

Opinion

Stowell
323-1711

Story of pioneer's trip to DeWitt

On Aug. 25, 1877, at a basket picnic of the Clinton County Pioneer Society, Mrs. Oliva (Stowell) Baker read aloud a long essay to the crowd of pioneer families which had gathered on the Indian Green at DeWitt. Her oration included many of her own personal experiences, as well as a recounting of her family's arduous journey from the state of New York to the wilderness of Michigan territory.

The following is an excerpt from her speech:

"In May, 1830, we commenced the journey in company with two other families, neighbors, taking the wagon route through Canada, traveling with the heavy lumbering wagons used 41 years ago. We were 21 days making the journey to Ann Arbor, and of the 21, it rained 15. Our party numbered 17 persons, including children of all ages.

"We crossed the Niagara River at Lewiston, a few miles below the falls on a ferry propelled by horse power; and here commenced the hardships that only ended with years of toil and privations to those fathers and mothers. I remember one day in particular of that journey, child as I was, we traveled where the country was so flat that the road was under water, except the brush and poles that had been thrown in from time to time, thereby making it barely passible. As the heavy wheels of our wagons rolled and crushed along the catfish and others of the finny tribe which with the high water, had floated up from the lakes and rivers, came to the surface, some torn and bleeding while others fled in terror to deeper water.

"A little further on, one of the horses tired out and laid down in the harness; and soon after this trouble was removed, we reached what seemed an impassible barrier. The road laid deep under water and a bridge was gone, having left not even a landmark by which a stranger might be guided. But here too, we found help in a time of need, as before. Several men were stationed near, whose business it was to take the lines, knowing the way to drive out into the lake, reaching a safe landing. I remember that father preferred to keep the lines in his own hands and follow the pilots for he said his horses knew his voice and would obey him best. It was water overhead and water underfoot. Even the god of day seemed wading in water, and at last dropped down in the west, out of sight into a watery bed.

"I think the bright anticipations of the elders of our little band must have been somewhat dimmed by this tedious journey in a strange land, amongst strange faces and customs, knowing that the end must be stranger still. We carried our provisions with us, as was the custom, stopping at traveler's houses or inns ... for the nights, obtaining lodgings and the privilege of setting our food upon their tables, and making our own tea and coffee, thereby dining upon many luxuries that we could not have found at hotels even in Canada at that time. At last we reached Windsor, taking the ferry for Detroit. At that time, as I remember, Detroit was a gloomy, muddy, French village.

"A few miles more and we reached Ann Arbor, the place of our destination. That beautiful city of today was but a small inland village then, divided by a small belt of forest, and called upper and lower town; and where now stands the great halls of learning, I gathered the wild berries. We stayed through the summer.

Historic DeWitt

By Kenneth Coin

It was a very sickly season and we soon made the acquaintance of him who called himself 'ague.' We did not like this stranger, but he proved to be one of the officious class we never can avoid.

"Father finally decided to come to Clinton County and try the experiment of clearing off a new farm. Having made the necessary arrangements he, in company with Capt. Lowry, a heavy land owner and speculator, and two hired men, came on for the purpose of building a house upon a tract of wild land containing 505 acres owned by said Lowry, situated four miles east of this village (DeWitt), on the south bank of the Looking Glass River.

"The house was finished, a task that did not require much mechanical skill, but a vast amount of patience and perseverance. The body was laid up of rough logs, shakes for a roof, and not once board in the whole construction. The chimney, built without jaws, was laid up of sticks in mud for mortar, and way up in the flue was placed a cross pole to which a lug-pole was attached and to the lug-pole was attached a chain where there hung several iron hooks resembling a long letter S upon which were hung the dinner pot or kettle.

"When the work was thus far completed, father came back after us, and again we commenced the journey westward on the seventh day of January 1837. We reached the house of our nearest neighbor to be, Welcome J. Partlow. The cordial welcome extended us that night by strangers made us feel that we were not destitute of human sympathy, even in the wilderness. After a night's rest and a sumptuous breakfast, we were carefully reloaded into our sleigh for the last three miles of our protracted journey. It was a cold morning — snow deep and no tracks. We were obliged to cross the river on the ice, for there were no bridges. The ice, always treacherous in the Looking Glass river owing to the numerous springs along its banks, let one of our sleighs through, doing little damage, however, except in frightening us, wetting the salt and sugar, and drowning the cat and chickens. It was a short work to reach the house which was built on the river bank for the convenience of water.

"After four years of toil, father left the farm with its 80 acres of improved land, intending to go to Portland, but through the influence of Capt. Scott he became a permanent resident of this village (DeWitt)."

Upon his removal to the village of DeWitt, Dr. Stowell built an impressive Greek revival style home at the northeast corner of Main and Franklin Streets, which in later years became the "Boston House" hotel.

Oliva married a young attorney, Joab Baker, and for many years they lived in the home now owned by Edwin Reed at 502 S. Bridge.

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. 20, 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.

Barna Allen (also recorded as Burma 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 Sibley 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 2, 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. (1794-1884) 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.

Stowell

MRS. JOAB BAKER.

An Early Resident of Clinton County Is Dead.

Mrs. Joab Baker, an early resident of DeWitt and St. Johns, and sister of Dorr K. Stowell, of this village, died at the home of her youngest daughter, Laura, now Mrs. M. A. Share, at Portland, Oregon, May 13, 1900, in her 73rd year.

The deceased was born in Onondago county, N. Y., and came to DeWitt township with her parents in February, 1838, where, in 1847, she was married to Joab Baker, and continued to reside there until the county seat was removed from DeWitt to St. Johns, when they came here, where Mr. Baker practiced law. Twenty-five years ago they removed to Muskegon, where Mr. Baker died about fifteen years ago, since which time she has resided with her daughter.

M. A. Share, husband of Laura, died about one month previous to the death of Mrs. Baker. He was 68 years old, a soldier in the civil war, where he had a remarkable record as a scout and spy. He was a practical business man, a kind and indulgent husband and father, and leaves a clean record of his life to the honor and satisfaction of his family.

Dance at Woodman hall tonight.

CR
5-31-1900

AGED PIONEER DIED THURSDAY

DORR K. STOWELL LIVED TYPICAL
SETTLER'S LIFE—MADE CLEAR-
ING IN WOODS WEST OF TOWN
FOR FIRST HOME.

DECEASED HAD LIVED IN
CLINTON CO. FOR 80 YEARS

WAS FOR SOME TIME PRESIDENT
OF PIONEER SOCIETY—HELD
OTHER OFFICES.

Dorr K. Stowell, one of the earliest
pioneers of this county, passed away
at his home on West State street at
about 5 o'clock, Thursday afternoon,
his death due to old age. Funeral ser-
vices were held at the home Saturday
afternoon at 2 o'clock, Rev. F. C. Ald-
inger, pastor of the Universalist church
in Lansing, officiating. Interment was
made in Mt. Rest cemetery.

Mr. Stowell was the last of a family
of eight children. He was born
in Cuyahoga county, New York, on
December 24, 1829, and came to Mich-
igan with his parents when a small
boy, settling in Washtenaw county. In
1837 the family moved to Lowry Plains
near Dewitt, where they made their
home for three years, later moving into
the village of Dewitt, where Mr. Stow-
ell's father, Dr. Hiram Stowell, bought
a farm on the southeast extremity of
the village, known now as the Newton
Webb farm. Dr. Stowell was one of
the earliest practicing physicians in
Dewitt, practicing there until 1857,
when he passed away.

During his boyhood, spent in the wil-
derness of Dewitt, Mr. Stowell had as
his companions only the Indian chil-
dren and thus learned the great fund
of Indian stories and the Indian lan-
guage which he remembered until his
death.

