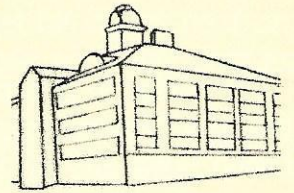


Clinton County Trails

Published by: Genealogists of the
Clinton County Historical Society
P.O. Box 23, St. Johns, MI 48879



Published Quarterly

June 2008

Volume 23, Number 2

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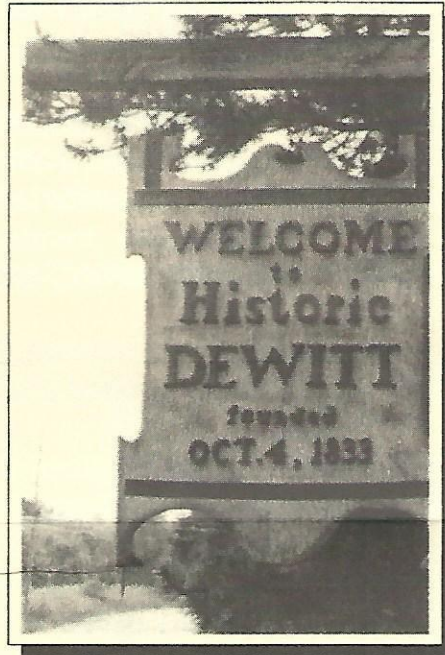
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NEWSLETTER

Myrna Van Epps
Kim Sperry
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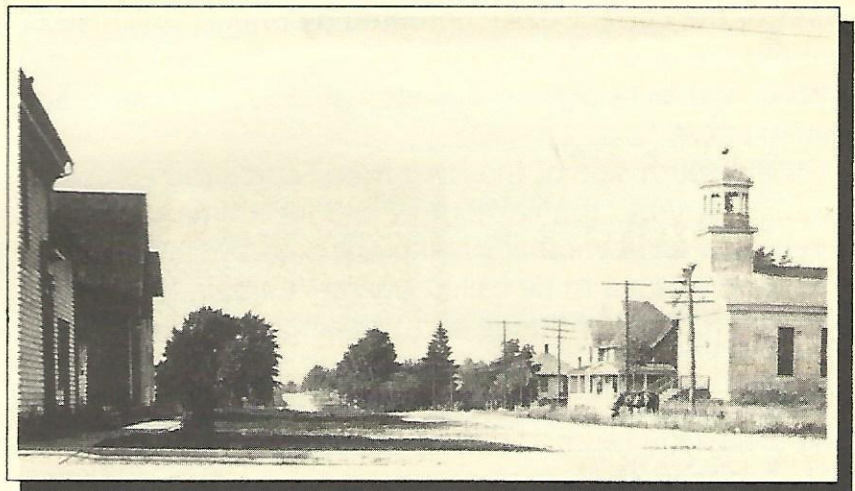
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DeWitt Celebrates 175 Years

Old bicentennial
welcome signs
[courtesy of CCHS archives]



North Bridge Street.
Baptist Church is on the right
[photo courtesy of DeWitt Public Library]

DeWitt Celebrates 175 Years

By Wayne Summers

Prior to October 4, 1833, Clinton County was home to a number of Native American villages and the Campau trading post on the Maple River. That was all to change with the arrival of Captain David Scott and his family.

Captain David Scott was born in Litchfield, Connecticut on November 1, 1779. Orphaned at an early age he learned to be self-reliant working a number of different jobs to survive. At the age of 18 he married Anna Cowles (or Cole) at Watertown, Connecticut, from whom he had a daughter, Emeline, born in 1801. At about the time of his daughter's birth David either divorced or abandoned his wife and child for another woman.

Although he left a daughter behind, we know he didn't forget her. A letter still held by Emeline's family from David written in 1817 reads in part:

"Dear Daughter

I for the second time set myself down to address to you as attending parent. All tho you and I have not had as much acquaintance with each other as parents and guardians generally have I think that I have as much affection for you as any parent ough to have had..."

He continued on to tell how well he was doing, offer advice, and tell her she was welcome to come live with him.

The same year Emeline was born, Captain David married Eunice Fobes (or Forbes), the other woman. Through their long marriage, David and Eunice had a total of 11 children, 6 of whom lived to adulthood.

David Scott served during the War of 1812 and obtained the rank of captain, a name he would go by the rest of his life. In 1816 the family moved to Genesee County, New York and then on to Ann Arbor, Michigan in 1825.

