

DeWitt - Bath

Review

Serving DeWitt, Bath and southern Clinton County

Volume 19, Number 26
©1997-Community Newspapers

Sunday, July 20, 1997
32 pages

5 Youths
work on Ben-
gel Wildlife
Center

12 SRT
Extravaganza
is July 26



Chad Cantwell

Ken Coin honored as Citizen of the Year

DeWitt Township board presents award

By NIKKI LOWE
Staff Writer

Sparked by the thrill of history since childhood, Ken Coin's interest in local history and his willingness to share his findings has prompted the DeWitt Township Board to name him 1997 Citizen of the Year.

"I felt honored that someone thought of me - a little bit humbled," Coin says.

Coin says he's loved history as long as he can remember. "I've always been interested in local history. Even as a small child I remember asking questions that probably surprised my grandparents and parents."

As he grew older his interest expanded. Coin says he had to do his homework to keep up with his relatives' conversations so he wouldn't have to interrupt and ask questions.

Feeling uneasy about the award, he

says, "I was really hesitant about accepting it because I don't like recognition."

Although, he says he feels better thinking the award is really about people appreciating history and DeWitt's heritage than about people appreciating him.

At the July 14 DeWitt Township meeting, he was presented with a plaque honoring him and a resolution which stated his endeavors. Those endeavors include serving on the DeWitt Public Library Board as representative for the City of DeWitt where he has held the offices of president, vice president and treasurer, historian for the DeWitt Public Library, columnist for the *DeWitt-Bath Review*, an active member of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, was active with the Clinton County Historical Society, has written the DeWitt History Series and was director of the archives room of the Clinton County Historical Society.

See Coin, page 31



Ken Coin is presented with his 1997 Citizen of the Year award from DeWitt Township Treasurer Brenda Barnett.

DBR photo by Nikki Lowe

Coin

Continued from page 1

Though Coin has held several positions concerning history, he says his favorite thing besides doing research is going to grade schools and giving talks or showing slides. He says writing the column is his way of giving back his gift to the community.

"There's a lot of people

that have lived in DeWitt all of their lives or a generation or two older than me and something presented in the newspaper lets people know someone shares their memories," Coin says. "That's really the only thing that does last in history is our memories."

Coin has lived in DeWitt all of his life and currently works for the Lansing 54A District Court.

Volume 18, Number 26
©1997-Community Newspapers

ton County

Sunday, July 20, 1997
32 pages

5 Youths
work on Ben-
gel Wildlife
Center

12 SRT
Extravaganza
is July 26



Chad Cantwell

Ken Coin honored as Citizen of the Year



20 July 1987
413

Community

Award reflects community's interest in history

By KEN COIN

Trying not to get a big head over the issue, I've concluded that being awarded Citizen of the Year by DeWitt Township is really representative of the interest of our community toward DeWitt's heritage.

When I initially agreed to write this column, I asked if I could do it anonymously. I thought a pseudonym would work well but that idea was quickly shot-down. One stipulation that I insisted on and I've adhered to is that I would not write a rosy "those were the good old days" column. Sentimentality has little appeal to me. I like to crack the nut and (for better or for worse) pick out every bit of the meat, good and bad.

I am constantly (and pleasantly) surprised by the number of newer residents to the community who comment on their enjoyment on what I write. With the mobile nature of our current society, I believe this interest is a great benefit to the makeup of the community. So it remains a constant conflict between writing for an audience unfamiliar with past names and events and the old timers who may wonder why I spend so much space on what to them seems like obvious background information.

During the last five years my column has taken on many subject matters. I have also presented these topics with different methods. Sometimes I present it straight-up as scholarly research; sometimes a light-hearted approach; sometimes as an out-and-out tall tale; sometimes rather autobiographical and sometimes a tale from my own family trunk. Always, I've tried to pass along something informative as well as entertaining.

Doing the research comes easy for me. Now I know that all of you who struggled through American History in high school are gagging at that statement, but it's true. It's particularly exciting for me to come across something "new" and look under every rock possible to try to expand on it. My articles about the local Indians, the Scott family, house histories ... those are examples of extensive research.

One of our biggest challenges for me is to take pioneer life experiences and write them out in a manner which offers you an interesting glimpse of past lives. DeWitt pioneers were essentially no different than you or I except in their life experiences which were often light years removed from what we now know. To adequately convey the emotions of loneliness, despair, anxiety, accomplishment and satisfaction which were the mainstays of pioneer life, is often beyond my abilities.

I have sometimes used my own ancestors as a vehicle for presenting a story. Believe me, I use them not because they were big rollers in old DeWitt or even because I like to see their names in print. For a whimsical tall-tale I like using them so as not to incur the wrath of the actual family involved. When the characters are unimportant, and the event stands alone, I prefer to embarrass my own family by making them the butt of jokes.

The most fun to write of course are the truly tall tales where I can take an actual person or event and weave dialogue and characters through it. Cash Bristol (honored veteran and town reprobate) along with Ima All-the-rage (the town plate who challenged the dress-code of Eastern Star) are examples of real people or events, cleverly disguised.