On October 10, 1852, Mr. Stowell was
united in marriage with Mary L. Nich-
ols of Farmington, Oakland county. To
this union six children were born, two
dying in infancy, and one son passing
away at the age of 4 years. Those sur-
viving are: Clark E. and Fred L. of
this place, and Mrs. Emma L. Hudson
of Okemos. Mrs. Stowell died on Jan-
uary 23, 1916. The deceased is also
survived by twelve grandchildren and
fifteen great grandchildren.

With his bride, Mr. Stowell began
housekeeping on his farm four miles
west of St. Johns, building a rough log
cabin without windows, in the woods,
and gradually clearing the land about
the pioneer home, which he bought
from the government.

He plastered his house with clay
which he mixed, and used peeled sap-
ling bark for mattress for the bed.

Mr. Stowell has often told a good
many stories of his early pioneer life,
one of particular interest being the
story of a bear coming in the dead of
night, and prowling around in the
woods near his home. When he went
out to investigate, Mr. Stowell found
that the bear had carried off one of his
hogs. He followed the bear into the
woods, and his wife came out holding
a candle made of a piece of muslin
soaked in deer tallow to light the way.
One of Mr. Stowell's dogs followed the
bear, and after a while succeeded in
making him drop the hog.

After living on the farm west of
town for some time, Mr. Stowell moved
with his family to St. Johns, where he
has resided for the past eighteen years.

The deceased was a prominent
granger, and for a number of years,
served as president of the Clinton
County Pioneer Society, and of the
Farmers' Mutual Insurance Company
for ten years. At various times during
his residence in Bengal, he also serv-
ed as supervisor, clerk, treasurer and
filled other township offices.

Mr. Stowell has been a resident of
this county for the past eighty years,
moving here when a lad of eight years.

Owosso—A good share of the right
of way for the electric line to Flint has
been secured. Owing to the high prices
of material, it is not probably the line
will be built this year.

MARRIED 60 YEARS CELEBRATE EVENT

(Continued from page 1.)

MR. AND MRS. D. K. STOWELL THE
HAPPY COUPLE.

PIONEERS OF THIS COUNTY

CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN
ALL PRESENT.

Couple Came To Clinton County
When It Was But a
Wilderness.

Two of our oldest Clinton County
residents, Mr. and Mrs. Dorr
Stowell, now residents of this city,
celebrated their 60th wedding anniver-
sary last Thursday, October 10.

The old couple have a fine fam-
ily, about four miles west of this city,
which they after years of toil cleared
from an unbroken wilderness. They
lived upon and worked this farm for
47 years. Thirteen years ago in the
spring finding that they could not
do the necessary work upon this large
farm, a home on State street was pur-
chased where the couple have made
their home since.

Mr. Stowell was born in Carver
county, New York, December 24, 1829.
He came with his parents to the ter-
ritory of Michigan in the year 1837.

Two years later, in 1838, the family
settled in Clinton county in the town-
ship of DeWitt. Here they settled on
a farm near the village, finding the
Indiana very plentiful but all of the
fact that their lameness makes
friendly. Their nearest white neigh-
bor was located two miles away. Two
years later they moved into the vil-
lage.

In 1848, he accepted a position
school teacher in Bengal. When
arrived there he found that he was
located two miles away from his school
house, wages being \$1 a week. Mr.
Stowell soon became a very suc-
cessful teacher and later taught also
Riley and Olive townships.

He worked one year in the pine
woods at Muskegon, returning to Ben-
gal in 1852, where he met Miss Mary

L. Nicholas who became his wife in
1852.

Mr. Stowell laughingly described
their honeymoon trip. They were mar-
ried at Mrs. Stowell's sister where
she had been staying the past three
years. Mrs. Stowell's birthplace was
in Farmington, where she was born
January 12, 1835. She remained
there for fifteen years when she came
to live with her sister. A few days
after their marriage, Mr. Stowell sug-
gested that they should go and visit
his parents in DeWitt. They made
their journey with their yoke of oxen
and lumber wagon, with a board laid
across for a seat.

They began housekeeping in a little
log cabin in the wilderness. There
was not much of a floor in the cabin
and windows were not even thought
of. All of their furniture was made
by Mr. Stowell. The first light used
was made by lighting a piece of cot-
ton attached to a button which was
dipped in coons oil. The tallow candle
came later followed by the wonderful
kerosene lamp.

Only one buggy was owned in the
country, and about four or five horses.
The unbroken wilderness surround-
ing them gradually cleared away, and
about 140 acres of heavy timbered
land was cleared into a beautiful
farm.

Three children were born to them:
Clark E. Stowell, of Bengal; Mrs. Em-
ma L. Hudson, of Ingham county and
Fred L. Stowell, a well known res-
ident of this city.

They also have twelve grandchild-
ren and seven great grandchildren.

Mr. and Mrs. Stowell are very
bright and active old people, in spite
of the fact that their lameness makes
it impossible for them to be out much.

Their anniversary was celebrated
with such a grand occasion should be,
all their children and grand children
being with them and doing all that
could be done to make the occasion
one to be long remembered.

HALLOWE'EN DANCE.

There will be a hallowe'en dance
given at the Bingham Grange hall
Saturday night, Oct. 31, 1912. Ev-
erybody invited. There will be no
charge Saturday evening on account
of the play given by the young people,
Oct. 19. Everybody come (entitled)
"The Cornet Song."

(Continued on page 6.)

Celebrate 50th Anniversary

Stowell



MR. AND MRS. FRED L. STOWELL

About thirty relatives met at the farm home of Mr. and Mrs. Durfee Angell on Turner Road, Lansing, Sunday, May 11, to help Mr. and Mrs. Fred Stowell of St. Johns celebrate their fiftieth wedding anniversary.

Those present were Miss Marjorie Stowell of Detroit; Mrs. Leah Walker and Nolan, Gaylord and Gladys Walker of East Lansing; Rev. and Mrs. Geo. H. Hudson of Okemos; Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Stark and son, Gelleo of Toledo, Ohio; Mrs. Amelia Kneeland of St. Johns; Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Hudson and sons, John and Dorr of East Lansing; Mr. and Mrs. Howard Hudson and son, Robert; Mr. and Mrs. Geo. Bearup and sons, Stewart and Ross of Okemos.

Three of the guests, Mrs. Emma Hudson, sister of Mr. Stowell, Mrs. Leola Stark, niece of Mrs. Stowell, and Mrs. Amelia Kneeland, cousin of Mr. Stowell, were present at the wedding a half century ago.

Mr. and Mrs. Stowell renewed their vows of fifty years ago with Rev. Hudson performing the ceremony. Mrs. Hudson acted as bridesmaid and little Dorr Hudson, grand nephew, acted as best man. Their two granddaughters, Miss Ruth Angell and Miss Gladys Walker, were flower girls.

Table decorations were yellow tulips and daffodils, and the house decorations were yellow roses, yellow tulips and lavender lilacs.

Mr. and Mrs. Stowell received several gifts in keeping with a golden anniversary. The occasion was also to Mr. and Mrs. Angell's eighteenth anniversary, and the twenty-fourth birthday of Nolan Walker, Mr. and Mrs. Stowell's oldest grandson.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Stowell have lived practically all their lives in

Clinton county. Mr. Stowell was born in a log house in Bengal in 1855 when that township was a wilderness. Mrs. Stowell came there with her parents from Litchfield when an infant. After marriage they continued to live in Bengal on a farm in the Drake district until 1906 when they retired and came to St. Johns. Mr. and Mrs. Stowell in late years have spent their winters

at the home of the daughter, Mrs. R. C. Buck, in Prescott, Arizona.

Stowell

Celebrate 55th Anniversary



MR. AND MRS. FRED L. STOWELL

1935

Sunday, May 12, marked the 55th wedding anniversary of Mr. and Mrs. Fred L. Stowell, well known St. Johns couple. It was also the 23rd for their daughter and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. Durfee Angell of Dewitt township, and after attending Mother's Day services at the Community church in East Lansing, the two couples were honored at a family dinner at the Durfee farm home near Lansing.