The Captain, Eunice, and their three sons moved into the wilderness of Clinton County in 1833. Upon arriving at the Indian village of Wabwahnahseepee on the Looking Glass River the family stayed with the natives until they were able to build a 25 by 25 foot log cabin. The cabin, located in the center of the current block bordered by Bridge, Main, Washington and Scott streets, was strategically situated just south of the Pontiac-Grand River Trail. As this was the trail used by the first settlers, pioneers often would stop at "Scott's" where the Captain gained the reputation of being a welcoming host.

On the south side of the river from Scott's the competing town of New Albany was founded in 1838 by the Turners. It quickly grew and for a time was the more prominent of the two villages before receding and eventually being annexed by DeWitt.

At Scott's (soon to be called DeWitt) Captain Scott built a frame house and hotel in 1839 on the south-east corner of Bridge and Washington streets. His town became the county seat the same year.

DeWitt was plotted out in 1841. The same year Captain Scott began what was to be his crowning achievement; the building of the Clinton House hotel. His grand idea required materials not easily transported down the narrow trails leading to and from town. So, in order to bring building supplies to the new town of DeWitt, Captain Scott had a road built from DeWitt to Flint by way of the Rochester Colony. Part of this road is still called Scott Road today.

When the Clinton House was completed in 1842, the Captain moved his lodging business to the "big house" on the south-west corner of Bridge and Main streets. His old hotel continued to be used as a store, post office, and the captain's residence until his death in 1851.

At the time it was completed the Clinton House was considered to be one of the finest hotels in the state. Only the cities of Detroit and Grand Rapids could boast of having hotels that could

match it. During its heyday it lodged many governors and other important officials.

Having secured the county seat and built the Clinton House, the Captain set his sights next on having DeWitt selected as the new state capital. This, however, was not to happen as DeWitt lost its bid on a 9 to 12 vote.

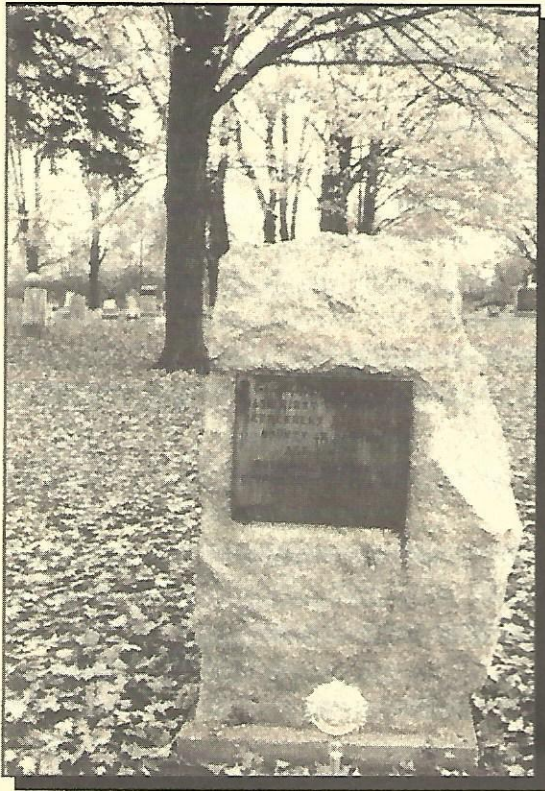
In 1857 DeWitt lost its status as the county seat to the more centrally located St. Johns which was situated on the new railroad line. Along with the designation, DeWitt also lost most of its prominent lawyers and merchants, and many of its early pioneers to the new upstart of St. Johns. Overnight DeWitt changed from a center of government to one focusing on meeting the needs of local farmers.

With the destruction of the Clinton House along with much of downtown in the fires of 1930 and 1931 nearly all of the vestiges of DeWitt's former glory vanished. It wasn't until after World War II that DeWitt began to come back to life as subdivisions started to spring up in and around the town. With the opening of I-69 in the mid-1980's the growth increased as DeWitt became a very desirable place to live and work.

Through its 175 year history DeWitt, like most communities, has seen boom times and bust. If Captain David Scott were to return to DeWitt today, he probably wouldn't recognize the town he established 175 years ago. However, I think he would be proud that a local elementary school bears his name and that his town is still a vibrant, welcoming community. (For a complete history of DeWitt read *DeWitt Area History* by Kenneth R. Coin. The 2nd edition published in 2008 is available at the CCHS archives and DeWitt Public Library.)