To all you who occasionally enjoy this column, to those who share new materials with me and especially to those who make a point of giving me feedback (which positive or negative, at least lets me know someone's paying attention), thank you. My ability to research and organize data is a gift. Writing it out into something that makes sense is my gift to you.

Ken Coin is a resident of DeWitt and the area's prima-

DeWitt lost bid for Capital selection in 1847

BY KEN COIN

A question I'm asked quite often pertains to the story that DeWitt was once the state capital for a day. The question is even more pertinent this year as Lansing celebrates 150 years as state capital. The story itself is technically untrue but it is based on sound fact.

The state constitution of 1835 dictated that the issue of a permanent site for the state capital be decided by 1847. The issue was no easier for the legislature to decide in 1847 than it had been 12 years earlier. If anything, the scheming and speculating that had ran rampant during those years only added to the difficulty in reaching a decision. Some communities like Marshall and Battle Creek had been so optimistic that they even designated streets with the name "Capitol Avenue".

The House took up the issue in 1847 and voted on the following sites: Marshall, Jackson, Grand Blanc, Byron, Ann Arbor, Detroit, Dexter and Eaton Rapids. None of these votes carried. A motion to select the village of Lyons won but was overturned the following day. The House finally passed a motion designating the site to be within the township of Lansing, a site which had been heavily promoted by land speculator James Seymour who offered to donate land to the state for building sites and even agreed to erect the necessary building (which he would then graciously lease back to the state).

This bill was then passed to the Senate where the debate made a familiar repetition of sites. Motions were made in favor of the following sites: Jackson, Marshall, Lyons, DeWitt, Ann Arbor, Detroit, Caledonia Township, Corunna, Flint, Lansing Township, Eaton Rapids, Ingham township and Albion. Several of the sites were voted on in the Senate, including DeWitt. Like several other sites, DeWitt won the vote only to be overturned the following day; likely after some late-night sessions of back room bargaining. In the end, Lansing Township and James Seymour's promises won the vote.

So, in a nutshell, DeWitt's closest claim to becoming the state capital remains the fact that for about 24 hours



Lansing's first Capitol building, constructed in 1847. This photograph of the pioneer structure was taken from the roof of the new (and present) Capitol building about 1880. The house shown in the left foreground is the site of the present Farnum Building on the southeast corner of Capitol and Allegan. This house was built in 1850 as a governor's residence but was deemed unsuitable (too small and conservative) by the early governors who refused to occupy it. The house was later moved to 2003 W. Main (where it remains today) and the old Capitol building was destroyed by fire in 1882. This photograph comes from an old stereopticon card, courtesy of Bonnie Ward.

money was in the Cabinet Counties of lower Michigan and Clinton County was among the northern-most organized counties in the central part of the state and DeWitt, as its seat, was among the largest communities in the region. What it lacked, and was probably its determining deterrent, was lack of a river forceful enough to power the anticipated mills and factories that a city of the period would require.

While many of the area settlers were pleased enough that the site selected was so close, their hopes of it having a boom effect on DeWitt held disappointment. Eventually (but not for about 20 years) Lansing would attract railroads which, in effect, gave DeWitt area farmers easier access of higher paying markets. But the immediate effect was the relocating of a major wagon road which had for some time bolstered DeWitt's importance. The Grand River road which had originally connected Detroit to Grand Haven via DeWitt, was soon en route through Lansing.

The only immediate benefits of the Lansing site were the temporary jobs it offered. Many state officials swelled DeWitt's numerous hotels while accommodations were being constructed at the capital city. Farmers found a

DeWitt lost bid for Capital selection in 1847

BY KEN COIN

A question I'm asked quite often pertains to the story that DeWitt was once the state capital for a day. The question is even more pertinent this year as Lansing celebrates 150 years as state capital. The story itself is technically untrue but it is based on sound fact.

The state constitution of 1835 dictated that the issue of a permanent site for the state capital be decided by 1847. The issue was no easier for the legislature to decide in 1847 than it had been 12 years earlier. If anything, the scheming and speculating that had ran rampant during those years only added to the difficulty in reaching a decision. Some communities like Marshall and Battle Creek had been so optimistic that they even designated streets with the name "Capitol Avenue".

The House took up the issue in 1847 and voted on the following sites: Marshall, Jackson, Grand Blanc, Byron, Ann Arbor, Detroit, Dexter and Eaton Rapids. None of these votes carried. A motion to select the village of Lyons won but was overturned the following day. The House finally passed a motion designating the site to be within the township of Lansing, a site which had been heavily promoted by land speculator James Seymour who offered to donate land to the state for building sites and even agreed to erect the necessary building (which he would then graciously lease back to the state).

This bill was then passed to the Senate where the debate made a familiar repetition of sites. Motions were made in favor of the following sites: Jackson, Marshall, Lyons, DeWitt, Ann Arbor, Detroit, Caledonia Township, Corunna, Flint, Lansing Township, Eaton Rapids, Ingham township and Albion. Several of the sites were voted on in the Senate, including DeWitt. Like several other sites, DeWitt won the vote only to be overturned the following day; likely after some late-night sessions of back room bargaining. In the end, Lansing Township and James Seymour's promises won the vote.