Fred L. Stowell and Abbie A. Buck were married May 12, 1880, and have spent their entire wedded life in this community. Mr. Stowell was born in Bengal, and his wife came to that township with her parents when a small child. Before moving to St. Johns in 1906 they resided on the Stowell homestead in Bengal which they still own. It

has been in the family's possession since being taken up from the government by Mr. Stowell's father, the late Dorr K. Stowell in 1853.

At the dinner Sunday the guests included three of Mr. and Mrs. Stowell's four daughters, Mrs. Angell and Miss Margery Stowell of Detroit, and Mrs. Leah Walker and children Nolan and Gladys of East Lansing. Also present were Mr. Stowell's sister, Mrs. George H. Hudson and husband of Okemos, Mrs. Hudson, with Mrs. Amelia Kneeland of St. Johns, and Miner Sutton of Bengal, are the only persons living who attended the wedding ceremony 55 years ago.

Mr. Stowell will be 80 years old on May 26, and his wife is four years younger. Both are enjoying fairly good health.

CLARK STOWELL DIES JAN. 26TH

WELL KNOWN MAN SPENT
ENTIRE LIFE, 78 YEARS,
IN CLINTON COUNTY

Headed Farmers Mutual Fire
Insurance Co. for Long
Period; Rites Friday

Clark E. Stowell, Bengal town-
ship pioneer and former president
of the Farmers Mutual Fire Insur-
ance Company of Clinton and
Gratiot counties for 15 years, died
at 7 p. m. Tuesday, January 26,
1932, at the home of his daughter,
Mrs. Elda Stoerck, of St. Johns,
where he had lived the past five
years. Funeral services will be
conducted at 2 p. m. Friday at the
Stoerck residence with burial at
Mt. Rest.

Born Sept. 18, 1853, the son of
Dorr and Mary Stowell, early Ben-
gal settlers, Clark Stowell spent his
entire life within a few miles of
his birthplace and had witnessed
and taken part in the development
of Clinton county for more than
three quarters of a century. Being
an industrious, hard-working man,
he became a successful farmer, and
under his long administration the
Mutual Company continued in
growth and service.

As a boy he attended the Frink
district school in Bengal and for
one term studied at Mudge's school
in Maple Rapids. Later he taught
rural scholars in several parts of
the county for four or five win-
ters. At the age of 21, with the
aid of his father, the late Dorr
Stowell, he purchased 80 acres of
land two miles east of Fowler in
Bengal township, and there he
made a home for his bride, Flor-
ence Plowman, daughter of an-
other pioneer Bengal couple, whom
he married in October, 1881. They
became the parents of three chil-
dren, Ray Stowell of Mt. Pleasant,
Mrs. Stoerck of this city, and the
late Mrs. Floyd Jones of Bengal,
who died several years ago.

Not long after the turn of the
century Mr. and Mrs. Stowell mov-
ed to their late home about two
miles west of St. Johns. There the
husband was stricken ill five years
ago and since that time he had
made his home with his daughter.
His wife passed away in August,
1927.

Besides his two children, Clark
Stowell is survived by one brother,
Fred Stowell of St. Johns, a sister,
Mrs. Emma L. Hudson of Okemos,
seven grandchildren and many
friends. In his death the county
has lost a sturdy citizen who serv-
ed as a township and school district
officer and took an active part in
the progress of the community in
which he lived.

Stowell

Grandson of Dr. Hiram Stowell, first probate judge of Clinton County



DEWITT REMEMBERED—A typical log homestead of the 1840's, this one was located on the East side of US-27 south at State Road (original settlers unknown), ca. 1920. Photo courtesy of DeWitt Library.

DeWitt in the 1840's wasn't a backwoods, dirtwater town

This is the first installment in a two-part column by Ken Coin. The second segment will appear in next week's issue.

One of the most rewarding aspects of researching local history is to be able to take something from the local history books, do some further research, and come up with the rest of the story which the books omitted.

DeWitt in the 1840's was not exactly the backwoods dirtwater town we often imagine. It offered a lot of potential for the adventurous Yankees flocking into the then, Far West. Among the typical pioneer wanna-be's, DeWitt attracted a large number of very industrious, well-educated young people, looking for the right opportunity to seize life by the tail.

Open any history of Clinton County and you're sure to find individual mention of three young girls, the Gooch sisters. (No, they weren't a Vaudville act!) They started life in the state of Maine, the pampered daughters of a successful lumber dealer, Benjamin Gooch. The War of 1812 had dealt him an unfavorable hand and trying to regain some of this former wealth, he wagered all he had left on government land in the Territory of Michigan.

The year 1834 finds the Gooch family on a packet boat on the Erie Canal, traveling through New York enroute to Michigan. The journey did not agree with the wife and mother, Lucy (Boyington) Gooch. She had the misfortune of falling overboard one night and was never seen or heard from again. Undaunted the Gooch's pressed on. The father's destination was Wayne County where he temporarily settled. The three sisters, sticking together, soon moved further and within a few years arrived at DeWitt.

Betsey Gooch (our first sister) arrived in DeWitt just in time to gain the distinction of the being the first teacher at the first school in the county — the Goodrich school which opened about 1836 in a log hut at the corner of Schavey and Howe roads. Shortly thereafter she was wooed and wed by another rising star of DeWitt's social elite, Dr. Seth P. Marvin, who had come to DeWitt in 1835 after completing his medical studies in Macomb County. His parents, "Deacon" Calvin and Deborah Marvin made the first settlement in Watertown Township (now the Lietzke farm on Airport road) and now Seth, upon hanging out his shingle, became the first practicing physician in Clinton County.

Shortly after Seth and Betsey's marriage they moved from the Marvin homestead to the new village of New Albany near the corner of Webb and Bridge street. Aside from his medical practice, Seth pursued local politics and in 1839 (when Clinton County was established) was elected the first county clerk. He went on to become county register of deeds and later Judge of Probate.

Mary Gooch (our second sister), like Betsey, was also a pioneer teacher in this county. Teachers and schools being both a rare commodity then, she taught not only in this area but also in Eagle and Victor townships. But in 1851, she caught the eye of a promising young attorney named Randolph Strickland (I suppose he could have caught her eye.) They settled in DeWitt where he had recently started his practice and built the home where Dan Matson now has his practice on Washington street. Like his brother-in-law, Seth, Randolph also stepped into the arena of politics and after several years as county prosecutor was, in 1860, elected to the Michigan Senate.

With the county seat being moved to St. Johns in 1856, the Stricklands went too and built one of the town's first "mansions" (it was located where St. Joseph's Catholic Church now stands, on the Courthouse Square). In the early years of the Civil War, Randolph was appointed by the Governor as Commissioner to Superintend the Draft and in 1863 was appointed by Abraham Lincoln as Provost Marshall. In 1868 he was elected to the House of Representatives and the Stricklands moved to Washington.

Olive Gooch (our third sister) had a less glittering life. She married her father's hired man, Stephen Hill, in 1835 and two years later they came to DeWitt, settling a homestead at the southwest corner of Lowell and Herbison roads in Watertown Township. Their beginning was not unlike that of her two other sisters but while the other sisters (and husbands) chased fame and fortune, Olive and Stephen took on the long laborious task of carving a farm from the wilderness.

Here the Hills remained for the rest of their lives, content with raising their six children and step by step, year by year improving their homestead into a productive farm.

Next week: The Rest of the Story.

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

DeWitt-Bath Review/December 14, 1992-5

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 Corunna — 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.

MRS. R. L. SMITH died at the residence of her son, H. C. Hale, in Lebanon, Nov. 28, 1881, aged 84 years. Mrs. Smith moved with her two sons, John R. and H. C. Hale, to Michigan in 1841, and settled in Ingham county. They came to this county in 1845.

