

# DeWitt-- Yesterday and Today

By Faye Hanson



On Wednesday night, October 22, 1930 one of the most popular stopping places between Detroit and Grand Rapids burned. The Clinton House, considered an eminent and popular hotel in its day, had been one of the outstanding landmarks in Central Michigan for nearly a century. It stood on the southwest corner of Bridge and Main Streets.

Construction was begun in 1839 by Captain David Scott who with his family was the first permanent white settler to locate in Clinton County. It was completed in 1841 and was 44 by 64 feet, three stories high with 35 rooms, besides hallways, closets and a ballroom on the third floor. The sleeping rooms were unusually large and many of them would accommodate at least three beds. However often travelers were obliged to sleep on the floor of the ballroom due to the shortage of lodging facilities when Circuit Court or the Board of Supervisors was in session, DeWitt was county seat until 1857 when it was moved to St. Johns.

The huge sills, beams, plates and great timbers in the massive roof, with four gables extending from the corners were hewn from the finest oak and black walnut. The work was done by a man named Gerry, a sailor, who worked on the timber in the winter and on the Great Lakes in the summer.

Smaller timbers were sawed in a mill on the outskirts of the village, while the siding and finished lumber was drawn from Flint. The construction of the building was so sound that it was still in a good state of preservation prior to the fire.

The old tavern was considered the finest between Detroit and Grand Rapids and had housed the notables of the state, including Zach Chandler and many Michigan governors. It was in this hotel that government officials, transporting money from land offices at Grand Rapids and Ionia to Detroit, stopped for the night. The money was placed in boxes and stored in the bar room and guarded by soldiers.

From the time it was completed until the county seat was moved to St. Johns, the Circuit Court was held, and the Board of Supervisors convened, in the ballroom.

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It was the social center of the town and the scene of many oyster suppers, this was really a nifty dish in olden days and no supper was complete without oysters. Crackling fires in the hotel's fireplaces made cozy its interior for Lansing merry makers after a sleigh ride to DeWitt. Babies taken along were laid out in rows on the beds on the second floor and slept through all the fiddling and noise.

Following the Civil War the Tavern was very popular and it was considered the proper thing to patronize the parties and social gatherings in the old hotel. The late Josephine Pearce Tucker told me they took a change of clothes and at midnight the ladies changed their costume in the rooms on the second floor. Lively rigs were in demand during the winter months and sleigh loads of Lansing residents made the trip to DeWitt to eat and dance in the hotel. It was an  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hour ride in the cold both ways.

The Clinton House lost part of its popularity when Lansing's first hotel was built after the State Capitol was moved there from Detroit. However it continued as a popular lodging house and was DeWitt's community center, until the advent of the automobile. Fast transportation and rapid growth of Lansing and Flint soon left DeWitt off the main highways of travel and the old Clinton House became a losing proposition. In its last years only the first floor was used as a poolroom and barbershop. At the time of the fire negotiations were underway to sell it to Henry Ford because of its historic value.

# DeWitt-- Yesterday and Today

By Faye Hanson

5/1/74



THE EARL TUCKER SLAUGHTER HOUSE which was located on Turner Road on the farm owned in recent years by Del Rose and now in the hands of a group of men who hope to turn it into a golf course. It is still referred to by residents of long standing as "Bone Hill". This picture was loaned to the library by Arnold Tucker, who grew up in DeWitt and is the descendant of early DeWitt pioneers. He now resides in Grayling.

# DeWitt-- Yesterday and Today

By Faye Hanson

6/12/74

THE FIRST TOWNSHIP IN CLINTON COUNTY TO BE GIVEN AN ORGANIZATION WAS THAT OF DEWITT. The act of the legislature, approved March 23, 1836, provided that the county of Clinton "be and the same hereby is, set off and organized into a separate township by the name of DeWitt, and the first township meeting therein shall be held at the dwelling house of David Scott in said township." David Scott had come to this area with his family in October 1833.

In 1837 the township of DeWitt as then existing, was divided along the line of the center, and a new township on the west one half and called Watertown, the first township meeting was held in the house of Anthony Niles in said township.

The next subdivision occurred in 1838 when the north half of Watertown was set apart and called Wandaugon and the first meeting was held at the home of George Campau. People dissatisfied with the Indian name later changed it to Lebanon.

At the time the County of Clinton received its final organization in 1839 there were but three townships, DeWitt comprised the eastern half, Watertown comprised of the present township and what is now Eagle, Westphalia and Riley townships, and Wandaugon the rest.

Taken from "Clinton County, Michigan" by Daboll, 1906.

# DeWitt-- Yesterday and Today

By Faye Hanson

1776.

**PROGRAMME.**

1886.

