

Celebrating 150 years

Clinton County Sesquicentennial

Hewitts play role in DeWitt, Maple Rapids

Editor's Note: The following history of the Hewitt family of Clinton County was written by Clinton County Historical Society member Ken Coin. Due to the length of the article, it has been divided into two parts. Part one this week deals with the family founders, Isaac and Phebe Hewitt, with histories of their children, William, Lyman, Deborah, and Fanny. Part two, in next week's CCN, chronicles the histories of the Hewitt's remaining children, Eliza, Abraham, Edmund, Simeon, and Luther.

Researching family and local history often reveals many interesting and unexpected ties between families and communities. DeWitt and Maple Rapids share many such ties, most of which can be traced to the very beginnings of the village of Maple Rapids in the early 1850's — to the Hewitt family whose roots go back even further into the earliest years of Clinton County.

In 1835, the large family of Isaac and Phebe Hewitt came west out of Steuben County, New York. After coming "up the lake" to Detroit, they continued on foot and by ox team, inland to Oakland County.

Here the women remained while the men went further into the wilderness in search of favorable lands on which to settle. Along the Pontiac-Grand River Trail, they came through the small settlement of Capt. David Scott on the Looking Glass River in DeWitt. Apparently impressed with the lands about the settlement, Isaac purchased nearby land in section 17 and his eldest son, William, purchased 40 acres of government land in section eight.

During the winter of 1835-36, the Hewitt men began clearing their lands and building cabins. They soon returned to Oakland County and brought the waiting women and children to join them in DeWitt.

Isaac and Phebe Hewitt are known to have had nine children who grew to maturity. Of these, all were born in Prattsburg, Steuben County, New York, and all came with the parents to Clinton County during that winter. At the time of the move,

William, the eldest, was a married man of 23 years, while Luther, the youngest, was a mere lad of only about two years.

Isaac was one of the founders of the DeWitt Baptist Church which was organized in 1840. He died in DeWitt on March 28, 1846, and is believed to have been buried in DeWitt cemetery as was his widow when she died on Oct. 20, 1854.

The following are individual accounts of each of the nine children.

William A. Hewitt was born on Nov. 26, 1811, and was married in 1830 to Hannah Hyatt, a native of Orange County, New York, born on March 15, 1813.

From his initial purchase of 40 acres of government land, William would eventually become one of the most prosperous men of the county. Aside from his farming, he was among the first four justices of the peace for DeWitt Township, being elected to the office in the first township election in 1837. He retained the office for several decades, both in DeWitt and later at Maple Rapids. He also studied law under pioneer attorney Joab Baker.

In 1850, William purchased the "Boston House," a small hotel on the northeast corner of Main and Franklin Streets in DeWitt. This Greek revival style structure had been built in 1843 as the private residence of Judge Hiram Stowell (the county's first judge of probate), and following the Judge's death, had been converted into a hotel by Parker Webber, the former miller for the Waterloo Joint Stock Co., at Wacousta.

William did a good business with his hotel and other business interests, especially catering to the professional trade who required lodging during the peak seasons when DeWitt swelled with people attending county court or other county business.

But William apparently had his sights set higher. He located an area in Essex Township which he felt offered great advantages for a town. He purchased the land from Solomon Moss, and on Feb. 20, 1852, after selling his interests in DeWitt, he moved his family to the site on the Maple River at the rapids.

He and his four sons began at once to construct a

saw mill and pull a dam across the river. For their first home, they moved a log cabin from Judge Pettit's farm to a location near the dam site.

Soon after, William opened a merchantile store at the site and began finalizing his plans for the future village. After platting the site, he began construction of a hotel and in 1854, he succeeded Edward Perrin as postmaster.

There were many people who undoubtedly contributed to the founding and initial growth of Maple Rapids, but the village owes its founding to the vision and industry of William Hewitt.

William and Hannah had five children: Joseph (married Sarah A. Hubbell and had three children), Zachariah (married America Hoyt and had two children), Fannie (married Martin V. Brown), Isaac (married Helen C. Lansing and had two children), and Rufus Henry (married Jennie Smith and had two children).

William died at a young age on Feb. 12, 1863. Hannah remained at Maple Rapids and on June 2, 1864, was married to William's younger brother, Simeon Hewitt. She died on Nov. 2, 1898, and was buried beside William in the Sowle cemetery.

Lyman J. Hewitt was born about 1815, and was married on Feb. 4, 1841, to Harriet Woodruff. She was born about 1820, and is believed to have been a sister to Riley J. and Addison A. Woodruff, early cabinet makers and later merchants of St. Johns and DeWitt respectively.

Lyman owned an 80-acre tract of land in section 31 of DeWitt Township as early as 1839, but was himself a carpenter by trade. The earliest mention of his occupation comes from the DeWitt Township minute books of 1842, where it is recorded that he was hired to build a public animal pound in the village for the containment of stray livestock. Upon inspection, it was noted to be "completed as specified with good padlock and hasp."

By 1850, Lyman had moved his family to DeWitt village where he opened a carpenter's shop on the south side of the river. Here the record of Lyman vanishes. He died during the latter half of the 1850's, for by 1860, Harriet was married to Daniel

Moore of that village.

Lyman and Harriet had only one known child, Milo H. Hewitt who served in Company A of the 23rd Michigan Infantry during the Civil War, and later moved to eastern Michigan.

Deborah Hewitt was born about 1818, and on Jan. 1, 1839, was married to John C. Warren. For a time they lived in the DeWitt area, but no confirmed records past 1840 have been located regarding them.

The federal census of 1850 lists a Deborah "Warner," age 33 with an eight-year-old boy, Hiram, living with Abel Hewitt in DeWitt, but the same census also lists a Deborah "Warren," age 34, living with Geo. O. and Eliza (Hewitt) Wells at DeWitt.

