

## Three Civil War Vets from DeWitt rest in unmarked graves

By KEN COIN

If you happen to visit the DeWitt Cemetery in observance of Decoration Day, you will not find the following names among the many interesting headstones. Three DeWitt men have no markers: they are some of the nearly forgotten Civil War veterans of DeWitt resting in unmarked graves.

Thomas J. Barton, a New Yorker, was born Aug. 26, 1840. He enlisted in the Ninth New York Heavy Art. After the war he came to DeWitt where he married Mary Priscilla Tucker in 1866. He was a member of the DeWitt G.A.R. post. He died May 25, 1926 and was buried beside his wife in lot 121 of section C.

Albert Blood (also recorded as "Peter"), was a corporal in the Eighth MI INF. Following the war he and his wife Sarah remained in the DeWitt for some time, moved into Watertown Township and, ultimately, to Bennington Township of Shiawassee County. The sexton's records for the DeWitt cemetery list simply "A. Blood" buried with a son, Floid. There is also a military notation in the records.

George W. Howe was born about 1831. In 1861 he enlisted with his brother Napoleon B. Howe at DeWitt in Co. D, 14th MI INF. He was discharged at St. Louis, Missouri, Feb. 10, 1863. After the war he and his wife Jane and their children remained in the DeWitt area for a time, but traces of him after 1870 are unclear. He was, however, a member of the DeWitt G.A.R. post. His widow was back living in DeWitt in 1900 at the home of their daughter, Athelia and Arthur Clements. Sexton records list he and his wife buried in lot 123 of section B.

Rufus W. Puttridge, owner of a DeWitt foundry prior to the war, was born about 1831 and was among DeWitt's earliest businessmen. He was married to Laura B. Stowall. In 1864, he enlisted at DeWitt in Co. H, 27th MI INF. He was discharged from service from Harper hospital at Detroit, May 27, 1865. No record of him or his second



**A random gathering** in front of the Clinton House? Or possibly the Civil War veterans of the George W. Anderson Post of the Grand Army of the Republic? Joseph Stickles was easily identified as the man with the wooden peg-leg;

wife, Marie (Wilkinson?), following the war has been located. The Sexton's records indicate he was buried in lot 25, section D with his first wife and infant daughter.

Joseph R. Stickles, born about 1846, a son of Jesse and Eliza Stickles. He enlisted at DeWitt on April 20, 1863 in Co. M, 7th MI CAV. He was discharged from Harper Hospital in Detroit the following March. He returned to DeWitt and by 1870, he and his wife Martha (Morgan) were living with his sister Mary and her husband, blacksmith Peter Bird.

He was a member of the DeWitt G.A.R. post and in 1890 was living with veterans Charles Walker and Artimus Newman. He died of consumption in October of 1898 at the home of a comrade, Smith Hall. Sexton's records show him buried with another veteran, John Blanchard in lot 114 of section B.

an older man in officer's dress is visible on the right and at least two men are simulating shouldering guns. Ca. 1880 (?), photographer unknown, courtesy of the DeWitt Public Library.

Artimus G. Newman was a member of Co. G, 3rd MI INF. He lost his right arm in war. He was a member of the G.A.R. and was a member of the veterans' group keeping "bachelor's hall" in the 1890's. By 1900 he had moved to Lansing and died soon after. Military records state he was buried in DeWitt.

Clinton County's chapter of The Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War will be working throughout the coming year to see to it that appropriate military markers are placed on these graves. But in the meantime, we're searching for information.

If you have any further information on these men, please contact either myself at (517) 669-9448 or Kent Armstrong at (517) 669-5765.

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



## Lerg farm carries rich DeWitt history

By KEN COIN

A few weeks ago I saw the stately old John Clement house on Clark Road at Gunnisonville being bulldozed. Built in 1883 and once counted among the showplace farms of the county, it succumbed to an undignified end without much of a struggle.

Along the same path, only three miles to the north, the Lerg farm at 2343 E. Round Lake Road awaits much the same fate. As the new bypass freeway progresses, the old house's future dims. But,

gable windows, heavy window lintels and unusually thick wooden bric-a-brac are all Moon trademarks.

In 1902 the Bird farm was purchased by John "Martin" and Theresa (Lorenz) Rohrer, whose descendants in the DeWitt area remain numerous. Their purchase consisted of 120 acres on the north and south sides of Round Lake Road, west of Bond Road. In 1904 this was increased to 160 acres with the purchase of an adjacent forty, from the Edmond Fitz estate.

John Martin and Theresa were both natives of

John emigrated in 1855 at the age of 16. The couple was married about 1874 and lived in Lansing prior to coming to DeWitt. They had nine children: George, Carl, Frank, Henry, Theodore, Bertha, Anna (Dyer) and Dora (Grinold).

According to family traditions - the well-maintained barns played double service as both farm buildings and a spill-over lodging area for guests to the farm. The Rohrer and Lorenz families were both extensive, even by the standards of the day. And when on special occasions the families gathered at

ground level and took advantage of sleeping quarters available in the lofts.

The farm was briefly owned by the Rohrer's son

See Lerg, page 7

### The Lerg barns

**At left** - The barns, still standing on the south side of the road opposite the house, have changed little in the hundred plus years since their construction. Pictured are John M. Rohrer and sons. Photo courtesy of Thelma (Hawk) Grinold.

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Along the same path, only three miles to the north, the Lerg farm at 2343 E. Round Lake Road awaits much the same fate. As the new bypass freeway progresses, the old house's future dims. But, as the accompanying photos show, the house's past was once radiant.

Levi C. Bird, a native of Washtenaw County and a California gold miner from 1859 to 1866, came to DeWitt in 1872 with his wife of three years, Helen Chubb. He purchased an old settled farm on the Pontiac-Grand River Road (now Round Lake road) east of DeWitt and set about to its improvement. According to an autobiographical account published in 1891, the Birds built the present brick house in 1880.

It has been asserted by some Lansing historians that the house is an early example of the famed Lansing architect, Darius

gable windows, heavy window lintels and unusually thick wooden bric-a-brac are all Moon trademarks.

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Their purchase consisted of 120 acres on the north and south sides of Round Lake Road, west of Bond Road. In 1904 this was increased to 160 acres with the purchase of an adjacent forty, from the Edmond Fyta estate.