**GRAND**

# 4TH OF JULY CELEBRATION

—AT—

# DEWITT

The Patriotic citizens of DeWitt and Vicinity have decided to Participate in a  
Genuine Old-Fashioned Fourth of July, on

# SATURDAY, JULY 3rd, 1886

And to which everyone is cordially invited.

## MUSIC BY THE DEWITT CORNET BAND

ORATOR OF THE DAY:

## Mrs. Martha Strickland of St. Johns

PRESIDENT OF THE DAY:

## SENATOR O. G. PENNELL OF DEWITT

VICE-PRESIDENTS:

Hon. John Fedewa, St. Johns; Hon. J. F. Clemons,  
Bath; Hon. James W. Randall, Wacousta;  
Hon. Sid. Edson, North Lansing; Hon.  
Dr. Geo. W. Topping, DeWewitt.

READER:

**T. P. BANTA.**

CHAPLAIN:

**JAMES M. HATH.**

MARSHAL OF THE DAY:

**CAPT. E. BEDELL.**

ASSISTANT MARSHALS:

**Chas. Walker and Chas. Andrus, Wacousta**

**Captain of Fusileers--Milan Gardner.**

**Captain of Cow Boys--"Buffalo Joe" Stickles.**

EXERCISES OF THE DAY:

## **NATIONAL SALUTE AT SUNRISE**

Line of March form at 10:30 a. m., thence to Gardner Grove, where the following program will be carried out:

1. Music by the Band.	6. Music by the Band.
2. Welcome Address by the President.	7. Oration.
3. Singing by the Glee Club.	8. Singing by the Glee Club.
4. Prayer by the Chaplain.	9. Music by the Band.
5. Reading Declaration of Independence.	

AFTERNOON EXERCISES:

1:30 p. m.—Grand Parade by the Fusileers and Wild West Cow Boys, under direction of Capt. M. Gardner and "Buffalo Joe" Stickles; 1st prize \$5, 2d \$2, 3d \$1.  
2:00 p. m.—Wheelbarrow Race; 1st prize \$2, 2d \$1.  
2:30 p. m.—Sack Race; 1st prize \$2, 2d \$1.  
3:00 p. m.—Egg Race; 1st prize \$1, 2d the eggs.  
3:30 p. m.—Catching the Wild West Pig; valued at \$5.  
4:00 p. m.—Glass Ball Shoot; shake purse.  
4:30 p. m.—Running Race; 1 mile; open to all; best two in three; 1st money \$6, 2d \$4, 3d \$2. Four to enter. Entrance fee 5 per cent.  
5:00 p. m.—Trotting and Pacing Race; open to all. Shake purse.  
5:40 p. m.—100 yard Foot Race; open to all; best two in three; 1st \$5, 2d \$3, 3d \$2. Entrance fee 5 per cent.  
6:30 p. m.—Great Sham Battle between the Fusileers and Cow Boys— a special attraction and well worth seeing.

Anyone taking part in the sports will report to the Secretary on or before July 3d, and the entrance fee in the Horse and Foot Races must be paid before starting in race.

COMMITTEES:

Executive—Geo. R. Simmons, M. T. Woodruff, A. Starmont, A. Rouse.  
Sports—Mark Pennell, S. Moon, F. D. Butler.

Bowery dance both afternoon and evening. Good accommodations and plenty of refreshments at the Clinton House, also at Bennett's G. A. R. hall. Grand opening ball at Clinton House Friday evening, July 2. A cordial invitation extended to all.

**WILLIS McLOUTH, Treas.**

**M. S. OSGOOD, Sec.**

Republican Steam Print, St. Johns.

THIS IS HOW THE FOURTH OF JULY WAS CELEBRATED  
IN DEWITT 88 YEARS AGO. THE NAMES OF WOODRUFF,  
MOON AND PENNELL ARE STILL TO BE FOUND IN DEWITT.

