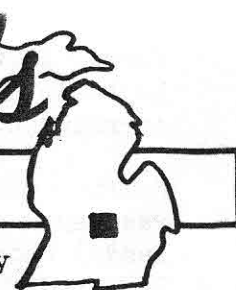


Clinton County Trails

VOLUME 3 NUMBER 3 Looking For Your Roots? Come Visit Us.



A publication of the Genealogists of the Clinton County Historical Society

GUNNISONVILLE - continued

by Alta Gunnisonville Pierce

I have wondered how the roads were built in the township and how it was decided which ones were to be built, but I find in the County History along with the list of supervisors, highway commissioners, this item, "In an examination of the early highway records, Road No. 1 is described as to location, No. 2, the same, then these two sentences--Said road to be six rods wide from the first to the second section, and the remainder four rods wide--The commissioners of highway continued to survey and award contracts for the construction of highways as the presence of settlers demanded them."

As I have mentioned before, Captain Scott came to DeWitt in 1833 and it was he who platted the present village of DeWitt. The first hotel was a cabin just east of the late Mark Pennell's old farm home on the north side of the road in the in the east part of the village and the first bridge across the Looking Glass River was just to the south. My father pointed out the approach to the old bridge to my a number of years ago. Captain Scott built a log hotel later on in the same block that the old Clinton House stood in, but further south and to the west.

From the County History, I find Court was held at DeWitt in private houses, the school house, the hotel, in the third story and even the Baptist Church, those first years. First jurors from the Gunnisonville neighborhood were W. Moore, Orange Cushman, and Elihu Gunnison in 1839. In May 1841 Gilbert Cushman, Johnathon Pearsall and Elihu Gunnison were three of the jurors and in the fall of that year, Morris Cushman was one also. In April 1839 Hiram W. Stowell was elected Judge of Probate and one of his first acts was to appoint Belinda Cushman as Guardian of Mail and Charles Cushman who were the minor children of Ira

Cushman. This was April 11, 1840.

October 12, 1840, County buildings were ordered by the Board of Supervisors and \$400.00 appropriated. Captain Scott deeded a plot of ground for the sum of \$10.00 for a public square with the provision that it should be returned to him or his heirs if the County Seat was ever moved and when the present Masonic Hall in DeWitt was built in 1888, I remember my father looking up this old deed of Captain Scott and making a settlement with his heirs. A public office building was erected on this square and was first occupied in January, 1843, although it was not entirely finished. (I believe this building is still standing.) A jail and residence were built at the same time, they were to the south and east (where Theodorice Richardson lived until his death.) DeWitt was the County Seat until 1847 when it was moved to St. Johns, the DeWitt people fighting until the last to retain it. The old jail was used until 1862.

The only doctors were at DeWitt, although one of them, Dr. Levi D. Jennison originally took up two forties in the Gunnisonville area. Dr. Marvin came in 1835, Dr. Jennison and Dr. Stowell in 1837, Dr. Moore in 1839, Dr. Bacon in 1852, Dr. Topping in 1854 and Dr. Simmons in 1878.

The first newspaper was started at DeWitt, about 1842 by Mark Childs and was called "The Clintonian." Publishing tax sales was the main source of revenue but mention is made of receipt of twelve shillings from Alfred Gunnison on a subscription in 1842. One number of the paper dated July 13, 1844, gave an account of the 4th of July celebration held at DeWitt--at that time the largest village in the county, containing as Mr. Childs humerously put it, "three dry goods stores, eight mechanic shops, one hotel, the Clinton House, two attorneys and two physicians.

The first saw mill erected in the township was at DeWitt, erected by Hiram Wilcox in 1873. It was on the south side of the river and just north of the road going to what is now the Omar Dills

farm. It was at this mill that Grandfather took his logs to be sawed into lumber when he built his frame house and I presume all the other old settlers from the surrounding area did the same.

DeWitt must have been growing in those days for I have heard my father tell of when he was seven years old, of going there with Grandfather to get a yoke of oxen (Nig and Dandy) shod, and there was a circus or some celebration in town that day and the DeWitt Cornet Band marched up Bridge Street and played the tune, "The White Dockage." Father never forgot that day or that tune--it was the first time he had ever heard a band. He said there were three hotels in DeWitt at that time, first, Clinton House, (built by Captain Scott's brother in 1829 to 1842, taking three years to build- it burned October 22, 1930,; second, Allports Hotel which stood on the east side of Bridge Street at the top of the hill where the large garage is now; and the third hotel was the East Main St. opposite end of the block from Hank Rouse's present home. This third hotel was owned by Mjer Olin, who was Deputy Sheriff at one time.

