



A bird's-eye view of the east side of DeWitt. Ca. 1912. Emery Hamilton, photographer.

Photos reveal early 1900's DeWitt

By KEN COIN

My Christmas came a little early this year thanks to Mike Mull being in the right place at the right time - a collection of about 25 glass plate negatives of DeWitt scenes taken between 1910 and 1913 by a formerly unknown area photographer, Emery Hamilton.

This shot, one of two taken from either the roof or the attic of the old Clinton House Hotel at the corner of Bridge and Main, shows the east side of town on a cold winter day. A quaint note to the picture are the blanketed horses tethered to the hitching posts on East Main beside the building which now houses the Foo Ying Restaurant.

Although there are ribbons of fresh concrete sidewalks, the streets remain

dirt. East Main Street itself becomes a rutted one lane two-track a block east of the main intersection. A special treat to my eyes were the houses, mostly hidden in the background: directly behind the tops of the twin utility poles is the roof-line of the one story house that was later moved to Wilson Street and located directly across from the former Griswold School.

On the left behind the rear of the Masonic Temple is Bert Scott's home (now the home of Chuck and Norma Ferguson at 211 Jefferson). To the right of it is the one story bungalow built by John Grinold (later the Baldwin home at 206 N. Market). Further to the right is the former Peterson house at 202 N. Market.

Noticeably absent, yet much older than these

homes, is Jack and Teresa Thompson's house at 114 N. Market. It's hiding at a surprise location; at the northeast corner of Market and Main where the former Blizzard house (built 1918) is now located at 302 E. Main. See the two little white dormer windows peaking up above Arnold and Judy Korte's roof?

Another house that's not where it should be (but you really can't see it without a magnifying glass) is the old creamery on the south side of Main at Market. It was moved back onto Market street about 1920 and made into a small home.

In the center of the picture there is a small group standing on the porch of the large white building which was known in pioneer times as "Gardner's". It served as a hotel and mercantile store. In the

1920s, Carl VanFleet had the building picked-up and turned a quarter turn so that it's length faced Main Street.

Ken Coin is a resident of DeWitt and the area's primary historian.



A bird's eye view of the west side of DeWitt. Ca. 1912, Emery Hamilton, photographer.

DeWitt buildings moved frequently back in early 1900's

By KEN COIN

Looking out over the rooftops of West Main Street, I'm particularly amused by all the little white privies behind the houses. Also note, just to the right of the wagon, the carriage steps in front of Dr. Richmond Simmon's house. Once fairly common, they outlived their usefulness when paved streets came along. They also became easy targets for snowplows.

The two-story structure with the porch in the foreground is still standing. At the time of this picture it was Jayne's Pharmacy. Peeking up above its roof was the Wesley Linn house which was razed about 1970 for a parking lot for the phone company.

Last time I pointed out some of the buildings on the east side of town that had been relocated. The west side had its share also.

The old Tucker home at 303 W. Main, much taller than its neighbors, is not in the line of roofs along the south side of the street. Oddly, also absent without leave in the left background is the Cole house (late the Weston's home) at 314 W. Washington. I'd speculate that although the Cole's house was only about 10 years old when this photo was taken, that it was soon moved from Main Street to make way for the larger Tucker house.

Toward the left in the photo is a short little shed with

two windows on the left and a door on the right. This shed was later (much later) moved to the south side of the river and made into a small home (burned by the fire department a few years back) on the west side of Bridge Street.

Obscured by the cross piece of the utility pole in the foreground is a small building at the northwest corner of Main and Scott which was moved back from the street and incorporated into the building of the Cowan house, currently on that corner.

Directly above that

same utility pole is the old Topping building, a salt-box shaped structure which was moved to 109 N. Scott about 1914 by Bert Florian to make way for his new house (later the Berkimer home) at 204 W. Main.

My grandfather remembered watching them move the Topping building. It was done in the winter, the

structure jacked-up and lowered onto skids, then dragged across the snow by ox teams and set into place. Having moved here in 1912, he was impressed with the way DeWitt folks were constantly picking buildings up and moving them here and there.

Ken Coin is a DeWitt resident and the area's primary historian.

Munroe family makes trek from New York to DeWitt

Family eventually settles in Eagle

By KEN COIN

In the spring of 1836, Jesse and Harriett (Parker) Munroe, along with Harriett's brother, Hiram Parker, took a rather unusual trip which would later have a great impact on the history of this region.

The Munroes left their five daughters and two sons at their farm on the Batavia Road east of Buffalo, N.Y. and took a horseback ride of dynamic proportions. In search of a new home they rode west through Ohio and on into Indiana. Not finding anything to their mutual liking they continued on into Illinois and further yet into Wisconsin; still nothing. They purposely avoided the Michigan territory. They had seen enough "Michiganders" who had returned to New York, "their sallow complexion and tales...of shaking with fever and ague."