John Martin and Theresa were both natives of Germany. Census records for the year 1900 show that

John emigrated in 1855 at the age of 15. The couple was married about 1874 and lived in Lansing prior to coming to DeWitt. They had nine children: George, Carl, Frank, Henry, Theodore, Bertha, Anna (Dyer) and Dora (Grinold).

According to family traditions - the well-maintained barns played double service as both farm buildings and a spill-over lodging area for guests to the farm. The Rohrer and Lorenz families were both extensive, even by the standards of the day. And when on special occasions the families gathered at the farm, many visitors kept their buggies on the

ground level and took advantage of sleeping quarters available in the lofts.

The farm was briefly owned by the Rohrer's son.

See Lerg, page 7

At left - The road opposite plus years since Rohrer and sold.

• Domestic

Gen  
The Division  
College of  
participate

• Couples  
• Lansing  
• Only one  
• Both parties

Interested

### WATERTOWN CHARTER TOWNSHIP

#### Synopsis of Board of Trustees Special Meeting

June 5, 1996

The meeting was called to order at 10:35 p.m. Members present: Shaver, Rathbun, Mallison, Porterfield, Waitzel. Absent: Pike, Gorman. Public comment was received. The agenda stood as presented.

#### ACTION TAKEN:

1. Waived the actual reading of Zoning Ordinance 11.5.
2. Removed the table the Resolution to schedule a public hearing on creating a special assessment district for sanitary sewers.
3. By a unanimous roll call vote, (absent: Pike, Gorman) adopted the resolution scheduling the public hearing on creating a special assessment district for sanitary sewers for the Grand River area.
3. By a unanimous roll call vote, (absent: Gorman, Pike) adopted the resolution scheduling the public hearing on creating a special assessment district for sanitary sewers for the airport/Hortison Road area.

The meeting adjourned at 10:47 p.m.

A complete copy of the minutes is available upon request.

Phyllis J. Rathbun, Clerk  
Thomas L. Shaver, Supervisor  
6-23, 6-25-96



The Lerg farm at 2343 E. Round Lake Road, taken about 1902 early in the ownership of John M. and Theresa (Lorenz) Rohrer (center). Flanking the Rohrs are their sons - Carl, Theodore, Frank and Henry. Photo courtesy of Thelma (Hawk) Grinold.

## Lerg

Continued from page 6

Carl before being sold to John and Dora Lerg about 1937. Since that time the farm was expanded to 243 acres and passed through

two more generations of the Lerg family. Having taken over the farm from his father LaVern, Roger Lerg, along with his wife Kim and their young children, will probably be the last residents of this time-honored farm.

A special thanks to Thelma Grinold for her photographs and research. Her late husband, Carl Grinold, was a grandson of John M. and Theresa Rohrer.

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

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# DMS students learn history

By KEN COIN

Last week, at the invitation of Mrs. McGivern and Miss Thomson, I had the pleasure of addressing DeWitt's third grade class (about 175 of them!) on the subject of DeWitt history. I don't know how well the kids enjoyed it but I had a blast.

As much as I enjoy history, it is really the evolution of people and lifestyles that I find the most fascinating. And I tried to convey to the children that DeWitt history has less to do with stern looking pioneers and old gray photographs and more to do with people just like themselves who lived out their lives in a world much different from the present.

I presented a slide show of about a hundred views of DeWitt and it's people to try and give the children an idea of what their lives might have been like in DeWitt a hundred years ago; a perspective of life back then from the viewpoint of a child.

We looked at life on a



farm; the extended family structure; the narrow confines of their world and similarities of children's play habits. We also touched on the one-room country school; modes of transportation; child mortality and the chores children performed.

The best part, from my standpoint, was the endless variety of questions the students asked after the slide-show. Some of their questions just blew me out of the water. "Did they always paint their barns red?" "Did they ever use candles if their power went out?" "Did they use pottery for dishes?"

I especially enjoyed hearing kids who lived in some of the area's older homes question or comment on their old house. And I think young Andy Zarkovich should get an

award for having a marvelous grasp on his family's DeWitt heritage. But regardless of whether a child has lived in DeWitt for only a year or comes from pioneer stock, I see that children have a tendency to look for a connection between themselves and the past which surrounds them.

Each generation of DeWitt folk has enjoyed a lifestyle far removed and nearly unimaginable by the generation(s) which followed. And if nothing else, I hope I instilled a bit of understanding that long before pavement, subdivisions or even running water, DeWitt had its share of intelligent, lively little third graders, just like them.

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

## A 1910 birthday party

At left - Neighborhood children gather for a birthday celebration at the Pike farm on Airport Road. Ca. 1910. George S. Pike photographer. Courtesy photo of the DeWitt Public Library.

## Past July 4 festivities come alive

Early settlers celebrate independence

By KEN COIN

The first known celebration of Independence Day at the DeWitt settlement was held in 1837 at the homestead of William and Esther (Utley) Webb, located on the north side of Howe Road, just west of Schavey. It was largely attended by most area residents who turned the gathering into a several day event. The Webb's log house, being larger than most, accommodated the pioneers for a rare opportunity of community enjoyment.

While most area cabins of the period had dirt floors, the Webb cabin had a state of the art wood "puncheon" floor which the pioneers put to good use as a dance floor. The only problem was, there was no music to be had. Mr. Webb, always the gracious host (pay attention, Martha Stewart) obliged his guests by whistling and singing while the settlers clapped



A sulky race on West Main street from a photograph dated 1913. The house and trees remain much the same, even after eighty years. Only the activity and the unpaved street give away the age of this wonderful old picture. Courtesy of Catherine Reed.

elected that year.)

In 1856, during the final months of Dewitt's reign as county seat, attendance on the Fourth of July numbered nearly 2,000 persons. They were treated to a celebration which began in the morning with a procession led by the Governor's Guards and ended at night with a "fine display of fireworks." As always, the crowd was offered a hot down dinner

was, coincidentally, a granddaughter of the whistling William Webb and a great granddaughter of Capt. Scott, recalled that the Fourth of July celebrations of the late 1800's were "always celebrated in a big way with cannons roaring all night before and most of the day - with a big parade of bands, horseback riders and fun makers."

