



**House divided** - The home at 510 W. Main in DeWitt (left) was formed by combining two wings that were removed from the home at 506 W. Main (right). Photo by Jennifer Vincent.

## DeWitt house was home for lawyer DeWitt C. Chapin in mid-1800's

By KEN COIN

Among the earliest lawyers to make their appearance in the frontier settlement of DeWitt was a father and son team, Theodore and DeWitt C. Chapin. They came from Lockport, N.Y. in 1839 and established a successful practice here in the village. The location of their office or residence from this early period had not been found.

DeWitt Chapin was elected county clerk in 1842, a position he held for two years. Soon afterwards, he and his father moved to Ionia and later still to Allegan when the elder Chapin died. About 1853, DeWitt C. Chapin returned to DeWitt with his young family and reestablished his successful practice here. It was recorded that although he was not a "profound lawyer", he was "an excellent pleader before a jury". In 1856 he was again elected county clerk, a position he held until 1862.

Upon his return to DeWitt in the early 1850s, Chapin purchased some acreage on the west side of town, just outside the platted village, on the north side of Main Street. Here, around 1854, he built a large home in keeping with his professional status. The main two-story por-

tion of the house (currently 506 W. Main) was flanked on both the east and west sides with one-story wings (currently the house at 510 W. Main). These wings were somewhat set back from the main structure to allow for porches which faced the street.

Many structures by this date were being constructed with "balloon framing" but Chapin's home was built in the older post and beam method. The entire building was finished in the then popular Greek Revival styling. The main portion of the house undoubtedly had a large formal entrance set to the side and facing the street. Behind this would have been an entrance and stair hall.

Although situated outside of the village itself, this home was never part of a farm. It sat on three acres of land which would have contained a garden plot, fruit trees, stable, chicken coupe and other outbuildings necessary for an efficient home.

In the mid-1860s the Chapin family left DeWitt again and moved to Gratiot County where DeWitt set up another law practice and again entered local politics. He died there in 1874.

By 1860 the Chapin home had been purchased by George W. Cook, a

retired farmer. Little is known of Cook besides the fact that he lived in this house for 25 years with at least three different wives: Loretta, Clarissa and Electa. Born in Massachusetts in 1803, he died at this home in 1885.

At the turn of the century the house was purchased by Homer and Carrie Brazee. Brazee, in partnership with Willis McLouth, was both a miller at the DeWitt mill on Prairie Creek and a general merchant for a number of years at the northeast corner of Bridge and Main.

During their ownership the Brazees, who had no children, extensively altered the old home by removing the wings, raising the house onto a modern basement and adding a two-story addition to the west side. The two detached wings were moved to a lot west of the house and joined together to form the long, narrow, one-story house at 510 W. Main.

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

Chapman

**Hymenial.**

On Wednesday evening, Nov. 16, 1892, about fifty invited relatives and neighbors assembled at the cozy farm residence of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Sackett, in Southwest Bingham, to witness the marriage of their daughter Luella E. to Ansell Chapman, of Riley township.— The ceremony was performed by Rev. G. S. Northrup, of the Baptist church, St. Johns. As evidence of the popularity and esteem in which the wedded pair is held by those present, they were presented with many handsome and useful articles, of which the following is a partial list:

Silver craster by Mr and Mrs Jas A Chapman.  
Upholstered chair by Mr and Mrs LeRoy Sheldon.  
Shade lamp by Mr and Mrs W A Sutton.  
Extension table by Will Sackett.  
Set dishes by Warren Sackett.  
Silver berry spoon by Mr and Mrs Oscar Plowman.  
Four dollars in silver by Mr and Mrs James Hubbard.  
Silver knives and forks by Misses Kittle, Etta and Eddie Harper.  
Silver knives and forks by Walter and Gerde Brown.  
Set of China fruit plates by Willie Rice.  
Silver berry spoon by Emma Rice.  
Silver carving set by Philip Parks and Lizzie Davis.  
Silver pickle castor by Edith Eldridge and Clarence Turk.  
Shade lamp by Mr and Mrs Caruss and Florence Weiter.  
Silver teapot by Bertha Lyon, Lilly Chapman and Oral Granger.  
China berry set by Eva Walker and Calvin Rice.  
Set silver fruit knives by Wesley Baughn.  
Silver toothpick holder by Geo. DuBois.  
Shade lamp by Cora Byrnes.  
Silver cake basket by Dora Walker, May Whittaker, George Gillett and Willis Walker.  
Silver berry spoon by N S Kulins.  
Silver pickle castor by Caddie Brown and Fred Georgia.  
Crumb brush and tray by Mr and Mrs Baughn.  
Set napkins and towels by Jennie and Ida Shumaker.  
Picture by Mr and Mrs John Snyder.  
Mr. and Mrs. Chapman are now spending a vacation in Detroit and other sections of Wayne county.

Chapman

## PRETTY HOME WEDDING SOLEMNIZED WEDNESDAY

AT HOME OF MR. AND MRS. A. L.  
CHAPMAN.

A quiet home wedding took place last evening at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Ansel L. Chapman of Riley, when their only daughter, Neva Lesna, became the bride of Mr. Floyd Lorenzo Rice, younger son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Rice of Bingham. Rev. C. J. Kruse, pastor of the M. E. church of St. Johns, performed the ceremony in the presence of the immediate families and a few friends. The bride and groom, assisted by Miss Merle Plowman and Lynn Harper, received their guests. Promptly at 6:30 o'clock, while Mrs. George H. Brooks rendered, "O, Promise Me," the bridal party took their places in the living room at an improvised altar, formed of a lattice work of white ribbons and myrtle, banked with pink and white chrysanthemums, where the ceremony was performed.

The bride was gowned in white crepe de chene with trimmings of white shadow lace and pearls. She wore a corsage bouquet of white carnations.

Following the ceremony, a three-course dinner was served by Misses Belle Harper and Doris Rosecrans, Howard Love and Ross Harper. The dining room was decorated with pink and white carnations and smilax.

Mr. and Mrs. Rice, after a short wedding trip, will be at home to their friends at their new home three miles southwest of St. Johns.

Chapman

## CIVIL WAR VETERAN DIES AT ST. JOHNS

Special to The State Journal.