1903 picture of the Clinton House Hotel. Built 1841 by Captain David Scott and owned at the time of this picture by Joseph Bard.
(courtesy of DeWitt Public Library)



Northside of West Main Street.
[Photo courtesy of DeWitt Public Library]

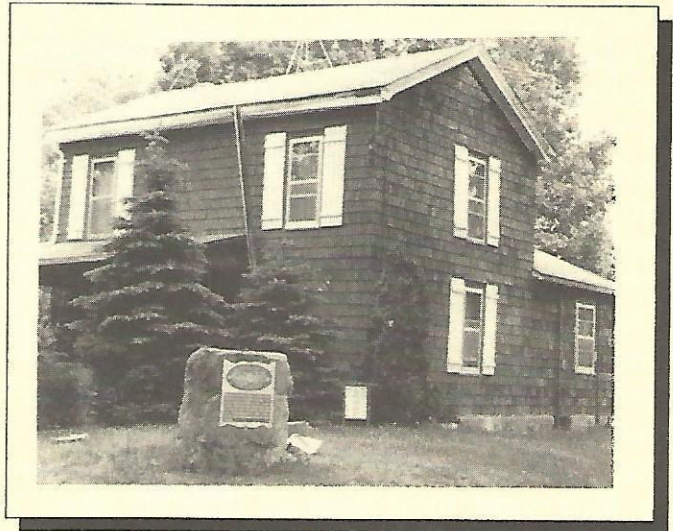
Captain Scott Marker – DeWitt Cemetery erected in 1916 says:
"Captain David Scott - Made first permanent settlement at DeWitt, Oct. 4, 1833 -- 1778-1851"
Located on lot next to David Scott's burial plot. [Photo courtesy of DeWitt Public Library]



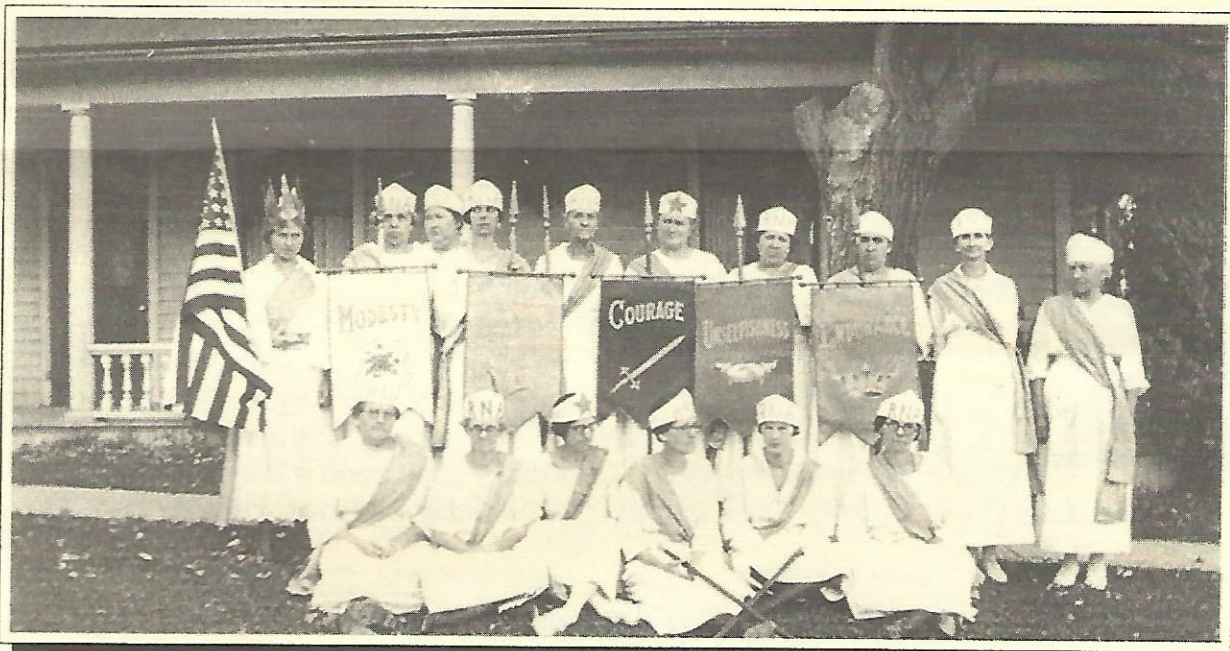
Griswold Ford Dealership on S. Bridge Street
[Photo courtesy of CCHS]



Strickland Law Office built c1846
former law office of Randolph Strickland.
Still used as law offices.
[Courtesy of Wayne Summer]



First Jail in Clinton County located at
206 E. Washington Street.
Was the county jail from 1843-1862.
[Picture taken c1980 -
Courtesy of DeWitt Public Library]