So, in a nutshell, DeWitt's closest claim to becoming the state capital remains the fact that for about 24 hours the Senate thought it would make a good site. And although it lost, it could be noted that DeWitt's defeat in the Senate (9 to 12) was by an equal or narrower margin than the sites of Caledonia, Detroit, Ann Arbor, Corunna, Flint, Ingham, Albion and Eaton Rapids.

The entire issue of selecting a location took some foresight on the part of the legislature. At the time, there was no town of Lansing. Most of the political power and



Lansing's first Capitol building, constructed in 1847. This photograph of the pio roof of the new (and present) Capitol building about 1880. The house shown in the le sent Farnum Building on the southeast corner of Capitol and Allegan. This house was dence but was deemed unsuitable (too small and conservative) by the early govern house was later moved to 2003 W. Main (where it remains today) and the old Capitc 1882. This photograph comes from an old stereopticon card, courtesy of Bonnie Ward.

money was in the Cabinet Counties of lower Michigan and Clinton County was among the northern-most orga nized counties in the central part of the state and DeWitt, as it's seat, was among the largest communities in the region. What it lacked, and was probably it's deter mining deterrent, was lack of a river forceful enough to power the anticipated mills and factories that a city of the period would require.

While many of the area settlers were pleased enough that the site selected was so close, their hopes of it having a boom effect on DeWitt held disappointment. Eventually (but not for about 20 years) Lansing would attract railroads which, in effect, gave DeWitt area farmers easier access of higher paying markets. But the immediate effect was the relocating of a major wagon road which had for some time bolstered DeWitt's importance. The Grand River road which had originally connected Detroit to Grand Haven via DeWitt, was soon en routed through Lansing.

The only immediate benefits of the Lansing site were the temporary jobs it offered. Many state officials swelled DeWitt's numerous hotels while accommodations were being constructed at the capital city. Farmers found a quick market for livestock and produce to feed the swarm gathering at Lansing and area carpenters and joiners could nearly demand their price in the construction of the vast amount of buildings which were springing up in the forest on the Grand River, including the statehouse pictured here.

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

Topping House was home of prominent DeWitt doctor

Later known simply as
"The Apartment House"

BY KEN COIN

With the recent appearance of the historic markers about town, there has been a renewed interest among owners of DeWitt's older houses to find out a little more about their own homes. Researching these old structures has been a hobby of mine since I was a kid, and it remains a constant learning experience about the genealogy and cultural history of the town. A few years back I began a series in this column of putting together my notes of what I knew about many of these pioneer residences. In light of the recent renewed interests, I think I'll pick up that theme again.

One house in town which has always held my eye is the old Topping house on Main Street. It was in my neighborhood for more than 30 years and it's history interweaves back and forth with the history of my own former home on Scott Street. But I still haven't quite been able to uncover all I'd like to. Every year I select a former pioneer family no longer represented in DeWitt and attempt to track down descendants who might be able to contribute photo's or family information. Last year I chose Dr. Topping in hopes of finding out more about this home. I wrote to dozens of possible descendants in Ohio and Virginia but came away empty-handed. So, such as it is, here's what I know about this still formidable old structure.

George W. Topping was born in Mentz, NY in 1827. He was bright and well-educated by standards of the times and won a scholarship to a teaching school in Albany. After working as a collection clerk on the Erie Canal and teaching school, he entered the study of medicine in New York and later Ohio. He gave up his studies soon after the discovery of gold in California, when he took the overland route to the gold fields. He remained there, working his claims, until 1853 when he returned, by way of Nicaragua, to his New York home with \$3,000 in his pocket for three years of work. That fall, he entered the University of Michigan and graduated with his medical degree the following spring.

Dr. Topping arrived in DeWitt in 1854 and set up his

chased a piece of land at the northwest corner of Main and Scott streets from Judge David Sturgis. On the property at the time was a partially completed "structure" which he modified into a residence and office. It was to his home that he brought his new bride, Lucinda Hurd, after their marriage in 1856. (This is the old saltbox-style home currently at 109 N. Scott which, at that time was located at 204 W. Main.)

I believe that shortly thereafter he began construction of the "big house" directly west of his first home. It was completed and occupied at any rate by 1864, as newspaper accounts of Lucinda's sensational death clearly make the distinction between the "office" and the "house" as being two separate structures. It was in this new home, after the birth of their two daughters, that on June 17, 1864, while working in the kitchen, Lucinda caught her dress on fire and rushed out of the house crying for help. A student by the name of Wellings, in the office building next-door, heard her shrieks and looking out the window saw her enveloped in flames in the yard. She was carried, unconscious, into her husband's surgical room on the second floor of the office building where she lingered for nearly three hours before death came. Dr. Topping, who had been out on calls, was summoned, but upon arriving could do nothing for his suffering young bride.

With two little girls to raise, age four and six years, Dr. Topping made a second marriage the following year to



Dr. George Washington Topping's home at 225 W. Main. Built about 1865 (?), remained one of DeWitt's showplace homes for more than a half century. Photo ca. 1925 courtesy of the DeWitt Public Library.

about town, there has been a renewed interest among owners of DeWitt's older houses to find out a little more about their own homes. Researching these old structures has been a hobby of mine since I was a kid, and it remains a constant learning experience about the genealogy and cultural history of the town. A few years back I began a series in this column of putting together my notes of what I knew about many of these pioneer residences. In light of the recent renewed interests, I think I'll pick up that theme again.