Fanny Hewitt was born on July 14, 1820. She, along with her father, was a founder of the DeWitt Baptist Church in 1840. She was the first new member accepted into the church following its formal organization.

On Feb. 21, 1841, she was married to William Rouse at DeWitt, where they continued to reside. They became the parents of a large family of at least eight children. All of these became orphaned following the untimely deaths of their parents: Fanny on Nov. 20, 1859, and William on April 12, 1860.

These orphaned children were looked after by Fanny's sister, Eliza, who moved into the Rouse household with her own children. Some of the orphans were known to have been sent at times to Maple Rapids to stay with family members there.

The known Rouse children include: Eliza Jane (married a Naracon), William Henry (married Helen Dunham), Caroline, Helen and Ellen (twins), Albert, Hattie (married G.W. Randell), and Mary Jane.

Note: A special thanks to Virginia J. Watter-son of Carland, Calif., (a great-great-granddaughter of William and Hannah Hewitt) for submitting much of this genealogical information to the Clinton County Historical Society Archives.

Hewitt

features

Clinton County News 224-236

Celebrating 150 years

Clinton County Sesquicentennial Part two of the Hewitt family saga

Editor's Note: The following history of the Hewitt family of Clinton County was written by Clinton County Historical Society member Ken Coin. Due to the length of the article, it has been divided into two parts. Part one, published in the Clinton County News on April 11, dealt with the family founders, Isaac and Phebe Hewitt, and histories of their children, William, Lyman, Deborah, and Fanny. Part two, in this week's CCN, chronicles the histories of the Hewitt's remaining children, Eliza, Abraham, Edmund, Simeon, and Luther.

Eliza Hewitt was born in Aug., 1824. Her first marriage was to George O. Wells of DeWitt on Dec. 16, 1841.

DeWitt in the 1840's became somewhat renowned for its large concentration of shoemakers and George Wells was among the earliest. The location of his shop(s) has not been pinpointed but early letters from the period mention him as working for a time with master bootmaker Andrew J. Bement (progenator of the St. Johns Bements) at his shop on East Main Street, and also for Nelson Alport in "the hole," a large factory which operated out of the cellar of the Clinton House hotel.

George and Eliza were also the county jailers for a time, living at the county jailhouse on East Washington Street. This was probably more of a job for Eliza than for George. During these early years the main function of a jailor was to feed and possibly launder for the prisoners whose cells were located in the basement of the jailhouse.

George died at age 38, on March 6, 1855, and Eliza remained in DeWitt several years, eventually

moving into the household of her late sister, Fanny Rouse.

In the early 1860's Eliza moved her family to Maple Rapids and was married there on Nov. 24, 1864, to David Goss. She resided in Maple Rapids for many years, eventually owning the home of her younger brother, Simeon, following his death. She died at the home of her granddaughter, Mrs. Eugene Brya in Olive Township.

Eliza is recorded as having eight children, but many of these died young and only two survived her at the time of her death on July 27, 1906. She was also the last surviving child of Isaac and Phebe Hewitt.

Abraham ("Abel") Hewitt was born about 1826 and was married in DeWitt on Jan. 1, 1849, to Jane E. Gunderman.

His death in the early 1850's cuts short his pioneer history in the county.

Jane, in 1854, married widower Jonathan Pearsall, an organizer and early driving force of the DeWitt Baptist Church. The Pearsall homestead included a large tract of land south of DeWitt along the east side of "Turner's Road."

After Jonathan's death in 1868, Jane remained in the DeWitt area, and, although no record of her death has been located, she remained an active member of the Baptist church until the 1870's.

Abel and Jane had two sons, Edward and George, both of whom remained in the DeWitt area.

Edmund Hewitt was born Dec. 15, 1828, and was married in DeWitt on Dec. 17, 1852, to Julia Bissell.

Just prior to his marriage, Edmund lived with the family of Rowland S. VanScoy (VanScoy would later

become a wealthy land owner in Essex Township). Rowland's wife was the former Ruth Bissell (his second wife was her sister), and it is believed that there was probably a connection between the wives of VanScoy and Julia Bissell Hewitt.

Julia died shortly after their marriage and on Aug. 12, 1860, Edmund married Mary A. Collins (a daughter of James and Margaret Collins?).

At the outbreak of the Civil War, Edmund enlisted in Co. E, 3rd Michigan Cavalry, and saw action throughout the war until his discharge in 1866.

Afterwards, he returned to his farm at DeWitt and remained on section 17, the remainder of his life. Edmund died on Aug. 21, 1905, and Mary, surviving him for several years, died Dec. 2, (1920?), at Rochester, Mich., where she had lived for several years.

Only two children survived Edmund and Mary, John, and Margaret (Mrs. Charles Griffey).

Simeon Hewitt was born in June of 1831, and was married on April 10, 1855, to Sarah J. Warren at DeWitt. She is thought to have been a daughter of Lyman and Betsey Warren (Lyman was an early master carpenter at DeWitt).

Both Simeon and Sarah joined the DeWitt Baptist Church shortly before their marriage. They remained active members only a short time and were "erased" from the membership rolls in 1858.

Sarah's fate remains unclear. In 1860, she is listed on the federal census as living in the household of Lyman and Betsey Warren, and in June of that year she was received back into the church where she remained on the membership rolls as late as 1870.

Shortly after the death of his mother in 1854,

Simeon purchased his parent's old homestead in DeWitt Township. In the late 1850's, he bought a saw mill in DeWitt which he then operated until the outbreak of the Civil War.

In 1861, he enlisted in the regiment known as the "Lancers" and served until his discharge.

Simeon was married a second time, June 2, 1864, at Linden, Mich., to Hannah (Hyatt) Hewitt, the widow of the eldest brother William. He moved to Maple Rapids where he opened a furniture store in 1869. To this business he added an undertaking establishment, both of which he continued to the time of his death. He sustained a substantial loss from the devastating Maple Rapids fire of 1885, but through persistence, was able to eventually rebuild his business.