# DeWitt-- Yesterday and Today

By Faye Hanson

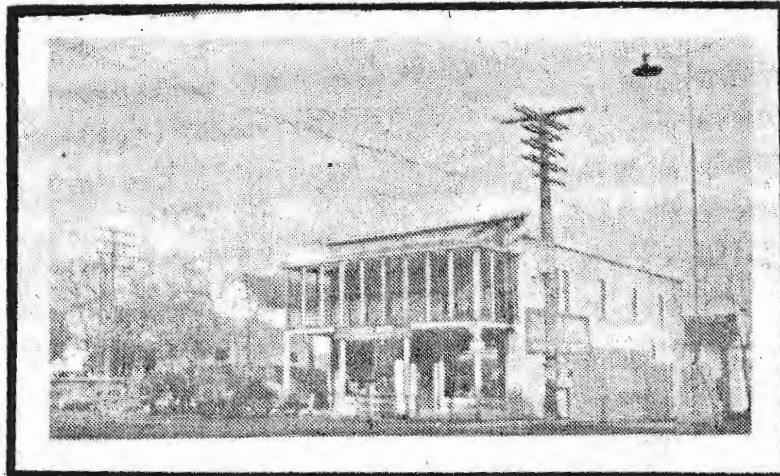


THIS POSTCARD SHOWING THE BRIDGE OVER THE LOOKING GLASS RIVER IN DEWITT was sent by Ella Trusdell from DeWitt to Mrs. Ella Brinkerhoff who was wintering in Miami, Florida. It is dated February 12, 1917.

7/25/74

# DeWitt-- Yesterday and Today

By Faye Hanson

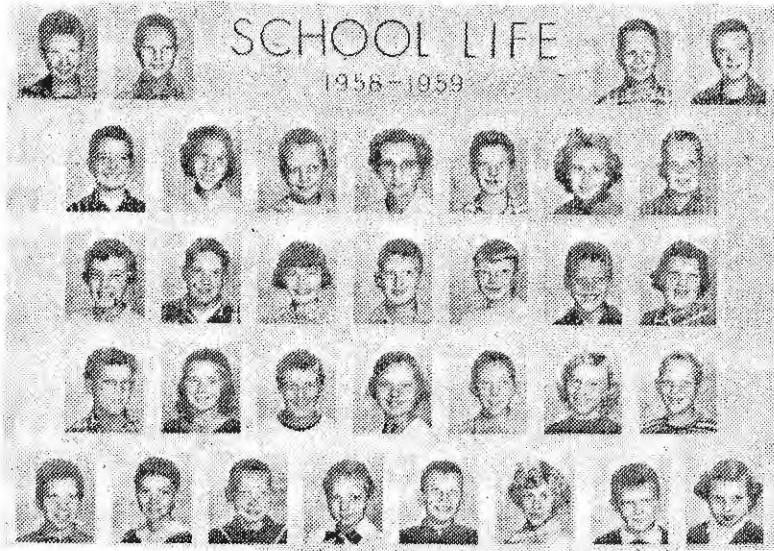


THE NORTHEAST CORNER OF BRIDGE AND MAIN STREETS. This building did not burn in 1930 when most of the downtown area went up in flames. Homer Braze had a business in this building and later M. E. Towne had a drygoods and grocery store here, it now houses the Shingle Shack and has just been remodeled. Notice the hitching rail in front to tie horses to, also the street light with DeWitt painted on its base.

# DeWitt-- Yesterday and Today

By Faye Hanson

8/12/74



THESE ARE FIFTH GRADERS in the DeWitt School in 1958-1959. Front Row: \*\*\*\*\* Jeanel Roberts, Jan Hanson, Laura Carrigan, Chuck Flynn, Pam Uschuk, \*\*\*\*\* Linda Salemka. Second Row: LeRoy Churchhill, \*\*\*\*\* David Parkhouse, Kay Olsen, Eric Cox, Barbara Wilcox Dienis, Jim Schavey. Third Row: Jamie Martimucci Dunkle, Terry Lattimore, Anita Bancroft, Paul Dinsthier, Dale Lee, Ruth Ross, Dick Coin and Elizabeth Kowalk. Fourth Row: Greg Pierce, Norma Suiter, \*\*\*\*\* Darotha Rosecrans (teacher), \*\*\*\*\* Sandra Egleston Wilcox, Dwight Devereaux. Top Row: \*\*\*\*\* Bill White, Roy Perry and Chuck Pierce. (\*\*\*\*\* Names not known)