One house in town which has always held my eye is the old Topping house on Main Street. It was in my neighborhood for more than 30 years and its history interweaves back and forth with the history of my own former home on Scott Street. But I still haven't quite been able to uncover all I'd like to. Every year I select a former pioneer family no longer represented in DeWitt and attempt to track down descendants who might be able to contribute photo's or family information. Last year I chose Dr. Topping in hopes of finding out more about this home. I wrote to dozens of possible descendants in Ohio and Virginia but came away empty-handed. So, such as it is, here's what I know about this still formidable old structure.

George W. Topping was born in Mentz, NY in 1827. He was bright and well-educated by standards of the times and won a scholarship to a teaching school in Albany. After working as a collection clerk on the Erie Canal and teaching school, he entered the study of medicine in New York and later Ohio. He gave up his studies soon after the discovery of gold in California, when he took the overland route to the gold fields. He remained there, working his claims, until 1853 when he returned, by way of Nicaragua, to his New York home with \$3,000 in his pocket for three years of work. That fall, he entered the University of Michigan and graduated with his medical degree the following spring.

Dr. Topping arrived in DeWitt in 1854 and set up his first and only medical practice. Upon his arrival he pur-

his home that he brought his new bride, Lucinda Hurd, after their marriage in 1856. (This is the old saltbox-style home currently at 109 N. Scott which, at that time was located at 204 W. Main.)

I believe that shortly thereafter he began construction of the "big house" directly west of his first home. It was completed and occupied at any rate by 1864, as newspaper accounts of Lucinda's sensational death clearly make the distinction between the "office" and the "house" as being two separate structures. It was in this new home, after the birth of their two daughters, that on June 17, 1864, while working in the kitchen, Lucinda caught her dress on fire and rushed out of the house crying for help. A student by the name of Wellings, in the office building next-door, heard her shrieks and looking out the window saw her enveloped in flames in the yard. She was carried, unconscious, into her husband's surgical room on the second floor of the office building where she lingered for nearly three hours before death came. Dr. Topping, who had been out on calls, was summoned, but upon arriving could do nothing for his suffering young bride.

With two little girls to raise, age four and six years, Dr. Topping made a second marriage the following year to Sindenia Ballard, by whom he would have one child, a son named George. Sindenia herself was highly educated for a young woman of her time, being a graduate of the Michigan Female College.

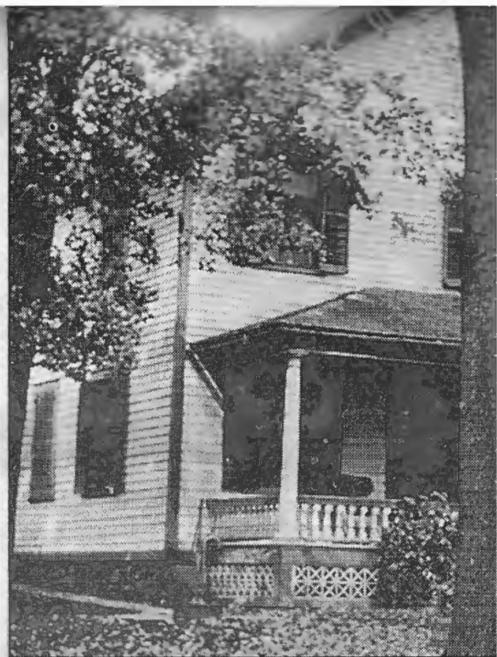
She was noted for her warmth and charitable disposition and added a refined elegance to this home, unequaled at that time in DeWitt. A few clues offering a glimpse into the spacious elegance of the old home's interior can be found in the descriptions of the weddings of Dr. Topping's daughters, Mary and Alice, which took place in the parlors.

Another unusual item comes from a brief biographical write-up of the doctor which alludes to the fact that somewhere in the house was found room to accommodate his enormous collection of insects and stuffed birds which was "the largest in the country".

Following the doctor's death in 1895, his widow left DeWitt to live with her son in Columbus, Ohio. His two daughters had also flown far from their DeWitt home: Alice Topping Weld lived in Illinois (and later Massachusetts) and Mary Topping Walbridge, in Norfolk, Virginia. The house was sold to Theodore Schavey who maintained it as a stately family home until the late 1920's.

It afterwards went through a few subsequent ownerships before being divided into apartments more than 50 years ago. For many decades, before "multiple housing" made an appearance in DeWitt, this fine old home, being the only one to fit the description, was known as simply "the Apartment House".

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



Dr. George Washington Topping's home at 2 remained one of DeWitt's showplace homes for more courtesy of the DeWitt Public Library.

VanFleets are early 1900s builders in DeWitt



Carl and Maude (Williams) VanFleet pose in front of their new home at the northeast corner of Scott and Jefferson streets. Ca. 1910.

Five homes still standing

BY KEN COIN

In the early years of this century, during one of DeWitt's growth spurts, several families made a name and reputation for themselves as builders. Among them the name VanFleet stands out, not in quantity but in quality, as builders with an eye for style. While many builders of the era found a few house plans that they could easily modify to suite the requirements of their customers, the VanFleet homes were each unique.