Soon after his removal to Maple Rapids he joined the Methodist Episcopal church and was on the building committee for the structure built in 1868. Besides a strong devotion to his church, he held memberships in the Maple Rapids Masonic Lodge, Order of the Eastern Star, Grand Army of the Republic, and was a charter member of the Ancient Order of United Workmen.

Simeon died at his home in Maple Rapids, April 10, 1902.

Luther Hewitt, the youngest child of Isaac and Phebe Hewitt, died at the young age of 22 years, on May 28, 1855, and was buried beside his parents in the DeWitt cemetery.

Note: A special thanks to Virginia J. Watter-son of Carland, Calif., (a great-great-granddaughter of William and Hannah Hewitt) for submitting much of this genealogical information to the Clinton County Historical Society Archives.

Obituary-
Maple Rapids Dispatch, Vol 24 No. 18

38 YEARS IN MAPLE RAPIDS

Simeon Hewitt Came Here From DeWitt in 1864.

Was in the Furniture and Undertaking Business for Many Years

Simeon Hewitt was born in Prattsburg, Stuben Co., N.Y., June 1830, and died at his home in Maple Rapids, April 10, 1902, aged nearly 72 years.

He came to Michigan with his parents in 1836 and settled in DeWitt when it was a howling wilderness; there being no roads or bridges. This necessitated a following of Indian trails and fording of streams. Milling was done at Pontiac, which took four days.

He grew up with the country, working at clearing of land and farming. After the death of his parents he purchased the old homestead and some time after purchased a saw mill which he ran until the breaking of the war. He enlisted in the Lancers in 1861 and was with the regiment until the spring of '62 when the regiment was discharged. He came to Maple Rapids in '64 and was united in marriage June 2 to Mrs. Hannah Hewitt who passed away before him to the better land three years ago last November. He entered the furniture business in '69 and has continued in that and the undertaking business nearly ever since.

The fire of October '85 swept away all his property and was followed by other losses. But with the pluck and persistency and honesty he pushed ahead and soon found himself in comfortable circumstances. He was township treasurer for several years and his benevolence was brought out in this capacity. Many a poor person was relieved from tax paying by his large-heartedness in paying them himself.

He was united with the Masonic Order in 1864. He was a charter member of the first lodge in the state of the Ancient Order of United Workman. He was also a member of the Grand Army of the Republic and of the Eastern Star.

He was a consistent and faithful member of the Methodist Episcopal church for many years, and was a member of the first building committee of the church that was built in 1868. He not only gave his money but he literally gave himself. He was always in his place at the devine service, encouraging and helping in all lines of church work. No truer friend or councilor did a pastor ever have. He loved his church because he loved his God, and his Master's service was his delight.

SDAY AFTERNOON, AUGUST 16, 1906.

DIED IN OLIVE

OLD RESIDENT OF MAPLE RAPIDS DEAD.

Mrs. Eliza Goss of Maple Rapids died Friday, July 27, at the home of her granddaughter, Mrs. Eugene Brya in Olive.

Mrs. Goss was a sister of the late Simeon Hewitt and was the last member of the family. She was born in Steuben county, New York, in 1823, and at the age of 20 was married to George O. Wells who died in 1855. Six children were born to them. In 1862 she married David Goss who died about ten years since.

Mrs. Goss was one of the earliest pioneers of Clinton county, having settled at Dewitt about 1835. She united with the Universalist church about 1858 and was also a member of the W. R. C. of Maple Rapids. She went to Maple Rapids to reside several years ago and owned the Simeon Hewitt residence at the time of her death.

The deceased is survived by two children Mrs. Elva Johnston of North Birmingham, Alabama, and George D. Wells of Lansing also a number of grand children and four great-grand children.

The funeral services were held at Dewitt Sunday July 29, Rev. E. Mudge of Maple Rapids officiating and the interment was made in the Dewitt cemetery.

Hewitt

DEATH OF AGED WOMAN

Mrs. Mary A., relict of Edmund Hewitt, died at the residence of her daughter, Mrs. Charles H. Griffey, at 30 Gladstone Ave., Windsor, Ont., Saturday morning, Dec. 2. Much of her life was spent on a farm in the village of Dewitt, near Lansing, where the funeral was held on Monday, Dec. 4, that being her 80th birthday.

Some twelve years ago, five years after the death of her husband, she came to her daughter as a confirmed invalid from inflammatory rheumatism and partial paralysis. From that time to the close she existed as a patient and practically helpless sufferer. A devout member of the Methodist church, her constant prayer was that the end might be hastened. As the wife, mother and friend, she was abundantly equipped with those qualities of mind and heart that endeared her to all with whom she became acquainted.

She will be recollected by a number of Rochester people who formed her acquaintance during occasional visits to her daughter during the last few years of her residence here. Surviving her are her daughter, Mrs. Griffey, a son, John Hewitt, of Detroit, and a sister, Mrs. Collins, of Lansing.

Hiatt

PSALM 23

*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

MAHLON HIATT

October 25, 1892 - April 16, 1956

63 yrs. - 5 mos. - 21 days

Services From

Vincent Funeral Home

Friday, April 20 - 2:00 p.m.

Clergyman

Rev. LaVern Bretz

DeWitt Community Church

DeWitt, Michigan

Casket Bearers

L. J. Griswold Lloyd Brownlee

Gaylord Ward Ralph Overholt

Archie Ward James A. Perry

Interment

DeWitt Cemetery

DeWitt, Michigan

Hiatt

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
HOWARD LEE HIATT

Date of Birth
June 30, 1916

Date of Death
June 14, 1969

Services

LEE R. RUMMELL
FUNERAL HOME

Wednesday, June 18, 1969
1:00 p.m.