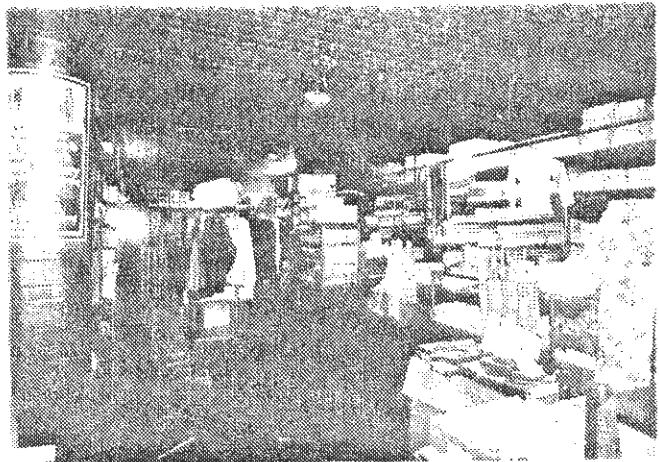
# DeWitt--Yesterday and Today

By Faye Hanson

THE ADVERTISER  
Thursday, Sept. 5, 1974



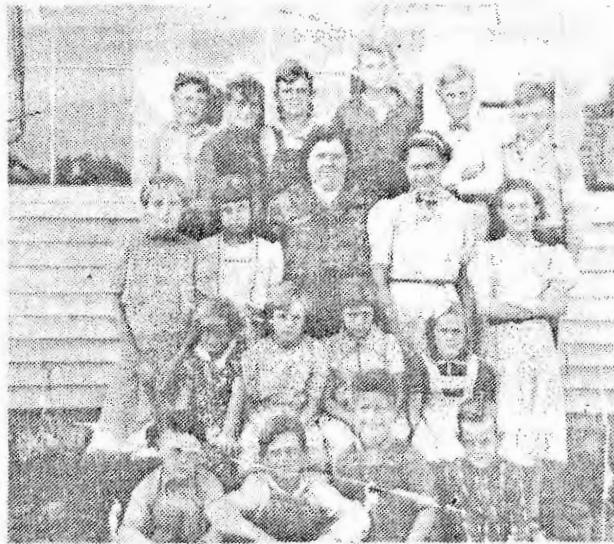
TWO VIEWS OF THE INTERIOR OF THE TUCKER STORE about 1928 - 29. This building now houses the Shingle Shack. In one Fred Tucker is talking to a salesman with Theodore Rohrer standing in the background. They sold groceries and drygoods. Pictures loaned to library by Arnold Tucker.



# DeWitt-- Yesterday and Today

By Faye Hanson

9/12/74

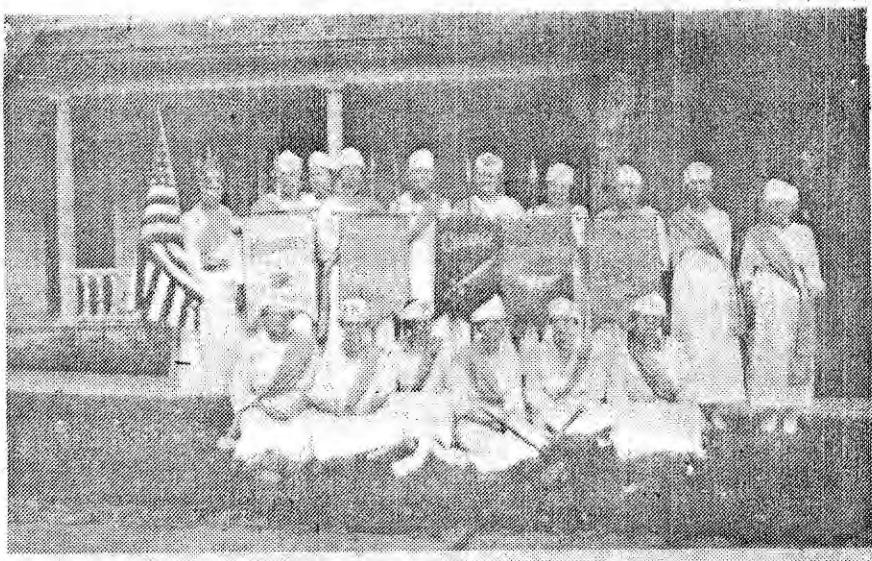


THE BROWN SCHOOL, 1938 - This country school on the corner of DeWitt and ~~Collier~~<sup>Padwick</sup> Roads is now closed and the children attend St. Johns Schools. In the back row, left to right: James Gardner, Rex Burgess, Ray Kimball, Bud Parks, Howard Sibley and John Kimball. Second row: Edith Onley, Gladys Clark, Miss Taber (teacher), Arlene Magsig, Jean Miller, Geraldine Onley, Anna Onley, Ruth Burgess, Marjorie Miller. Front row: Bob Gardner, Walter Clark, Roymane McClure and Junior Magsig. Picture loaned to the library by Robert Bowling.

# DeWitt-- Yesterday and Today

By Faye Hanson

9/19/74



DEWITT ROYAL NEIGHBOR'S LODGE CAMP #432 early in this century. This lodge met in the building now housing Keck's Appliance Store.

In the back row: Blanche VanDyke, Belle Knapp, Hazel Ferrier, Nina Yanz, Martha Blizzard, Mattie Spayde, Mary Smally, Edith Wagner, Kate Gillett and Francis Mann.

Seated: Hannah Stanton, Minnie Staub, Ida Mae Norris, Grace Hammond, Matie Staub and Lottie Martzke.