Carl and Earl VanFleet were local-born brothers. Their grandparents, John and Mary VanFleet were among the early pioneers of the South Riley area. Their father, Knight VanFleet, branched out from farming to operate a draying business (hauling freight with teams and wagon). As young men, Carl and Earl assisted their

said to have studied architecture. Indeed, his exposure to the Prairie school of design as well as other experimental forms are evident in their building projects in DeWitt. Aside from his building activities, Carl was a long-time rural mail carrier in the DeWitt area. Earl, who is known to have lived here from about 1910 to at least 1920, seems to have devoted his full energies as a building contractor.

Unfortunately, inquiries to Earl's family, now living in Royal Oak, turned up no records of his house building activities in DeWitt. Carl, on the other hand, who had no children, was overly fond of relegating his "old trash" to the burning barrel. Nevertheless, at least five of the VanFleet projects are known. The house pictured here (124 W. Jefferson), Carl's later home (123 N. Bridge), Earl's home (310 W. Washington), their parent's home (502 W. Main) and their Aunt Regina's home (109 Wilson).

Carl and Maude's first home, pictured here, is believed to have been built about 1910. The house was soon after sold to the Hurd family who lived here a number of years. Harry and Freda Bollinger lived here in the 1950s and liked the home so well they repurchased it from later owners Keith and Jean Blizzard. It has been the home of Jim and

Shirley Costigan for more than 20 years.

Although the house and adjoining carriage barn remain the same as pictured, the skirted porch did not prove to be a wise choice. Like so many similar porches in DeWitt, it looked good on paper but proved no match for Michigan's climate and was soon replaced.

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

VanFleets are early 1900s builder



Carl and Maude (Williams) VanFleet pose in front of their new home at the northeast corner of Scott and Jefferson streets. Ca. 1910.

Five homes still standing

BY KEN COIN

In the early years of this century, during one of DeWitt's growth spurts, several families made a name and reputation for themselves as builders. Among them the name VanFleet stands out, not in quantity but in quality, as builders with an eye for style. While many builders of the era found a few house plans that they could easily modify to suite the requirements of their customers, the VanFleet homes were each unique.

Carl and Earl VanFleet were local-born brothers. Their grandparents, John and Mary VanFleet were among the early pioneers of the South Riley area. Their father, Knight VanFleet, branched out from farming to operate a draying business (hauling freight with teams and wagon). As young men, Carl and Earl assisted their father in this business until after their marriages; Earl to Eva Simmons in 1908 and Carl, in 1905, to Maude Williams. Their father, Knight and his brother Dey are both known to have dabbled in the building business before Earl and Carl and it is likely the four men collaborated on some of their earlier projects.

What I know of the VanFleet's early years as builders is sketchy at best. Most of the information is from oral history of friends and those who later owned homes built by them. While Carl remained in DeWitt his entire life, Earl moved in and out of the picture. He moved to Chicago about 1905 where he worked at Marshall Fields and is

said to have studied architecture. Indeed, his exposure to the Prairie school of design as well as other experimental forms are evident in their building projects in DeWitt. Aside from his building activities, Carl was a long-time rural mail carrier in the DeWitt area. Earl, who is known to have lived here from about 1910 to at least 1920, seems to have devoted his full energies as a building contractor.

Unfortunately, inquiries to Earl's family, now living in Royal Oak, turned up no records of his house building activities in DeWitt. Carl, on the other hand, who had no children, was overly fond of relegating his "old trash" to the burning barrel. Nevertheless, at least five of the VanFleet projects are known: The house pictured here (124 W. Jefferson), Carl's later home (123 N. Bridge), Earl's home (310 W. Washington), their parent's home (502 W. Main) and their Aunt Regina's home (109 Wilson).

Carl and Maude's first home, pictured here, is believed to have been built about 1910. The house was soon after sold to the Hurd family who lived here a number of years. Harry and Freda Bollinger lived here in the 1950s and liked the home so well they repurchased it from later owners Keith and Jean Blizzard. It has been the home of Jim and

Shirley Co
Although
remain th
prove to b
DeWitt, it
Michigan's
Ken Co
ry histori

Victorian Schavey house marks early DeWitt homestead



The stately Schavey House, built in 1886 on the south bank of the Looking Glass River, has long drawn attention as one of the loveliest houses in the DeWitt area.

BY KEN COIN

The former Schavey farm, the area now developed as Spring Brook and Spring Brook Lakes, dates back to the earliest years of DeWitt. Alanson and Sarah Goodrich came with their large family to DeWitt in 1835 and the following years purchased his land on the south bank of the Looking Glass from the government. They cleared a sizable acreage,

built a home (directly north of the present brick house) and remained here until Alanson's death in 1859 at the age of 57 years. The Goodrich homestead retained some notoriety in the fact that Clinton County's first school was taught in an abandoned log hut on the property and remained DeWitt's only school for several years. There was also the cemetery on the east side of the road about a half-mile

south of the house. This cemetery, originated by the Oliver family who lived further south, was called the Goodrich Cemetery for many years even after it was acquired by the township of DeWitt (it was later removed, during the Schavey ownership of the farm, to the DeWitt cemetery - but that's another story).