Clergyman

Rev. LaVern Bretz
Valley Farms Baptist Church

Interment

DeWitt Cemetery

Bearers

Clark Becker	Otto Mailo
William Thoma	Clarence Simon
Charles Prince	Joseph Ramon

Military Honors by

E. J. Werner V.F.W. Post No. 3733

Hiatt

In honor of the
Twenty-Fifth Wedding Anniversary of
Mr. and Mrs. John Hiatt
their daughters
request the pleasure of your company
at a Buffet - Dance
on Saturday June the Twenty-third
at six o'clock in the evening
DeWitt Memorial Building
West Washington Street
DeWitt, Michigan

R S Q' Y'
after four o'clock
489-0088

Mr. and Mrs. John H. Hiatt
request the honor of your presence at
the marriage of their daughter
Denice Kay

to

Mr. Matthew A. Purves
son of Mr. and Mrs.
Leon M. Trierweiler
on Saturday, the sixth of July
nineteen hundred and seventy-four
at two-thirty in the afternoon
St. Therese Church
2620 Turner Street
Lansing, Michigan

Buffet reception immediately following
at St. Therese Assembly Hall
2680 Turner Street

Hicks

DeWitt remembered:

Businessmen linked DeWitt and St. Johns

By KEN COIN

Back when Rip was a pup and Clinton County was formed, DeWitt (or, more specifically "Scott's") was named as the county seat. Now, at that time, anything of any progressive substance lay on the south side of the river in the village of New Albany. About all that had been developed on the north side, at "Scott's" was simply Capt. Scott's continually expanding log cabin. So, in 1841, Capt. Scott, figuring that if he was going to keep the county seat on his side of the river he'd best take action. Much to the wide-eyed amazement of his friends and family he began pacing off streets and blocks in the midst of his forest.

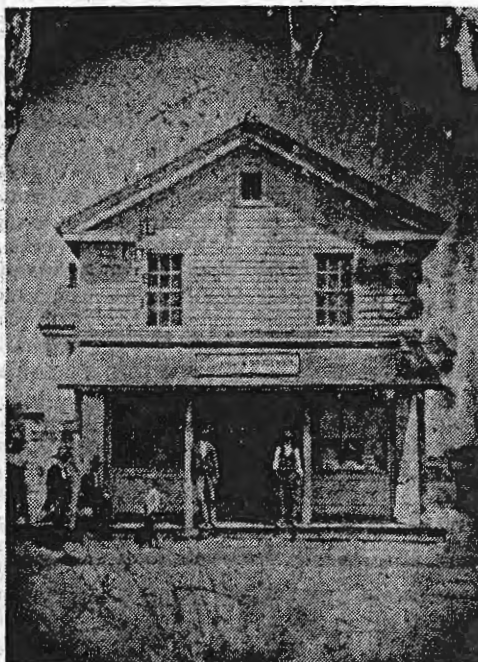
To his credit, within the next 15 years he would see much of his village become of reality with graded streets and substantial homes, shops and stores. The one pictured above was built by John Hicks, who came to DeWitt to clerk for his uncle, David Sturgis, the first merchant to establish himself in Scott's town of DeWitt.

Having heard the rumor (through political connections) that a railroad was being plotted through the center of the county (bypassing DeWitt to the north by several miles), Sturgis went into Bingham Township where he found none other than the state's Auditor-General, The Commissioner of the Land Office, the State Treasurer, the Deputy Attorney-General and the Chief Engineer of the proposed railroad company all flitting about trying to gobble up land before the news broke out that a railroad was making tracks that way.

They might have incorporated themselves into the partnership of Dewey, Cheatam and Howe, but they didn't and although he wasn't invited into the inner fold of this close-knit group, Sturgis was there that summer day in 1854 when they came up with the more apostolic name of St. Johns. For his part, Sturgis did get a street name in his honor.

Meanwhile, back in DeWitt, John Hicks continued to manage the Sturgis business investments and soon bought him out, after Sturgis decided that St. Johns held the better potential. Soon after his purchase, Hicks built the store pictured here and began his own business.

Although an excellent businessman, Hicks did not mix well with the general mercantile set. He had the misfortune of a disfiguring birthmark which covered most of his face and the cruel fron-



THIS AMBROTYPE in the DeWitt Library's collection is the oldest known photograph of DeWitt and dates to the late 1860's.

The quaint Greek Revival style store building (advertising "Root Beer, Candy and Groceries") was located on the northwest corner of Bridge and Main and was typical of many commercial buildings built in the early 1850's when DeWitt, as county seat, enjoyed a lucrative market for goods and services. It burned in the 1930 fire.

Peeking out in the left background is the first Methodist Church building. Built in 1865, I believe it was moved across the street in the 1890's (when a brick replacement was constructed) and is still standing as the nucleus of the Foo Ying restaurant. Photo courtesy of the DeWitt Library.

tier jokels dubbed him "Hog Hicks." Socially withdrawn, it is said that when in public he usually wore a veil to hide his affliction.

In 1856, with the county seat moving to St. Johns assured (nothing left to do but take a vote to make it legal), Hicks packed up his wife Eliza, sold his store in DeWitt to James Sturgis and moved to St. Johns. There he soon transformed his small business into a mini-empire which also included shipping, banking and manufacturing. He became one of the wealthiest men (the wealthiest if we're only counting honest money) in the county. His mercantile store went out of business shortly after its 100th year, but his lovely Victorian mansion is still standing on State Street (M-21), a block west of the courthouse.

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

Hicks

DIED ON THE WAY TO ST. JOHNS

LEFT MT. DORA, FLA., IN SPECIAL
CAR YESTERDAY.

Oldest Merchant in Clinton County and
One of the Wealthiest Men in
Central Michigan.

A telegram was received this noon announcing the death of John Hicks, while on his way home from Mt. Dora, Florida.