ST. JOHNS, Oct. 27.—James Ansel Chapman, died at his home in St. Johns, Tuesday.

Mr. Chapman was born in Medina county, Ohio, September 7, 1844. In 1852 he moved, with his parents, to Michigan, and settled on the farm in Riley, where he spent most of his life, and where his son still resides.

In 1862, near the beginning of the Civil war, at the age of 18, he enlisted in Company G, 5th Michigan cavalry, and served for three years. At the close of the war he returned to his home in Riley.

On February 22, 1866, he was united in marriage to Sarah A. Witheral, and to this union two children were born. In 1912 his wife died, and on December 15, 1913, he was united in marriage to Mrs. Jennie McCabe.

Mr. Chapman had been a resident of St. Johns since 1908. He was formerly a member of the Bengal Riley Baptist church.

He is survived by his widow, Mrs. Jennie Chapman, one son, Ansel, of Riley, one daughter, Mrs. Eunice Chapman Plowman, of Northstar, a step-son, Byron McCabe, one sister, Mrs. Allen Sutton, of St. Johns, two grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

The funeral was held from the home on Thursday afternoon, Rev. G. B. Northrup officiating and the interment was made in the Bray's cemetery.

# Lifestyle

323-1711

## Long-ago veterans had local ties

There were many veterans of the War of 1812 who came to the DeWitt area in the early years of its settlement. Some stayed briefly before moving on, others remained and eventually died here. Several became prominent settlers while others lived out an obscure life; their former military service unrecorded.

Unlike veterans of all later wars (with the exception of the war with Mexico, 1846-48) veterans of the War of 1812 formed no local organizations. As a result, much of the information of these men's military past has been forgotten. Likewise, even many of the names have been lost.

The following are some veterans of this war who have a recorded association with early DeWitt.

Perhaps the most notable veteran of early DeWitt was its founder, Capt. David Scott. He was born in Litchfield, Conn., Nov. 1, 1779, and was reportedly a captain in the 23rd U.S. Infantry. He married Eunice Forbes of Shoreham, Vt., in 1801. They settled at DeWitt in 1833 and it was here that he died, May 7, 1851. He and his wife are buried in the DeWitt cemetery.

Col. Thomas Lee was born Dec. 21, 1774, in Hudson, N.Y. He came to DeWitt at a relatively early date but no information concerning his life here has been confirmed. His wife's maiden name was Asenath Winants and they had at least one son, George W. Lee. Col. Lee died at DeWitt, Dec. 2, 1852, and is buried in the DeWitt cemetery.

Barnabas Allen (also record as Burnab or Barney Allen) was born in Washington Co., N.Y., Nov. 12, 1786 (?). He settled south and west of DeWitt in 1837 and was among the earliest members of the DeWitt Baptist Church in 1842. He died March 4, 1847, and is buried in the DeWitt cemetery beside his wife, Betsey (Heath) Allen who died in 1841. Their son George W. Allen became a prominent settler of section 19, this township.

The tombstone of Enos Silsbee in the DeWitt cemetery has been engraved (at a later date) "PVT. N.Y. Militia, War of 1812." He died Nov. 7, 1845, at the age of 48. He is buried with his wife, Abigail, and two daughters who died at an early age. Other than these facts, nothing fur-

ther is known.

David Olin Sr. came to DeWitt at an early date, reportedly in 1837. His name is frequently mentioned in the early histories of this area but as he had a son by the same name it is nearly impossible to distinguish who is being credited. David Sr. is credited with building the Baptist Meeting House on north Bridge street and one of the early schools at Gunnison's corners. He is also listed among the early owners of DeWitt's Clinton House hotel. He died here on August 25, 1857, at the age of 62, and is buried in the DeWitt cemetery.

Henry Chappell (also spelled Chappel) is believed to have been an early settler south and west of DeWitt. He died here on May 25, 1861, at the age of 72 and was originally buried in the former Goodrich cemetery on Schavey road. His grave, along with several others, was removed to the DeWitt cemetery at a later date.

James Stickles, an early settler of southern DeWitt township, died August 26, 1876, at the age of 79. He is said to have been buried in the Hurd cemetery beside his wife Lucy.

Daniel Ferguson Jr. (1794-1864) is believed to have come to the DeWitt settlement in 1834 along with his father, Daniel Sr. and several brothers. Most of this large family, including Daniel Jr., eventually settled in Olive township near Muskrat Lake. Specific references to him are confusing due to he and his father having the same name. He was probably buried in either the Alward or Merrihew cemeteries, though no connection to either has been located.

Dr. Hiram Stowell (whose veteran status has not yet been firmly established) was a native of Cayuga Co.,

## Historic DeWitt

By Kenneth Coin

N.Y. He and his family came to DeWitt in 1837 and settled on the Looking Glass river, several miles upriver from the Scott settlement. He was elected Clinton county's first Judge of Probate in 1839 and afterwards came to the village of DeWitt where he built an impressive home on the northeast corner of Main and Franklin. He died here on August 25, 1857, at the age of 62 and was buried in the DeWitt cemetery.

According to records of the Daughters of 1812, Porter Briggs is said to have lived in the DeWitt area but this has not been confirmed by local records. It is possible that he was connected with the later Briggs family of southern DeWitt township.

Chappell

Child

Camp Lee, Grand Rapids,  
Sunday, December 6, 1863

Dear Clarra,

I thank you for your letter, which I received yesterday. My health is quite good, much better than it has been since returning from the South. I had a cold so severe that if I had been at home and tried former habits and remedies, I would have been very liable to have produced a severe fit of sickness. I rode on the platform of the cars most of the way and was much exposed to the weather. How grateful to God we should be for health. I was glad to hear that you were having a cellar made. Inform me how far the bank extends from the house, how you like it, and how much it cost. I suppose you are writing to me today and am apprehensive that I shall leave here before your letter arrives. I expect to remove from here tomorrow or next day, but do not know whether it will to Detroit or Chicago. I am in hopes that it will be Chicago. I am pleased with the idea of leaving here. I want to be with mt regiment as soon as possible.