MRS. CHAS. TURNER died at St. Johns, January 12, 1882, aged 76 years; a resident of St. Johns 26 years. She was a kind and esteemed neighbor.

MRS. CHAS. BENTLEY died at her home January 22, 1882. She was an old resident and much beloved by the community.

JOHN CLARK, of Eagle, died January 22d, 1882, at the home of his brother, David Clark, aged 82 years.

HON. WM. SHEPARD died Feb. 4, 1882, in his 67th year. He was born in Saratoga county, N. Y., in 1815; came to Michigan in 1843 and settled in Duplain. Mr. Shepard acted a prominent part in the settlement and development of Clinton county. At Duplain, Maple Rapids, and Shepardsville he did the work of a pioneer, and did it well. During his life he has been engaged in farming, mercantile, and milling business, and in the practice of law. He was Judge of the county court in 1851. He was prominent in the county Pioneer Society, and one of its charter members.

MRS. SAMUEL FORMAN, of DeWitt, died Feb. 26, 1882, aged 68. She was born in New Jersey, in 1814; married in 1832, and moved with her husband to Wayne county, Michigan, in 1836. They settled in Watertown. She was devoted to the welfare of those around her.

MORRIS FEDEWA died at the home of his son, John H., in St. Johns, April 2, 1882, aged 70 years. He was born in Germany, in 1812; emigrated to this country in 1842 and settled in Dallas, where he cleared 80 acres of land. On account of business complications he lost his property in 1860. He then moved to Westphalia and cleared up a new farm and made a comfortable home.

CHARLES BURT died at his home in Essex, March 30, 1882, aged 62 years. He was born in the State of New York in 1821, and came to Michigan in 1839 and settled in DeWitt. In 1854 he moved into Essex and settled upon the farm upon which he has since lived. He had the esteem and respect of the community.

JOHN VAN HOSEN, also a pioneer of Essex. (Particulars not reported.)

MRS. J. S. LOOMIS died in Watertown, April 22d, 1882, in her 60th year. She was a resident of the township about 40 years.

JAMES DOAK, of Bingham, died May 15, 1882, in his 69th year. He was born in Philadelphia, in 1814, and came to this county about 30 years ago, and has since resided here.

DANIEL WARREN, one of the pioneers of Bingham, died recently at Kalamazoo, aged 68 years. He owned at one time the Walbridge farm adjoining the village on the south.

LIFE OF RANDOLPH STRICKLAND.

BY S. S. WALKER.

Randolph Strickland was born in Dansville, Steuben county, New York, February 4, 1823. His ancestors were from England, coming to this country in the sixteenth century. John Strickland, his grandfather, was a soldier in

the Revolutionary war. His father came from Massachusetts to Dansville, New York, in 1816, and was among the first to make his home in what was then termed "the west."

Schools were few and of the poorest kind. Very few books were to be found in the neighborhood. Under the instruction of his mother, who was a woman of strong mind, young Strickland learned to read and write, and when ten years old he had read every book to be found in the immediate vicinity of his home—including the Bible, which he had read twice through by course. He was the oldest of seven children, and when he was twelve years old his mother died. From that time he was compelled to labor daily to assist in supporting the family, and had no opportunity for study except after the day's work was done; then with his book in hand, by light made from burning pine knots, he toiled on until "the small hours." By such unaided efforts he obtained a good common education. When sixteen years of age he was employed in a saw-mill, taking the position of a grown man, and laboring sixteen hours each day during the season. From that time until his majority he engaged in lumbering in winter and farming in summer.

At twenty-one he set out for Michigan, in the hope of being able to make for himself a pleasant home and an honorable position in society. When he reached his destination he had less than one dollar left; but he had an excellent constitution, great will-power, a strong determination to succeed, and was ready and willing to perform any kind of hard labor. In December, 1844, he commenced teaching school in Ingham county, Michigan, for ten dollars per month, the best price to be obtained. When spring came he engaged in chopping and clearing land, and during summer labored in the harvest field. In the fall following, having carefully saved his earnings, he commenced the study of the law. When his small amount of money had been expended for board and clothing, he left the office to work in the saw-mill, harvest field, and to teach school, always taking his law books with him, and never allowing an hour to be lost. In this way without assistance as to means for his support, he struggled on until, in October, 1849, he was admitted to practice in all the courts of this State. The following winter he visited his early home in the State of New York, and there engaged in teaching.

In the spring of 1850 he returned to Michigan, and commenced the practice of his profession at DeWitt. In the fall of 1851 he was married in Kent county, to Mary Ellen Gooch. In 1852 he was elected Prosecuting Attorney for Clinton county. He was reëlected in 1854, 1856 and 1858. He was one of the delegates to the national republican convention held at Philadelphia in 1856, and earnestly advocated the nomination of John C. Fremont for President. During the following campaign he was on the stump continually, and aided materially in carrying his State for the candidate of his choice.

In 1860 Mr. Strickland was elected to the Michigan Senate, in which he served on the Judiciary Committee, advocated and assisted in carrying through the bill allowing parties to testify in their own behalf in civil cases, and also allowing the respondent in criminal cases to make his statement to the jury in the nature of evidence, on which they may acquit if they believe it. His party urged him to accept a second term in the Senate, but he declined, and was again in 1862 elected prosecuting attorney.

In the early part of the rebellion Mr. Strickland was appointed by the Governor of Michigan, the Commissioner to superintend the draft, known as the State conscription. President Lincoln, in April, 1863, appointed him

Provost Marshal for the Sixth Congressional District of the State, which office he held until after the close of the war, and was honorably discharged in October, 1865. In the execution of this most delicate trust he so performed his duty as to make a host of warm and earnest friends.

At the Congressional Convention held in his district in 1864—when the then member of Congress had not served out his first term—the nomination was tendered to Mr. Strickland by a majority of the delegates, which honor he respectfully declined, on the ground that the sitting member, by the usage of the party, was entitled to a second term, saying to the delegates that he could not accept the nomination and thereafter hold an honorable position in the party.

After his discharge as Provost Marshal, Mr. Strickland returned to the practice of his profession, and continued actively and successfully engaged therein until 1868, when he was nominated for Representative in Congress. He was a member of the Republican State Central Committee in 1867 and 1868. Having been a delegate to the Chicago Convention that nominated General Grant for President, and being on the ticket, he canvassed nearly the entire district, speaking through fourteen of the eighteen counties of which it was composed, carrying all the counties but three, and being elected by more than 3,400 majority.

Taking his seat as a Representative from Michigan in the forty-first Congress, Mr. Strickland served on the Committees on Public Lands, Mines and Mining, and Invalid Pensions. The demands of his district upon its Representative were at that time unusually great; it had more than 1,500 miles of navigable coast; its agriculture would have averaged fairly with the other districts throughout the country; its exports of salt, pine lumber, iron ore, pig iron, and ingot copper were enormous, and its fisheries were equal in value to its wool and wheat productions combined. Notwithstanding this large extent of territory and varied interests to look after, he accomplished as much or more for his district than any other Representative from the State. He delivered a speech in the House upon the tariff, March 26th, 1870, which was well received.

After his return from Congress he again took up the practice of his profession. At the time of the second Grant campaign he joined the new party of Liberal Republicans, believing that the old Republican party had rendered its best services to the country.

In the following campaign of Hayes and Tilden, Mr. Strickland heartily supported Tilden and Reform, having looked and hoped in vain for a reformation to take place within the old party. He, appreciating more and more fully the fact that any party that has long held supreme power must become corrupt, and believing more firmly than ever that the good of the people demanded a new order of things, labored to that end.