The travelers decided to conclude their wandering with "look through Michigan, the one state they had no idea of settling in when they left home... Much to their surprise, they found the state satisfactory." They continued north to

the Grand River Valley and there the Munroes and Hiram Parker each found what they had been looking for; the Munroes in Clinton county and Parker in Ingham.

Jesse was "captivated at first sight" with the magnificent forests, reasoning that "land which supported such growth of trees would raise anything (he) planted. There were the black walnut, butternut, hickory, black cherry, bird's eye maple, curled maple, sugar maple, silver-leaf maple, beech, basswood, sycamore, ironwood, white, black and bur oaks - many being three and four feet in diameter."

Returning to New York and disposing of their farm there, Jesse and Harriett Munroe prepared their family for the tedious journey to their new home in the Michigan Territory. Two hired men were sent overland to drive the stock through Ohio and up to Detroit while the family with one additional hired man traveled "up the lake", from Buffalo to Detroit aboard the little steamer "Robert Fulton".

"Detroit was very disappointing to the older members of the family a very uninteresting town... The buildings were low and very unpretentious, right down in the mud, a small old French town." The lake group and the overland

group met there and proceeded on through the frontier.

"The first day out of Detroit (they) went only 10 miles. The road was simply terrible. There were places where there were half a dozen tracks where different travelers had endeavored to get around the deep mud holes, but each one seemed equally bad. The wagon wheels would sink below the hubs."

By early October the Munroe party reached the Scott settlement at DeWitt. The Scotts "were prepared to take care of travelers, having a double log house provided with appetizing food." The log hotel mentioned here was located in the middle of the block bounded by Main, Scott, Bridge and Washington streets.

Harriett Munroe and her five daughters stayed on at Scott's for the next three weeks while Jesse and the men went on into Eagle to construct the family's log house. The size of the Munroe cabin was so unusually large for its wilderness setting that a curious neighbor, who followed the sound of the construction through the dense forest, asked upon discovering it, "Are you intending to keep hotel?"

At the end of October, Jesse returned to Scotts to collect his family and take them to their new home in

Eagle township. "The rains had raised the Looking Glass River so that it could not be forded, we were all taken across the river in an Indian canoe. A pole was used instead of a paddle."

And so, the five Munroe girls, ages 3 to 18 years, left DeWitt, for the time being. But they'd be back. In the meantime they were off on an adventure in their new home where "each one found something interesting" and each left their mark on the history of mid Michigan.

Note - the quotations used in this piece are all those of the Munroe women, several of whom later wrote of their pioneer experiences. In the next

installment I'll expand on who these Munroe girls became and why they had so much to say about the history of this area.

Ken Coin is a DeWitt resident and the area's primary historian. His column appears every other week in this newspaper.

Coin continues story of DeWitt's Munroe sisters

By KEN COIN

In the last installment, its autumn of 1836 and the Munroe sisters, their brothers and parents are leaving Scott's hotel at DeWitt and being ferried across the Looking Glass River by Indian canoes in the last stretch of their journey to their new home in Eagle township.

Marion, the eldest sister, became a teacher for the neighborhood school. She was also recruited by her uncle, Hiram Parker to teach near Mason at a settlement called Jefferson City.

Her travels between Eagle and Mason took her on a route along the Grand River, including the site where Lansing would later be established. A favorite resting spot for her was the high bluff on the north bank of the Grand and she often rested her horse there dreaming of someday having a lovely home high above the river.

She married a Mason merchant, James Turner in 1843. The couple lived at Mason until 1847 when the state capital was moved from Detroit to Lansing. They then moved to the new town of Lansing and built a small house (pictured here) on a site purchased several years earlier. Marion had planted trees on the site anticipating her eventual residence. It was, after all, only a few hundred yards south of the high bluff that she dreamed of years earlier.

James Turner prospered as a merchant and land agent in Lansing and outlying communities. He became actively involved

in many business enterprises including plank roads and railroads. In time, the Turner's purchased Marion's bluff to the northwest of their home and later built an impressive brick home which still stands as the nucleus of the Turner-Dodge mansion in North Lansing.

James Turner died in 1869 at the young age of 49. Marion continued to live in their home on the bluff for nearly 50 more years; saw its transformation into the mansion we see today and died in 1912.

Betsey, also an early school teacher in Clinton and Ingham Counties, was the first Munroe girl to be recruited to teach at the Jefferson City settlement.