There is not the society in camp here that I expect to find when I get to my regiment. There are a great many thieves and gamblers among the men and they steal from small amounts up to \$500. \$50 was taken from bunk under me two or three nights since. I am in hopes of getting the portion of my bounty and pay soon. James Child is here among the drafted men and "Uncle Mark" appear to be his ", 'oy and his song." I do not see him all the time!! I shall try and send home my shawl, and one army blankets. Keep two for myself not knowing but I shall want them if the weather should be extremely severe. They will keep me comfortable. I apprehend it will be difficult to acquire the habit of sleeping in bed as usual formerly. I saw the Rev. Mr. Mason on the ground before leaving for the South, introduced myself and had a pleasant conversation with him, have not seen him since. I will write you again when I am located. If I leave before receiving a letter from you written today, it will be forwarded to me. It is most impossible for anyone to get a furlough from this camp. When I get to Camp Douglas I am in hopes it will be different.

This camp is considered by old soldiers, under more strick discipline than any other in the country and there is much complaint in consequence. I see the necessity of it and have no complaints. With the class of men they have to manage, there is a necessity for rigid discipline. Many of them are in chains, others two are handcuffed together. Many of the substitutes are a hard class of Canadians. I should advise all friends if they thought they stood one chance in ten to be drafted, to enlist and avoid the stigma of going to war because they

Child

compelled too. About 700 has been added to the army by the October draft and forwarded from this camp. I had to be at a few dollar expense on my journey and some in treating my cough, buying apples & etc. I frequently am engaged in making toast and broiling meat. I generally keep butter on hand. I have not paid or seen to speak to Col. Spaulding since my return. He is now absent, and if he returns here I wish you remit the amount to him. As I think of nothing more of interest to you, I close, hoping that God will protect you all.

M. A. Child

Camp Lee, Grand Rapids,  
Sunday, December 6, 1863 }

Dear Clara,

I thank you for your letter, which I received yesterday. My health is quite good—much better than it has been since returning from the South. I had a cold so severe that if I had been at home and tried former habits and remedies, I would ~~not~~ have been very liable to have produced a severe fit of sickness. I rode on the platform of the cars much of the way—and was much exposed to the weather. How grateful to God we should be for health. I was glad to hear that you were having the cold made. Inform me how fast the感冒 extends from the house—how you take it, and how much it cost. I suppose you are writing to me to-day and am apprehensive that I shall have time before your letter arrives. I expect to remain from here to-morrow or next day, but do not know whether it will be to Detroit or Chicago. I am in hopes that it will be Chicago. I am pleased with the idea of leaving here. I want to be with my children as soon as possible.

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Off

M. A. Carter

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# Chingman

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**CHINGMAN,  
ANTHONY SR.****Pentwater**

Age 87, passed away August 14, 1988 in Hart. He was retired from Motor Wheel in Lansing, was a co-founder of the Northern Michigan Ottawa Indian Foundation, the Woodland and Grandvalley American Indian Society, and the Grand River American Indian Society. He is survived by 1 son, Anthony Jr. of Pentwater; 2 daughters, Vicky Minnaker of Muskegon and Gladis Laws of Pentwater, formerly of Lansing; a step-daughter, Victoria King of Lansing; 18 grandchildren; 27 great grandchildren; 2 great great grandchildren. Funeral services will be held at 10 a.m. Wednesday at the St. Joseph Catholic Church in Weare. The Rosary will be at 8 p.m. Tuesday at the Tate Funeral Home in Hart.

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**SMITH, GARY R.****Laingsburg**

Age 32, died Saturday August 13, 1988. Memorial services will be

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# County's Sesqui Celebrate Clinton

## DeWitt Hotel is survivor of past era in Clinton County history

By KEN COIN

The face of the land has changed much since Clinton County's organization in 1839. The pioneers saw to it that the forests were cleared, streams diverted, and marshes eliminated.

In turn, the forces of nature have returned those pioneers to the earth along with their log buildings and split-rail fences. It's a constant battle — man builds up and nature reclaims.

Unique amongst the small list of survivors from 1839 is an imposing, yet unpretentious structure on the south side of the Looking Glass River, now called DeWitt.

The old "DeWitt Hotel" of New Albany Village, smothered in early county history, predates most any building in central Michigan and is unquestionably the oldest structure in Clinton County which can be documented with any amount of certainty.

THE OPENING of the interior of Michigan territory in the 1820's and early 30's was accompanied by countless quick wealth speculations, originating mostly from the drawing rooms and drafting tables of well-to-do New York entrepreneurs.

Clinton County received its ample share of these schemes in the forms of preplanned settlements, paper villages, canal works, plank roads, industrial complexes, and even an university.

The Clinton Salt-Works (Lebanon), Rochester Colony (Duplain), Waterloo Joint Stock Company (Wacousta), New Albany (DeWitt), Middleton (DeWitt), "Old DeWitt" (DeWitt), and Grand River City (Delta Mills-Watertown) were all planned with the intent of lining someone's pockets with western gold. Of these, most have evolved in one form or another to the present day, but with each there is little or nothing remaining from the 1830's, none that is, except at New Albany.

THE INTERESTING history of New Albany's

"DeWitt Hotel" reaches back a few years prior to its actual construction date of Oct. 21, 1833, when Hiram Sheldon, then of Cleveland, Ohio, purchased 107 acres of government land in section No. 8 of DeWitt Township.

This land, on the south bank of the Looking Glass River, was nearly opposite the village of DeWitt which would be platted several years later by Captain David Scott on the north.

It is not known if Sheldon ever recorded his plat for the village of New Albany. Researchers have been trying to locate its existence for over 100 years. All that can be learned of how it was laid out must be pieced together from clues found in the land descriptions of deeds and early tax assessments.

HOWEVER, IT is known that the village was laid in a common grid with streets running north and south, east and west. Several current streets are known to have originated from this plat — Bridge Street (not by the name) and Webb Drive (still known as Rochester Street, well into modern times).

By 1836, the village had remained undeveloped and on Oct. 1 of that year, Hiram Sheldon sold his "village" to George T. Clark of Albany, N.Y. He sold it "lock, stock, and barrel" so to speak, and reserved for himself only 18 random lots which he later disposed of.

In 1838, Clark took the first steps towards developing his village by hiring a resident agent, Milo H. Turner of Rochester, N.Y., who then came to New Albany with a large stock of merchandise and opened the first store.