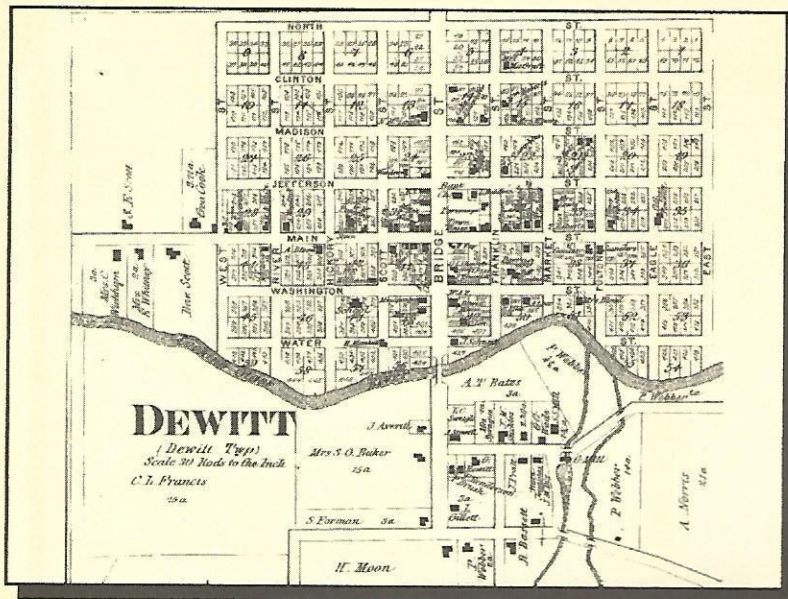


DeWitt Royal Neighbor's Lodge #432

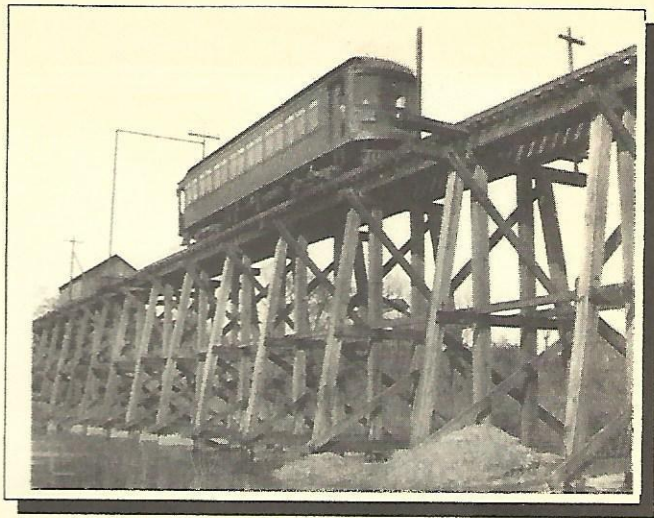
[photo courtesy of DeWitt Public Library]

Back row: Blanche VanDyke, Belle Knapp, Hazel Ferrier, Nina Yanz, Martha Blizzard, Mattie Spayde,
Mary Smally, Edith Wagner, Kate Gillett, & Francis Mann

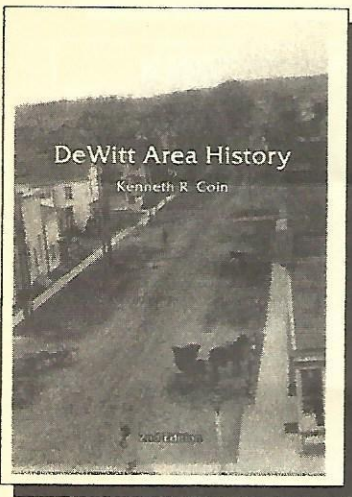
Seated: Hannah Stanton, Minnie Staub, Ida Mae Norris, Grace Hammond,
Matie Staub & Lottie Martzke



1873 map of the village of DeWitt
[courtesy of DeWitt Public Library]



The Interurban crossing over the Looking Glass River in DeWitt. The Interurban made trips between St. Johns and Lansing from 1901-1929.
[courtesy of DeWitt Public Library]



DeWitt Area History Book Available

Ken Coin's DeWitt Area History book has been updated and is now available for purchase. The original book was published in thirteen installments for the 150th anniversary of founding of DeWitt in 1983.

For DeWitt's 175th birthday the book has been revised to include information on recent events. It also includes more in depth information on schools, churches, and civil war soldiers, along with a selection of Ken's articles on local people originally published in the *DeWitt-Bath Review*. The book has a complete index allowing specific items of interest to be easily located.