Esther also recalled the

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In 1844, Joseph W. Cook reported that the celebration of the Fourth of July included a large crowd for the "common festivities" (picnic, speeches, etc.) but that the music was "rather bad". About 20 couples attended a ball at the DeWitt Hotel and a large supper was held at the Clinton House with about 120 in attendance. "It was voted to take supper there again as soon as James K. Polk is elected president of these United States but the probability is, that it will not be this year". (But the surprise was on Cook, for Polk was



A sulky race on West Main street from a photograph dated 1913. The buildings and trees remain much the same, even after eighty years. Only the activity and the unpaved street give away the age of this wonderful old picture. Courtesy of Catherine Reed.

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The late Esther Williams, a long-time DeWitt resident (not to be confused with the swimmer of lesser fame) who

was, coincidentally, a granddaughter of the whistling William Webb and a great granddaughter of Capt. Scott, recalled that the Fourth of July celebrations of the late 1800's were "always celebrated in a big way with cannons roaring all night before and most of the day - with a big parade of bands, horseback riders and fun makers."

Esther also recalled the afternoon horse races on Main street. The dusty dirt course, a straight shot from Norris road to the uptown intersection, with its arbor of maples, made a wonderful setting to cap-off the afternoon activities.

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# Fresh sweet pickles just like Aunt Martha (Locher Hill) used to make

By KEN COIN

It is perhaps one of the toughest lessons to learn in life but believe me, there's no easy road to per-



Martha Locher Hill

fect pickles. If you can gag down pickles made from a short and quick recipe - more power to you. But, if you want a truly great pickle, a pickle you can be proud of:

I've been using the following recipe for years. It's a sure thing. It's sure to be a lot of work but it's also sure to reward you with the best sweet pickles you'll ever taste. I knew it was an old recipe, but I was surprised to recently find it among some very old papers belonging to Martha Hill. That's a good endorsement - Martha wouldn't push a poor pickle!

## Clip and Save

### Aunt Martha's Very Best Sweet Pickles

Get small cukes, FRKSH, 2 to 4 inches - wash and scrub but keep whole.

Fill crocks with cukes near to top (2-3 gallon stoneware crocks). Fill remaining space with a brine made from 1 pint pickling salt per gallon of water. Put a weighted plate on top of crock if needed to keep cukes submerged. Let it set for a full week. Ignore foam and

acum.

**7th day** - Drain off brine and rinse remaining salt (if any) out of crock. Cover cukes (in crock) with boiling water - let stand 24 hours.

**8th day** - Repeat seventh day except add 1 tsp. alum.

**9th day** - Drain off water. Cut cukes lengthwise into spears. (Very small ones may be kept whole.) Cover with boiling water - let stand 24 hours.

**10th day** - Drain and cover with syrup:

- In big metal pan add 5 pints white vinegar and 6 pints white sugar (yes, 6).

- Bring to a boil.

+ *Alum* - in a spice bag or a pouch made of at least three layers of cheese cloth, add 2 tablespoons celery seed, 1 fresh stick of cinnamon, 1 box (1 1/2 ounce) pickling spice.

(Put this wad of spice into the syrup each time it's boiled and tucked down)

into the cukes for overnight.)

Crocks can "bleed" - store them on a cookie sheet.

**11th day** - Pour syrup from crock into big metal pan (throw in spice bag) add one cup of sugar and bring to a boil. Pour back into crock.

**12th day** - Repeat above, including adding 1 cup sugar.

**13th day** - Repeat above, including adding 1 cup sugar.

**14th day** - Get your jars ready -

- Pack them tightly with pickles
- Bring syrup to a boil
- Fill remaining space in jar with syrup (leaving maybe 1/2 inch from lip of jar)
- Seal jars according to recommended rules of canning (but they don't need a hot water bath).

Also on 14th day, if you have extra or are doing several batches (which I

would highly recommend) some cukes can be ground up into relish and packed the same as the pickles.

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

DeWitt Back to Basics 31 July 1996 p. 6



# Long-ago DeWitt photographer's works featured in display



This view of commercial buildings on the north side of west Main is one of nearly 30 views of DeWitt 80 years ago taken by a rediscovered DeWitt photographer, Emery Hamilton. About 20 of his photographs, taken from a decidedly male point of view, are currently on display at DeWitt City Hall.

"It's a Guy Thing", 1910-1916 Photographs by Emery Hamilton on display at DeWitt City Hall.

By KEN COIN

Less than a year ago a box of 5" x 7" glass-plate negatives, still in an original pasteboard box, made its way into the local history collection of the DeWitt Library. Then, only weeks ago, nearly 10 more were purchased from the same Lansing antiques collector. Among the negatives are about 25 which can be identified as having been taken in the DeWitt area between 1910 and 1916. Luckily, an address label on the box has lead to the identity of the actual photographer, Emery Hamilton.

A collection of Hamilton's work, currently on display at DeWitt City

The title for this exhibit was inspired by the emphasis of the photographer's work. Subject matter and views in the collection appeared to be scenes and people which were completely familiar to men of that era: The agent at the depot; a switch operator; the blacksmith shop; men cavorting in front of the barber shop; a game of horseshoes; fishing trips. There are also shots of new "guy" toys: a snow plow, teams of horses, a new tractor and horse-drawn grocery wagon.

Individually, photographs rarely tell much about the photographer. In this instance, where large portions of an amateur

Ethel's family is well documented. Her grandparents, Lysander and Sarah (Bate-man) Howe, were pioneer settlers of Olive township in 1855.

Following their marriage, the Hamiltons lived north of DeWitt, apparently alternating between Ethel's bachelor uncles, Charles and Daniel Howe. By 1910, when the photography hobby began, they were living near Alward Lake. Emma Turner, Ethel's mother, owned a small parcel of land there on the east side of Loomis road.

About 1918, the Hamilton's left DeWitt and moved to Lansing where they shared a home on

remainder of their lives. Ethel died in 1934 and was buried in the Turner family plot of the Merrihue (or North Olive) Cemetery on Price road.

Lansing city directories show Emery a resident of the Cleveland Street address until 1958. Census records and city directories do not indicate that Emery and Ethel had any children. However, negatives of infant children, recently added to the collection, identify a Warren and June Hamilton. Any further information on the Hamiltons would be very much appreciated.

The photo exhibit, sponsored by the DeWitt Public Library is a unique historic

photo exhibit with a different slant and is well worth the visit to city hall.