However, he was much more than a merchant. His main purpose was to promote and develop the town and sell village lots on Clark's behalf.

DURING HIS first year at New Albany, Turner leased the newly completed saw mill on Prairie Creek from Hiram Wilcox and began construction of the "DeWitt Hotel." Turner was soon joined by his

brother, Jesse Foote Turner, and together they completed the building of the hotel at what is now the southeast corner of Bridge and Webb.

When finished, the hotel was a monstrous accomplishment for its time and place. Its main two-story portion measures 40 by 32 feet and has a large one-story ell to the rear. The framing is said to be of post and beam construction, much like the common method used for building barns.

Its simple floor plan features a central hall with several rooms leading off from one side and the tavern room or "assembly room" from the other. Upstairs, beside the hall, there were at least six bedrooms for lodgers.

THE HOTEL'S exterior was finished with clapboard siding with only one architectural element, a finely crafted sidelighted doorway with reeded pilasters, capped by a segmented lintel of Greek-key panels.

Although the hotel would soon be superseded by gander and more "refined" area structures to the pioneers then traveling along the Pontiac-Grand River Trail, the hotel at New Albany must have appeared as a palace in the wilderness when they emerged from the surrounding forests.

In 1839, the country went into a devastating economic depression due largely to the results of the "wild-cat" banking practices and overspeculation by eastern investors. Many areas of Clinton County felt the effects of this. George T. Clark was an apparent casualty of this depression for in 1840 he lost much of his New Albany investments.

THE FIRST to go were the undeveloped village lots. Many of these as well as many which he had

sold to other investors were lost for unpaid taxes.

The sale of these New Albany lots and many other affected "paper villages," remained on the county tax records until the late 1840's.

During this period, Clark also lost or sold his interest in the mill complex along Prairie Creek to the Turner brothers. The complex at that time included not only the grist mill and mill pond, but also two known saw mills and numerous carpenter and cabinet shops.

However, Clark was able to retain some of his Clinton County investments. He kept the grist mill and general store at Mapleton (Rochester Colony in Duplain) and the general store and hotel at New Albany.

BY 1847, for reasons unknown, Clark came to Clinton County bringing with him his wife, Jane, and two young children. They took up residence in the hotel, but whether or not the building continued to function as a hotel is not known. No surviving records from the period indicate that he was an innkeeper, but several references state that he was a "merchant."

In May of 1849, both George and Jane Clarke died within days of one another, George on the 23rd at the age of 43, and Jane on the 29th, at 33. By this time, he had evidently managed to amass or recoup a considerable fortune.

The settling of the Clark estate was by far the largest and most complex undertaking the Probate Court had yet faced. Appraised, the estate was estimated at excess of \$10,000 (those were 1850 dollars).

Clark

# Clinton County Sesquicentennial

## Clark's real estate story tells how others operated his local business

By KEN COIN

*Editor's Note: The following article written by Ken Coin is the second part of a two-part story about the DeWitt Hotel and New Albany Store which prospered from the beginnings of Clinton County.*

HE HELD mortgages and promissory notes for nearly half that amount. Rare indeed was the county resident who was not somehow economically affected by Clark's death.

The Clark children, Sarah and Roswell, returned to New York to live with an older brother, Joseph Clark of Albany. And again, Milo H. Turner was left with the power of attorney to act as the agent for the Clark family in sorting everything out.

An inventory of the hotel, taken shortly after the Clarks' deaths gave an interesting look at how the former hotel must have been furnished during and before the Clarks' residency.

Among the outstanding features of the inventory are 45 chairs, seven looking glasses, six beds, and a surprising amount of carpeting.

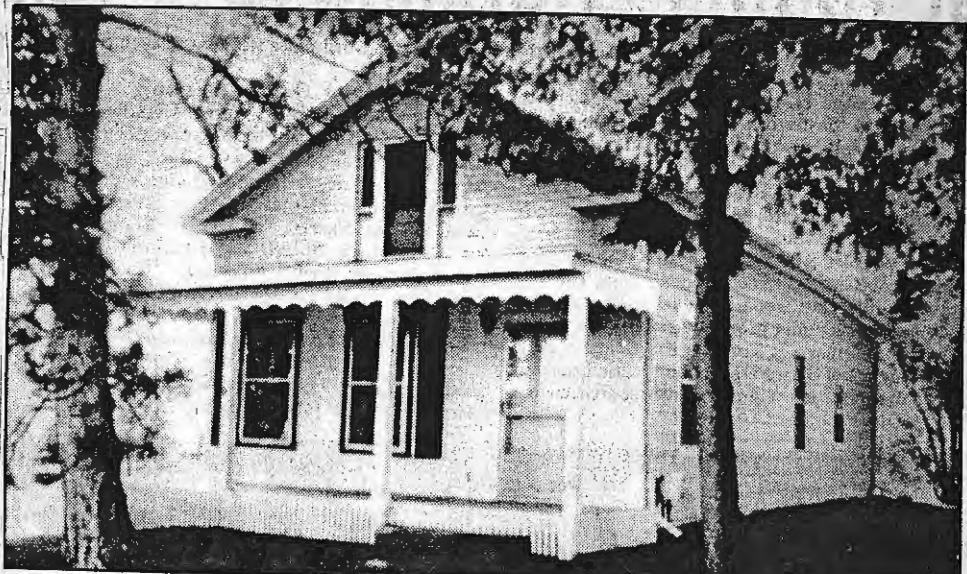
The auctioning of Clark's real estate began on Jan. 22, 1850, at the courthouse steps on East Main Street in DeWitt. The Mapleton property including the mill and store was let to Benjamin Shepard as the highest bidder on behalf of his brother William

**DEWITT HOTEL** — Built in New Albany Village, the DeWitt Hotel is an imposing structure left over from the beginnings of Clinton County. The second part of this article, written by Ken Coin of DeWitt about New Albany and DeWitt will be featured in the May 22 edition of the Clinton County News.



Courtesy photograph

**NOTE:**  
**Part II of**  
**this story**  
**appears in**  
**May 23 CCN**



**THE NEW ALBANY STORE** was a busy meeting place for Clinton County residents during the early years of the county's history.