The news was not unexpected, for although his condition has remained about the same for the last week and it was thought that he would live to reach his home, still on account of his age and weakness the end was only a question of days. The family started from Mt. Dora yesterday morning in a chartered car, and Mr. Hicks' death occurred when the journey was about half completed.

John Hicks was the oldest merchant in Clinton county, and perhaps no other man had a wider circle of acquaintance. He was born in Kingston, Ontario, July 7, 1824, his father having been an English captain who afterwards sailed the Great Lakes, and his mother, born Eunice Bailey, a native of Connecticut. He received his first education at a district school in Canada, supplementing it with a course at Whitney Academy. After working a short time on the farm he came to this state in 1849, settling at DeWitt where his uncle David Sturgis had a general store and mill. He kept books for his uncle and afterwards became a partner. Three years later he bought out his uncle who removed to St. Johns, he himself remaining at DeWitt.

In those days it was a week's trip to Detroit, and practically all business was carried on by barter, and in handling a manner of goods and in every kind of deal Mr. Hicks acquired a large share of the experience and business judgment that afterwards built up for him one of the largest fortunes in Central Michigan. In the fall of 1856 he disposed of his business and resumed partnership with his uncle at St. Johns. Two years later he entered the grain business and in 1860 built the grain warehouse here. He also managed later date two stores in Gratiot county, one at Bridgeville and one at Pompeii, and also had a fine farm of 100 acres in East township.

Handicapped by a misfortune that would have broken the ambition of a man of less sterling stuff, John Hicks forged steadily ahead, managing all his lines of business with prudence, excellent judgment and the strictest integrity, and investing his profits with equal foresight, and before many years he became one of the leading capitalists of the county. He was one of the organizers of the St. Johns National Bank, of which he has been president since its organization, and was an organizer and director of the Saving Bank. He also built numerous buildings including that in which his store is now located which he built with R. M. Steel. Later he became heavily interested in Florida, Arkansas, Mississippi and other southern timber lands, besides owning ranch property in Nebraska and other places. He was also a large holder of bank stock in Detroit, and other cities.

In 1855 he married Eliza A. Huston, a daughter of Mathew Huston, whose father came to Vermont from Ireland in 1818, coming to Gratiot county in 1848. Three children were born, Ida H. Rawson, of Mt. Dora, Florida, Jennie M. Vaughn, deceased, and John C. Hicks, who is well known as one of the leading business men of St. Johns. Though not so actively engaged in affairs during his latter years, he still kept in close touch with every phase of his large interests and his mental powers were unimpaired to the last. The remains are expected to arrive in St. Johns tomorrow. Osgood & Osgood, the undertakers, received a message to meet the special car at Cincinnati and Will H. Osgood left for that point at noon today.

Hildreth

**Was a Man Held in High Regard by Many
Warm Friends.**

James Hildreth of Bengal, was stricken with appoplexy Sunday afternoon at four o'clock and died a few moments after seven the same afternoon.

He was out in a cornfield when the shock came and although carried at once to his home and two physicians called, there was nothing to be done. Mr. Hildreth had been in good health and his sudden taking off is a severe trial to his family and many friends. He formerly lived in St. Johns but purchased a farm in Bengal several years ago and had been a hard working, conscientious man. His friends in St. Johns all held him in the highest regard. Mr. Hildreth was born in Riley and had spent his life in this county. He was forty-five years of age.

He leaves a wife and two sons aged about 10 and 12 years. The funeral services were held Tuesday at the Wolcott church and the remains interred in the Prairie Creek cemetery.

Hildreth

**Orel Hildreth, 73,
Succumbs To Short
Illness March 18**

Orel Hildreth, aged 73, former Merle Beach rural mail carrier, died at 1 a. m. Wednesday, March 18, 1931, at his home on South Oakland street, St. Johns. He was taken seriously ill the previous Sunday.

Funeral services will be conducted by Rev. T. S. Cleaver at 3 p. m. Saturday at the Eberts funeral home. Burial is to be made in Mt. Rest.

Mr. Hildreth was born in Riley township Sept 16, 1857, and spent the greater part of his life in Idley, Olive and Dewitt townships. He is survived by his widow, two brothers, K. R. Hildreth of St. Louis, and A. G. Hildreth of Lansing; four nieces, one nephew and many friends.

DeWitt home built in 1847 is still part of old downtown

By KEN COIN

Newlyweds Cortland Hill and Lucinda (Reese) Hill made their first appearance in DeWitt in the fall of 1837 en route to their homestead, which was to be the first settlement in Bengal Township (eight miles north and west of DeWitt). In 1846 they returned to DeWitt where Cortland set up a mercantile partnership with Walter Hubble. The following year the Hills made plans to build a new house in DeWitt on the northwest corner of Scott and Washington streets.

In the vault of the Register of Deeds office in the courthouse in St. Johns there was recently rediscovered, an old ledger which contains copies of various business contracts dating from the mid-1800's. Among them is a

contract between Cortland Hill and James W. and Jesse F. Turner for the construction of Hill's house on lot 328 of block 42. Dated June 10, 1847, for the consideration of \$460, the Turner brothers agreed to build this house. The contract is filled with details regarding the construction techniques, materials and finishing specifications.

The house was to be one and half stories, 24'x32'. Built in a braced post and beam method, the beams and corner posts were to be 8" x 10" with 2" x 5" studs (5" x 5" beside windows and doors) and 3" x 8" floor joists. All framing was to be of oak or ash including the decking boards of the roof.

The house was to have 11 windows, each of 12 panes of glass, each pane 10" x 14". It would contain eight interior doors and three exterior doors (3' x 7' x 2" thick). All floors were to be clear "matched" pine with the exception of the kitchen, which specified white ash. Eight-inch baseboards were to be finished throughout the house with beaded molding on all doors and windows. All finish lumber was to be clear pine, black walnut or butternut (a pale walnut substitute).