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# Long-ago DeWitt photographer's works featured



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A collection of Hamilton's work, currently on display at DeWitt City Hall, is probably the first time his views have ever been exhibited. In fact, prints of his work are so rare that only two are known to exist. An original copy of the store buildings pictured here (not on exhibit) was already in the library's collection and, secondly, a print of men lounging on East Main (which Hamilton himself titled "Hobos of DeWitt") was in my own collection.

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Individually, photographs rarely tell much about the photographer. In this instance, where large portions of an amateur photographer's work remain intact, we can see 80 years ago into his world, through his own eyes and study the scenes he thought worthy of capturing for posterity.

Very little is known about Emery Hamilton. He was born in 1874 and was married about 1897 to Ethel Turner of Olive township, a daughter of Silas and Emma (Howe) Turner. In contrast to Emery,

remainder of their lives. Ethel died in 1934 and was buried in the Turner family plot of the Merrihow (or North Olive) Cemetery on Price road.

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About 1918, the Hamiltons left DeWitt and moved to Lansing where they shared a home on Hickory street with Ethel's mother. For several years Emery worked at the REO factory until the depression when he got a job for the W.P.A.

In 1920, they moved to nearby Cleveland Street where they spent the

# Short hair was considered taboo back in the early 1900's

## Women said to be mentally ill for having bobbed hair

*DeWitt Bath Review*  
BY KEN COIN  
18 Aug. 1996 PG 6

For men and women alike, a head of hair (or lack, thereof) is probably one of our most instantly recognizable features. As such, we think nothing of frequently altering that "look" by a quick trip to an expensive salon, the local Curl-Up and Dye or by taking a chance with an in-home job. But, to women of just a few generations ago, what we would now consider a routine cut could send shockwaves reverberating throughout the community.

Some time ago Bonnie Ward passed along to me a clipping that she found in her grandmother's scrapbook. Her grandmother, Maud Cutler, was herself an early "bobbed" hair gal and probably did not take this pastor's soul-saving message with the piousness it was intended.

*Hair Bobbing Described by English Clergyman*  
Portsmouth, England October 18, 1915

Women who bob their hair are committing "sexual suicide", believes the Rev. C. F. Aspinwall, vicar of St. Bartholomew's Church.

"They are suffering from mental disease akin to lunacy," he wrote in the current issue of the parish magazine. "It is the greatest sin committed by women since Eve took the apple in Eden."

"Can anyone imagine a woman less like what God intended her to appear than with a short cropped head, horn-rimmed spectacles, a man's waist-coat, arms burned a nasty copper color....?"

It was a shocking event to have a young lady in one's family cut her hair. Smoking cigarettes could remain private; sexual indiscretions could remain....well, discrete; but cut hair was right out there for everyone to see (except on Sunday when women had to wear a hat to church).

My grandmother bobbed her hair about 1918 when she left the farm to become a ribbon and lace clerk at J.W. Knapp's department store in Lansing. Being a big city working girls must have given her a new sense of independence? Rebelliousness? Wickedness even? Whatever the reason, she brought the shorn locks home with her, perhaps in case she changed her mind and needed to



An unidentified area woman, lacking common decency, flaunts her new "bobbed" hair. Courtesy of the DeWitt Public Library.

weave it back in place.

Nearly 80 years later I still have it (No, I'm not kidding), a two foot long, brilliant red ponytail, in a paper bag in the closet. I realize it verges on disgusting (OK, maybe it even crosses the line) but, my list of family heirlooms only goes downhill from there.

Someday I plan to get it out, hand it to my daughter and take great pleasure in watching her come right out of her skin. Then, after I've had my little fun, I want her to understand and maybe appreciate all the options and choices available to her. Choices that lawmakers, clergy

and the people next door did not allow women to enjoy only a few generations ago.

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

# Scott Street home has long history in DeWitt

BY KEN COIN

The earliest record of this old home comes from the tax assessment rolls of 1854 which note that Christopher Leffingwell was paying the property tax on this property which included a "house and barn." But the history of this Greek Revival-style home probably dates back some years earlier.

In 1843, the Scott family altered their original plat of the village by scratching out River street (supposed to run parallel between Washington street and the river) and the southern extensions of Scott, Hickory, Logan and West (now Wilson) streets. In 1847, Charles Scott sold the Clinton House hotel and with it a tract of village lots which included where the Ward home would later be built.

It is my belief that Milo & Caroline Turner, the new hotel owners, built the Ward house during the summer of 1847 then sold

it, along with the hotel to Nelson Alport the following fall. Alport attempted to sell the tavern and house on Scott Street in 1852 to Charles Clifford but the deal, apparently, went sour. Nelson Alport, and a group of Clifford's other creditors tried to recoup their losses and Attorney Leffingwell, representing Alport's interests, continued to pay the property taxes until the dispute was settled.

Horace L. Marshall, an early New Albany blacksmith, bought the house in 1858. He had come to DeWitt from the town of Salem in Washtenaw County in the early 1840s as a young widower with several children. He married Ruth G. Cain, a widow with several children of her own, and between "his, her's and their's" the family consisted of at least nine children. That may seem excessive for a house this size, but DeWitt houses, at that time, didn't come much larger.

The Marshall family weathered many storms in

this house including Horace's serious drinking problem. Things became so bad at one point that the township prohibited merchants and innkeepers from selling liquor to Horace Marshall, John A. Smith or William Huggett. Twice, Horace lost the house to foreclosure mortgages and twice again for unpaid taxes.

Through persistence and fortitude, Horace's children managed to rally during these hard times and the house remained their family home until 1901. At least five of the Marshall children died in their youth or as young adults but three that lived long and prosperous lives include: John C. Marshall, a local civil war veteran who married Mary Woodruff and had only one child, Emery J. (who became a highly successful physician at Marshall, Michigan); Frances Marshall, who married Elisha Pike and became a pioneer of Cheboygan County; and Amanda Marshall, who

married Addison A. Woodruff and became the "grandmother" of DeWitt's Woodruff family.

In 1912, Andrew L. Eldridge came to DeWitt as a new partner in the hardware store. A son of Bengal township pioneers, Darius and Lucinda (Drake) Eldridge, he was soon followed to DeWitt by two sisters, Mary (Mrs. Richard Havens) and Sophronia (Mrs. Ira Ward).