In April of 1851, Caroline Turner then living in Monroe County, N.Y., sold the hotel and surrounding land to Rowland VanScoy of DeWitt. She realized a hefty profit on the transaction for after retaining the property for only one year she sold it for \$900.

CLARK

Clark

VanScoy, a native of Kent, Putnam County, N.Y., had first come to Clinton County on April of 1839, purchasing 160 acres of land in southern DeWitt Township. He eventually acquired a substantial amount of land in the DeWitt area.

HIS MOVE to the hotel was his last in the DeWitt area and he remained there only a short time. On April 24, 1854, he moved his family to Essex Township to a newly acquired farm in section no. 9. He continually upgraded his land holdings both in Essex and DeWitt and at the time of his death in 1890, was one of the wealthiest men in central Michigan and owner of well over 1,900 acres in Clinton County alone.

Some of the land which VanScoy did not choose to keep at the time of his departure from Essex Township included a farm in southern DeWitt Township, the hotel, and lands at New Albany. These he sold on March 22, 1854, to his former neighbor, Henry Moon.

Moon, a native of England, had come to America in 1826 and to Michigan in 1833 where he settled near Ann Arbor. There in 1835, he married Susan (Frazy) Place, the widow of David T. Place. Two years later, Moon brought his young family to the wilderness of Clinton County where he purchased 160 acres in section no. 29 of DeWitt Township.

IN 1850, Moon, like many area men, made the hazardous trip to the west seeking his fortune in the tempting gold fields of California. He remained there for three years, returning to his wife and children in 1853 with as his obituary put it, "a snug fortune." He was one of the lucky few, not that he returned with wealth necessarily, but that he was able to return at all.

His riches were invested in land, in particular, the old hotel, then owned by VanScoy. This commodious building was just what Moon needed for his equally large family. He had at the time, six children plus four children of his wife's from her previous marriage.

He acquired more acreage in the vicinity of the house, built barns, planted orchards, and eventually improved it into one of the showplace farms of Clinton County.

IN 1875, faced with ill health, Henry Moon retired from farming and moved into the village of DeWitt, selling his former home and much of his acreage to his son, Sylvester Moon.

Sylvester and his new bride of two months, the former Jennie Harper (an adopted daughter of

George and Margaret Allen of DeWitt), moved into the house and continued to make it their farm home for over 30 years.

In 1908, after returning from an extended vacation in California, Sylvester and Jennie decided to sell the farm and return to California, permanently.

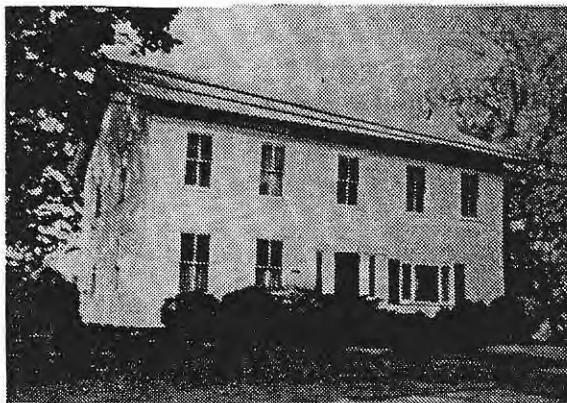
THE PURCHASERS of the farm were Frank and Pauline "Polly" (Yanz) Klever (now spelled "Klever"). The historic old home has remained in the Klever family since that time, eventually passing into the ownership of the Klavers' son, Charles, and his wife, Mable.

The name of New Albany is now but an unique oddity. The names of its streets have been changed, the mill complex, long vanished. Even the surrounding land is quickly succumbing to the machines of modern development.

Of New Albany of DeWitt in 1839, and perhaps all of Clinton County, only the DeWitt Hotel, a chance survivor of progress and nature, remains as a silent monument and sole witness to the past 150 years of Clinton County heritage.

Clark

# Historic hotel building up for sale in DeWitt



BY KEN COIN

While I don't intend for this column to become a glorified classified ad, the "For Sale" sign which recently sprouted in the yard of the Klaver house has caused an amazing amount of interest. The DeWitt community may well want to sit up and take notice for a very unique historic landmark is at stake and the fact that it is located in our own "Historic DeWitt" makes us all a little responsible for its future.

This imposing yet unpretentious structure at the corner of Webb and Bridge in what is now DeWitt was once the old "DeWitt Hotel" of New Albany village. Smothered in early county history, it predates most any building in central Michigan and it's unquestionably the oldest structure in Clinton County.

The "paper village" of New Albany was purchased in 1836 by George T. Clark, a speculator in Albany, New York. In 1838 he took the first steps toward developing his village by hiring, as his resident agent, Milo H. Turner of Rochester, New York, who then came here with a large stock of merchandise and opened the first store. Turner's main purpose, however, was to promote and develop the town of New Albany and sell village lots on Clark's behalf.

During his first year here, Turner leased the newly completed saw mill on Prairie Creek from Hiram Wilcox and began construction of the "DeWitt Hotel". Turner was soon joined by his brother, Jesse Foote Turner, and together they completed the building of the hotel on what was then called "Rochester Street".

When finished, the hotel was a monstrous accomplishment for its time and place. The original two-story portion, a post and beam construction, measures 40 by 32 feet and has a large one story ell to the rear which was added sometime later (perhaps merely 140 years ago!) The simple floor plan features a wide central hall with an open walnut staircase. On the east side were two large parlors connected by wide double doors; the front "Ladies

Parlor" being noticeably more elegant with fine woodwork. On the west side was the tavern room. This hotel, like the later Clinton House, was not a tame "temperance tavern"; it was annually licensed by the township to serve "spirituous and intoxicating liquors".

On the second floor were three large "chambers" and three smaller rooms, all connecting. Understand that in pioneer times renting a private room was, if possible, cost prohibitive. Lodgers did not rent rooms, they rented a space, in a bed, often with a stranger. When county court was in session, or when the county supervisors were meeting, bed space in DeWitt was at a premium. It was also recorded that in 1847, when the capital was moved from Detroit to yet-to-be-built Lansing, legislators and state workers swelled DeWitt hotels beyond capacity.