Picture taken on the northeast corner of Franklin and East Main Streets in front of building owned by Dr. Fred Smith. Picture loaned to the library by Matie Staub.

## DeWitt-- Yesterday and Today

By Faye Hanson



BRIDGE STREET looking north from Washington Street, showing the bank on the corner where Terranova's now stands; next was Harry Reed's grocery, now a parking lot. The store farther down with the balcony was Eldrich's Hardware and is still standing as part of Dalman's. In the background you can see the steeple of Community church. The picture was taken by Mark Norris, now deceased. Picture loaned to the library by Arnold Tucker.

# DeWitt-- Yesterday and Today

By Faye Hanson



MAIN STREET LOOKING EAST FROM THE LIGHT. Brooks Drug Store on the corner where Dalman's Hardware now stands, this building burned in the fire of 1930. The next two buildings stand where O'Shaughnessey's Chevrolet is now. The building on the corner was the Woodman Hall and now houses Keck's Appliances. Across is the DeWitt Tavern which burned several years ago and the Township Hall and Les Ferrier's Pool Hall. Notice the hitching posts for horses near the corner. Picture loaned by Arnold Tucker.

# DeWitt-- Yesterday and Today

By Faye Hanson

THE ADVERTISER  
Thursday, October 10, 1974

FRIDAY, CIVIC LEADERS marked the 141st anniversary of DeWitt's founding by dedicating the first phase of West River Park (6 blocks west of the traffic light, on Main Street) and receiving the first of several large hand-carved city limit signs welcoming people to "Historic DeWitt - Founded Oct. 4, 1833". These signs are hand-carved from redwood blanks by Lansing craftsman, Leon (Jake) Smeltzer.

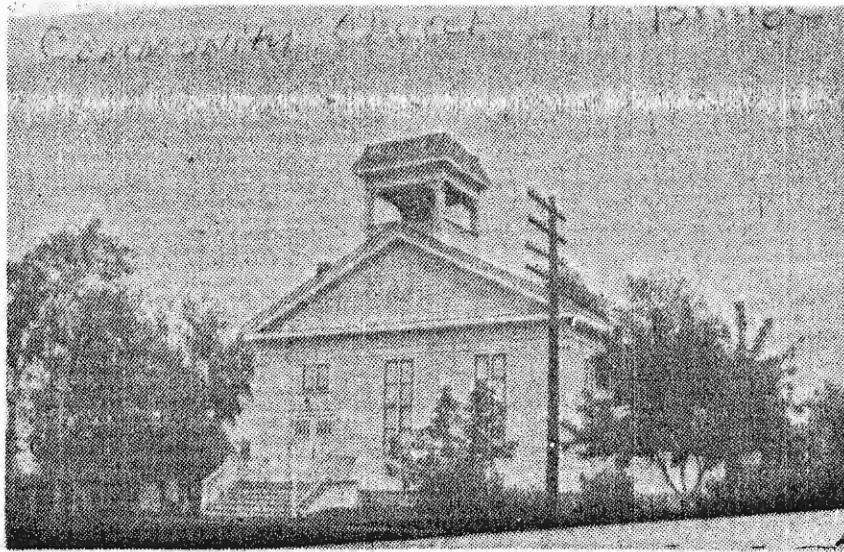
The signs are being hung at the three principal entrances to the city: the grounds of the Franciscan Retreat, the New England style Community Church and the new West River Park serving as wooded settings for the red, white and blue signs. They were given to the city by American Bank and Trust, Michigan Beef Co., and by Millbrook Meadows, Inc.

Founder's Day Ceremonies also kicked off DeWitt's Bi-Centennial plans which will culminate with a week long celebration the week of July the Fourth, 1976. Many plans are under way to restore historical sites in the area and to make people in DeWitt aware of their heritage. In 1976 we will be celebrating our 143rd birthday as well as our country's 200th birthday. Those on the Bi-Centennial Commission are Faye Hanson, Chairman; Eleanor McKinney, Secretary; Ralph Woodruff, Orla McGuire, Marilyn Coin, Larry Arbanus and Ted Powell, with Mayor Murl Eastman as ex-officio member.