Extra-wide cornice



114 S. Scott Street - The pioneer home of Cortland and Lucinda Hill, Bengal township's first pioneers, built in 1847

during their brief residence in DeWitt. Photograph by Jennifer Vincent.

boards and gable-end trim was to be installed in the latest Greek Revival style "to match that of (the) store built by Thomas Lewitt". One of the exterior doors was to also be finished in a high Greek style with "extra fixings" and there was to be, in addition, a "5' square portico (porch) with roof and latiss (sic.) on 2 sides".

There was to be a 9' x 32' cellar and the house would rest on 18" thick stone walls, faced with cobblestones. (Note - although the house was later raised onto a higher foundation, traces of the original cobblestone facing can still be seen at ground level from Washington

Street.)

The Hill family remained in this home only a few years, selling it to Frederick Reed. Joseph Edmond Williams, a carpenter, purchased it in the early 1860's and owned it until the end of the century. He and his wife Abby had 10 children, which filled the house to capacity. A peek inside the household in the 1880 census shows eight adults and two children living within (Praise the Lord and pass the aspirin!) Their adult children included: Edmond, George, Odgen, Nellie, Edith McClintock, Marinda Worden-Lapham, Ellen Stampfly and Eunice Vail.

Hill

A:11

Twenty-five Years of Wedded Bliss.

Last Saturday nearly seventy relatives and friends of Mr. and Mrs. Mark Hill met at their pleasant farm home and helped them celebrate their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. The day was greatly enjoyed by all who partook of its festivities and a day that will long linger in the memory of all present. As usual on such occasions a dinner fit for a king was served to all. The dress worn by Mrs. Hill on her wedding day was on exhibition. The time was taken up with music singing and visiting.

Among the guests from a distance were J. Hill and wife, Celin Hill and wife, Wm. Hill and daughter from Mulliken, A. Hill, wife and son and E. Hill and family from Mason. Mr. and Mrs. Hill were the recipients of several substantial presents, among them a beautiful silver berry spoon from a brother in California. Mrs. Millard Pike and Mrs. Peter Huot read original poems written for the occasion. As the shades of evening drew near the guests, after wishing the bride and groom many happy returns of the day, departed for their homes realizing that an other bright page had been added to the book of life.

ONE WHO WAS THERE.

Hill

OBITUARY

Frank J. Hill, son of Abel and Maria Hill, was born in Riley township, Clinton county, May 20, 1867, and passed away at his home in Ovid township June 20, 1938, at the age of 71 years and one month.

February 12, 1890, he was united in marriage to Hattie A. Morse of St. Johns. To this union two children were born, Oral C., at home, and a daughter, Ola, who died in infancy. He was a kind and loving husband and father, a good neighbor, always ready and willing to assist them in any way he could, and will be greatly missed in the community in which he lived. He was a member of the Modern Woodman of America, and a great worker in the Townsend Club.

Besides the widow he is survived by one son, Oral O. Hill and three brothers, Edd Hill, of Grand Ledge, Bert Hill, of Dewitt, and Fred Hill, of Lansing, besides many other relatives and friends. Mr. Hill was ill about four months and everything that helping hands could do was done, but to no avail.

Funeral services were held from Osgood funeral home June 24, with burial at the Blenheim cemetery. Rev. W. S. Phillips of Ovid, officiated.

Coin explains *The Rest of the Story of the Gooch Sisters*

A visit to the DeWitt cemetery will tell much of the rest of the story of Betsey Gooch. Her small white tombstone is there showing she died in 1860, at the young age of 44 years. But the real clue is almost hidden on the back side — the six children she buried within an eleven-year period; all dying at various ages from two months to nine years.

If the premature deaths of his six children weren't enough, the death of his wife proved too much for Seth Marvin. He experienced periods of deep dispondency and depression for which he could find no relief. He remarried and had more children — it didn't help. He changed careers by becoming a druggist — it didn't help. He relocated to Cofunna — it didn't help. In 1864, while visiting his former in-laws at the Strickland Mansion in St. Johns, he unceremoniously went into the carriage barn, wrapped a bed cord around his neck, tied the ends to a peg above his head, then sat down on a box and by mere gravity and determination allowed himself to be strangled.



COLORING CONTEST WINNERS — The DeWitt Business Association Coloring Contest winners are (back row, l. to r.) Jessica Johnson, Nicole Piper, Amy Ruelle, (front row) Abby Fedewa and Janette Bourdan. Not pictured is Jade Zallman. DBA representatives are Bruce Joslyn (left) and Don DeRosia. Courtesy photo.

Mary Gooch was once described as "one of the bright lights of St. Johns society" and there are many glowing (no pun intended) memories written of the elegant parties at her stately home and the impressive rosters of dignitaries who were entertained there. She and husband Randolph were the cream of Clinton County society to be sure. But fame is fleeting and Randolph's poor health led him to the state hospital at Battle Creek in 1881 where he soon died. Mary remained mostly alone in the big house for the next 23 years and soon after her death in 1904 it was torn down.

For as many warm accounts that survive of Mary and Randolph Strickland there are an equal number of the not so kind accounts of their three daughters. In a nutshell — they were universally viewed as (to put it kindly) pampered and indulged. Maybe so, but at least one, Martha, perhaps just too many years ahead of her time, shocked the county with her out and out suffragette notions. She became an attorney like her father and is said to have been the first woman to appear in a Michigan courtroom as a defense attorney in a murder case. And if that didn't make one's eyebrows arch up to the hairline, when she married she was brazen enough to retain her maiden name. She was also suspected of smoking little cigars, wearing pantaloons and being paid as a public speaker. "Indecent", some said.

As to Olive Gooch — well the history books leave us feeling somewhat sorry for her. Hitched to a dirt farmer in the country, she seems to have missed out on all the fun. But going beyond where the books leave off we find that she and Stephen Hill shared a life together for fifty years. Yes, they too endured personal suffering; they buried two of their young children and a third died in the Civil War. But at the end of their lives' journey they were surrounded by children and grandchildren and every improvement to their farm was a personal triumph.