The exterior of the hotel was finished with clapboard siding (an unheard of luxury in the 1830's) with only one architectural element, a finely crafted side-lighted doorway with reeded pilasters, capped by a segmented lintel of Greek-key panels. A similar side-lighted entrance (of more modest design) is located on the south end of the hall.

When the first stage coaches bumped and rumbled through the interior of Michigan in 1839, it was here that travelers stopped for lodging and food. To the pioneers then traveling along the Pontiac-Grand River Trail who were accustomed to crude shanties along the route, this hotel at New Albany must have appeared as a palace in the wilderness when they emerged into its clearing from the surrounding forests.

By 1847, village owner George Clark came to Clinton County, bringing with him his wife Jane and two young children, and took up residence in the hotel. But in May of 1849, both George and Jane Clark died within days of one another. The settling of their estate was by far the largest and most complex undertaking the young Clinton County Probate Court had yet faced. Appraised, the estate was estimated at excess of \$10,000 (a fortune in 1850!)

An inventory of the hotel, taken at the time, gives an interesting look at how the former hotel must have been furnished during and before the Clarks' residency. Among the outstanding features of the inventory are 45 chairs, seven looking glasses, six beds and a surprising amount of carpeting.

The auctioning of Clark's real estate began on Jan. 22, 1850 at the courthouse steps on East Main street. Milo H. Turner bought much of the property

Continued on page 11

## Coin: Preserving hotel's heritage

Continued from page 6

adjacent to the mill complex on Prairie Creek and Caroline Turner (his wife) was highest bidder for the hotel, some village lots in New Albany and some acreage to the south. Although the Turners purchased much of the estate to add to their already substantial land holdings and business enterprises, they had, by this date, all but left the beckoning call of the California gold fields where they eventually became permanent settlers.

In April of 1851, Caroline Turner sold the hotel and surrounding land to Rowland VanScoy, a farmer of southern DeWitt Township. VanScoy moved his family to the hotel but remained only a short time before moving to Maple Rapids. A chance survivor from the VanScoy ownership is a gold-embossed invitation to a grand Washington's Birthday celebration "At the Assembly Room of Rowland S. VanScoy", February 22, 1853. The admission was \$1.75 but it promised "Good Music will be in Attendance".

In 1850, Henry Moon also made the hazardous trip to the gold

fields of California. He remained there three years, returning to his wife and children with, says his obituary, "a snug fortune". In 1854 he purchased the hotel from VanScoy and this commodious building was just what he needed for his equally large family. He had, at the time, six children, plus his wife Susan's four children by her previous marriage. He acquired more acreage in the vicinity of the house, built barns, planted orchards and eventually improved it into one of the showplace farms of Clinton County.

In 1875, Moon retired from farming and sold the home and farm to his son Sylvester who, with his new bride of only two months, (Jennie Harper) moved into the house. Although they had no children to fill it, they continued to make it their farm home for over 30 years, selling it in 1908 to Frank and Pauline "Polly" (Yanz) Klaver. The historic old home has remained in the Klaver family since that time, eventually passing into the ownership of their son Charlie and his wife Mable.

The name of New Albany is now a unique oddity in DeWitt. The names of its streets

have been changed; the mill complex, long vanished and the surrounding land is quickly succumbing to the machines of modern development. Of New Albany in 1838, of DeWitt and all of Clinton County, only the DeWitt Hotel, a chance survivor remains as a silent monument and sole witness to the past 150-plus years of Michigan's transformation from a wilderness territory to a modern state. There aren't many Michigan towns that can boast a 156-year old stagecoach stop. And although it needs a lot of attention it'd be a pity if "Historic DeWitt" didn't know what a gem it

had until after it was gone.

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

Cline

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THE CLINTON COUNTY JOURNAL

# Dewitt and Vicinity

## Riverside

By Mrs. Abbie E. Dills

**Sketch of Mary Cline Davison**  
Mary Olivia Forman, only child of William and Marion Forman, was born Sept. 22, 1834 in Millford, Oakland county, Michigan. After her father's death, she and her mother, after residing in Lansing a number of years, moved to St. Johns the second year after it became county seat of Clinton county, residing there until November 9, 1864, when they moved to Dewitt residing on the property now owned by Mrs. Grace Coon on the corner of Main and Scott's streets. Miss Forman received her education in the schools in Millford and Lansing. In her early womanhood she was united to a Mr. Cline. To this union one son was born, who died in infancy. Thursday evening, Dec. 29, 1892, she was again united in marriage to Joel Davison of Clare county. The following evening,

Dec. 30, 1892, her mother who had been a helpless invalid for a number of years passed away aged 85 years. During the earlier years of their residence in Dewitt Mrs. Forman and her daughter carried on both a dressmaking and millinery business. Mrs. Davison's husband died a few years ago and since then she has resided alone in her home on Bridge street south, until a year ago on account of her feeble health and old age and no near relatives she was taken to the county farm, where she passed away on Saturday, Sept. 15, 1923, aged nearly 89 years. Mrs. Davison was a writer of both prose and poetry, especially of children's stories, a work she followed quite extensively until recent years. Many of her pioneer productions are preserved with other works for the pioneer book. Mrs. Davison was a member of the Clinton County Pioneer society and a charter member of the W. R. C. of Dewitt. Her funeral was held Monday afternoon, Sept. 17, at the M. E. church, Rev. Geo. Wahl officiating. Mrs. Josie McLouth and Mrs. Minnie Moon furnished the singing with Mrs. Merle Kraas at the piano. Pall bearers, Hudson Gillett, Jerome Dills, Scott Pike, and Thomas Baldwin. Interment in Dewitt cemetery.

## Card of Thanks

We wish to thank the friends for the many beautiful flowers and their kindness shown at the funeral and burial of Mrs. Davison.—Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wilcox and family.

Cochran

## Obituaries and Funeral Notices

### DEATHS

COCHRAN, MAX W.