It was Ira and Sophronia Ward's son Eddie (and his wife Ruby) who actually purchased the former Marshall home

from Victor Clavey in 1919. Over the years the Ward family built the two additional homes which face Scott street, making both a close-knit family and neighborhood. For the old Marshall house, however, Gaylord and Marjorie (Bradfield) Ward were

the next generation to raise their family here. Their son, Brad, with his family and Aunt Ira, are now the current residents.

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



# Scott Street home has long history in De

BY KEN COIN

The earliest record of this old home comes from the tax assessment rolls of 1854 which note that Christopher Leffingwell was paying the property tax on this property which included a "house and barn." But the history of this Greek Revival-style home probably dates back some years earlier.

In 1843, the Scott family altered their original plat of the village by scratching out River street (supposed to run parallel between Washington street and the river) and the southern extensions of Scott, Hickory, Logan and West (now Wilson) streets. In 1847, Charles Scott sold the Clinton House hotel and with it a tract of village lots which included where the Ward home would later be built.

It is my belief that Milo & Caroline Turner, the new hotel owners, built the Ward house during the summer of 1847 then sold

it, along with the hotel to Nelson Alport the following fall. Alport attempted to sell the tavern and house on Scott Street in 1852 to Charles Clifford but the deal, apparently, went sour. Nelson Alport, and a group of Clifford's other creditors tried to recoup their losses and Attorney Leffingwell, representing Alport's interests, continued to pay the property taxes until the dispute was settled.

Horace L. Marshall, an early New Albany blacksmith, bought the house in 1858. He had come to DeWitt from the town of Salem in Washtenaw County in the early 1840s as a young widower with several children. He married Ruth G. Cain, a widow with several children of her own, and between "his, her's and their's" the family consisted of at least nine children. That may seem excessive for a house this size, but DeWitt houses, at that time, didn't come much larger.

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this house including Horace's serious drinking problem. Things became so bad at one point that the township prohibited merchants and innkeepers from selling liquor to Horace Marshall, John A. Smith or William Huggett. Twice, Horace lost the house to foreclosure mortgages and twice again for unpaid taxes.

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Smack-dab in the center of what should be the intersection of Scott and Water streets stands the old home of Brad and Pam (VanEpps) Ward at 300 E. Scott. Photo by Karen Faust.



# Sixth child of DeWitt's founding family profiled

By KEN COIN

It's been some time since we visited the family of DeWitt's founders, Capt. David and Eunice (Forbes) Scott. The identity of a sixth child, Susan, came my way some time ago, but it was only recently that I did any follow-up research.

In the fall of 1824, 26 year-old Norman Perry ventured out from his family home in LeRoy, New York and made the long trek to the Michigan territory. East of Romeo, he located an 80-acre parcel of wilderness land which he found to his liking. At this site, he felled enough trees to construct a crude log cabin, complete with the standard split-log puncheon floor and shake roof. He managed to clear four acres of land before the coming of winter. He returned that winter to his parent's home in LeRoy and shortly thereafter found himself at Capt. David Scott's doorstep, vying for the affection of his eldest daughter.

Susan Scott, or "Sukey" as she was commonly called, was born at the family's old home of Shoreham, Vermont on February 21, 1802. As a young girl her family moved to Genesee County, New York. After a short stay, they moved on to Cattaraugus

plus Reuben Smith and the cow, floundered in the mud, tripped over logs and, in general, tried to find a path that would take them to Royal Oak and from there to Norman's home site near Romeo.

The bridal suite in their new home was described as a loft in the cabin with a pile of fresh boughs for a mattress. Their first night in their new home was secondarily eventful in that the newly purchased cow was apparently not well-content with it's new home. It walked back home to Detroit. Norman pursued it for over 20 miles the following day but eventually gave up the chase when he realized the cow was moving at a faster pace than himself.

Their homestead was eventually enlarged to 320 acres, located two and a half miles east of Romeo. Norman Perry became a member of the Territorial Militia and was several times promoted. In 1830 he was made a Captain by Gen. Lewis Cass and made Lieutenant Colonel in 1832 by Gov. Stevens T. Mason.

Norman and Sukey remained on their homestead for the rest of their lives. Norman died there, July 19, 1880 and Sukey,

on July 3, 1894. In her older years she was hailed by Macomb County historians as "a happy and cheerful old lady, full of neighborly deeds and kindness" and "a women of a large and well balanced brain".

The Perry's had seven children, all of whom lived to adulthood: Delia (Mrs. John Selleck), Ozni, Ellen (Mrs. James Sanford), Manly, Norman, Norton and Marshall. Of these, most remained in Macomb County except Ellen Sanford who went with her husband to California and eventually settled in Charlotte, Michigan, and Marshall is believed to have moved to Lansing.

It is the Perry's son Nor-

ton who ties back into the history of the town his Grandfather Scott founded. If you'll recall last winter when I wrote about the Munro sisters; in particular Betsey Munro who married DeWitt's miller, Parker Webber. Well, about 1870, Norton Perry visited DeWitt and soon after married the Webber's daughter Alice.

Norton and Alice may well have then lived in DeWitt for a long time, but by 1880 they had moved to Lansing where Norton bought out the old Haughawout grocery on Turner Street. Their daughter Alice married Lansing attorney T. Rogers Lyons.

Through the discovery

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Susan Scott, or "Sukey" as she was commonly called, was born at the family's old home of Shoreham, Vermont on February 21, 1802. As a young girl her family moved to Genesee County, New York. After a short stay, they moved on to Cattaraugus county (but remained there only six months) then back to LeRoy in Genesee county. In March of 1825, Norman and Sukey were married and immediately set out for Norman's new homestead in the Michigan territory.

They traveled by team with Norman's friend, Reuben Smith to Buffalo where they took passage on the steamer "Superior" which carried them "up the lake" to Detroit. There they purchased a cow which also accompanied them the rest of their journey. For two days the newlyweds

plus Reuben Smith and the cow, floundered in the mud, tripped over logs and, in general, tried to find a path that would take them to Royal Oak and from there to Norman's home site near Romeo.

The bridal suite in their new home was described as a loft in the cabin with a pile of fresh boughs for a mattress. Their first night in their new home was secondarily eventful in that the newly purchased cow was apparently not well-content with it's new home. It walked back home to Detroit. Norman pursued it for over 20 miles the following day but eventually gave up the chase when he realized the cow was moving at a faster pace than himself.