Cemetery History. Mr and Mrs Thomas Robbins adopted a boy by the name of Thomas Worden. His death, I believe, was the first in the little settlement of Gunnisonville. He was born about 1845 and died before 1858. Was buried in the Cushman cemetery and my father and his brother Ora were tow of the pallbearers, Uncle Ora died June 11, 1855 and was the first one to be buried in what is now the Gunnisonville cemetery, at that time it was an open field. Later, Grandfather gave the plot of ground for a cemetery, it is the square between the school house yard and the east drive and extended south as far as the school grounds do. You can see a line of large maple trees outlining the plot. More acreage has been bought and added several times to make the cemetery the size it is now. There was once a cemetery at Livermore corner, across from where Bradley's Oil Station is now, also one across the road from where the Cushman school house stood, but both have been taken up and the bodies removed.

The first schoolhouse in the township was built in Section 7, soon after 1835 and as far as I can find out the first one at Gunnisonville was built in 1837 or 1838. There have been at least four school buildings on the present site, a log one, a frame one, and two brick ones. (Mrs Lottie Motts thinks there was a rude log one built there before the large log one that burned was built, if so that would make five school buildings there.) Her Grandfather David Olin built the first log one and obtained the first teacher, foing thirty five miles to get her. She "boarded around" the same as all teachers did in those years. I don't know the year the log school burned, but the frame one burned in 1882 or early 1883 for the first red brick building was built in the summer of 1883, the same summer that Phillip Krause built the brick house on his farm, (Cathey place now). That first brick school house burned Friday, February 15, 1907 and the following is copied from an article published in the State Journal, that afternoon, "Just before the forenoon recess it was noticed that smoke was coming into the school room, apparently from the small front entry. The teacher, Miss Effie Foster, went out back but could see nothing to indicate from whence the smoke was coming. Back into the school room, she found the students wildly excited, and quickly dismissed them after telling them she could not see any fire anywhere. As soon as the children reached the playground, they discovered flames issuing from the roof and in a short time the building was wrapped in flames. The nearby farmers were reached with the news as soon as possible, but they had no means of hindering the progress of the fire, which soon reduced the little brick structure to a smoking heap. From the hurried investigation, it was discovered the fire was caused by a defective chimney and that it had caught between the ceiling and roof. It was valued at about \$1,500 and there was \$1,000 insurance carried on it." I wish I knew the names of the teachers in the early days, but the first I have any record of, other than a Miss Josslyn, are those who taught when my father attended the school. In the spring of 1852 Miss Essler taught, from then on to 1858 was a Miss Irish, Miss Helen Hurd, Miss Lusiana Hurd (She married Dr. Topping later) Edgar Clark, and John D. Woodbury who taught there two years. In 1858 Father and his sister Nell went to Lansing and attended Miss Roger's Seminary which was situated where the school for the Bling now stands, so I have no other names of those early Gunnisonville teachers after that date.



Four Generation of Hewitt's

1897

Isaac 1839 - 1921

Ray M. Hewitt
1874 - 1943

Hannah Hyatt Hewitt
1813 - 1898

Harold H. Hewitt
1896 - 1969
ca. 6 mo.

William A. Hewitt, Founder of Maple Rapids, Michigan

Among the first few settlers to arrive in Clinton County, Mich. in 1835 was the Hewitt family. William A. Hewitt was born the 26th of November 1811 in Prattsburg, Steuben Co., N. Y., the eldest son of Isaac and Phebe Hewitt. After receiving his education, he married in 1830, Hannah O. Hyatt the daughter of Zachariah and Lavina Hyatt of Prattsburg.

The movement westward in the early 1800s lured many New York residents including the Hewitts. They made the arduous journey by boat along Lake Erie to Detroit, then overland through forests on foot and ox-team to Oakland Co., Mich. in 1835. That winter William, his father and brothers reached the tiny settlement of DeWitt in Clinton Co. They set about clearing land they had purchased from the government land office for \$1.25 per acre. Early in 1836, after William had built a log cabin, he returned to Oakland Co. for Hannah, their two young sons and the rest of the Hewitt family. Within the next few years they established farms and became an active part of the growing community of DeWitt.