233 Downer, Lansing

Age 60, died at a local hospital Friday, Nov. 24, 1972. He was born Aug. 30, 1912 in Bath Township and had been a lifelong resident of Lansing and vicinity except for 17 years in Bay City where he was co-owner of the Northeastern School of Commerce. He was former educational legislative consultant for the State Department of Education for 12 years, then he was director of federal and state relations for the Flint School system for the past five years. He was a member of the First Presbyterian Church of Lansing, of the Michigan Association of School Superintendents and Michigan Association of School Administrators, and Michigan Education Assoc., and member of the National Education Assoc., member of the Flint Association of School Administrators, a member of the City Club of Lansing. He is survived by his wife Susan, two daughters Mrs. Bruce (Karen) Seble of East Lansing, and Mrs. Thomas (Kay) Whale of Troy; four granddaughters, a step-mother, Mrs. Hattie Cochran of Lansing. Funeral services will be held Monday, 11:30 a.m. at the Gorsline Runciman East Chapel, East Lansing. Rev. Irving R. Phillips of First Presbyterian Church officiating. Pallbearers will be James Burroughs, Richard Adams, Richard Smith, Joseph Koldernish, Gerald Dunn, Ferrell Crawford. Honorary bearers will be Ford LaNoble, Cecil MacDonald, Harold Brown, Dr. William Early, James Allen Dorval Hoffmeyer, Carl Ackley, Ray O'Toole, Malcolm Whale, and Russell Smith. Friends desiring may make contributions to the Ingham County Cancer Society. Interment in Rose Cemetery, Bath.

LOCAL HISTORY  
COLLECTION  
FILE  
FOX

OBITUARY.

MRS. WM. COFFMAN.

Miss Ellen Otto, was born in Adams, Hillsdale county, May 6, 1864. In the fall of 1871, she came with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. A. B. Otto, to Riley, Clinton county, where she lived until her marriage to Wm. Coffman, September 16, 1883. A daughter was born to them September 5, 1884. Her journey through life was very even, not marked with many events; but a year previous to her death, she had expressed a desire to the writer to become a professing Christian, and a member of the church, but by some cause of her own, it was neglected. She had been in declining health for some months before she gave up to that fatal disease consumption, when she calmly said "Gods will be done". She had a desire for baptism and a cordial invitation was sent to the Rev. John Klose, of Delta, who gave her words of comfort and performed baptism. A short time after they came to her father's house, where she was tenderly cared for by loving hands, until January 22, 1894, the great physician came and relieved her from her severe suffering which she had endured with patience and took to the home she had so cared for, where sin nor suffering never came.

By her request the funeral took place at the M. E. Church, at Wacouta, conducted by the Rev. John Klose, who delivered a very sympathetic sermon, from psalms, 23-4.

She was the youngest of nine children, one soldier brother dying one year after her birth, four sisters, three brothers an aged father and mother, a kind and sorrowing husband and a little daughter, with many kind and loving friends mourn her loss.

Why the youngest should be called first is one of God's great mysteries, and we leave her with Him who doeth all things well.

Alicu, our loved one, sleep and rest,  
Thy work on earth, so soon is done,  
We saw thee lean on Jesus' breast,  
We saw him sweetly take thee home.  
ONE WHO FEELS HER LOSS.

Coffman

Smith 2e7.

2-1-1893

Coffman

## DEATH CLAIMS RILEY MAN, 78

1940

Wm. Coffman Succumbs July  
20; Lifelong Resident  
Of This County

William Coffman, lifelong resident of Clinton county, died Saturday evening, July 20, at his home in Riley township after a three months illness. He was 78 years old.

Mr. Coffman was born in Eagle township Jan. 29, 1869. He was married in 1883 to Ellen Otto of Riley township, who passed away in 1893. The following year, Mr. Coffman was united in marriage to Emma Mullen of Riley township.

Funeral services were held Tuesday at 2 p. m. from Dewitt Community church, with Rev. Earl F. Collins officiating. Burial was made in Waceusta cemetery.

Mr. Coffman is survived by his wife; five children, Mrs. Arthur Sullivan of St. Johns; Mrs. Howard Plowman, Olive township; Mrs. Tony Speerbrocker and Kermit Coffman of Riley township, and Mrs. Donald Blizzard of Lansing; one brother, John Coffman of Bingham township; 13 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. Two sisters and one brother preceded him in death.

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## *Obituaries*

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### **Lillian Coffman**

Lillian O. Coffman, 86, of Riley Township, DeWitt, died on May 6, 1990, at Sparrow Hospital in Lansing.

She was born in Clinton County on March 21, 1904, the daughter of Joseph and Anna (Roll) Schaefer.

Mrs. Coffman was married to William Kermit Coffman in Grand Ledge on June 2, 1924.

She was a homemaker.

Surviving are her husband, William; two sons, William Coffman of DeWitt, and James Coffman of Lansing; two daughters, Mrs. Violet Martin of St. Johns, and Mrs. Bernita Sillman of DeWitt; seven grandchildren and 11 great grandchildren; one brother, Harold Schaefer of Lansing.

The funeral service was held on May 9 at Osgood Funeral Home in St. Johns, with Pastor David Voorhees officiating. Interment was at DeWitt Cemetery.

COIN

## DEATHS

COIN, RAY C.

15621 Turner St.

Lansing

Age 72, passed away Monday at a local hospital. Born in Cass County, Indiana, January 10, 1901 he had lived in the Lansing area most of his life. Employed at Motor Wheel Corp. for 47 years. Surviving are the wife, Bessie; three sons, Raymond of Sheridan, Vernon and Eugene of DeWitt; five grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren. Funeral services will be held at the Lee R. Rummell Funeral Home, DeWitt, Wednesday at 11 a.m. with the Rev. LaVern Bretz of Valley Farms Baptist Church officiating. Burial in DeWitt Cemetery.

### *The Twenty Third Psalm*

*THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD; I SHALL NOT WANT.  
HE MAKETH ME TO LIE DOWN IN GREEN PASTURES;  
HE LEADETH ME BESIDE THE STILL WATERS.  
HE RESTORETH MY SOUL; HE LEADETH ME IN THE  
PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR HIS NAME'S SAKE..  
YEA, THOUGH I WALK THROUGH THE VALLEY OF  
THE SHADOW OF DEATH, I WILL FEAR NO EVIL;  
FOR THOU ART WITH ME; THY ROD AND THY STAFF  
THEY COMFORT ME. THOU PREPAREST A TABLE  
BEFORE ME IN THE PRESENCE OF MINE ENEMIES;  
THOU ANOINTEST MY HEAD WITH OIL; MY CUP  
RUNNETH OVER. SURELY GOODNESS AND  
MERCY SHALL FOLLOW ME ALL THE DAYS  
OF MY LIFE; AND I WILL DWELL IN THE  
HOUSE OF THE LORD FOR EVER.....*

#### *In Memory of*

RAY C. COIN

*Date of Birth*  
January 10, 1901  
Cass County, Indiana

*Date of Death*  
May 14, 1973  
Lansing, Michigan

*Services at*  
LEE R. RUMMELL FUNERAL HOME  
DeWitt, Michigan  
Wednesday, May 16, 1973  
11:00 A. M.