# DeWitt--Yesterday and Today

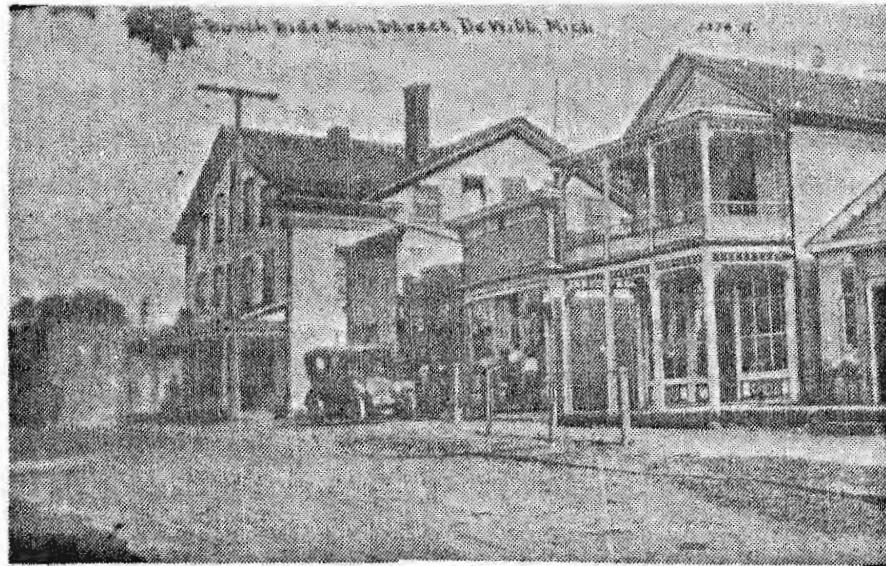
By Faye Hanson **THE ADVERTISER**  
Thursday, October 17, 1974



THIS IS A PICTURE OF THE DEWITT COMMUNITY CHURCH taken before it was turned around and remodeled. The building faced Jefferson instead of ~~Webb~~ as it does now. In 1947 the building was moved back 25 feet, turned a quarter of the way around and the porch added, thus facing <sup>West</sup> Main Street. The original building was dedicated on Dec. 14, 1853. The building is now for sale, the congregation having moved into a new and much larger building on Webb Road.

# DeWitt-- Yesterday and Today

THE ADVERTISER  
Thursday, October 24, 1974



SOUTH SIDE OF WEST MAIN STREET looking from Scott Street toward the light. On the far right is Hunt's Drug Store, then the Clinton House. Levi Sibley is standing by his model T in front of the post office. Others in front of the post office are Mark Norris, Helen Dills and Charles Webb. The store with the balcony is Jayne's Drug Store. Frank Rose is sitting in front of his father's store. Picture given to the library by the late Helen Dills Stampfly.

# DeWitt-- Yesterday and Today

By Faye Hanson

THE ADVERTISER  
Thursday, October 31, 1974

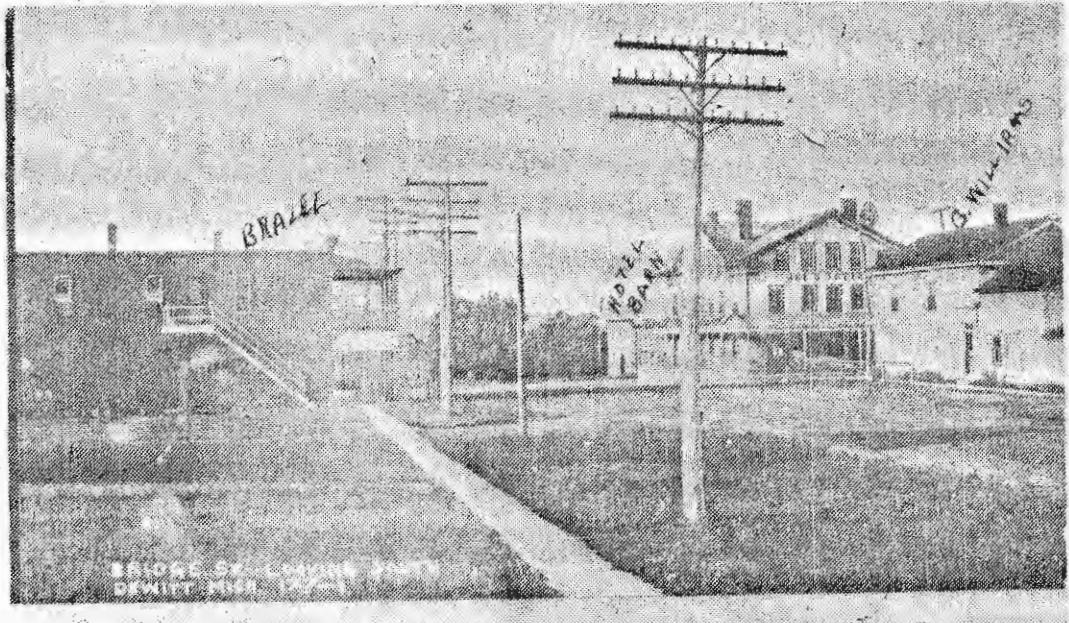


DEWITT BELLES OF LONG AGO. Picture taken about 1871 or 72. In the back row: Regina Van Fleet whose home was at 109 Wilson; Alida Van Fleet Whitiaker, her sister, who lived on West Cutler Road; second row, Jennie Parks Fletcher and Estella Cook Dills who first lived on a farm at 10301 North DeWitt Road and then moved into the house her husband built at 203 Scott Street; Front row, Ella Simmons Pike who lived in Olive Township and Charlotte Moore Burns.