The new 2nd edition was edited by Wayne Summers and published by the DeWitt Public Library with underwriting from the Friends of the DeWitt Public Library. The paperback book has a total of 326 pages and sells for \$10. Books may be purchased at the DeWitt Public Library or the Archives of the Clinton County Historical Society. To order a copy send a check for \$14 (\$10 + \$4

shipping) to DeWitt History Book, DeWitt Public Library, 13101 Schavey Road, DeWitt, Michigan 48820.

RECENT ACQUISITIONS

- *Ovid Register-Union*; 22 Jun 1893
- *Third Sibylline Book*; SJHS annual 1899-1900
- Civil War Scrapbook of Edward H. Bedell
- Records of Hon. Rowland S. VanScoy, JP; 1864-1849
- 2 report cards of Asa Gillson, 1900-1
- *Families in America of Helen L. Motz & Harold F. Tolles*
- *Tolles in America*; 1997
- Diary of Harold F. Tolles
- Clinton Co. Safety Guide pamphlet; 1952
- Russell Family research by Janet Fessler
- Ohio Gen. Society Quarterly, 4 issues 2007

- Photos: Edward H. Bedell's medals & ribbons
George Winfield Page & Monroe Page
George Winfield Page
Russell Family
St. Johns State Bank, ca 1894
Fredrick Nuffer Tolles & Myrtle
Lucille (Rice) Short Tolles
Fredrick Nuffer Tolles
Plowman School students; 1954

EATON COUNTY CONNECTIONS

submitted by Janalynn Martens,

Descendant of Ezekiel and Sarah (Cryderman) Niles

John Bissell

John Bissell was born in New York state, Dec. 22, 1836 [sic], and when a small boy moved to Michigan, to the town of Lyons where he resided until he moved to Wacousta about fifty years ago, and lived there until 30 years ago when he came to Grand Ledge, which place has been his home until the day of his death, which occurred Feb. 14, 1909 [sic]. Mr. Bissell was married to **Carrie E. Andrus** in April 1864. At 20 years of age he enlisted in the Third Michigan Infantry, which afterwards was consolidated with the Fifth Infantry, but was always called the Old Third. He served four years in the Army of the Potomac and was in the following battles: Bull Run, Gettysburg, Chancellorsville. At Gettysburg he was wounded and taken to the hospital. At the Battle of the Wilderness he was captured and was in Andersonville prison nine months and was also exchanged to other prisons. Deceased was a pensioner and certainly deserved all he ever received for the service he gave his country. His death was caused by rheumatism and a general breaking down, although he had passed his 73d birthday and was able to be out every day, and seemed to be in as good health as usual. The funeral services were held at his daughter's home on W. Front street, and were conducted by Rev. W. L. Waters, pastor of the Congregational church. Mr. Bissell is survived by his wife and daughter, **Mrs. Fay Ward** of this city; two brothers, **Charles Bissell** of Wacousta and **Edward Bissell** of Merle Beach, and one sister, **Mrs. Van Schoy** of Eaton Rapids. Besides these he leaves a host of old friends here to mourn his loss, as a good and honest citizen, and also many comrades of the war days who will sadly miss him. (Friday, 19 Feb. 1909 - *Grand Ledge Independent*, p. 1, c. 2.)

Mrs. John Bissell died at the home of her daughter, Mrs. Fay Ward on West Front St., Monday morning at 10 o'clock, after an illness of about two months. She was taken sick at her own home on West Main St. last fall with rheumatism,

and gradually kept getting worse, so it became necessary to have her taken to her daughter's home that she might be properly taken care of. At the time of Mr. Bissell's death she was confined to her bed, and probably the shock of his death hastened her's [sic]. Her condition had been very bad for some time, and towards the last her heart became affected, and her throat especially. The night before she died was a very hard one, but towards the last she grew quiet and was unconscious when the end came. **Carrie Andrus** was born in Casnovia [sic - Cazenovia], New York, July 13, 1836 [sic], and when only two years old moved with her parents to Michigan. They came through by boat from New York to Detroit, and with the aid of an ox team they had to break their way through the wilderness after they arrived in Michigan to get to the little town of Wacousta where they were bound for. She was united in marriage to John Bissell in Wacousta, April 1864, and one child was born to them, a daughter, **Mrs. Marcia Ward** of this city, who cared for her during all her sickness. Mrs. Bissell also leaves two sisters, **Mrs. Geo. Saunders** and **Mrs. Austin Cowan**, both of Rockford, and two brothers, **Chas. and Girard Andrus** of Wacousta. Mr. and Mrs. Bissell lived at Wacousta until they came here 30 years ago, where they have since lived and enjoyed life at their home on W. Main St. Mrs. Bissell was a pioneer school teacher of Clinton county and her pleasant and cheerful manner made friends for her all through her life, and especially among the young people. Of her own family only one daughter and one granddaughter are left, but she will be missed by hosts of friends and neighbors, who always welcomed her and were made happier by her pleasant smile. Mrs. Bissell was a member of the Congregational church, and the funeral was held Wednesday afternoon at her daughter's home on W. Front street, Rev. Waters officiating, interment at Oakwood. Among those of her relatives from out of town who attended the funeral were: Mrs. Geo. Saunders, a sister, and a niece, **Blanche Cowan**, both of Rockford. Her sister, Mrs. Austin Cowan, is an invalid and was not able to attend.