*Clergyman*  
Rev. LaVern Bretz  
Valley Farms Baptist Church

#### *Bearers*

Robert Norton	Arnold Miller
Ralph Myers	Lawrence Carrow
Stanley Smith	Leighton Whitbeck

*Burial*  
DeWitt Cemetery  
DeWitt, Michigan

C O I N

Mr. and Mrs. Dayton Driver  
request the honour of your presence  
at the marriage of their daughter

Florence Esther  
to

Mr. Vernon C. Coin

on Saturday, September the seventeenth  
nineteen hundred and fifty-five  
at five o'clock in the afternoon

United Brethren Church  
East Grand River at Clark  
Lansing, Michigan

Reception following ceremony  
Veteran's Memorial Hall  
Dewitt, Michigan

Coin

Lisa Florence Coin  
and  
John A. Dreuth  
together with their parents  
Mr. and Mrs. Vernon C. Coin  
and  
Mr. and Mrs. Henry J. Dreuth  
invite you to share in the celebration  
when they exchange marriage vows  
and begin a life together  
on Saturday, the twenty-ninth of April  
nineteen hundred and seventy-eight  
at six o'clock in the evening  
DeWitt Community Church  
DeWitt, Michigan

Reception immediately following  
Plumbers Hall  
5405 South Logan  
Lansing

## DeWitt Couple United



MR. AND MRS. EUGENE C. COIN

Mr. and Mrs. Eugene C. Coin, of DeWitt, have just returned from a wedding trip through the Upper Peninsula, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois and Indiana. They were united in marriage in DeWitt on Saturday, May 27.

Mrs. Coin is the former Marilyn Staub.

A lovely wedding was the event of Saturday night, May 27, at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Carl Staub, when their granddaughter, Marilyn Jean Staub, became the bride of Eugene Coin of Valley Farms, Lansing. They were attended by Mrs. Greta Perry and Harold Coin of Midland. The reception was held at Memorial building in DeWitt. Jack Crownier and his dance band furnished music for dancing. Ice cream and a lovely wedding cake and coffee were served the more than 100 guests by Mrs. Beverly Kruger, Barbara Hicks, Norma Decker and Dorothy Hill, all graduates of Marilyn's class in DeWitt high. Judy Parker had charge of registration and Phyllis Henneman assisted with the gifts. After

northern trip they will make their home north of DeWitt. Both are employed in Lansing.

## Staub-Coin Vows Exchanged On May 27

Miss Marilyn Jean Staub, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Staub, of DeWitt, was united in marriage to Eugene C. Coin, son of Mr. and Mrs. Ray Coin, of Valley Road, in Lansing, on Saturday evening, May 27. The nuptial vows were spoken at eight o'clock at the home of her grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Carl Staub, at 145 Chadwick Road, in the presence of about 30 relatives and close friends. Rev. LaVern Breit officiated at the ceremony and traditional wedding music was played by Maxine Coin.

The bride, given in marriage by her father, was attired in a gown of white organza over nile green taffeta fashioned with a hoop skirt. Her tiered veil of illusion fell from a Juliet cap of starched organza and she carried a colonial bouquet of white roses and carnations.

Her only attendant, Miss Greta Perry, of Alma College, wore a gown similar to that of the bride, of white organza over orchid taffeta, and a halo hat of net. Her orchid bouquet was of white and orchid carnations.

Harold Coin, of Midland, was best man.

For her daughter's wedding, Mrs. Staub, chose a dress of sheer navy with white accessories. Mrs. Coin wore a two-piece forest green gown with matching accessories. Both wore corsages of roses.

The reception was held in the Memorial Building. The four tiered wedding cake was flanked by burning tapers and encircled by a wreath of lilies of the valley. Ice cream, cake, and coffee were served by Beverly Kruger, Barbara Hicks, Norma Decker and Dorothy Hill all of whom graduated with the bride. Judy Parker had charge of the guest registration and Phyllis Lenneman, a cousin of the bride, assisted with the guests. Jack Crownier and his orchestra played for dancing.

The new Mrs. Coin graduated from DeWitt high school with the class of 1949 and Mr. Coin graduated in 1948. Both are employed in Lansing. After a trip through northern Michigan they will reside at their home just north of DeWitt.

Guests were present at the wedding and reception from Midland, Brooksville, Fla., St. Johns, Lansing and DeWitt.

Coin

Mr. and Mrs. Merle T. Hershberger  
request the honour of your presence  
at the marriage of their daughter

Cynthia Merle

to

Mr. Richard James Coin

on Saturday, the third of April  
nineteen hundred and seventy-one  
at seven o'clock

Mentor Christian Church  
Mentor Avenue at Jackson Street  
Mentor, Ohio

Reception  
following ceremony  
in Fellowship Hall

Coin

Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Samuel Coin  
request the pleasure of your company  
at the wedding reception of their daughter

Shirley Hay

and

Mr. James Graham Costigan, Jr.  
on Saturday, the fifteenth of March

Nineteen hundred and sixty-nine

at seven o'clock

12521 West Geneva Drive

DeWitt, Michigan

R.S.V.P.

Coin

The pleasure of your company is requested

at the wedding reception of

Elizabeth Ann Piggott

and

Kenneth R. Coin

Saturday, the twentieth of June

nineteen hundred and eighty-one

at three o'clock

803 West Main Street

Detroit, Michigan

Requesting the honour of your presence

at the marriage ceremony

at two o'clock

Coin

Mr. & Mrs. Conway E. Coin  
wish to announce the marriage of their daughter  
Penny Lynette  
to  
Mr. J.L. Finney  
at a private service  
on April 10, 1976