The Thomas Parr family was the second owners of the farm. They had been early prosperous settlers of the Maple Rapids area. It has been said that they built a very handsome home on the property (directly north of the present home) which was later destroyed by fire. Their reason for coming to DeWitt has never really been expanded upon and, in any event, they remained here only about 10 years before returning to Maple Rapids where they reestablished themselves as one of the affluent families of that area.

In 1875, Theodore and Rebecca (Heitmeyer) Schoewe purchased the Parr farm. Both natives of Germany, the Schoewe's epitomized the American dream of immigrant success. Born in 1842, Theodore came with his parents to America in

here, replacing the original Yankee families, the Schoewe's worked hard and prospered. Like their contemporary Germans (and in sharp contrast to the usual Yankee frugality) the Schoewe's invested their profits in building a substantial residence and farm buildings, befitting their industrious reputation. The house, still impressive after 110 years, was erected in 1886. The late Faye Hanson who lived in the Schavey house for many years said the house was built to replace the original home which was destroyed by fire.

It is not known who the architect or builders were for the house. Some people have suggested that it was designed by Lansing architect Darius Moon. This is highly possible but is theory based only on the slim evidence of a similarity in style and the knowledge that he designed homes for many members of the greater Lansing, German Methodist community. All that is known of its construction is that the ornate "stone" window lintels and sills were manufactured in St. Johns by C.I. Holton. The interior was lavishly finished with fine woodwork, enormous pocket doors separating the main rooms and each

room in the house boasted interior louvered shutters.

The Schoewe family, which later simplified the spelling of their name to Schavey, remained based here for over 50 years and operated one of the largest and most successful farming operation in the area until the farm was auctioned

in 1928. It was later the home to the Welton and Hanson families but is probably better remembered as one of the farms long-owned by the Rosevale Meat Packing Company.

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

Community

Victorian Schavey house marks early DeWitt history



The stately Schavey House, built in 1886 on the south bank of the Looking Glass River, has long drawn attention as one of the loveliest houses in the DeWitt area.

BY KEN COIN

The former Schavey farm, the area now developed as Spring Brook and Spring Brook Lakes, dates back to the earliest years of DeWitt. Alanson and Sarah Goodrich came with their large family to DeWitt in 1835 and the following years purchased this land on the south bank of the Looking Glass from the government. They cleared a sizable acreage,

built a home (directly north of the present brick house) and remained here until Alanson's death in 1859 at the age of 57 years.

The Goodrich homestead retained some notoriety in the fact that Clinton County's first school was taught in an abandoned log hut on the property and remained DeWitt's only school for several years. There was also the cemetery on the east side of the road about a half-mile

south of the house. This cemetery, originated by the Oliver family who lived further south, was called the Goodrich Cemetery for many years even after it was acquired by the township of DeWitt (it was later removed, during the Schavey ownership of the farm, to the DeWitt cemetery - but that's another story).

The Thomas Parr family was the second owners of the farm. They had been early prosperous settlers of the Maple Rapids area. It has been said that they built a very handsome home on the property (directly north of the present home) which was later destroyed by fire. Their reason for coming to DeWitt has never really been expanded upon and, in any event, they remained here only about 10 years before returning to Maple Rapids where they reestablished themselves as one of the affluent families of that area.

In 1875, Theodore and Rebecca (Heitmeyer) Schoewe purchased the Parr farm. Both natives of Germany, the Schoewe's epitomized the American dream of immigrant success. Born in 1842, Theodore came with his parents to America in 1854, a journey by sailing vessel which took nearly three months. They settled in Erie County, Ohio where Theodore remained until 1867 when he first came to Michigan to work as a mechanic for the Michigan Central Railroad. In 1869 he returned to Ohio and began working his portion of his parent's farm.

In 1872, Theodore and Rebecca came to Michigan and settled among a rapidly expanding German society in DeWitt. Their first farm, Mrs. Diadama Ward's former homestead, was located at Herbison Road, about where Padgett Park is now located. In 1875 they exchanged this for the Parr farm on the Looking Glass.

Like many of the German families who settled

here, replacing the original Yankee families, the Schoewe's worked hard and prospered. Like their contemporary Germans (and in sharp contrast to the usual Yankee frugality) the Schoewe's invested their profits in building a substantial residence and farm buildings, befitting their industrious reputation. The house, still impressive after 110 years, was erected in 1886. The late Faye Hanson who lived in the Schavey house for many years said the house was built to replace the original home which was destroyed by fire.

It is not known who the architect or builders were for the house. Some people have suggested that it was designed by Lansing architect Darius Moon. This is highly possible but is a theory based only on the slim evidence of a similarity in style and the knowledge that he designed homes for many members of the greater Lansing, German Methodist community. All that is known of its construction is that the ornate "stone" window lintels and sills were manufactured in St. Johns by C.I. Holton. The interior was lavishly finished with fine woodwork, enormous pocket doors separating the main rooms and each

room in the house boasts interior louvered shutters.

The Schoewe family, which later simplified the spelling of their name to Schavey, remained here for over 50 years and operated one of the largest and most successful farming operations in the area until the farm was auctioned.