(Friday, 19 March 1909 - *Grand Ledge Independent* p.1 c.5.)

LEBANON FARMERS' CLUB

The archives of the Clinton Co. Historical Society holds some early records of the Lebanon Farmers Club. Included are two books of the secretary's records which begin with the organizational meeting and end with a meeting dated Feb 12, 1942. At that time the group apparently was still very active. The books also contain the yearly membership lists, the list for 1942 names 28 members. Following are the organizational minutes, a newspaper account of the first meeting, and the first list of members:

Dec. 19th, 1896. A meeting was held at the home of C[laud]. F. Abbott to organize a farmer's club. Jay Sessions was chosen chairman and C. A. Abbott, secretary. A constitution was read by the chairman which was adopted, article by article, by vote of those present. The chairman appointed Messrs. M. J. Palmer and John Hiner tellers, after which the following officers were elected: Pres. Jay Sessions; Vice President, C[ornelius] Grove; Secretary & Treasurer, C. F. Abbott. Remaining members of the executive committee: Mrs. Jay Sessions, & Mrs. C. Benjamin. (Lebanon Farmer's Club, Secretary's Records)

The first regular meeting of the Lebanon Farmers' Club was held at Mr. And Mrs. Jay Sessions' Dec. 31, commencing at 10 a.m. A goodly number were present, but some were kept away by the very bad day and wretched condition of the roads. Mr. and Mrs. J. T. Daniells of Essex had been invited to be present and showed their interest in the work by driving from their home eleven miles to assist the new organization.

After music by Mrs. Benjamin, Elma Hanford, and Claud Abbott, the president, Jay Sessions, welcomed all to the meeting and spoke briefly of advantages of such an organization and claimed its social features was of the most value,. J. T. Daniells, president of state association, then spoke of the good work already done by local clubs and state association and some of the work to be accomplished, and highly praised the club as a social organization where women have equal rights with men, and urged each member to get the best possible good by regular attendance and active participation in the literary part of the work.

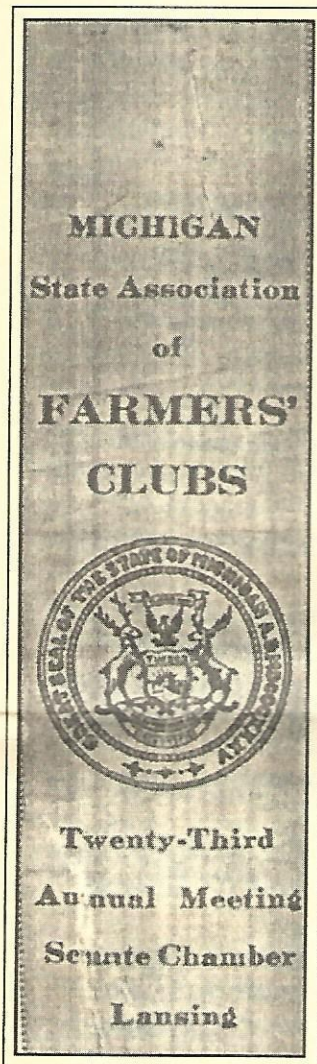
After dinner barns and stock were examined and program resumed as follows: Irma Sessions recited Tennyson's beautiful poem, *Ring Out, Wild Bells*, which was very appropriate for the last day of 1896. Miss Velma Smith read a well-written essay on the *The New Year*, replete with good ideas. Claud Abbott's paper, *Beginning the New Year*, was full of practical ideas. He spoke of the advantage of keeping a farm and have surroundings in a neat and orderly condition; great need of a progressive farmer taking a good agricultural paper like *The Michigan Farmer*, and value of keeping correct farm accounts. A number present discussed both of the above papers.

Cornelius Grove led the general discussion on question, What are some of the principal causes for failure among farmers? He claimed intemperance and use of tobacco were prime causes and unjust laws, especially our system of currency, was responsible for shrinkage of values and prices, general depression of business, and loss of many homes by foreclosure.