# DeWitt--Yesterday and Today

By Faye Hanson

THE ADVERTISER  
Thursday, November 7, 1974



BRIDGE STREET LOOKING SOUTH showing Brazeel's store, the hotel barn, the hotel, and George Williams store. The telephone was in town but the streets were not paved and hitching rails were still in use. Photo given to the library by the late Helen Dills Stampfly.

# DeWitt-- Yesterday and Today



This picture was brought into the library by Albert Tolksdorf and we had quite a time placing its whereabouts. Because of the pitched roof, we didn't think it was the old depot as that roof was flat. Finally John Pennell told us that indeed it was the depot when it was new and it did have a pitched roof. The first trains coming into DeWitt were powered by steam and later converted to electricity. Mr. Pennell says this building was built to house the generators for the electric train. The door on the left is for freight and the one on the right for passengers. Charles Farrier is the man standing in the center in front of the building. Evidently at a later date this roof was removed and a flat one was put on it.

THE ADVERTISER

Thursday, November 14, 1974

# DeWitt-- Yesterday and Today

By Faye Hanson



THIS IS A 1946 PICTURE OF THE STUDENTS OF THE LEHM school on the corner of Chadwick and Bond Roads. It was brought to us by Joyce Jackson.

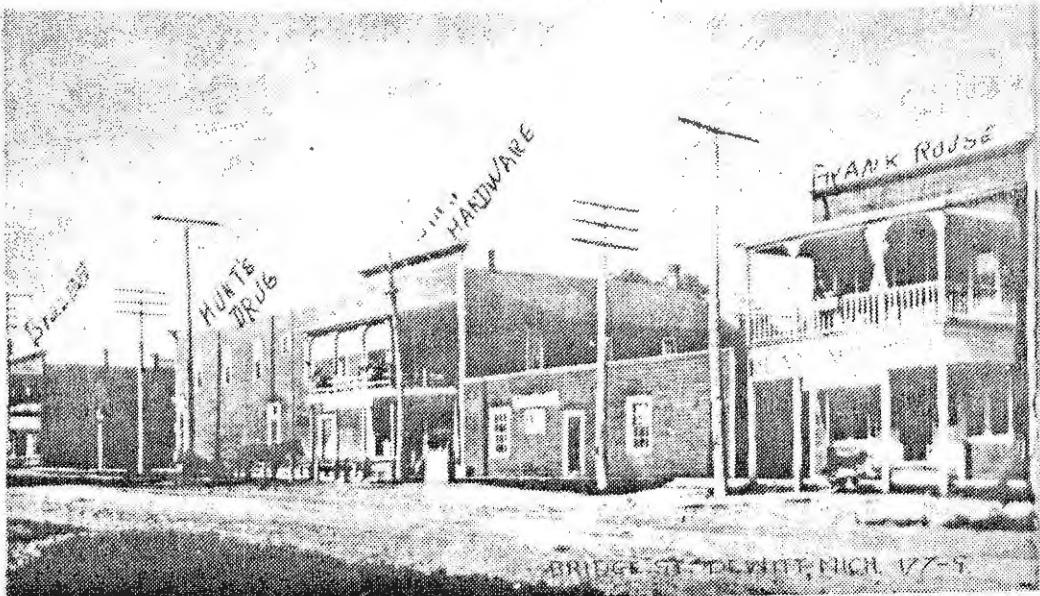
Back row, left to right: Beverly Bell, Loretta Kristofferson, Dorothy Magsig; second row: Arlene Wilson, Betty Magsig, Joyce Bross, LaVern Lietske, Keith Holley and Lawrence Bross; third row: Shirley Wilson, Anita Kristofferson, Jean Witt, Arthur Magsig, Leslie Bross, Ken Hawk; front row: Delores Kristofferson, Barbara Fish, Karen Lietzke, Lee Ann Lange, Gary Wixon, Ronnie Gleason, Joe Holley and Marvin Witt.