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## Collins home is unique in its history

By KEN COIN

The DeWitt area is dotted with many lovely farm homes. One of the most interesting in terms of its history and style, is the old Collins home on Solon road. Older area residents may remember it as Louis' and Estella farm. They bought it about 1910 and it remained in their family for many years. But let's go back to the beginning:

In 1845, James and Margaret Collins migrated to DeWitt and pioneered a homestead which lay south of Solon Road and east of Turner Road. They were both Irish immigrants who had married in New York state in 1835 and had come to Michigan about 1840, settling first at Marshall.

Upon their arrival at DeWitt the Collins family, which by then consisted of about five children plus the parents, stayed for a time with the neighboring Hewitt family (whom, I believe, they had previously known in Steuben County, New York) in an empty log cabin on the Hewitt farm.

Among James' first priorities was raising what was described as "a substantial house of logs" on his new farm. After clearing a small spot for crops, he surprised his neighbors by planting garden products for his household use instead of the common cash crop of wheat. The family worked many years to clear the land and transform it into a productive farm.

James died in 1960 at just under 56 years of age, a respectable "old age" for the period. Margaret, sixteen years younger than him, would outlive him by twenty-five years. Of their large family, seven have been accounted for; William, James, John, Catherine "Kate", Mary (who married Edmund Hewitt), Alice and Margaret. (One of the later two married a White and the other a Murphy.)

Of the three sons, James died in infancy and John died at age 29 in 1866. His is thought to have been a veteran of the Civil War which may have been a factor in his early death, leaving brother William as head of the family.

In 1876 William Collins had the large brick residence built upon his family farm, a circumstance unique in several respects. First, although large brick homes were not unusual in DeWitt, this one, architecturally speaking, was of a very modern design. Others in the area, beautiful in their own right, were more conservative. This house is definitely not the "same old house - covered with brick."

Secondly, unlike most of the other brick homes of the

period, this one was not built by a German family relatively new to the area. This was an Irish family which had been here for over thirty years. Very few of the early pioneer families ever built beyond the basic upright and wing frame farmhouse. (Too much inbred Puritanism.)

Thirdly, and most significantly, while most such homes were built to house proportionally large families, William was a bachelor! This huge house, with spacious



The stately old Collins house, one of DeWitt's finest Victorian homes, at the intersection of Solon and Myers roads. Photo by John Hill.

rooms (and plenty of them) was built for himself, his widowed mother and his unmarried sister Kate; a lot of house for three people to get lost in.

The Collins' did not long enjoy the new home. Soon after it was built William was elected county sheriff and he moved to St. Johns. His mother Margaret and sister Kate joined him and the three of them made their home together for a number of years. Margaret died in 1885 in St. Johns and William, in 1915, with Kate following in 1928.

Perhaps they shot their wad on bricks and mortar - William and his mother Margaret are both buried in the DeWitt cemetery in unmarked graves.

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



# Main Street home belonged to first Webbs in DeWitt



One of the earliest homestead sites in DeWitt (indeed, in all of Central Michigan) the pioneer home of William and Esther (Utley) Webb at 3580 W. Howe Rd. dates back to 1835. Photo by Karen Faust.

BY KEN COIN

In 1835, William Webb purchased 170 acres of government land (the southwest quarter of section 6) and soon after, with his new bride, Esther Utley, they moved up from Plymouth, Wayne County. Upon arriving at the Scott settlement, they were taken in by the Chauncey Ferguson family whose homestead adjoined to the east. The Webbs remained with the Fergusons for

four weeks while a temporary log shanty was erected on their own land.

The Webb family held the distinction of being the fourth to settle in DeWitt township. The fifth family came in rapid succession by the next-day arrival of Ephriam and Sarah (Yerkes) Utley (Ephriam being either Esther Webb's brother or uncle.) The Utleys settled across from the Webbs on the south side of Howe.

On a pleasant knoll in

the southeast corner of his land, William Webb eventually erected a comfortable log cabin which, it has been often noted, boasted a puncheon floor. Yes, this is the William Webb of whistling fame whose puckered lips constituted the entire orchestra for a Fourth of July ball in pioneer times. (At this early period with no milled lumber to be had anywhere in central Michigan, settlers wishing to take the extra effort

could substitute the common dirt floor with one of the logs laid side by side and hacked with an ax until the surface was nearly flat.)

Over the years as the wilderness gave way to a highly productive farm, their log home was replaced by a frame house which was then expanded numerous times to accommodate a growing family. The rear portion of the current home dates back well over a hundred and thirty years while the two-story front portion appears to have been added in the early 1880's.

Besides a daughter Lorena who died as a baby, the Webbs had four children: Jane "Jennie", Frank, Edward, and Byron. An interesting note about the three brothers is the fact that they married three sisters; all daughters of Charles and Julia (Terry) Scott. (That had to be confusing for everyone concerned!) Frank married Viroquia "Otie"; Edward, Eunice "Eliza"; and Byron, Nellie. Charles and Julia Scott had no son to offer the Webb boys' sister Jennie so she had to fend elsewhere for her "Scott", a

son of Sylvester and Sophronia (Cooley) Scott.

William Webb died in 1881 and Esther followed in 1900. Both are buried in the DeWitt cemetery, as are most of their children and grandchildren. Although none of the Webb descendants remain in DeWitt, many still reside in the Lansing area.

Now, I hear you asking, "Is that how Webb Road got its name?" The answer is "No". Webb Road was named for the Newton and Phebe (Huyck) Webb family who lived where the

Stone House at Prairie Creek Golf Course is now located. There's no connection with William Webb. Likewise, there's no known connection with another William Webb family which lived northeast of DeWitt; nor with the Sheffield Webb family which lived north of town, nor the Joseph Webb family....

Suffice it to say that a hundred and twenty years ago DeWitt was just crawling with Webbs. But it's the family of William and Esther Webb who were here first.

# River valleys attract early settlers in Clinton County

BY KEN COIN

(The basis of this article was prepared in 1989 for the *Clinton County News* as part of a series honoring the county's sesquicentennial).