In 1840, while teaching at the Waterloo settlement (Wacousta), she married a local miller, Parker Webber. They moved to DeWitt in 1848 and purchased the Stowell home at the northeast corner of Main and Franklin and converted it into a "Temperance Tavern". Selling the tavern in

1850 they purchased the DeWitt Grist Mill on Prairie Creek and also the former New Albany Store (110 E. Webb Dr.) which was converted into their family home. Parker Webber became DeWitt's miller, a position he kept about twenty years until his death.

Although she retained ownership of the DeWitt mill (even after it burned in 1902), Betsey moved about 1880 to Lansing where she remained until her death in 1912.

Harriett was also a teacher in Clinton and Ingham counties. In 1849 she married John W. Longyear, an attorney who had come to Mason from New York in 1844 and had resettled in

Lansing when it became the capital.

Longyear was one of Lansing's earliest and most successful lawyers. He was elected to Congress in 1862 and reelected in 1864. Following an appointment to the U. S. District Court in 1870, the Longyears moved to

Detroit but following Judge Longyear's untimely death in 1875, Harriett returned to Lansing where she died in 1917.

Adelia married Daniel L. Case, an attorney and merchant who had established himself at Lansing in 1847. Case became involved in politics by

being elected to the State House of Representatives in 1850. In 1858 he was elected to his first term as Michigan's Auditor General.

Throughout the Civil War he was actively engaged in enlisting troops in the Lansing area. It is

See Munroe, page 32



Constructed at Mason, but shipped to North Lansing where it was assembled, the first home of James and Marion (Monroe) Turner, located near the corner of Turner and Clinton streets, is said to have been the first frame house in Lansing. Ca. 1910, Emery Hamilton, photographer.

Monroe

Continued from page 9

also noteworthy that Case along with two of his fellow brothers-in-law, James Turner and John Longyear were the founders of the Michigan Female Institute (also known as Miss Roger's Institute), a woman's college located where the School for the Blind now stands.

Unlike her other sisters, Adelia died relatively young in 1887 at the age of 55. Her husband died in 1898.

Eliza, the youngest went to Lansing about 1847 to live with her older sister Marion. She later married Dr. Charles Turner, a younger of Marion's husband.

Dr. Turner had established his first practice in

DeWitt in 1848. He also dabbled in politics, being elected Clinton County Sheriff in 1850. He married Eliza Munroe in 1855 after his return from a three year excursion to Panama and the California gold fields where, it was said, he made a sizeable fortune.

Dr. Turner was involved in several different business enterprises in Lansing (often in connection with other family members). In 1876, in partnership with his nephew Amos Turner, they constructed the "Union Block"

a series of five brick stores still standing in the 1200 block of Turner Street in N. Lansing.

About 1880 the Turners came to DeWitt where Dr. Turner resumed his medical practice.

In 1887 he retired and they returned to Lansing. Dr. Turner died there in 1901 and Eliza, the last surviving Munroe girl, died in 1919.

Ken Coin is a DeWitt resident and the area's leading historian. His column appears twice monthly in the DeWitt-Bath Review.

History

DeWitt doctor played a role in diphtheria epidemic

By KEN COIN

DeWitt was fortunate that for nearly a half-century it had a resident physician, Dr. George W. Topping, who was known state-wide as being on the forefront of modern medicine. Unlike many of the "squack" physicians who were allowed to practice unchecked, Dr. Topping backed his methods with research and documentation. Many of his notes and observations have been preserved in the annual reports of the State Board of Health from which the following story was taken.

In July of 1876, Dr. Topping treated a "broken-down" old woman in the DeWitt area who died from what he diagnosed as diphtheria. At the time diphtheria was not thought to be contagious and he took extensive notice of the old woman's living conditions: there was an extensive swamp near the home, the well water looked "faily and impure and had a crackish taste." There was no cellar beneath the kitchen floor which seemed always damp from being so near the earth beneath

with a wet board shanty on the back." The house had no well and household water was supplied from a nearby spring.

In July of 1877, diphtheria again cropped up in the area; this time on a huge scale. It began simultaneously in the Monroe Cole family northwest of DeWitt and in the David Knight family to the northeast. Before it subsided, Dr. Topping would treat 44 afflicted persons. The outbreak in the Knight family remained largely contained (or so it appeared) to about eight families and no more than 16 cases.