William, not content to spend his life entirely as a farmer, studied law under attorney Joab Baker and passed the bar to become a lawyer. When DeWitt Township was organized in 1837, he was elected Justice of the Peace and was recorded as uniting the first couple to marry in Clinton Co. He also held the office of Assessor and Highway Commissioner for the township at different times. As his family increased by a daughter and two more sons, he left farming to establish a mercantile and later a hotel business in the village of DeWitt.

A man of enterprise and great energy, it was as a land agent that he found his greatest success. Attracted to the northern part of Clinton Co. by the pleasant land with the natural advantage of water power, William Hewitt purchased 240 acres in Essex Township from Solomon Moss and others along the east side of the Maple River. There he envisioned a thriving town could develop and prosper on the banks of the river near the area George Campau had established an Indian trading post 20 years before. On 20th Feb. 1852, William moved his family from DeWitt to the rapids on the Maple River. With the help of his four sons Joseph, Zachariah, Isaac and Rufus Henry, he immediately began construction on a dam and a saw mill. Their first home was a log house which they moved from Judge Pettit's farm to a site near the dam. William was elected a Justice of the Peace for the township in 1852, a position he held the remainder of his life.

After the dam and saw mill were completed in 1853, he established a merchandise store which he operated for a short time. That same year William was elected Supervisor of Essex Township and he plotted out the plan for the future village of Maple Rapids. In 1854 he was appointed postmaster of the first post office in the village. Disaster struck that winter when a fire destroyed the saw mill. Wm. started over. He rebuilt the mill which was ready for operation again the next year.

Soon other settlers moving along the trails were attracted to

the area. Seeing the potential for a future in the small village, they bought land from William. As more people came, he built a hotel and public house to accommodate the new arrivals. Under his leadership Maple Rapids began to grow and develop. A few years later he enlarged the saw mill and added a grist mill to serve the local farmers. By 1860 there was recorded in the U. S. census, 214 homes and over one thousand inhabitants in the township of Essex. Maple Rapids was the largest community in that township.

There were other early settlers who contributed to the growth and prosperity of the village...among them were Solomon Moss, James Sowle, John Johnson, Hiram Benedict and Timothy Pettit. Maple Rapids, however, owes its founding to the entrepreneur, William A. Hewitt. Until his untimely death on 12 Feb. 1863 at the age of 51 years, he was the driving force guiding Maple Rapids from a vision to a viable community.

In each of his endeavors the four Hewitt sons were able and energetic assistants. They carried on the many business ventures William had begun. Joseph became the first cabinet maker in the area and later established a mercantile business. Zachariah ran the saw mill. Isaac operated the grist mill for a time. He joined his brother Joseph in a mercantile partnership, later managed the real estate business and eventually became a banker. Rufus Henry went into the manufacture of furniture. The daughter, Fanny, married Martin V. Brown who was a prominent merchant.

In 1865, William's widow, Hannah, married her brother-in-law Simeon Hewitt. They continued to live in Maple Rapids playing an active role in the community. Until her death on 2 November 1898 at 85 years old, she was affectionately known as "Aunt Hannah" by everyone in the area. Both William and Hannah were buried at the Sowle Cemetery in Maple Rapids.

Today only a name on a building and a stained glass window in the Methodist Church are visible reminders of the Hewitt family.

By Virginia J. Watterson A great, great Granddaughter of William and Hannah Hewitt.