Long before the settlers came up from the south; long before the Coureur du Bois plied the waterways of the Maple, Looking Glass and Grand Rivers, these river valleys were dotted with many permanent and transient villages. One such village was actually more a unit of people than an exact geographic spot. The early traders along La Riviere du Plain (later renamed the "Maple River") made note of the village of the tribe of Makitoquet. (Located in what would later be the northwest quarter of section three, Essex Township.)

Ensign's 1880 *History of Shiawassee and Clinton Counties* relates that Makitoquet's band was large and comprised several villages along the river in both Essex and Lebanon townships. The one in section three of Essex was termed the most "ancient".

Aside from the Cushman-Campau trading post at the rapids of the Maple, that area saw little activity of white settlement until 1834 when Daniel Barker and family entered the



**Bridget (Kearney) Piggott, a native of County Tipperary, Ireland.** By age 12 the Potato Famine in Ireland had left her an orphan; at age 13 she came by herself to America; by age 20 she was a pioneer in Clinton County, feasting on quail with her Indian friends at Chief Makitoquet's town on the Maple River.

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This land included the area earlier referred to as the "ancient" village of this tribe.

Though there appears to be no record of a land purchase in section 19 of

delicacy which the women of the tribe cured by hanging them from the top poles within the wigwam where they were smoked from the fire within the hut.

Aside from the land records, piecing together the subsequent changes of this tribe is close to (but

not quite) impossible. The records, at best, are extremely rare. Ensign's history records only one additional family in the tribe, "Aiken, the half-breed with his two wives", (possibly Achan Lemangier).

The 1840 federal census lists only one Indian family

in the county that year; Wintagowish, then in his 60's and an aged man by the standards of the times. In his household are a woman in her 50's and two girls both under five years of age.

Surprisingly, Rev. Manasseh Hickey, a missionary

See Coin, page 19

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Aside from the Cushman-Campau trading post at the rapids of the Maple, that area saw little activity of white settlement until 1834 when Daniel Barker and family entered the area and made a settlement well to the south in section 30 of Lebanon. As the Barker's were not soon followed by any further settlers, the incident probably made little of an impression on Makitoquet's tribe.

But something must have triggered caution in the minds of the tribe for in the early part of 1837 they began a systematic purchase of lands; their own lands which they had lived on for generations. On Jan. 10, 1837, Baptiste Makitoquet and Etienne Lemorandiere purchased lands in section 14 of Lebanon at the government land office at Ionia. The following day, Win-



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tagowish (referred to by Ensign's book as a "sub-chief", a kind of lieutenant to Makitoquet" and "their speaker") purchased more lands in the same section.

Later, on the 31 of the same month, Baptiste Makitoquet made a second purchase; this time in section 12. On the same day, three other Indians, hitherto not associated with Makitoquet's tribe, purchased lands in the same section. The three men's names were: Pewamo, Tanwasome and Kawyawsome, all residents of Clinton County. The first named of these men should read familiar to all area residents as Pewamo village was given his name in 1859.

The last known purchase by this group was made in section three of Essex, dated February 1, 1841, the purchaser listed as Wabecake Makitoquet.

This land included the area earlier referred to as the "ancient" village of this tribe.

Though there appears to be no record of a land purchase in section 19 of Lebanon this tribe (or a smaller portion perhaps) is widely recorded as having a longstanding village or encampment there on the hill southeast of Matherton.

Bridget (Kearney) Piggott related memories that as a young bride in the late 1850s, she often accompanied her husband Charles, walking from their homestead in section 25, clear across the township to Matherton to purchase staples and supplies. While her husband went into the Matherton settlement, she enjoyed staying at the Indian village where she visited with the women of the tribe. She remembered eating quail, an apparent

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## Coin

Continued from page 14

to the Michigan Indians, recorded that at the time of his visit to Wabecake Makitoquet's village in the summer of 1847, there were some forty to fifty families living there. A sharp contradiction to the federal census records of 1850 which list only three Indian families at the village. They include:

Achan Lamanger (alias Atiene Lemangier) age 39, a merchant with no spouse but three sons: Alexander (14) Fawder (?) (7) and Achan, Jr. (9 months) and one daughter Sophia (8).

Waubekakak (Wabecake Makitoquet?) aged 35 with his wife Mary (30) and three sons: Nosea, George (11), William (6) and Kabamza (8); two daughters: Nosea (13) and Mary (2) and one additional adult woman, Sarah Waubekakak, age 50. (The head of the house is listed as simply "Waubekakak" yet all the other members are listed with Waubekakak as their surname.

William Mactoket (Makitoquet?) age 20, with two boys, Ninna (12) and Peter (9) and a girl (16).

The federal census of 1860 lists none of these families; nor, for that matter, any Indians in Clinton County. Were they overlooked? Had they moved on? It's my belief that they moved far north to Emmet county but that research will have to wait.

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

# Allen family members are early settlers in DeWitt

Pioneer family  
transforms  
wilderness  
into farm

BY KEN COIN

Among the early settlers to DeWitt was the Allen family, which settled south of the Scott settlement. Barne "Barney" Allen, a veteran of the War of 1812, settled here as early as 1837. A native of Washington Co., NY, Barney was married about 1804 to Betsey Heath, (it's recorded as Heath but I think it was actually Hath) and following his service in the War of 1812, the Allen's migrated to Niagara county.

After arriving in DeWitt, Barney and Betsey were organizers of the Baptist community in DeWitt where their close association with fellow members is believed to have also followed family ties. They undoubtedly were the parents of several of the younger pioneer couples in the area but, to date, only two of their children have been confirmed: George and Lucy.

Barney and Betsey were unusually old compared to most pioneer of the period. Both were in their early



The pioneer farm home of George and Margaret (Laughlin) Allen. This late Greek Revival style home, likely built in the late 1850s, is located on the south side of Clark Road, west of Schavey. Photo by Jennifer Vincent.

to Michigan, renting a large farm near Plymouth. Upon their arrival in DeWitt they took up an 80-acre farm on the south side of Clark road, west of Schavey, transforming it from wilderness to a productive farm. They had only two children, Oscar and Mary Jane, but also raised an adopted daughter, Jane Harper (of Bengal Township) who later married Sylvester Moon.

George and Margaret built the house, still standing on their old homestead, in the late 1850s.