Bauerle Farm is site of early German settlement

By KEN COIN
Contributing Writer

Several weeks ago I gave you a brief history of the Schavey family, one of the first German families to make their appearance in DeWitt. I can't emphasize enough the tremendous change that these German families had on the culture and economy of DeWitt.

By my calculations (and this is certainly open for debate), I believe the Bauerle family (at one time spelled Bauerly, but pronounced similar to "Barley") could well be the first German family to arrive at DeWitt. Their appearance in 1862 paved the way for dozens of others and like most other waves of emigration, many of these families were connected by genealogical or religious ties.

Now claiming they were perhaps the first is an oversimplification. Since the beginning of the county's settlement, economic possibilities in DeWitt caused many early German settlers from the Westphalia area to temporarily come to DeWitt where they could hire out, temporarily for good wages. Somewhat later, German families based in North Lansing edged their way north into the southernmost portion of DeWitt Township but retained Lansing as their home city.

Charles Bauerly was born in Wurtemberg, Germany in 1837. That same year his father, John Bauerly, a wagon-maker and gunsmith, emigrated to America in search of opportunity. He settled in Saline, Mich. where he plied his trade as a wagon maker, saving money to afford the cost of bringing



his family across the ocean. Thirteen years would lapse before he was able to bring his wife Caroline and three teenage boys: Fred, Gottlieb and Charles. The voyage of the mother and sons was 43 days on the ocean. This was immediately followed by an 18-day journey "up the lake" from New York City to Jonesville, Mich., where the father was by then located. It must have been an exceptionally joyous reunion after being separated for 13 years!

Young Charles, 13 at the time, concluded his education at the local schools. The backwood schoolhouse was a far cry from the highly structured education he had known in Germany and after less than a year, his formal education ended.

Shortly thereafter, he became employed by John Schneeburger where he remained for 10 years. During that period, in 1862, he was married to Catherine Hepfer. Like her husband, Catherine was also born in Wurtemberg, Germany and had emigrated in 1847 at the age of 5 with her parents, Jacob and Mary (Walter) Hepfer to Washtenaw County, Mich.

The same year as their marriage, Charles purchased 86 acres in DeWitt Township from John P. Willet, the site of the present farm on Clark Road. The young couple presumably lived for a time in

the cabin built by the former owners and in 1867 the earliest portion of the present house was built. As their family grew, so did their house and in 1882 it was enlarged with additions. The large frame barn, shown in the illustration was built in 1878 and the substantial granary, in 1880.

In 1866, Catherine's parents came to DeWitt, as did two of her brothers and a sister. One brother, John Conrad Hepfer, purchased the Barnabas Bassett farm adjoining the Bauerle farm on the east. Like the Bauerle farm the Hepfer farm on DeWitt Road remained in the family for over 100 years, but was razed to make way for the present freeway.

Charles and Catherine Bauerle had nine children born to them: Lydia (Mrs. Valentine Neller), William, Edward, Caroline (Mrs. Jacob Schlenker), Maria (Mrs. John Friegle), Karl, Charles, John and Henry. The couple remained on their farm until 1903 when they moved to Lansing and the farm was purchased by their son Charles Jr. Charles died in 1917 and Catherine in 1926. Both are buried along with

many members of their family in the Hurd Cemetery.

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

Policy holders of Modern Woodmen and Royal Neighbors

BY KEN COIN

It's nice when things pertaining to DeWitt's history find their way home. Don and Ruth Peterson, who recently moved to Waters, MI, sent back a very old record book to donate to the DeWitt Public Library.

The 90 year-old ledger is a receipt book for insurance policies sold by either the Modern Woodmen and Royal Neighbors here in DeWitt from 1905 to 1922. It contains about 100 names of old DeWitt residents as well as some pertinent information about them such as age, occupation and beneficiaries for their policy.

The following are the names, occupations and ages recorded in the book:

1905 - J.A. Johnson, carpenter, 26; Jesse Hubbard, laborer, 45; Cleo Moses, laborer, 19; Gertie Moses, housewife, 18; Arthur Moses, carpenter, 38; May Moses, housewife, 27; Effie Halterman, housewife, 26; P.E. Halterman, barber, 34; Elmer Parks, laborer, 41; Gerry Dills, farmer, 19; Sarah F. Dryer, housewife, 47; Nathan G. Wager, day laborer, 26 and Beryl V. Dyke, buttermaker, 18.

1906 - Geo. L. Hayes, clerk, 27; Edith M. Wager, housewife, 18 and Mary Johnson, housewife, 24.

1907 - Abbie E. Dills, housewife, 49.

1909 - Fred Oberry, machinist, 25.

1910 - Helen A. Dills, post mistress, 20.

1911 - John H. Grier, laborer, 47.

1912 - Earl VanFleet, carpenter, 30; Otto Lietzke, farmer, 32; Alfred R. Coon, physician, 29; Glenn Bray, farmer, 27; Erwin E. Smith, farmer, 32; Agnes K. Springsteen, 41; Loyal D. Springsteen, farmer, 48; Chas B. Schneeberger, farmer, 34; John H. Farrell, farmer, 38; Ernest Day, farmer, 21 and Fred E. Carrus, common laborer, 42.