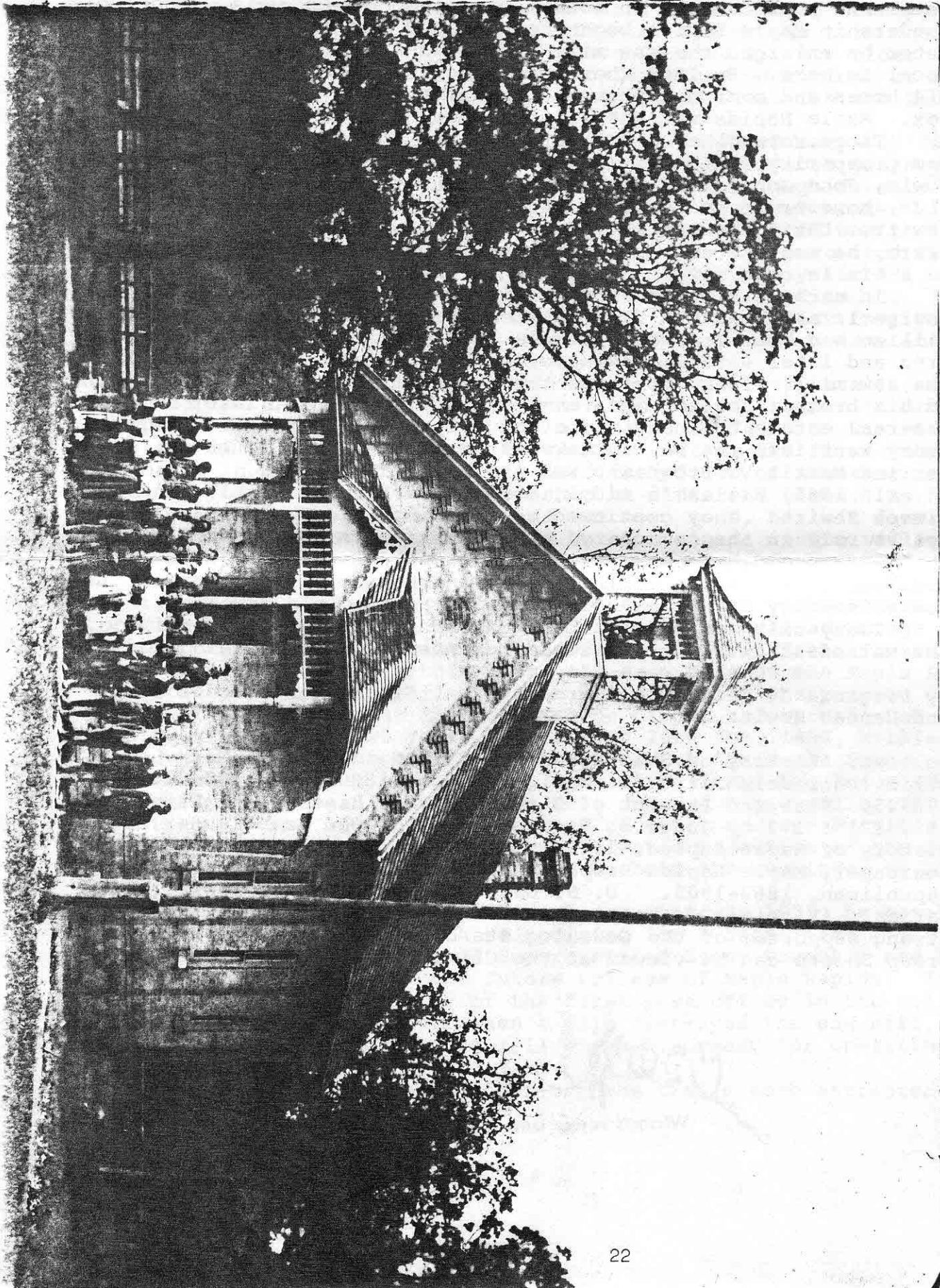
Sources: History of Shiawassee and Clinton Counties, Mich. by F. Ellis (Philadelphia: D. W. Ensign & Co., 1880), pp. 403-413, 452-456 Past and Present of Clinton County History of 1906, pp. 168, 171 & 172 by Judge S. B. Daboll. The Old Lamplighter, a History of Maple Rapids, 1826-1976 by Beth Dean. Articles in the newspaper, Maple Rapids Dispatch, 1885-1895 and Clinton County Republican, 1863-1905. U. S. Census 1820-1910 also Hewitt Obituaries. (Virginia J. Watterson is a member of CCH Soc. and a strong supporter of the Genealogists of the Society. Her Family Group Sheets can be viewed at the Clinton Archives)



Grove School, District No. 2, Essex Twp., ca 1906

Teacher, Emma Harvey (?)

Students included: Otis Delameter, Bill Rice, James Sowle, Inez Sowle, Nellie Sowle, Ruby McNeil, Roy McNeil, Glenn McNeil, Eva Mae Floate, Kitty Belle Floate