It remained their home until George's death in

About a half mile east of Schavey, also on the south side of Clark, was the farm of Henry and Lucy (Allen) Chappell. The evidence is still scant as to whether this Lucy was actually Barney and Betsey's daughter. Age and local proximity would indicate it, but there was also a Lucy Allen who married Adam Laughlin (a brother to Margaret (Laughlin) Allen) of Bengal township. (Perhaps the two Lucy's were actually one in the same.)

Like Barney Allen, Henry Chappell too was a veteran of the War of 1812

He may well have had a family prior to his marriage to Lucy Allen in 1833 (She being considerably younger than he.). They had at least five children: Amy, Gardner, Enoch,

<sup>CHAPPELL</sup>  
Laura Jane and Gilbert. Like the Allens, Henry Campbell, following his death in 1861, was buried in the township cemetery on Schavey Road. Later being transferred to the

village cemetery, he now counts among the large number of 1812 veterans buried in DeWitt.

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Barney and Betsey were unusually old compared to most pioneer of the period. Both were in their early 50s when they settled here. She died in 1841 at the age of 56 and he in 1847 at the age of 62; both of them counting among the earliest deaths in the area. They were originally buried in DeWitt Township's first cemetery on Schavey Road and were among the several graves removed to the village cemetery about 100 years ago.

George Allen followed his parents to DeWitt, arriving here about 1840. Born in Rome, New York in 1806, at the age of 9 he was sent away to live with a Baptist minister until he reached his majority. Ill treated (in a Dickensian scenario) he ran away after five years only to leave home again at age 14 to strike out on his own on the Erie Canal.

In 1831, George married Margaret Laughlin of Astabula County, Ohio. They lived for a time in Ohio and afterwards came



**The pioneer farm home** of George and Margaret (Laughlin) Allen. This late Greek Revival style home, likely built in the late 1850s, is located on the south side of Clark Road, west of Schavey. Photo by Jennifer Vincent.

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It remained their home until George's death in 1888. Some time after the turn of the century, Margaret went west to live with her adopted daughter Jane Moon in Imperial, California. She died there in 1906 at the advanced age of 96.

Their daughter, Mary Jane married Charles Lott and lived on the farm directly across the road from her parents. This farm now adjoins the Methodist property to the west and was, until recently, the Kowalk farm. Charles Lott was one of the many children of Peter and Elizabeth Lott, also very early DeWitt pioneers. Peter Lott, for all his possible pioneering contributions will, alas, be remembered solely for his spectacular exit from this earth. In the wee hours of New Year's morning, 1850, after sneaking into a brewery on Prairie Creek and imbibing way too much, he fell out a window to his death.

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# Bringing gifts of cake, young DeWitt kids bring joy to elder

BY KEN COIN

As we kids stood around the basement of the Community Church, arms folded across our chests in defiance and tapping our cold feet, we debated who's bone-head idea this was. In the kitchen of the old church the adults were carrying up a huge cake which, the night before, had been the centerpiece of the Christmas program; A Birthday Party for Jesus.

Someone had the bright idea that the cake, cut into several dozen five pound cubes, could be delivered to all the insulin-starved senior citizens of the community. This was matched with the equally delirious notion that we, the church youth, would be more than happy ("delighted", I believe, was the actual term used) to personally deliver it.

Randy Berkimer and I paired up and were soon handed a heaping platter of cake globs and frosting and the name of our shut-in: Nellie Boyd. That wasn't too bad. Mrs. Boyd was a nice old woman who lived by the post office, only a few blocks from the church. Randy figured we could just leave it on her porch, bang on the door and be home in just a few minutes.

Soon, we were standing at the back door of her little house, banging away on the old wooden door. Randy was quick to admit defeat.

"She's not home, let's go," he said.

"No, I think there's a light on." I answered, naively optimistic.

"Well she can't hear us; she's probably deaf. Let's go!" he said emphatically, tugging at my arm.

Just as we turned to scamper away the door began to shake and heave as someone from within struggled to get it open. It was the 60's, we'd seen "To Kill a Mockingbird",

we knew the possibilities.

Suddenly, the door gave way and there she stood, no bigger than a minute with her gray braids twined tightly to her head. We tried to explain what we were up to, but she really didn't seem to care. So completely thrilled with having visitors, she pulled us both into the dim little house, apologizing about the door and making us take seats at the table of the sparse kitchen.

Standing across the table from us she clasped her gnarled hands together in front of her prim cotton dress. "Now then, what are your names?" she cooed.

We said our names and, again, tried to give an explanation for the mountain of crumbling cak, but she cut us off.

"Randi and Kim? Well, you may call me Grandma, everyone does. It's just so nice of you young girls to stop for a visit. And, I see you brought cake." she added, giving a delighted little clap.

"GIRLS?" Indignant at being mistaken for a girl, Randy (or "Randi") was ready to get out of there but I didn't want to leave without explaining the cake business.

"And so you girls wanted to share some cake with me?" Grandma Boyd asked after we stammered out the scenario again. "Well, I think that's about the nicest thing I've ever heard of. And I sure wish I could eat a piece but I'm afraid I can't. With my diah-beedies, the doctor has cut me off from sweets."

"Ok.... well, bye..." Randy was preparing for a hasty exit but he wasn't quite quick enough. In half an instant the old woman was behind him pushing him back down into the seat of the ancient kitchen chair.

Putting a talon on each of our shoulders the tiny woman delivered her appeal. "Much as I'd like a taste of that cake, it would make me even happier to watch you

girls eat it for me," she said with a mischievous twinkle behind her spectacles.

"Can't do it.....They won't let us....No can do..." we babbled. Behind us, almost out of sight, Grandma Boyd was rummaging in a drawer; we thought for forks. When she turned back around, we caught the glint of metal in her hand: the red bulb from an old celluloid wreath at the window reflected in miniature form the blade of a long, sharp, knife!

Frozen with fear, one of us (I'll say it was Randy because I'm the one telling the story) screamed like a girl named "Randi" as Grandma Boyd made a quick thrust of the wrist. It easily slashed between us and made a clean and remarkably equal separation of the pile of cake on the platter. She then handed each of us a heavy old fork and with the serene look of an aged Madonna, watched as we both gobbled down our portion.

Still twitching, (from the scare or the sugar rush - I don't know which) we walked back out into the snow. We swore oaths over and over again that we'd never do that again. Yet for all our protests we both suspected that in some convoluted sort of way, we were the ones who received the gift that day.

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