The next meeting will be at C. Grove's Jan. 11, and after that the first Thursday of each month. (*Clinton Republican*; 7 Jan 1896; p1 c3)

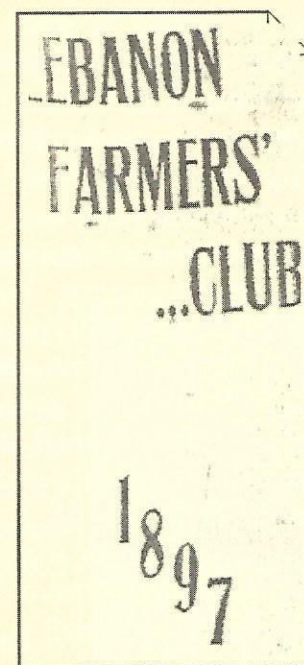
Announcement

There's a link to the website of the archives at <indy.com>. It was created and is maintained by Judy Peters to acquaint people with the archives. Take a look at the "teasers" there and then follow the link to www.dewittlibrary.org/CCHS.



1897 MEMBERSHIP LIST (from the secretary's records)
M/M C. F. Abbott
M/M Frank Abbott
Lewis Bentley
Elma Brooks
M/M Herman Gaddy
Bird Grove
C. Grove
Milo Grove
Ray Grove
M/M Thomas Hanlan
M/M John Hiner
H. S. Holmes
Frank Lamphere
M/M Thomas Hanlan

Helen Lamphere
Chas. A. Martin
E. A. Martin
Levi Messer
M. M. Messer
O. A. Messer
M/M G. W. Morice
H. Murwin
M. J. Palmer
M/M F. M. Piggott
W. H. Sage
M/M Jay Sessions
M/M Eli Smith
Susan Vincent
M/M E. B. Warne
Frank Williams



WILLIAM DENNIS DAVIS

by Linda Davis, 1986

William Dennis Davis was born in the state of Rhode Island October 16, 1820, the eldest son of **Aaron and Sarah (Larkin) Davis**. In 1823 he moved with his parents to New York state.

At the tender age of seven he was hired out to drive horse on the toe path of the Erie Canal. He worked here two years when his mother died and he was then taken by an aunt who sent him to school for two years.

At this time his father married again and he was again hired out for two years to drive a team on a freight wagon plying between Rochester and Albany. For two years after this he hired out on a farm.

At the age of seventeen he came to Michigan with his father and settled near Jackson where he worked on a farm for two years more. He then came to Olive, Clinton Co., where he again worked on a farm for **George Gillett**.

At the age of twenty-one he bought eighty acres of land in section three, Riley Twp., his nearest neighbor being three miles away. He built a log cabin, chopped in the winter, and worked for Gillett in the summer.

On April 8, 1843, he was married to **Louisa Pruden** and they settled in this little log cabin without doors or windows, just holes cut through to let in the light and bedsteads made of poles. Their chairs were also made from slabs with poles for legs. In the fall of 1843 he gathered his crops, a half bushel of potatoes and a peck of corn being all the wild beasts had left him.

One cold night in early November he shouldered his ax and walked to Lansing through woods and swamps and hired out as a woods foreman to clear a site for the capitol building. He walked home on Saturday nights and back on Sunday to carry provisions for the family.

In the spring of 1844 he moved to Jackson where he worked for the city helping build the wall for the prison.

On March 23, 1846, **Rhoda Jane** was born and in the fall he again moved to his cabin in Riley and chopped through that winter. In the spring of 1847 he rented a farm in Ionia Co., near Lyons. Here **Aaron** was born on Jan. 27, 1848. In the spring of 1850 he again moved to his farm in Riley where John was born April 10, 1850. He then built a large log house and barn. It was here that **William D., Sarah Armina, Charles H., Warren H., Letticia Ann, & Rachel L.** were born. In 1870 he built a frame house. When the Civil War was declared he enlisted and was preparing to go when his ax caught in a limb over his

head and came down nearly cutting his foot off at the ankle, which crippled him for life.

He died of la grippe on Feb. 2, 1892, on the farm he had hewn from the forest, aged 71 years, 3 months, and 17 days.

WILLIAM D. DAVIS

Clinton Independent, 4 Feb 1892; p1 c4.

Died at his home in Riley Township, Feb. 2, 1892, of pneumonia, aged 71 years [71/3/17]. The deceased was born in Rhode Island; came to Michigan in 1853, and settled in Jackson County where he remained 17 years when he moved to this county and settled in Riley, where he has continuously resided ever since, living the whole time upon the very farm upon which he died. A wife and seven children survive him. The mother is at this time quite feeble. The funeral will take place from the home tomorrow and the interment will be made in the Bengal Cemetery [Bray Cemetery, Sect. 27]. Mr. Davis made all the arrangements for his own funeral and burial.