Their early home was not of mill-cut lumber like the sisters' and even their last home couldn't compare to what the Stricklands had achieved, but a memory written by their son describes the situation best: "a log shanty, its floor of split logs, with but one window and two doors, it was still home and within it hunger and want were never felt."

There's a lesson to be learned here: Things are not always as they appear — even in the history books.

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

Grand Ledge sports pioneer retires

Linda Hill started the girls athletic program for the high school

By Bob Gross
Lansing State Journal

GRAND LEDGE — It was 28 years ago when Linda Hill joined the faculty at Grand Ledge High.

And it didn't take long for her to spot one major flaw in the school's extracurricular program.

There were no sports for girls. So she started basketball and softball programs.

With no extra pay, either.

Now she can relax at her cottage at Carp Lake near Mackinaw City, read the scrapbooks and think about all those years of practices and games, of the championships, the near misses, the rainy springs and cold winter trips.

Hill has officially retired, ending a 33-year career as teacher, coach and physical education instructor. When she returns to mid-Michigan, it'll be to visit family and take in Michigan State football and basketball games.

"It was time for me to leave," Hill said. "I've had a great time coaching and teaching and being around the students and athletes and people have been very good to me. I've been proud to be part of the Grand Ledge athletic tradition over the years.

"But I want to stop and smell the roses now, work a summer job in Mackinaw City and enjoy the cottage and the northern atmosphere. It'll be great, and I can't wait to get up there."

Softball was probably the sport Hill enjoyed the most. She coached it from 1973 to 1983 and captured

Please see HILL, 5C



GREG DeRUITER/Lansing State Journal

Outgoing Comet: In Linda Hill's 33-year career as a teacher, coach and physical education instructor at Grand Ledge, she

coached the softball teams to eight conference titles, four Class A district championships and one regional crown.

Hill: High school pioneer retires

Continued FROM 1C

five Capital Area Conference and three West Central Conference championships. In 1994 and this past season, she coached the freshman teams and had a combined 43-9 record.

"We had a lot of success but we had some outstanding athletes, too," Hill said. "We had a pitcher by the name of Bonni Kinne who was one of the premier high school

athletes in the state. That was back when fastpitch was king."

Grand Ledge won four Class A district crowns and a regional championship under Hill. In 1979, the Comets reached the Class A state championship game and had to face Royal Oak Dondero. Hill's team lost 2-1 on an unearned run in the bottom of the ninth inning.

"That was heartbreaking," Hill recalled. "It was a super game."

Mid-Michigan fans owe Hill a great debt of gratitude for her role

in starting the first Softball Classic, now played annually at Lansing's Ranney Park.

"We wanted to start a tournament to promote girls softball so a group of us got together, found a good sponsor in Arby's and it all happened," Hill said. "Deb Pozega had a big hand in helping get the thing off the ground floor."

Hill's basketball teams began to flourish during the 1977 season when the Comets went 13-4 and finished second in the conference.

A year later, they were 15-3 with all three defeats by Lansing Everett. In 1981, Grand Ledge was 10-5.

"There are a lot of memories," Hill said. "But I take personal pride in getting softball and basketball programs started so the girls had something to compete in. They had nothing to work for. The teams have been very competitive and we can all be proud of the accomplishments."

And proud and thankful that Linda Hill took the time and interest.

Hill tops Time out for a pioneer

Without the Linda Hills of this world, we'd all be spectators in the sports arena.

Fortunately, Hill and her colleagues in women's athletics refuse to languish along the sidelines.



Hill

They're the doers, the dreamers who nurture championship softball teams and claim none of the credit. Instead, the glory goes to young players who blossom under their coaching.

Linda Hill, a Grand Ledge teacher, coach and physical education instructor for 33 years, says she'll blow the whistle on her own sports career and slide into retirement. She'll find time to smell the roses, she says.

She's earned it. When Hill joined the Grand Ledge faculty, she found no sports opportunities for girls. She started some, on her own, with no extra pay.

Because of Hill's behind-the-scenes leadership and the inspiration of others like her, young women take sports programs for granted. In softball, Grand Ledge won five Capital Area Conference and three West Central Conference championships. The district also captured four Class A district crowns and a regional championship on her watch.

She helped launch the first Softball Classic now played annually at Ranney Park.

For Hill, it's time to look ahead to the serenity of northern Michigan and sports entertainment of her choosing. For Grand Ledge, it's time to look back, to recognize the contributions of a crusading pioneer and say thanks.

7-11

C. C. R.

April 24, 1924

Obituary

Harriet Rebecca, youngest of a family of 11 children of Benjamin and Betsy Hilliker was born in Jaaper, Stuben county, N. Y., May 10, 1833. When she was three years old, her parents moved to Michigan, settling on a farm in Farmington, Oakland county, where she grew to young womanhood. October 28, 1852 she was united in marriage at Redford, Wayne county to James Wilcox of Farmington, Mich. Soon after their marriage they left for Clinton county where they settled on a farm in Olive township where she resided until 1910. To this union five children were born, two sons and three daughters, two daughters, Lucy and Gertrude, died in their young girlhood. After a brief illness her husband died May 24, 1866, leaving her with her little family of small children to battle life's problems alone, consequently she was versed in all the hardships and adversities of pioneer life. After 33 years of widowhood she was again united in marriage to Jacob S. Rodgers of Alma October 2, 1899. Mr. Rodgers passed away February, 1902. Mrs. Rodgers sold her farm and with her youngest son, Charles bought a home in Dewitt village on Mill street, east, in 1910, where she has since resided with the exception of a year living elsewhere she had been a continuous resident of Clinton county for 72 years. Mrs. Rodgers was a practical nurse and went far and near to minister to the sick, a vocation she followed for many years. About ten years ago she lost her eyesight, which was a great affliction to her, but through it all she was tenderly cared for by her son's wife, Mrs. Charles Wilcox. She had been in ill health for several years from hardening of the arteries, but her last illness was only of two weeks duration. She passed away Monday morning, April 14, within four weeks of being 91 years of age. She is survived by her sons, Oscar, of Farmington, Charles of this place and one daughter, Mrs. Bertha Wixon of Merle Beach, ten grandchildren, ten great grandchildren, several nephews and nieces, besides many friends. Among her nephews and nieces in this place are Omar and Jerome Dills and Mrs. Ella Brinkerhoff. Mrs. Rodgers was an ardent believer in the Universalist faith, being a member of the Universalist society at Dewitt and also a member of the Clinton County Pioneer society.