When the great industrial and financial questions came up for consideration, he was found, as ever, on the side of the people and the oppressed. He worked with great zeal on this, as on all questions which lay near his heart, superintending and carrying on work after his health had so failed that he had been obliged to give up his business. It was in June of 1880 that Mr. Strickland was compelled to relinquish his cases in court and office business. His health failed steadily and gradually, notwithstanding his strong will and determination to get well, which probably prolonged his life some time. He

went to the Sanitarium at Battle Creek for medical aid the 11th of March, 1881, where he died the following May 5th.

By his death society lost one of its most valuable members; the temperance cause one of its strongest allies and most ardent workers; the educational interests a firm and loyal supporter; and all who knew him a true friend and brother. To Mr. Strickland as much or more than to any other of its pioneer settlers, is Clinton county indebted for its gradual development and present material prosperity.

EATON COUNTY.

MEMORIAL REPORT.

BY H. A. SHAW.

DAVID STIRLING was born near Glasgow, Scotland, May 26, 1818, and moved to Canada with his father, William Stirling, and his family in the year 1821. When six years old his parents removed to New York Mills, Oneida county, New York, where he resided until he grew to manhood. While a young man, living in New York, he learned the machinist's trade, at which he worked for several years. By close attention to business he acquired sufficient means to start in the mercantile business and was engaged in the dry goods and general trade for some time in the State of New York, at the same time being a partner in the firm of Stirling, Hamlin & Seelye, in the then village of Eaton Rapids.

In 1840 he was united in marriage to Miss Mary M. Harvey, of New York Mills, and on June 1st, 1849, he arrived at Eaton Rapids with his wife and family. Previous to his arrival the firm had built the old Union Block, on the lots where Brainerd's grocery and Knapp & Carr's hardware store now stand, continuing in business there for some years, when he moved to the store on the north-east corner of Main and Hamlin streets, which was destroyed by the great fire of 1864, removing, before the fire, to the old Union Block, where he continued business till 1870.

About this time the mineral water was discovered here, and Mr. Stirling sunk a well on his lot on Main street, since which time he has been engaged in running his bath-rooms and bottling and shipping mineral water. Although not being very rugged since he came to Michigan, his health did not fail him perceptibly, till about three years ago he began to complain and gradually failed till death relieved him of his sufferings. He died August 23, 1881, of cancer of the stomach, and Bright's disease of the kidneys.

Mr. Stirling united with the M. E. church at the age of eighteen years and was an earnest worker in that society, being one of the first members of that church here, in which he held various offices with credit to himself and the church.

His wife and four children survive him, also two brothers and three sisters, Mrs. Jane Garton, in California, Mrs. Amos Hamlin, Mrs. W. J. Seelye, Messrs. William and James Stirling, of Eaton Rapids.

SANDFORD MOTT died August 6, 1881, aged 70 years. He was born in New York State; came here from Fairfield, Ohio, in October, 1845; settled on the farm on which he died, and cleared it up himself. At one time he lost a good

ship, March 16, 1880. He was born in that township, was well respected, and was about 34 years of age.

WILLIAM M. HEAZLIT of Dowagiac, was born in Cayuga Co., N. Y., Sept. 23, 1819, and came to Cass Co., and settled near Dowagiac in May, 1847. He died at his residence, April 2, 1880.

JACOB B. BUTTS, who died at his home in Milton, March 22, 1880, had been a respected resident of this county for upwards of thirty-five years. He was born in Pennsylvania, June 5, 1827. His widow, a daughter of Peter Truitt, and several children survive him.

CLINTON COUNTY.

MEMORIAL REPORT.

From the Lansing Republican, May 7th, 1881.

DEATH OF RANDOLPH STRICKLAND.

On Thursday morning, May 5th, this gentleman died at the Sanitarium in Battle Creek, of consumption, aged 58 years. He was a native of Livingston county, New York, grandson of a revolutionary soldier, and endured the usual rough and self-denying experience of poor boys among pioneer settlers. He worked sixteen hours a day in a saw-mill, and afterwards studied by the light of pine knots. In the winter of 1844 he taught school in this county, saved a little money, and studied law. He commenced the practice of his profession at Detroit in 1850, but soon removed to De Witt, Clinton county, where he was elected prosecuting attorney for four succeeding terms. He was a State senator in 1861-2, provost marshal in 1863-4-5, representative in Congress in 1869-70. In the latter year he was beaten out of a re-nomination by John F. Driggs, but the people elected Judge Sutherland, democrat, and left Mr. Driggs at home. Mr. Strickland was an earnest and zealous republican until the Greeley campaign, since which time he has acted with the democracy and the greenback party. He possessed ability, perseverance, and popular manners, but has suffered from ill health for several years. His home has of late been at St. Johns, where he leaves a widow and four daughters, who will be comfortably provided for by \$15,000 life insurance.

From the Clinton Republican.

A telegram received here this morning, May 5th, 1881, announced the death of Hon. Randolph Strickland at Battle Creek, whither he went about four weeks ago to try, as a last resort, the merits of the Sanitarium. But it was too late; consumption had laid its remorseless hand upon him, and he grew rapidly worse after the change.

Randolph Strickland was born in Dansville, Steuben Co., N. Y., February 4, 1823. When twenty-one years of age he started for Michigan, and in December, 1844, commenced teaching school for ten dollars per month in Ingham county. The next summer he labored as a farm hand and the following fall commenced the study of law, and in October, 1849, was admitted to practice in all of the courts of this State. In the spring of 1850 he commenced the practice of his profession at De Witt, then the county seat of

Clinton county. Two years later he was elected prosecuting attorney, giving such satisfaction that he was called to the responsible position four successive terms. He was a delegate to the national convention at Philadelphia in 1856, and voted for the nomination of John C. Fremont. In 1860 Mr. Strickland was elected to the State senate, and declined a re-nomination in 1862 to again accept the office of prosecuting attorney of this county.

Mr. Strickland removed from De Witt to St. Johns in 1862. In 1863 President Lincoln appointed him provost marshal for the sixth congressional district of Michigan, which position he held until the close of the war.

In 1868 he was nominated for congress by the republicans of this district, then composed of eighteen counties, and was elected by 3,400 majority. He left the republican party during the Greeley campaign and was identified with the democratic party until the greenback party entered the political arena, when he at once became one of its most prominent members, his name appearing upon the greenback ticket in 1880 for Secretary of State.

Mr. Strickland was the earliest and one of the most successful lawyers of Clinton county, was closely identified with its development, and few men will leave, upon their death, a larger circle of friends to mourn their loss.

The deceased leaves a wife and four daughters, grown to womanhood, who will be comfortably provided for, Mr. Strickland having carried an insurance of \$15,000 upon his life. The Knights Templar, of whose lodge he was an honored member, will have charge of his funeral.

FUNERAL RITES.

The remains of the late Randolph Strickland arrived here from Battle Creek on the 11:15 A. M. train on Friday, May 12, 1881, and were conducted to the family residence by the Knights Templar, in uniform, and resident members of the Clinton county bar.

The funeral services were conducted at the Congregational church on Sunday last by the Sir Knights. The St. Johns city band furnished appropriate music and headed the procession from the home to the church, and as they neared the church they played the beautiful selection "Flee as a Bird," and we think they never played sweeter or more soul-stirring music. The church was beautifully decorated and a large concourse of people were present, many more than could comfortably find seats, to pay their last respects to the deceased. After a solemn service the remains were escorted to DeWitt for burial, where they were placed at rest beside two other members of the family who died during Mr. Strickland's residence in DeWitt. It is estimated that upwards of forty teams were in the procession from this place, and several hundred friends of the deceased from DeWitt and vicinity were at the cemetery upon their arrival, to add their testimonial of respect to the distinguished dead.

From the Clinton Republican, June 2, 1881.

OLIVER DAVIS, whose death at Elsie, May 19, was noted in last week's Republican, was born at Mayfield, Montgomery county, N. Y., March 11, 1797. In 1855 he came to Duplain township, and settled upon a farm one mile south of Elsie, where he lived until his removal to the village in 1865. He spent his earlier years in farming and carpenter work, but later worked at shoemaking. He buried four wives between 1827 and 1870, leaving his fifth wife a widow.