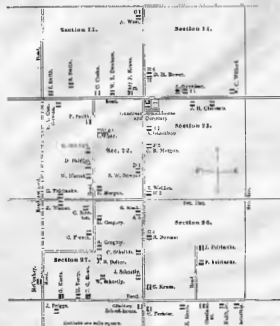
In the case of the Cole family the outbreak was much more wide spread. Dr. Topping, who immediately began to read a pattern of contagiousness from his notes, surmised that this was probably due to the fact that the Simmons School (on Cutler west of Airport), which seemed at the center of the outbreak, had not closed. School officers had been assured by another physician that diphtheria was not contagious and there was no need to suspend

100 STATE BOARD OF HEALTH—REPORT OF SECRETARY, 1896.

OUTBREAK OF DIPHTHERIA.

MAP OF A PART OF LANSING TOWNSHIP, CANTON COUNTY, MICHIGAN.

Letters A, B, C indicate points of beginning of the disease. Figures indicate the number of cases in each house. The number of deaths, shown in circles, indicate the number of deaths.



At most of the houses on section 22 there were no young children. Running west through the south part of section 22 and diagonally southwest through section 23 to the large white water in the south part of section 23, with a cross that crosses the north-west corner of section 23 and passes south through section 23 to the water-filled creek. The spread of the disease seemed to have its connection with the water-courses. Sections 24 and 25 are also and are partly located in the "Big Marsh." West of section 22 and east partly with them is a large water-filled swamp. Sections 26, 27, 28, the northern part of section 29, and the north part of section 30 are high sandy knolls and ridges; the remainder of section 29 and the top of section 30.

Board helped change the standard medical opinion of diphtheria.

Although the outbreak had run its course north of DeWitt, it wasn't finished. In August of 1878, it surfaced again southeast of DeWitt in the home of George Keck (on Wood road south of Stoll). Mrs. Keck, who had visited an afflicted family in the

cases in Lansing and St. Johns were connected to family visits or attending funerals of victims in the DeWitt area. The outbreak is said to have extended to the Bath area with equally devastating results, but no concise records were kept by physicians there.

The cases in the Gurnisonville area were recorded and long

afflicted household's well water, distances of privies from wells and the like, he went so far as to take note at instances where the

disease was believed to remain dormant in bedding. Ken Coin is a DeWitt resident and the area's primary historian.

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The following March another area woman became afflicted with the same disease. She was a young woman but lived in "an old, rotten, log house,

northeast. Before it subsided, Dr. Topping would treat 44 afflicted persons. The outbreak in the Knight family remained largely contained (or so it appeared) to about eight families and no more than 16 cases.

In the case of the Cole family the outbreak was much more wide spread. Dr. Topping, who immediately began to read a pattern of contagiousness from his notes, surmised that this was probably due to the fact that the Simmons School (on Cutler west of Airport), which seemed at the center of the outbreak, had not closed. School officers had been assured by another physician that diphtheria was not contagious and there was no need to suspend school.

By the time the outbreak subsided three of Dr. Topping's patients were dead. But his keen observation, copious notes and reports to the State Health



At west end of the basin at section 22 there were no young children.
Runway went through the south part of section 14 diagonally northwest through section 15 to a large creek which joins to the north-east corner of section 14, with a creek that drains a smaller west corner of section 14 and passes north through section 16 to the first abandoned creek. To spread of the dike caused to have no connection with the water-course.
Sections 22 and 23 border on, and are partly included in, the "Big Marsh." West of section 14 and 22, partly within them, is a large basin of water.
Section 14, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, and the south part of section 15 are high and hilly and are in the number of sections shown on the map in open air soil.

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Although the outbreak had run its course north of DeWitt, it wasn't finished. In August of 1878, it surfaced again southeast of DeWitt in the home of George Keck on Wood road south of Stoll, Mrs. Keck, who had visited an afflicted family in the Knight neighborhood was the first to come down with it. In all, eight persons in the Keck household became afflicted; none fatally.

A son of Phillip Kraus (at Gunnisonville) visited the Keek family while they were convalescing and carried the disease back home with him. Ten members of the Kraus family became afflicted. One of them, an eleven year old, died. Charles Sloan, a neighbor, came and helped prepare the boy's body for burial. A later outbreak among Sloan's grandchildren in St. Johns and Lansing resulted in one death.

The outbreak then traveled to the West and Bower homes north of Gunnisonville. At Daniel Bowers', four people were afflicted resulting in two deaths. Other outbreaks, none of which resulted in death, appeared among the B. Downer, Gunnison, Walden and Morgan families.

Before the diphtheria epidemic finally subsided,

cases in Lansing and St. Johns were connected to family visits or attending funerals of victims in the DeWitt area. The outbreak is said to have extended to the Bath area with equally devastating results but no concise records were kept by physicians there.