1913 - Frand Tellner, carpenter, 23.

1918 - Katherin Balli, telephone operator, 18; John D. Case, barber, 21; Flossie Faiver, housewife, 26; Clyde Faiver, farmer, 31; Lyle R. Goodsell, farmer, 31; Lyle R. Goodsell, farmer, 20; Rose Goodsell, housewife, 21; Floyd

E. Goodsell, farmer, 22; Floyd Hotelling, teamster, 18; Russell Harper, farmer, 19; Armance Harper, housewife, 36; Daniel Heiler, farmer, 44; Eddie Harper, farmer, 49; Ruth E. Moses, high school student, 19; Lena M. Moses, housewife, 17; Iva Redouty, housewife, 20; Leo Redouty, farmer, 23; Frank A. Richmond, shop hand, 18; Albert S. Schafer, farmer, 34; Eleanor Schafer, housewife, 21; Clinton Springsteen, farm hand, 19; Aden Springsteen, farm hand, 22; Myrtle Schneeberger, housewife, 40; Karl B. Schneeberger, farmer, 18; Thomas E. Staub, farmer, 21; Matie R. Staub, housewife, 19; Frank L. Todd, garage owner, 42; Lulu A. Todd, housewife, 38; Clifton E. Wilcox, farm hand, 17; Eva L. Day, housewife, 25; Gladys Harper; Frand C. Roosa, farmer, 38; Darwin H. Day, farmer, 25; Charles F. Young, farming, 29; Edith J. Roosa, housewife, 37 and Gordon E. Munger, high school student, 16.

1919 - Hazel A. Stevens, school teacher, 24; Addie Heiler, housewife, 34; Florence M. Mankey, housework, 18; Rose M. Mankey, school teacher, 20; Lucile Mankey, school teacher, 22 and Garfield Peltier, farming, 38.

1920 - Edith May Lederman, housewife, 37; James F. Harrington, barber, 25; Clara Hardman, truck driving, 23; Harold John Ridenous, general laborer, 18; Loyal William Miller, general laborer, 18; Donovan Wright Cutler, general laborer, 17; Carl C. Wilcox, general laborer, 17; Albert Howard Doty, general laborer, 16; Bert Carl Smalley, general laborer, 17 and Joseph Henry Lacross, general laborer, 18.

1921 - Harold E. Springsteen, farming, 17; Carlton Boss, farmer, 21; Floyd Hotelling, general laborer, 21 and Earl C. Jones, farmer, 21.

1922 - Charles Benedict Schneeberger, farmer, 43.

Many thanks to Don and Ruth for sending this back "home". The library will take good care of it.

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

ession if you experience some of the following:

Troubled Thinking Patterns

- Decreased memory/concentration
- Irritability
- Extreme self-blame or guilt
- Suicidal thoughts or actions

Loss of Motivation

- Deep sadness or despair

Records

Continued from page 10

"Aug. 17, 1859 at a meeting of the church held at the home of Mrs. G. W. Topping the following reso-

lutions were adopted: That by the unreasonable of said Baptist Church and our own self respect - we are compelled to leave the house (the Baptist meeting house) and seek elsewhere to worship. That although we have been treated rudely and war declared against us - Yet in retreating we do it with a peaceful spirit, disclaiming all unkind and discourteous feelings ..."

Remember that depression is not a weakness, it is an illness. Don't let depression

1997 "Taxpayer Relief Act" Changes Made to 1,109 IRS Rules!

Will you make mistakes under these New Laws that could cause you to needlessly overpay your taxes??

This new law, which was passed by congress in August 1997, adds incredible amounts of complication and confusion across the entire spectrum of income earners. Whether you make \$4000 a year, or \$400,000 a year...you have new and hard to understand issues you are being forced to deal with!

There isn't any area

of your Financial Life that won't be affected by this new law! Don't make mistakes that will cost you a pile of money!

To help you understand what we're talking about we've prepared a **FREE REPORT**. Call today toll free **1-800-927-9102**, 24 hours, for a free recorded message, and to get your **FREE** copy of this new report

lutions were adopted: That by the unreasonable of said Baptist Church and our own self respect - we are compelled to leave the house (the Baptist meeting house) and seek elsewhere to worship. That although we have been treated rudely and war declared against us - Yet in retreating we do it with a peaceful spirit, disclaiming all unkind and discourteous feelings ..."

Ah well what church family doesn't have its ups and downs?

On behalf of the DeWitt Public Library (which will add this little treasure to its future Local History room and guard it for the next 146 years) I'd like to thank Mr. Ortwein for seeing to its safe return home and to Marge McGovney for her always efficient service as courier.

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

©1997 NEXTEL Co.
and/or service mark

2 Little Numbers



Where else can you get 100's of channels in digital? Other mini-dish providers offer less channels. NFL, NBS, Sony, Uniden and more. Parents no imitations: you get the best in the Satellite System.

Limited time offer for new subscribers. Price shown is for model N. Activation fee & 1 year agreement required. Subj to \$29 monthly required. Subject to DIRECTV services. Call



1-800-444-1234

Monday - Friday
Just we're on Grand

MERRY CHRISTMAS

