion; they don't know what to think because they can't understand a single thing the auctioneer's saying.

Anyway, hats off to Doris and Esther. You two really know how to throw an auction. Let's do it again sometime.