The cases in the Gunnisonville area were recorded and largely attended by Dr. Orville Marshall of Lansing. He concurred with Dr. Topping's hypothesis of diphtheria's communicable nature and although he continued to make notes of

Back in 1905

Believed to be an engagement party, pictured at left, for Helen Lucille McLouth and Harry F. Petersmeyer, circa 1905. This is one of the new additions to the DeWitt Library's local history photograph collection. Part of a collection of McLouth family material, it was generously donated by Roger and Phyllis Griffin. Courtesy photo



Photos freeze a moment in time

Several years ago I undertook a project to catalogue and index the photographs in the library's local history collection. At long last I'm pleased to report the project is completed. My procrastination aside, a major stumbling block to finishing the task was the pace at which the collection continued to grow over the past 10 years.

When I began, the collection (not counting the hundreds of school pic-

ture have generously loaned their treasured originals to be copied:

Neil and Arleta Cutler, Thelma (Hawk) Grinold, Diana (Miller) Haggerty, Lana (Smit) Hardman, Bertha (Staub) Lennemann, Sandra (Balderson) McDaniel, Eleanor (Moon) McKinney, Helen Moon, Art and Jean Newman, Ruth (Marzke) Overholt, Gerald Pike, Dorothy Scott, Syble (Scott) Shannon, Lavinia (Siklow)

weeded through my pictures yet once more this week and these are the photographs headed for the library's collection:

The high school girls gym class in 1916; a hog butchering in 1918; a yard party from about 1930 (which looks to be more of a brawl in obvious violation of the Olmstead Act); kids on the school playground about 1947; Sunday night snapper club in 1950; antiques at the

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wooded through my pictures yet once more this week and these are the photographs headed for the library's collection:

The high school girls gym class in 1916; a hog butchering in 1918; a year party from about 1920 (which looks to be none of a kind in this area);

When I began, the collection (not counting the hundreds of school pictures) included about 120 ~~photos~~ mounted again last week and was amazed to learn that the collection has grown to 800 pictures. During that time original photographs have been donated by the following:

Freda Bollinger, Ken Coin, estate of Rilla Cutler, estate of Clarence Fuerstenau, Roger and Phyllis Griffin, Don Harnish, Vincent VanFleet, Ralph Woodruff and the DeWitt Memorial Association.

Some were donations of just one or two photographs; others, substantial collections. While original photographs are always best, there have been many instances where the library arranged for quality copies to be made of significant photographs. The following

Gerald Pike, Dorothy Scott, Syble (Scott) Shannon, Lewis (Sibley) Stuplowsky, James Stiller, Bonnie (Cutler) Ward, Robert Wilcox and Ralph Woodruff.

Photographs have always have a magical characteristic with me. There's something fascinating about seeing a moment in time, frozen for posterity. And although they've been coming in just about as fast as I can keep up with cataloging, I'm not complaining. Whether it's a street scene from a hundred years ago or simply kids playing tag yesterday, each photograph is a special treat for the eyes that will only increase in historic value as the years unfold.

Of course, you know what this is leading up to: A call for more! But what should go to the library? Well, as an example, I

ground about 1947; Sunday night supper club in 1950; uptown after the snowstorm of 1967.

Scrapbooks, picture post cards, landscape photographs, early negatives, old photo albums of stereafaced pioneers; basically anything which shows something of DeWitt's people, places and events are suitable for the library. And what would be especially desirable to help round off the collection would be pictures from the Gunnisonville and Valley Farms areas. So, if your spring cleaning includes old pictures (or negatives), please keep the library in mind.

Ken Coin is a DeWitt resident and the area's primary historian.

Pike family has rich DeWitt history

By KEN COIN

The saga of one of DeWitt's oldest families came to an end recently with the death of Gerald Pike at the age of 84. He was the last local descendant of the Pike family which has been a part of this community for nearly 160 years.

Several weeks ago, in this column, I related some information regarding the growth of the local history photograph collection at the DeWitt Public Library. My mentioning Gerald's name among the contributors was rather an understatement. He was more than generous over the years in making available to the library his enormous collection of family materials which included old genealogies, ancient letters and diaries, and hundreds of historically significant photographs; all of which constituted a wealth of information on early DeWitt.

He assisted me over the years with several local history related projects and probably the most rewarding for both of us was a project involving nearly one hundred glass plate negatives. The negatives had been taken by his father, George S. Pike, between 1900 and 1915 but few had ever been developed into prints. It was especially thrilling for both of us to see these pictures finally come to life after being stored in boxes for nearly seventy years. I have used many of these



At a Pike family reunion around 1900, David Scott Pike treats his returning brothers and sisters to an omnibus tour of old family homesteads in the DeWitt area. One of the many splendid photographs taken by George S. Pike and made available to the DeWitt Library by his son, the late Gerald Pike. Courtesy photo.

views in this column over the years (the library has copies of many) and a complete set was made for the State of Michigan archives.