R. DuBois Taught the Peck District School of
Olive and Bingham

Mr. Editor - Although the dust of fifty years may have accumulated over the writer's recollections of pioneer life since he first came to Michigan and engaged to teach school in a log school house in what is known as the Peck district four miles south of St. Johns, on the town line of Olive and Bingham townships, still names and incidents are fresh in his memory for it was his first experience as teacher in the winter of 1854-5. There were sixteen families in the district, all living in log houses roofed in with shake, the logs chinked in with clay, one door shut out the wind and storm, and one window greets the day. Their names were Tabor, Sperry, Parmer, Norris, Larkins, Bunn, Bond, Bain, Bush, Cushion, Fenner, Peck, Arnet, Hugget and Yallup. There were two families of Norris, Wm. and Stark. This was before there was a railroad in Clinton county and before St. Johns had been discovered. There were few roads and these few were impassable owing to mud, stumps and logs. However, after traveling on foot for twenty miles and answering a few questions found in Daboll's arithmetic, Kirkham's grammar, Webster's elementary spelling book and reading a section of the English reader, J. O. Parmer, Dr. Lamb and Mr. Conn concluded I was a fit subject to teach school in Clinton county for an indefinite period of time; and John O. Parmer wrote the certificate, "to all whom it might concern", to that effect, which the pedagogue has preserved fifty years intact, verbatim add-litteratum.

It may be difficult for the boys and girls of these pioneers, now grown to manhood and womanhood, to realize the thirst for knowledge their ancestors possessed, and the limited means they had for quenching that thirst when Clinton county was in its elementary stage.

While visiting that neighborhood a short time since, old memories came thick and fast of fifty years ago. The fathers and mothers, together with their domicils, are no longer visible, but the boys and girls who attended my school have taken their parents' places with children of their own, and they have joined the procession that grows and passes on year by year.

"For life is onward evermore,

Still the present is improving

On the age that went before.

For there comes a time in the history of pioneer life when prosperous days and increase of numbers make it necessary that the old home roof shall furnish shelter no longer for the rising generation. The rough walls built of logs are out of date and have become dilapidated, the roof falling in, the homely fire place where hospitable flames have leaped up the old stone chimney so many winter nights, is crumbling and indeed the whole structure is no longer a fitting place for the household.

The boys and girls of the twentieth century have more fastidious tastes than their fathers and mothers who were so proud and happy long years ago of their rural shelter in Clinton county's wilderness, for their farms were nearly all covered with great forest trees that cumbered the ground. The younger ones of the family have long been ashamed of the log house and have a desire to see it razed to the ground, and now one after another they have

given place to more modern structures which are both more comfortable and ornamental. These early settlers came to take possession and build their cottages in the happy spring time of their lives, young, vigorous and hopeful.

The morning sun was shining and the air filled with music of the birds nesting in the forest trees. Here came one by one the children of their love, each gladly welcomed; here too came the good neighbors and with cheery welcome gathered around the festal board graced with venison and wild turkey which were at that time inhabitants of the forest. Besides their feast days there were days of marriage and mirth when happy brides left the old hearthstone for household fires of their own kindling and the door opens as it were into another world for them, with clasped hands and with eyes dimmed with tears they pass out, perhaps, to see the old home no more.

As I think back to the winter I passed so pleasantly in that locality, I almost wish--I know 'tis folly to complain, whatso'ere the fates decree, but were not wishes all in vain I'd tell you what my wish would be--I'd wish to be a boy again, back with the friends I used to know, for Oh! I was so happy then; but that was long ago.

Submitted by William Serviss

DUTIES FOR HOSPITAL NURSES IN THE 1880s

1. Sweep floors of your ward daily. Dust the furniture and window sills.
2. Maintain an even temperature in your ward by bringing in a scuttle of coal at the beginning of each work day.
3. Light is important for observing the patient's condition. Therefore, each day fill the kerosene lamps, clean chimneys and trim wicks.
4. The nurse's notes are important to the physician. Make your pens carefully. You may whittle nibs (sharpened ends of quill pens) to your individual taste.
5. Day duty nurses will report every day at 7 a.m. and leave at 8 p.m. except on Sunday on which day you will be off from 12 noon until 2 p.m.
6. Graduate nurses in good standing with the director of nurses will be rewarded with an evening off each week for courting purposes or two evenings if you regularly go to church.
7. Each nurse should lay aside from her wages a goodly sum of her earnings. This is for her benefit during her declining years, so she will not become a burden. For example, if you earn 30 dollars a month, you should save 15.
8. Any nurse who smokes, uses rouge, uses liquor in any form, gets her hair done at a beauty parlor, frequents dance halls, or who engages in levity on Sunday will give the director of nurses good reason to suspect her worth, intentions, and integrity. If her misguided conduct in such an unseemly and unlady like manner is brought to the attention of the hospital administration, she will be asked for her resignation.
9. The one who performs her labors and serves her patients and doctors faithfully and without fault for five years, will be rewarded by the hospital administration with a five cent per day increase, providing there are no hospital debts outstanding.