Strickland

Jan 14 1897
Clint. Co. Indep.

A St. Johns Lady Married in Colorado.

The Colorado Springs Gazette of January 5, 1897, has the following

"Mrs. Martha Strickland, of Denver, and Sheldon C. Clark, of Cripple Creek, were married New Year's evening at Denver, by the Rev. Mr. Utter, of the Unitarian church. They are stopping at the Alta Vista en route for Cripple Creek, where they will make their home. Mrs. Strickland is well known here, having lectured here on parliamentary laws at the summer school. Her many friends extend congratulations."

PERSONAL

Clinton
Republican
May 2, 1907

AN OLD LANDMARK

Strickland Property Soon to be Razed to the Ground

ROMANTIC EARLY HISTORY

The Home Was the Scene of Many
Happy Gatherings in Early Days

On the site of the first house ever erected in St. Johns, the building known as the Strickland house was built nearly half a century ago.

In 1862, Randolph Strickland, one of the foremost lawyers in Clinton county and of the state, removed his family from Dewitt to St. Johns. This was 5 years after the county seat was changed from the former place to the latter.

In 1864 Mr. Strickland purchased the property of Dr. Crawford on Linden Avenue and here he built his beautiful home. Much time was spent in beautifying the grounds, in terracing the lawn and in planting trees and shrubbery.

About this time Mr. Strickland held the place of provost marshal from this congressional district. In 1869 he was elected congressman from this district. Although his duties called him away a great deal of the time, he with Mrs. Strickland found much time to devote to educational matters, and always worked for the best interests of the town.

Mr. and Mrs. Strickland were ideal entertainers and they, with their four charming daughters, kept the home gay with festivities. Numerous are the balls and parties recorded in the minds of many of our old residents. Company often came down from Washington and helped make merry.

Mrs. A. O. Hunt gives a description of a gown she had made to attend an occasion of this kind. It was of yellow and blue changeable silk, made with immense sleeves, a full skirt to accommodate the large hoops, and neck slightly low. Her hair was dressed in the prevailing fashion then, parted in the middle and combed low over the ears with a huge back comb. Of course the fan, scarf and huge poke bonnet were not lacking. The dances always took place in the large room back of Mr. Strickland's study. This room extended the entire width of the house.

Besides these festivities many serious games of chess were played as the host was an excellent player and some of our old residents can remember being badly beaten.

Mrs. Strickland was a lady of an extremely strong character. She was one of the originators of the Reading Circle out of which grew the present Ladies' Literary Club.

Their daughters were educated at the University of Michigan and received, as well, the best of home training. Martha, the eldest, studied law, and afterwards married Sheldon C. Clark of Rockford, Illinois. She now teaches parliamentary law in that place. Alida is now Mrs. W. H. Eastman of Grand Rapids and is at the head of a fine private school there. Jessie was the musical one of the family. She excelled both in vocal and instrumental. After her marriage to Dr. Herman Ostrander of Lansing, she went to that place, where she died some years ago. Hattie was married to J. E. Allaben, and now lives in Rockford, Illinois.

In 1881 Mr. Strickland died at Battle Creek, where he had gone for treatment. Mrs. Strickland followed him in 1905. St. Johns thus lost two of her best citizens, and very soon the old house will be torn down to make a place for the handsome new Catholic edifice, which will be erected this summer. With the passing of this old house, one of the old landmarks of the city will be lost, but the memories of the past will always remain as long as there is an "oldest inhabitant" left to recall those former happy days.

Matson and Skorich office was home to Bradfield family

By KEN COIN

Walter Hubble came to the area in 1837 as an 18-year-old member of the "Waterloo Joint-Stock Co." which founded Wacousta. He was (with perhaps a brother) a merchant there for the company until 1840 and remained a resident until 1844 when he moved to some government land he had purchased in 1836 in Essex Township (north and west of present St. Johns). He remained there only a few years before moving back south, to DeWitt, in 1846. Here he established himself in partnership with Courtland Hill in a general store on the northeast corner of Washington and Bridge (on the present site of Terranova's).

That same year (1846), Hubble purchased the lots where the Matson & Skorich offices are now located and, in 1848, built the present building as his home. He apparently arrived in DeWitt with a political reputation for, aside from his vocation as a merchant, he was elected county clerk in 1846 and held the office until 1850. He was also elected justice of the peace in 1848. His political career seems to have offered a sufficient wage for it was also in 1848 that his partnership with Courtland Hill dissolved and Hill (Bengal Township's first settler in 1837) returned to his own substantial homestead in that township.



The old Randolph Strickland home at 202 E. Washington, currently the law offices of Matson and Skorich.

Although this photograph was taken over 50 years ago, the house itself was, at that time, nearly 100 years old. The picture shows a unique feature original to the house, a recessed porch (on the right) which faced the west. Tending to her flower beds in the center is Jessie Bradfield: the house was "home" to the Bradfield family for many years in the middle of this century. Ca. 1939, Helen Hilts, photographer; courtesy of Dan Matson.

For Hubble, what appeared to be a political career on the rise was simply a flash in the pan. He died in the fall of 1851 at the young age of 34 and was buried in the DeWitt Cemetery.

Randolph and Mary (Gooch) Strickland bought this home soon after their marriage in 1851. (You'll remember Mary: it was her mother who had the misfortune of falling off the packet boat along the Erie Canal.) The site was conveniently located for

About 1870, the home was purchased by Elisha and Frances (Marshall) Pike, who remained here until the 1890's when they became part of the large migration of DeWitt families who relocated to the area of Wolverine, Michigan.

Except for the elimination of the porches, the house remains much as it originally did nearly 150 years ago. Several original interior doors, with thumb latch catches, remain intact. The solid structure

was built with post and beam construction and the unique hip-roof is self-supporting, offering a large second floor "chamber",

originally accessed by a tiny closet staircase.

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

Strickland

Republican.

OCTOBER 19, 1905.

MARY E. STRICKLAND

Remains Laid to Rest in Dewitt, Friday

CAME TO CLINTON IN 1847

Beautiful Tributes to Memory of a Well Known Pioneer

The funeral services for Mrs. Mary E. Strickland, who died Tuesday of last week at the home of her daughter, Mrs. J. E. Allaben, of Rockford, Ill., were held Friday, at 1:00 o'clock, at the old home of the late Hon. Randolph Strickland, corner of Linden avenue and Cass street, in this city. The Rev. George Elliott Cooley, pastor of All Saints church, Grand Rapids, officiated.

A selected choir, consisting of Miss Helen Corbit, Miss Edith Dunn and Mrs. D. W. Kelley, with Dewitt Hunt as pianist, rendered touching music. Mrs. Kelley sang a beautiful and fitting solo—"Sanctus." Rev. Mr. Cooley read some verses in the old and new testament. He quoted beautiful passages from Lowell, Tennyson and from George Elliott's, "The Choir Invisible," and read beautiful verses composed by the grandson of the deceased, Elwin Strickland.

The Lansing & St. Johns Electric Railroad sent two special cars to carry the body and friends to the Dewitt cemetery, where the remains were laid to rest.

It is interesting to note that the early married life of the late Hon. Randolph Strickland and his widow, the deceased, was spent in Dewitt; that their old home still stands upon the banks of the Looking Glass river; that when Mr. Strickland died he was buried in this old and oldest cemetery in Clinton county, and now his love's mate sleeps by his side while their souls have joined the choir invisible.

The Strickland family was one of the oldest and most respected known in Central Michigan. The late Hon. Randolph Strickland was a sound, brilliant lawyer, an able congressman, a true friend and a patriotic citizen. The deceased, tender, gentle, true, adored by her family and beloved by all, was one of the beaming light points in St. Johns circles. Three daughters survive her, Mrs. Strickland-Clark, of Chicago; Mrs. W. H. Eastman, of Grand Rapids; and Mrs. Dr. John Allaben, of Rockford, Ill.; and eight grand children.