While his father chronicled a changing DeWitt at the turn of the century with his camera, Gerald's aunt, Agnes (Pike) Steinhart, sought to record in writing the tangled genealogies of many of DeWitt's founding families. Gerald's copies of her handwritten manuscripts, gleaned from interviews with pioneer ancestors, have become a gold mine of information on the Pike, Scott, Tucker, Simmons, Knapp and Cook clans.

The last time I spoke with Gerald was a chance meeting at the cemetery. He had been checking up on family graves and pointed out to me an interesting fact. He wondered if it was some sort of record that he had six generations of his Pike family resting in the cemetery. I thought it very amazing and pointed out to him that counting his great-

great-great grandmother Knapp, he actually had seven generations. All told, he had eighteen direct ancestors buried there. That has to be some sort of record.

Besides his parents, George and Edna (Randall) Pike, three grandparents are buried there: Ida (Cook) Randall and Milard and Ella (Simmons) Pike. Six great-grandparents are there: Amori and Amina (Simmons) Cook, George and Elizabeth (Tucker) Simmons and James and Ann (Simons) Pike. Six great-great grandparents: Joseph and Charlotte (Herrick) Cook, Atwell and Lovina (Knapp) Simmons and Mark W. and Nancy A. (Cook) Pike; plus the furthest ancestor, Polly (Hines) Knapp who was a great-great-grandmother to both of Gerald's parents.

The youngest generation of the Pike family buried there is that of Gerald and his wife Lucille's

daughter Nancy who died at birth in 1942 and their son Richard who died as a result of an accident while in the military in 1953.

The story of DeWitt is far from finished but, for now, the chapter of the Pike family has been completed and in my next column, I'll pass along some of the history of this remarkable pioneer family.

Ken Coin is a DeWitt resident and the area's primary historian.

Local historian profiles Pike family in early DeWitt

By KEN COIN

Mark Woodbury Pike, the progenitor of DeWitt's Pike family, was born in Rutland, Vt., in 1799. Family tradition has it that Mark was "raised by a man named Utley". My research indicates this to be Col. Peabody Utley of Landgrove, Vt. Three of Col. Utley's sons, Ephriam (and wife Sarah), William (and wife Mahala) and Hiram (and wife Jane) were among the earliest settlers of DeWitt.

Mark was married in 1818 to Nancy Alta Cook (b. 1797) a daughter of Elisha and Abigail (Williams) Cook. The couple lived for a time at Belmonte, NY and in 1839 came to DeWitt. Besides Mark's connection here to the Utleys, Nancy's brother Joseph and Charlotte (Herrick) Cook had previously bought land northwest of DeWitt (from the Utleys) and had made an attempt in 1838 to settle here (but didn't settle permanently until 1840).

Mark and Nancy's land lay at the southwest corner of Norris and Chadwick roads, approximately two miles north of DeWitt. Here they built a temporary log shanty which was later replaced by a comfortable log house that stood on the site until 1915. About 1850 a log school was built south of the home site (approximately where Arnold and Martha Blizzard's home is now located) and named the "Pike School".

Although the Pike's eldest sons, Mark Jr. and James, remained in New York, Mark and Nancy brought five children to DeWitt: Nancy, Elisha, Joseph, William and Jacob "Sidney". Nancy, the only daughter, soon married David Scott, Jr., a son of DeWitt's founder, and remained in DeWitt. Elisha married Frances Marshall and remained in DeWitt for a time but later became one of the many DeWitt families who migrated to Rondo (a small settlement north of Wolverine, MI).

Joseph and William Pike caught the California gold bug and became members of a large DeWitt group which went to the gold fields in the early 1850s. William died on the journey there and Joseph, having contracted con-



The Simmons-Pike homestead - (ca. 1885) at 9747 S. Airport Rd. Pictures (l. to r.) Elizabeth (Tucker) Simmons, George R. Simmons, Millard Pike, Ella (Simmons) Pike, Agnes (Pike) Webb, Hiram Simmons, Eva (Simmons) Van Fleet, Carrie (Swift) Simmons-Baldwin, Unknown, Courtesy of the late Gerald Simmons Pike, Courtesy photo.

(Simmons) Webb, Hiram Simmons, Eva (Simmons) Van Fleet, Carrie (Swift) Simmons-Baldwin, Unknown, Courtesy of the late Gerald Simmons Pike, Courtesy photo.

tracting children. But the agreement couldn't be fulfilled: James' mother Nancy herself died only four days after her son.