²Louisa (Pruden) Davis died 21 April 1895; aged 71/5/7; ³buried in Bray Cemetery. ⁴Aaron L. Davis died 5 Oct 1893. ⁵Wm. D. Davis, Jr., died 11 Feb

1882; age 29/7/17; buried in Bray Cemetery. ⁶Leticia Davis died 24 Feb 1864; age 1/11/5; buried in Bray Cemetery

¹ Bray Cemetery Index; Genealogists of Clinton Co. Historical Society, 1979. -- ² *Clinton Republican*; 24 Apr 1895, p 1; & 29 May 1895,

p 2. -- ³ Bray Cemetery Index; Genealogists of CCHS, 1979. ⁴ *Clinton Republican*, 12 Oct 1893, pp 1 & 4. ⁵ Bray Cemetery Index;

Genealogists of CCHS, 1979. Bray Cemetery Index Genealogists of CCHS, 1979

➤ **The Archives of the Clinton County Historical Society** are located at 16101 Brook Road in the DeWitt Twp. Community Center. Volunteers are there to give research assistance from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Mondays and Tuesdays and from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Thursdays & Fridays. Phone: (517) 482-5117. Web Page: www.dewittlibrary.org/CCHS

➤ **The Genealogists of the CCHS** meet the first Monday of each month at 1:00 pm November through March or 7:30 pm April through October in the Firstbank community room, located downtown St. Johns. E-mail address: ccgensoc@yahoo.com. The **Historical Society meetings** are held 30 minutes prior to the Genealogist's meetings at Firstbank, the first Monday of January, April, July & October.

➤ **The Paine-Gillam-Scott Museum** is located on the west side of the Courthouse Square in St. Johns. Open April 1 - Dec 31. Sunday 1:00-4:00 p.m. & Wednesday 2:00-7:00 p.m. Web page: www.pgsmuseum.org and their e-mail address is: pgs.museum@hotmail.com

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

LIST 5 NAMES YOU ARE RESEARCHING

Mr./Mrs./Miss _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ New _____ Renewal _____

E-Mail Address _____ Date _____

ANNUAL DUES to join both the Clinton County Historical Society and the Genealogy Committee are \$15 single and \$20 a couple/family. Membership is based on the calendar year and includes a subscription to the quarterly newsletter, *Clinton County Trails*. Checks should be made payable to the Clinton County Historical Society and mailed to P.O. Box 174, St. Johns, MI 48879. Genealogical queries should be addressed to: Genealogists of the Clinton County Historical Society, P.O. Box 23 St. Johns, MI 48879.

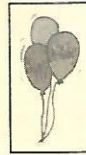
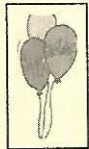
ANCESTRAL CELEBRATION

Paine-Gillam-Scott Museum

Court House Square (West side) –

St. Johns, Michigan

Saturday - June 21, 2008 – 1-4 p.m.



The Paine-Gillam-Scott Museum

staff is planning a special celebration to dedicate the newly created turn-of-the-century Swegles General Store and the mid-20th century dental office on their grounds. At the same event the Genealogists of the CCHS plan a special recognition of those who have received certificates as descendants of the county's early settlers. Those who have farms designated as "Centennial Farms" are invited and will be recognized also.

Registration will begin at 1:00 p.m. The building dedication ceremony will be held at 1:30 p.m. Recognition of certificate holders and centennial farm families will begin at 2:30 p.m.

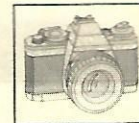
Refreshments and tours of all three buildings in the museum complex will be on-going during the celebration. The genealogists will have a display and be available to share information about researching family history. A photo booth will be in operation for scanning and preserving historical photographs relating to the county.

This event is open to the public. Please watch the museum's website, www.PGSMuseum.org and the newspapers for more information. See following notice

A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

Help us record and preserve the history of your Clinton County ancestors. A photo scanning booth will be set up at the Ancestral Celebration event as stated above. Please bring your historic Clinton County photos and share them with us. We especially need photos relating to early factories, machine shops, foundries, blacksmith shops, sawmills, auto and farm implement dealers, gas stations, restaurants, hotels, and other businesses and of the people who owned or operated them. Also, photos of early homesteads, country schools, opera house and theatres, farming activities (especially mint farming) would be great additions to our archives.

Know someone who won't be at the event? Photographs can be e-mailed to the museum pgs.museum@hotmail.com or the archives www.dewittlibrary.org/CCHS.



Pictures Please!!!!