LAMPHERE-WARD

MRS. MARY E. STRICKLAND

Passed Away at Rockford, Ill.—Remains Will Be Brought Here Friday

Mrs. Mary E. Strickland, one of the first settlers in St. Johns and widow of the late Hon. Randolph Strickland, died Tuesday at the home of her daughter, Mrs. J. E. Allaben, of Rockford, Ill., where she went from this city last December. Her daughter, Mrs. Strickland Clark, was with her when the end came.

Mrs. Strickland came with her husband to Dewitt, Clinton county, in 1847 and in 1862 moved to St. Johns and soon after they erected the large brick residence at the corner of Linden Avenue and Cass street. In 1897 Mrs. Strickland suffered a stroke of paralysis and since that time had been in feeble health. She is survived by three daughters, Mrs. Allaben, Mrs. Clark and Mrs. Allida Eastman, of Grand Rapids. She also leaves eight grand children.

The remains will be brought to St. Johns today and funeral services will be held Friday, after which the remains will be taken to Dewitt and laid to rest by the side of her husband. Services at Strickland residence at 1 o'clock.

Wedding invitations and engraved cards at Allison's Jewelry Store. 50-tf

Your Checks are Ready

Claims against the Clinton County Agricultural Society will be paid at the St. Johns National Bank. Call there and get your check.

GEO. N. FERREY, Sec'y.

All kinds of sewing machine needles at
PARKER'S JEWELRY STORE.
50-tf.

Clinton Rep. 10-12-1905

Strong

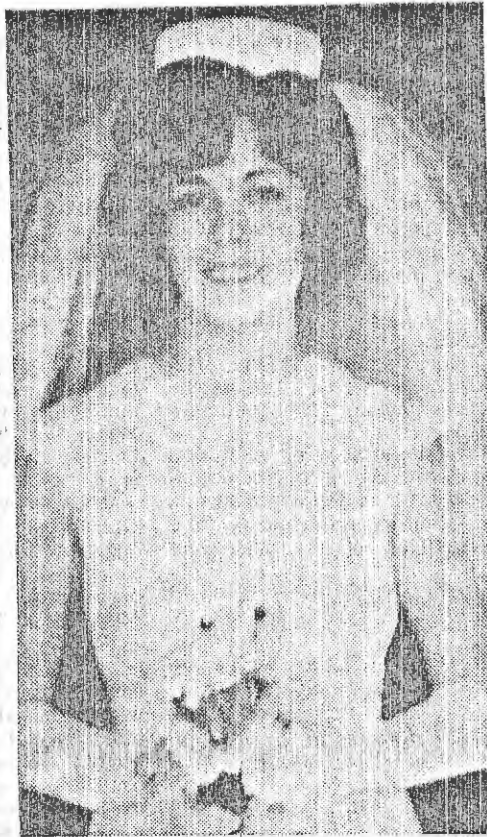
Betrothal Made Public At Party 1933

Mr. and Mrs. Vernie Strong entertained a group of 30 young people at an informal party at their home Saturday evening, Nov. 11 to announce the coming marriage of their daughter Lucille to Jack Gallagher, son of Mr. and Mrs. Patrick Gallagher. The wedding will take place Dec. 23.

It being in the form of a hard time party, prizes were offered for the worst looking costumes, everybody coming dressed his hardest. Mrs. Wm. Macpherson of Fowler won the prize for being the worst dressed woman and Willard Krebel of St. Johns was chosen from the men. Games and stunts were the diversions of the evening. Refreshments were served by the hostess. Guests were present from St. Johns, Fowler and Lansing.

June 14 1964

Strong



MRS. CHARLES E. STRONG

Diane Brainerd Is Saturday Bride of Charles E. Strong

Now en route to a New York honeymoon where they will visit Niagara Falls and the World's Fair are Mr. and Mrs. Charles E. Strong, who were married Saturday afternoon in the Michigan State University Alumni Memorial Chapel.

The bride, the former Miss Diane Priscilla Brainerd, attended MSU and completed the secretarial course there.

Her parents are Mr. and Mrs. Francis B. Brainerd, 2022 Byrnes Road.

The bridegroom is a June graduate of MSU, where he was affiliated with Delta Tau Delta fraternity.

He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Durward Strong of Lake Odessa.

Diane's floor length gown featured an applique organza bodice and a modified sheath linen skirt.

She carried a bouquet of white roses and carnations with pink rosettes intermingled.

Mrs. Judy Ballantine of Wichita Falls, Tex., sister of the bride, was matron of honor.

She wore a floor-length semi-sheath of aqua shantastic with a floating back panel. A matching pillbox hat with short veil completed her ensemble.

Identically gowned bridesmaid was Miss Marilyn Belknap of Lansing.

Dick Ford of Franklin served as best man, and ushers were Jerry Beers, David Martens and Robert Robinson.

A reception in the chapel lounge followed the ceremony.

Upon their return June 20, the newlyweds will live in Lansing.

Strong

**Riley Young Man
To Wed Cleveland
Girl On Saturday 1930**

Clarence Strong, son of Mr. and Mrs. Verne Strong of Riley township and Ethel Plater, daughter of Mrs. Josephine Plater of Cleveland, Ohio, will be married at Cleveland on August 9. Only immediate members of both families will be present.

Mr. and Mrs. Verne Strong and daughter Lucille left on Thursday of this week for Cleveland to attend the wedding.

Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Strong will visit Michigan on their wedding trip and Mr. and Mrs. Verne Strong will hold a reception for them shortly.

Strong

OBSERVE ANNIVERSARY

Mr. and Mrs. Vern D. Strong of Riley township, observed their 40th wedding anniversary Christmas Day at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Grenlund of Bannister. The anniversary was celebrated in the same house in which they were married. They have three children, Mrs. Jack Gallagher, who was present with her family, and Mrs. Enos Buchanan and Clarence Strong, both of Cleveland, Ohio, who were unable to be with them Christmas Day. Other guests were Lymon Cobb and daughter Elizabeth, Miss Amy Cobb and Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Cobb and family of Elsie, Andrew Grenlund and Miss Anna Grenlund of Bannister. Everyone present wished them many more years together. 1940

YOUNG COUPLE WED IN RILEY DEC. 23

Strong

MISS LUCILLE STRONG AND
JOHN GALLAGHER TAKE
NUPTIAL VOWS

On Saturday evening, Dec. 23 the home of Mr. and Mrs. Vernie Strong of Riley, was the scene of an attractive wedding when their daughter, Lucille, became the bride of John Gallagher, son of Mr. and Mrs. Patrick Gallagher of Bengal.

At exactly 6 p. m. the couple took their places before a beautiful bank of Christmas decorations where the ring ceremony was read by Rev. L. A. Fisher. The bride was beautifully gowned in gold crepe and carried a bouquet of carnations and snapdragons. They were attended by Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Strong of Cleveland, Ohio.

The immediate relatives of the bride and groom witnessed the ceremony, after which a three-course wedding dinner was served by Miss Anna Grenland, Miss Cora Hobert and Miss Alice Kreble.

The couple are well known young people, the groom being a successful farmer of Bengal, while the bride is a teacher in the public schools. After a short wedding tour they will be at home on the Gallagher farm in Bengal.

Sturgis

6-DeWitt-Bath Review/Monday, July 4, 1994

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.