Thus a good woman has passed on who was known to all as "Aunt Beck" and who will be remembered for her kindness to others and devotion to her home and family.

Her funeral was held Friday morning with short services at the home of her son, where she resided and funeral at the Baptist church. Rev. George Ashworth of the First Universalist church of Lansing officiated. Mr. and Mrs. Marc Cutler sang several duets, the numbers being Mrs. Rodgers' own selection, Mrs. Merle Kraas presiding at the piano. The bearers were her nephews, Omar and Jerome Dills and grandnephews, Bert Taylor and Allen Stampfy, the undertaker, her grand nephew, W. D. Brinkerhoff of Lansing. The many beautiful floral tributes showed the esteem she was held in by her friends. Interment was made in Dewitt cemetery. The friends from away who attended the funeral were Omar Wilcox and children and son, Forest, and daughter, Mrs. Hazel DeGrow of Farmington, Mrs. Frank Green, Carl Wilcox of Northville, Mrs. Zoe Wheeler of Flint, Mrs. Belle Hard- enburgh of Highland Park and Mr. and Mrs. Charles Hilliker and daughter of Farmington.

Card of Thanks

We wish to thank those who assisted us at our mother's death, the singers, especially the business men of this place and other friends for the floral emblems. Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wilcox, Mr. Oscar Wilcox, Mrs. Bertha Wixon.

Hilliker

Hilts



Pfc. OTIS L. HILTS entered the service in Sept. 1942 and received his training at Camp Shelby, Miss. He landed at his destination in India in April 1943. Pfc. Hilts is the son of Mr. and Mrs. John Hilts of Dewitt.

Hilts

HILTS, IVAN "CHUCK"

Lansing



Born November 26, 1933 in St. Johns; died June 17, 1994 at the age of 60. Mr. Hilts worked for 42 years in the computer data processing industry, having worked 20

years at Capital Business Service and served as Vice President. Preceded in death by his father, John; 2 brothers, Otis and Olin; and 2 sisters, Phyllis Mason and Vivian (Arthur "Happy") Corwin, he is survived by his wife of 41 years, Carol; 2 daughters, Dawn (Kenneth) Goodwin and Amy (Kirt) Galatian, all of Lansing; 3 sons, Brad (Rebecca) of Chattanooga, TN, Casey (Bonnie) of St. Johns and Eric of Lansing; 9 grandchildren, Katherine Hilts, Brandy and Shari Goodwin, Kelly, Brandon and Ashley Hilts, Andrea and Charlene Galatian and Jonathan Tyler Hilts; mother, Elsa of Ovid; 1 sister, Zelma (Kenneth) Heibeck of St. Johns. Funeral services will be held Monday, June 20, 1 p.m. at the Gorsline-Runciman Co., DeWitt Chapel with Pastor Curtis A. Petrak, Associate Pastor of First Baptist Church of St. Johns, officiating. Interment will follow in DeWitt Cemetery. Friends may call at the Chapel beginning Sunday, 4 p.m. where the family will receive friends 4-7 p.m. In memory of Mr. Hilts, those desiring may make contributions to the Michigan Diabetes Association.

Olin O. Hilts

Olin O. Hilts, 64, of Lansing, formerly of DeWitt, died on April 21, 1989, in Lansing.

Mr. Hilts was born on June 8, 1924. He was employed at the Walker Lumber Company and Culligan Water Conditioning Incorporated in DeWitt, at the Boys Training School, and at the mailroom at the Secondary Complex, State of Michigan, in Lansing.

He is survived by one son and daughter-in-law, Marley and Susan; one granddaughter, Theresa Hilts of Grand Ledge; his mother, Elsa Hilts of DeWitt; one brother, Ivan (Chuck) Hilts of Lansing; and one sister, Zelma Heibeck of St. Johns.

He was preceded in death by his father, John Hilts; two sisters, Phyllis and Vivian; and a

Helen Sturgis Becomes Bride of Bath Man

The marriage of Miss Helen Sturgis and Ralph Hobart took place at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Otis Almy, of Owosso, on Saturday, Nov. 26. The ceremony was performed by Rev. LaVerne Bretz of the Valley Farms Baptist church. A lovely bouquet of bittersweet flanked by flame-colored electric candles on the mantle of the fireplace, formed a colorful background for the service.

The bride was attired in a gown of wine colored velvet and carried a bouquet of red and variegated carnations and swansonia. The matron of honor, Mrs. Otis Almy, wore a wine crepe gown. Her flowers included bronze mums and swansonia.

Following the ceremony a luncheon was served. The table centerpiece was a beautiful bridal cake.

The bride is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Jesse D. Sturgis of St. Johns, and a graduate of Fowler high school and Clinton County Normal.

The bridegroom is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Hobart of Bath. He attended the James Couzens Agricultural School at Bath.

Mr. and Mrs. Hobart are residing in Bath.

Hobart

Hobert

ANNOUNCE MARRIAGE

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Hobert, of Bath, announce the marriage of their daughter, Coral, to Mr. Russell Howe, of Lansing. The ceremony took place Sept. 17. 1938