THE ADVERTISER  
Thursday, November 21, 1974

# DeWitt-- Yesterday and Today

11/28/74

By Faye Hanson



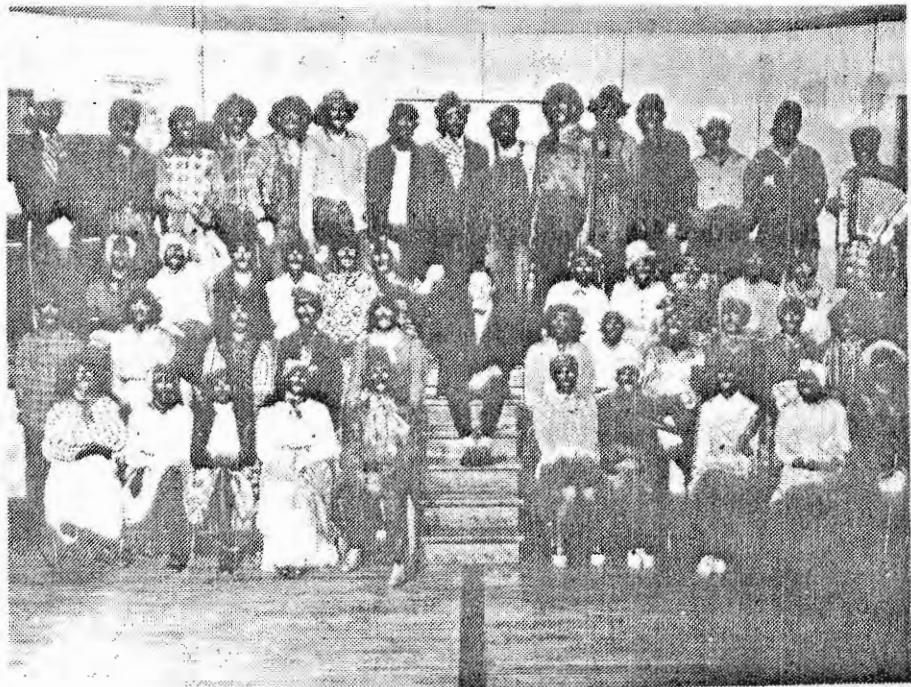
THIS IS THE EAST SIDE OF BRIDGE STREET looking towards Main. It shows Frank Rouse's Meat Market, Linn's Hardware, Hunt's Drug Store and Brazee's General Store. Notice the horse and buggy standing in front of the hardware store. Picture given to the library by the late Helen Dills Stampfly.

The picture of the depot shown two weeks ago has brought the following response from Frank Richmond, formerly of DeWitt, now of Houghton Lake, saying the building was destroyed when the generators blew up and was replaced by the flat roofed depot.

# DeWitt- Yesterday and Today

By Faye Hanson

12/12/74



THIS IS THE CAST OF THE FIRST CANTATA ever presented by the DeWitt High School in 1946. The stars were Demaris Cutler, Eldon Price, Albert Schulz and Margaret Fuerstenau. Marilyn Staub Coin played the accordian. Others in the picture are: Lawrence Pitter, Mary Beth Bond, Irene Wolfe, Beverly Blizzard, Dorothy Hill Lankford, Dale Haviland, Jack Doak, Kathlynn Moore Mann, John Lietzke, Beverly Hunt, Marilyn Brownlee Hiatt, Joan Miller Kowalk, Norma Decker Ferguson, John Miller, Molly Wilcox Ruble, Jim Decatur, Dick Kiebler, Amy McKinney Mulford, Max Cotton, Jack Fuller, Barbara Christie, Jake Kirchen, Devon VanDyke, Janet Lankford Schulz, Kittie White Coin, June Sample Minier, Willard Reed, Greta Perry Bond, Bobby Hicks Kirchen, Chuck Ferguson, Jackie McKinney Lankford, Dorothy Schultz, Herbert Ritter, Demaris Dodson, Carol Bixby, Ardaht Dick, Rose Marie Balderson, Janet Hewitt, Irene Minier, Joan Pike, Virginia Richter, Clio Cassel, Melvin Brownlee and Jack Crowner. Can you find these people? Picture loaned to the library by Janet and Albert Schulz.

12/26/74

# DeWitt-- Yesterday and Today

By Faye Hanson

THIS CLIPPING FROM A 1891 PAPER WAS LOANED TO US  
by Mr. and Mrs. Burl Dieter who live on a Centen-  
nial Farm at 9920 DeWitt Road.

"On Monday evening, October 5th, seventy five friends and relatives met at the home of David Scott to celebrate his 74th birthday. He first came to this county October 4, 1833, thus being a resident of this county for 58 years and of Michigan for sixty six years. His father,,Captain Scott, was the first settler in this county. David Scott is a worthy member of the Masonic order, a charter member of the grange and still belongs to the order. Mr. Scott, or Uncle David as he is commonly called, was the recipient of a beautiful willow rocker. Mr. G. Pennell, in behalf of his friends, presented the chair with some appropriate remarks to which Mr. Scott responded."