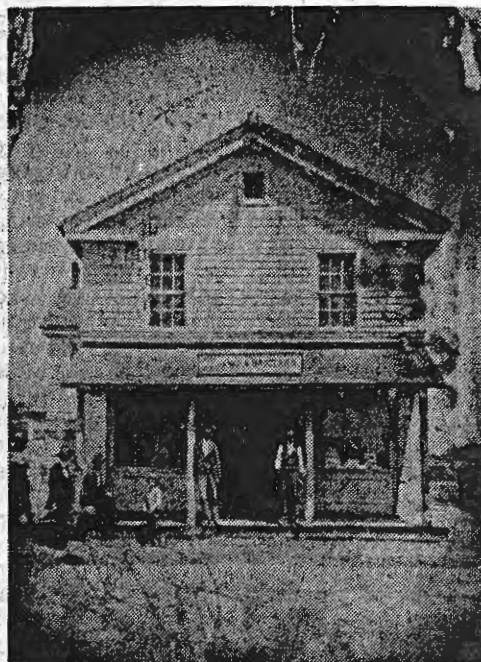
To his credit, within the next 15 years he would see much of his village become of reality with graded streets and substantial homes, shops and stores. The one pictured above was built by John Hicks, who came to DeWitt to clerk for his uncle, David Sturgis, the first merchant to establish himself in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

Sturgis

DeWitt remembered:



Photo courtesy of Don Harnish

THE TREADWELL FARM ON EAST MAIN STREET IN DEWITT, ca. 1918. The vantage point of the photographer would be standing in the driveway of Chet Church's house looking west across the lot where Edith Hayner's new home is now located. This photo is from the snapshot album of Reva (Treadwell) Derham, courtesy of Don Harnish.

Edith Hayner's new home isn't the first on this land

By KEN COIN

Something's happening on east Main Street in the wooded lot between the Catholic Retreat and Edith Hayner's new home.

Trees are coming down and dirt is being moved; a sharp-eyed excavator might find something interesting there besides the rock piles and old foundations. This small lot just happens to be one of the oldest home sites in Clinton County and as the above photo shows, it has gone through quite a change in the past few generations. It just goes to show how quickly we humans can turn a woodlot into a building lot and in turn, how quickly Mother Nature can reclaim her own.

Before Capt. Scott put his plat of DeWitt on paper there were other platted villages in the vicinity. One called Middletown was located on the north side of the river and exactly east of the old plat of DeWitt. Without putting you to sleep with exact legal descriptions of the placement of Middletown, just imagine that it was roughly the property which now incorporates the Catholic Retreat, Earl and Esther Klaver's farm and the new homes along the south side of east Main.

Middletown did not survive the economic panic of 1839 and when the "village" was sold by the state for back taxes in 1842, David Sturgis, DeWitt's first merchant north of the river, was one of the buyers at that sale. He soon added to this purchase by buying the entire east portion of Capt. Scott's platted village, which included the lands this house would occupy. Judging by the tax rolls, Sturgis built this house (or substantially added to it) between 1847 and 1852.

When the whistle of the first locomotives lured Sturgis to St. Johns in the mid 1850's he sold this house to JW Gardner, who used it as home base for his large farm. His farm was bordered on the south by the river, on the

north by Cutler Road, on the west by DeWitt Road and on the east by the farm now owned by Jim Wadel.

In 1868, Gardner reduced the size of his farm by selling off everything on the north side of Main Street/Round Lake road.

The new owners of this old house was the family of Orrin and Lorana Pennell. Forty years later it passed to their youngest son, Mark (John and Marjorie's father) who lived there until about 1910 when he built a retirement home at 210 E. Main and sold the farm to the Treadwell family.

It was Charles Treadwell, a thresher in the DeWitt area for many years, who purchased the house and farm on the north side of Main street, with brothers John and Edward Treadwell buying the lands along the south side.

Charles and May (Dunham) Treadwell, with their two daughters Ila and Reva, lived in this house until 1918 when they moved to their newly-built stone house on east Main now owned by Chet Church. After that date the old house fell into disrepair. What happened to it? I can't find the answer. As is too often the case it's the more recent history I have trouble with. It appears in an aerial photo of DeWitt of the mid-1920's but after that? I've asked many people who remember the house and barns being there, then remember them not being there but don't recall how they came to "not be there". Judging by the size of some of the trees in that lot, I'd say it's "not been there" for a very long time.

As to the farm lands which would later become the Catholic Retreat, the Surratt family bought Charles Treadwell's farm in the 1930's and slowly transformed the rolling fields with the planting of pine trees.

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

Sturgis

Mrs James Sturgis Buried at Dewitt

Dewitt—The body of Mrs. James Sturgis, who died in California in January was shipped to Chicago and placed in a vault, but on account of the cold weather it was not brought to Dewitt until last Thursday. The burial services were conducted by Rev. H. R. Strong, and the body interred in Dewitt cemetery by the side of her husband. Besides the son from Maryland there were two auto loads of relatives and friends from Ithaca present at the burial. Mr. and Mrs. James Sturgis were early residents of this place. At one time Mr. Sturgis owned and operated a general store here where Glenn Cole's implement store stands.

Clinl. Co. Rep News

6-12-1924

JAMES STURGIS

Sturgis

Another old pioneer gone.—James Sturgis of Ithaca, Mich., but formerly of this place, died at his home in Ithaca, Thursday last, of consumption. His remains were brought to this place for interment. The funeral services were held at the M. E. church, this place, last Sabbath and were largely attended. The deceased was a brother of Alfred Sturgis of near this village. Mr. Sturgis came here in 1845 and followed mercantile business for nearly twenty years and is well and favorable known by many old residents in this locality. He leaves a devoted wife, a large family and many friends to mourn his loss. IAGO.
Feb. 12, 1884.

Clin. Rep.

2-14-1884

JUDGE DAVID STURGIS, one of the earliest settlers of this county, who for many years was a prominent business man at DeWitt, and who has subsequently been engaged in business at this place and Bridgeville, some twelve miles north of this, died at the latter place on Sunday morning last, after an illness of a few days only. The deceased was also identified with the political history of this county, having been elected one of the side Judges of the County Court, before that institution was abolished; and also served one term in the Legislature of this State, ~~several~~ years since. Judge STURGIS was married to Miss JULIA WRIGHT, of this village, about one year since, since which time he has resided at Bridgeville. The funeral took place at the M. E. Church, in this village, on Wednesday, and was largely attended. The funeral discourse was preached by Rev. A. WOOD, the officiating minister of that church.

Sutfin

Clarence Phinney of Olive and Miss Ruth Sutfin of Ovid township, were married Monday noon at the Methodist parsonage. Rev. C. J. Kruse officiated. The couple were attended by Miss Florence Phinney of Olive and Carl Zacharias of this city.

DeWitt-- Yesterday and Today

By Faye Hanson

DeWitt has its own poet in the person of Mrs. Pheba Sweet of 217 Scott Street. Mrs. Sweet is 87 years young and has always written poetry. She has resided in DeWitt for 4 years, coming here from Delta Mills where she spent most of her married life on a farm. She is doubly sweet as she has been married twice and both times to men by the name of Sweet, although they were not brothers. Her daughter, Mrs. Naomi Tenney, lives on West Howe Road and her granddaughters, Mrs. Mary Woodruff and Mrs. Jean Blizzard live in DeWitt. She often babysits with her great grandchildren, lives alone and does her own housework. She still writes poetry, many times to commemorate a friend's birthday or for other special occasions. She has had two volumes published and the following poem is from a volume entitled "REMINISCENCES OF DAYS GONE BY."

AT THE AUCTION

Today we went to the auction
It's lots of fun you know
There were mobs and mobs of folks there
Though the wind was bitter cold.

I sat in the car and watched them
As they mulled around the place
Some hanging on to the youngsters
Others carrying them from place to place.

They laughed and seemed so happy
Though occasionally some raindrops fell
Why couldn't the world in general
Enjoy life quite so well?

Happy Mother's Day, Mrs. Sweet.

Sweet

POEMS

by

Phebe Ann Sweet



REMINISCENCES

of

DAYS GONE BY

FOX
COLLECTION
LOCAL HISTORY
MUSEUM