Mark, the old pioneer, then went to live with his daughter Alta Scott in DeWitt, and the seven grandchildren were scattered: Francis (and wife) went west; William went to the DeWitt home of Sylvester Swift; Edgar went to the home of a cousin Anna Cook; David "Scott" to the neighboring home of another cousin Abigail (Cook) Free-

Elizabeth (Tucker) Simmons retired to DeWitt.

Millard and Ella had two children, a daughter Agnes (who married James Milan, Frank Steinhardt and lastly Eugene Forbes) and a son George. George married Edna Randall and they had three sons: Glenwood, Loyde, and Gerald Pike.

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Local historian profiles Pike family in early DeWitt

By KEN COIN

Mark Woodbury Pike, the progenitor of DeWitt's Pike family, was born in Rutland, Vt., in 1799. Family tradition has it that Mark was "raised by a man named Utley". My research indicates this to be Col. Peabody Utley of Landgrove, Vt. Three of Col. Utley's sons, Ephraim (and wife Sarah), William (and wife Mahala) and Hiram (and wife Jane) were among the earliest settlers of DeWitt.

Mark was married in 1818 to Nancy Alta Cook (b. 1797) a daughter of Elisha and Abigail (Williams) Cook. The couple lived for a time at Belmont, NY and in 1839 came to DeWitt. Besides Mark's connection here to the Utley's, Nancy's brother Joseph and Charlotte (Herrick) Cook had previously bought land northwest of DeWitt (from the Utleys) and had made an attempt in 1838 to settle here (but didn't settle permanently until 1840).

Mark and Nancy's land lay at the southwest corner of Norris and Chadwick roads, approximately two miles north of DeWitt. Here they built a temporary log shanty which was later replaced by a comfortable log house that stood on the site until 1915. About 1850 a log school was built south of the home site (approximately where Arnold and Martha Blizzard's home is now located) and named the "Pike School".

Although the Pike's eldest sons, Mark Jr. and James, remained in New York, Mark and Nancy brought five children to DeWitt: Nancy, Elisha, Joseph, William and Jacob "Sidney". Nancy, the only daughter, soon married David Scott, Jr., a son of DeWitt's founder, and remained in DeWitt. Elisha married Frances Marshall and remained in DeWitt for a time but later became one of the many DeWitt families who migrated to Rondo (a small settlement north of Wolverine, MI).

Joseph and William Pike caught the California gold bug and became members of a large DeWitt group which went to the gold fields in the early 1850s. William died on the journey there and Joseph, having contracted consumption, died soon after his return. The youngest child, Jacob Sidney, never married and became an early lumberjack in northern Michigan.

James G. Pike, one of the sons who remained in New York, was married there in 1845 to Anna Simons. In 1849 they too came to DeWitt to join James' parents. In 1863, Anna Pike died leaving James with the care of their eight children. One month later a daughter Alta died and James too became ill. Before he died the following year, he asked his parents to see to the raising of his seven



The Simons-Pike homestead - (ca. 1885) at 9247 S. Airport Rd. Pictured (l. to r.) Elizabeth (Tucker) Simmons, George R. Simmons, Millard Pike, Ella (Simmons) Pike, Agnes (Pike) Milan-Stainhardt-Forbes, George Pike, Ada

(Simmons) Fleet, Carrie of the late G

remaining children. But the agreement couldn't be fulfilled: James' mother Nancy herself died only four days after her son.

Mark, the old pioneer, then went to live with his daughter Alta Scott in DeWitt and the seven grandchildren were scattered: Francis (of age) went west; William went to the DeWitt home of Sylvester Scott; Millard went to the home of a cousin Amori Cook; David "Scott", to the neighboring home of another cousin Abigail (Cook) Freeman; Agnes went with her grandfather to her Aunt Alta Scott's and the two youngest, Clara and Jasper were sent back to New York state to live with relatives of their mother.

Of the many branches over several generations of this family, it was only through Millard Pike that any descendants remained in DeWitt. Being one of the few siblings that remained in the area, he married Ella Simmons in 1877 and they soon after took over the operation of Ella's family farm (pictured here) and her parents, George and

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Eugene Fort Randall and Gerald Pike.
Ken Coin historian.

Wild ride down the Looking Glass River remembered

By KEN COIN

It seemed like such a good idea at the time.

Saturday, June 11, 1836 - Twenty-six year-old Peter M. Kent, full of energy and fine ideas, stepped carefully out of the canoe onto the muddy north bank of the Looking Glass. He flung his satchel and bedroll up onto drier ground then turned and tossed a small silver coin to the Indian who had ferried him across.

It was well-worth the money; the crossing had been the only thing that had gone smoothly on his three-day trip from Jackson.

