



Genealogists of the
Clinton County Historical Society:

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Clinton County Trails

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ARLENE LOUNDS



HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERS

All members of CCHS are urged to attend the April 17 board of directors meeting. It is at 7:30 p.m. in the community room of Community First Bank in St. Johns. (Enter via rear door).

The board would like member input on what direction the society should take in the future.

There will be discussion on changing the by-laws which are outdated and often impossible to comply with; and new blood is needed on the board itself.

All CCHS members are urged to attend as the turnout will indicate interest in the Society ☺.

WE ARE ON THE INTERNET!

We are sharing cyberspace with Mid-MI Genealogical Society, Eaton County and Ingham Co. Societies. Our home page can be accessed by the following address:
<http://www.sojourn.com/~mmgs/gofcchs.html>

The home page is still under construction, but stop by and visit us. E-mail any suggestions to improve our image to asmith@im4u.net. ☺

LANCE-WHEELER FAMILY

The following account was submitted by **Rosemary Lance**. (See her query in this issue.) She thinks it was originally written (after 1905) by **Ora Gibbs**, the adopted daughter of **James and Sarah Lance**. Ora was born 16 June 1876 and perhaps married a **Fink**. Although Rosemary copied Ora's story with no editing, it has been edited for use here.

In 1854, when Ohio was still in its infancy, a young man left his home and started with his half brother and the brother's wife for the unknown wilds of Michigan to make his fortune. They bid farewell to loved ones and started on their way. After driving for some little time, they stopped to rest and feed their faithful horses. The young wife might have been sitting on the wagon tongue thinking and crying. Upon questioning, she says she will go no farther unless they go back and get her sister. Undoubtedly, the young man was not adverse to this because she was the sweetheart he had left behind. Accordingly, they hired another horse and wagon, drove back for her, and after a short time again started on their way.

These people's starting place was Chippewa Twp., Wayne Co., Ohio. They were **David, Mary (Wheeler) Richard Lance**; and **James and Sarah (Wheeler) Lance**. The sweethearts were married at Jackson, Michigan, on the way.

James and Sarah only stayed one year the first trip. They journeyed back to Ohio and lived a year with his parents. During this year a son was born (**John**). He was only two weeks old when in April 1855 they started on a second trip to Michigan.

This time they drove direct to Clinton County, and for six weeks they lived with the **Stephen Parks** family, one mile south and one mile west of Fowler, while they were

clearing a small tract of land and putting up a little log cabin on a farm which they bought and which was to be their home for the next few years. It was located one mile south and a half mile west of the present village of Fowler.

The hardships of those first few years are but of our imagination. They stayed in Michigan nearly two years and then again journeyed to Lafayette Twp., Medina Co., Ohio. James bought a store at Lafayette and engaged in the merchandising business for the next three or four years.

During this period (1857-1861) two daughters, **Mary and Rachel**, and two sons, **James and William**, were born. They had spent part of the time in Michigan usually journeying back to Ohio in the fall. It was during one of those sojourns in Michigan that the husband was called back to Ohio on account of the death of his mother, and the brave young wife and mother with her babies was left to keep house. While he was gone an epidemic of diphtheria broke out, and the oldest son, John, contracted the dread disease and died. Mary was very ill at the same time but was spared. The father came back to a desolate home.

In 1860 or 1862 they moved from the farm to the old station of Dallas. This was three-quarter mile east of what is now Fowler. Here James was a storekeeper, postmaster, and station master at different periods of time. At first he had his store in a part of his home, but later moved it across the road, which was very lucky for shortly after moving, their house burned. This was in 1866 or 1867.

Three children were born at Dallas: **Amanda** 1862; **Almeada** 1864, **Alice**, 1866. Alice was the baby who was left in the cradle when the house burned. At this time a new

village called Isabella sprung up at the present site of Fowler. **J.W. Fowler** owned this land, and by paying the Detroit & Milwaukee Railroad \$750, he induced them to move their depot and building to this new site. Consequently, business began to flow that way. **James Lance** was store keeper and postmaster at the time. He moved his store from Dallas and his home from the Dallas Hotel where they had been living since their home burned. They moved to a new building just south of Isabella on land owned by him and which later was platted and known as the "Lance Addition." The building was later known as the "Dallas House" and was the first house to be built in Fowler, as Isabella was now renamed. (Dallas House was moved in the spring of 1925 to make room for a gasoline station.) The family lived here and kept store for about five years. During this time three children were born: **Robert** 1867; **Isora** 1869; **George** 1870.

In 1870 or 1871 they moved further south to the farm home which they had built and which most of us know as the "Lance Homestead." The first house on this site they had the ill luck to lose by fire; but they went to work harder than ever and rebuilt, this time with brick.

This house is still standing and looks much the same as it did when they lived there. Four children were born here: **Hattie** 1872; **James** 1874, **Ernest** 1876, **Charles** 1877. This made fifteen children in the family, all of whom are still living except John, James, Robert and George. Even with this family they had room in their hearts and home for another girl, **Ora Gibbs**, whom they adopted in 1890 and who had a home with them as long as they lived, and to whom they were father and mother.

The two earnest homemakers were just as earnest religiously. Their home was the

gathering place for all the ministers and church people of the country around them. They belonged to the United Brethern Church but were not stingy either with their help or money to other denominations.

For years the nearest church home was the Bengal Church, and they always did their share (and often someone else's share), and always helped by being present. Later they built a church on some of their own land and helped to pay the minister that they might have a church nearer home. They were attendants at the quarterly meetings, and it was neither their fault nor teachings that caused things to happen at home during those meetings. For instance, they weren't at fault because the minister called and found Isora having a grand old smoke on the spring seat under the pine tree. She just wanted to find out to her own satisfaction. Oh, wasn't she sick!

Although with such a large family it would seem they would need all they had, no one was ever sent from their door hungry. Even the lowliest tramp had a place at the table. Any poor down-and-outer around them knew the latch string was always out at Jim Lance's, and many a morning would find one or two more for breakfast than were there the night before.

Their children grew to establish homes of their own. When Christmas and their holidays came along, all gathered at the old home. It was a merry crowd. The youngest grandchildren are the only ones who are most unfortunate in not being able to remember the great, long table laden with good things to eat and the good times we had on those occasions. In 1900, on account of failing health, James and Sarah sold the farm and moved into a house just north of it. They spent their remaining years here, comfortable and happy as possible living within sight of the old home where they had