Up the steep riverbank he trudged, his nose following the smell of wood smoke and his ears, the rabble of thirty or so frenzied land lockers. Capt. Scott's log tavern sat majestically atop the huge open hill offering a dynamic view of the river valley. Making his way through the gathering, Kent hailed an older man, a short but grizzled and robust fellow and inquired, "Is this where Scott lives?"

Captain Scott squinted his eyes, sizing-up the enthusiastic young man then assessing the eclectic rabble gathered at his home. "He stays here."

There was no room for Kent at Scott's Inn that

like his trip up from Jackson, full of obstacles at every turn. The alternative, however, was to traverse the Looking Glass and, as luck would have it, a "boat", operated by Mr. Hewitt and Dr. Levi Jennison would be weighing anchor for Ionia on Wednesday.

The boat, barely qualifying the definition, was a 25-foot canoe with poles lashed across it to form outriggers (of sorts). The cargo for this voyage was mostly freight: castings and fixtures for the Kidd Fanning Mill Co. at Ionia, a shipment of medicines for a doctor at Lyons, a buffalo robe and other sundry items. Kent looked at the vessel with skepticism but after being assured that Hewitt and Jennison had been conducting a regular booming business he paid his fifty-cent fare and boarded with his satchel and bedroll firmly clutched.

"The river is up and the channel is deep

The wind is steady and strong.

Oh, won't we have a jolly good time as we go sailing along?"

Down the river. Oh, down the river.

Oh, down the river we go-oh-oh..."

And down the river they did go. The captain, managing the impenetrable

excursion.

One of the other paying passengers was a Massachusetts man whose lack of adventure was amply compensated by pessimistic qualities. From the onset of the journey he appointed himself ship "doomsayer".

"Keep it in the center!"

"We're gonna run aground!"

"Turn us back around!"

"We're going to be killed!"

He never once let up and as they finally approached the river's mouth at the Grand all his wailing and gnashing came to a self fulfilled prophecy. When the craft faced the cross-current of the Grand all was lost.

"Murder! Murder! Murder!", cried the man from Massachusetts (much to the amusement of the Indians watching along the shore) as the vessel lurched and rolled. But the sturdy boat did not overturn. Instead, it sank directly to the bottom.

"Murder! Murder! Murder!", shrieked the man from Massachusetts, standing waist deep in the water. The other passenger and crew swam towards shore except Kent who swam down river in pursuit of his satchel which was floating along nicely atop the folded buffalo robe.

of Portland, Eagle and Delta Mills and the gristmills of Wacousta and Portland. He located a large homestead in Oneida township and in 1838 married Eliza Hoxson, a sister to James Newmans' wife.

He became an owner in the gristmill and sawmill at Grand Ledge in 1854 and in 1861 moved his family to that town, having built a large home on West Jefferson street. He lived to a ripe old age and often enjoyed recounting the tale

of his ride down the river. *DeWitt and is the area's primary historian.*

Ken Coin is a resident of

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There was no room for Kent at Scott's Inn that night, nor the next, nor the next.

He therefore had plenty of time to consider his options for continuing his trek to his ultimate destination at the Newman settlement near the confluence of the Grand and Looking Glass. In the meantime he enjoyed what appeared to be the only local pastime of milling around the hotel, smoking, drinking and solving all the problems of the frontier.

Kent had been told that the Indian trail west of Scott's was passable but,

like his trip up from Jackson, full of obstacles at every turn. The alternative, however, was to traverse the Looking Glass and, as luck would have it, a "boat", operated by Mr. Hewitt and Dr. Levi Jennison would be weighing anchor for Ionia on Wednesday.

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And down the river they did go. The captain, manning the improvised rudder, pointed out the numerous natural wonders of the Looking Glass river basin.

After several hours of bumping and lurching and getting smacked in the face by low hanging branches they reached the mill site of the Waterloo Joint Stock Co. (Waconsta). Having survived mild rapids, a few running agrounds and a couple of 360 degree spins, Kent was at last able to pry his white knuckles from their death-grip on his baggage. By the time they passed the Deitz homestead he found himself actually enjoying the

excursion.

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On the bright side, the upset took place exactly at the spot where Kent wished to disembark. James Newman, having heard the cries of murder from his cabin, rushed down to the river to welcome them all ashore.

Kent became a permanent resident of the area and closely associated with the building and operating of several mills in many area towns. He was involved in the building or development of the sawmills

of Portland, Eagle and Delta Mills and the gristmills of Wacousta and Portland. He located a large homestead in Oneida township and in 1838 married Eliza Hixson, a sister to James Newmans' wife.

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