OAKLAND COUNTY, MICHIGAN

FARMINGTON: 1824 - 1908
BRIEF HISTORIES & BIOGRAPHIES

by

NATHAN H. POWER
Introduction

Nathan H. Power, in collaboration with his good friend Governor Fred Maltby Warner, wrote seven brief histories helpful to Farmington historians. In addition to early Farmington, Power also wrote brief biographies of P. D. Warner, Fred Warner, and Dr. Wixom. The writer mentions the current date of 1921 in this collection of papers, just two years before the death of the former governor.

These articles were found pasted in an “Order Book” that also contained newspaper clippings written by P. D. Warner of early Farmington. Power’s handwritten copy was transcribed, with the typed copy shown at the bottom of each page.
Hon. Fred M. Warner, life long resident of Farmington and three times governor of Michigan is responsible for the publication of this valuable and authentic history of the town of Farmington. Born in England July 21, 1863, he came to this country when three months old. Soon after he lost his mother and was adopted by the Hon. P. Dean Warner then a leading and influential citizen of the town. He graduated from the Farmington High School when 14 years of age. He attended the State Agricultural College for one term, after which he became a clerk in his father's store at Farmington.
Farmington. A short time afterwards he took over the business and successfully conducted it for twenty years. In 1889 he established a large cheese factory in Farmington and the success of that venture led to the establishment by him of like factories in other parts of the state. And made him one of the largest producers of this useful dairy product in Michigan. In 1894 after much solicitation he consented to become a candidate for the State Senate on the Republican ticket. Heretofore the district had been overwhelmingly Democratic. He was elected by a large majority which was increased at the next election in 1896. In 1900 Mr. Warner was nominated to the office of Sec. of State.
Elected and selected in 1902. In June 1904 he was the nominee of his party for the office of Governor. Was elected by a good majority and re-elected in 1906 and 1908. He was the first and only governor of Michigan to receive three consecutive terms. He was also the youngest governor since 1839. Previous to the election of Mr. Warner to the office of Chief Executive of the State the use of large sums of money to secure nomination to office had become a grave abuse. Mr. Warner realized that and in the face of most bitter and desperate opposition succeeded in having enacted the present excellent and satisfactory primary law of the state. He could ask for no better monument.
to mark his political career. Other excellent measures became laws during his administration. Keen
competent and resourceful his influence upon legislature and the State institutions was of the very
best while governor of the commonwealth. Returning to private life he came back to Farmington and became
the leading citizen of the town. Always successful in business he is the president of the Farmington
State Bank and a director in the same. He is also president of the Redford State Bank and an officer and
director in various other financial institutions. In 1888 he was happily
married to Miss Martha M Davis of Farmington. Four children all of them living at the present time (1921) have been
From

born to them. Edessa, Howard, Harley and Helen. As time rolls on Farmington will see citizens come and go. Most of them will be ordinary people pursuing the common vocations of life. Some will be given honor and preferment. May that honor and preferment be as richly deserved as the subject of these brief and imperfect lines. Fred M. Warner.

Written by N. H. Power — Schoolmate of his youth and friend of his mature years.
Some additional facts concerning the early history of Farmington. Although signs of very old Indian occupation are found in the town it is probable that there were no large established Indian Villages. However on the farm of J. B. Francis near the Novi town line seven skeletons were found in a single grave. While over another was growing a tree nearly two feet in diameter.

Early in February 1824 Arthur Power, his sons John and Jared Power with David Smith and Daniel Rush set out from their homes in Farmington, New York and came to Michigan. They chose a place for their camp and on the 8th day of March 1824.
cut the first tree ever felled in the town. John Power one of the choppers died four years after. While David Smith lived to be over 80 years old. Near where the tree stood they built the first log house. It stood on Sec. 22 on land now owned by Fred Westfall. Into this humble pioneer abode came happiness and contentment also pestilence and death. In 1832 cholera became epidemic in Michigan. The little settlement in the wilderness did not escape its ravages. A man by the name of Barnum was its first victim, followed a few days after by the death of the wife and daughter of Nathan Power who with his family.
occupied the log house at the time. This sad event occurred Aug. 1832. The mother died at 7 a.m. and the little 3 year old girl at 11 a.m. Late that afternoon they were buried in the Cemetery known as the Quaker Cemetery. Buried in one grave. The first burials in the Piece.

The first Doctor to settle in the town was Doctor Ezekiel Webb. He came in 1824 and built his house on land now occupied by the dwelling of Constantine Collins. The next year 1825 the doctor succeeded in having a Post Office established and became the first Post Master. Mail came once a week from Detroit and was frequently delivered by the doctor himself on
his professional tours.

The first death in the town was that of Mrs. Sanford M. Utley which occurred in about 6 months after settlement. Death was caused by a fall. It is a singular circumstance that on the day of her burial the first white child was born in the town. John W. Collins who spent his entire life in the town, dying in 1913 at the age of 89.

The first framed building to be erected in the town is still standing in a good state of preservation on the farm now owned by Charles Westfall. It was built by Solomon Walker for Nathan Power in 1827. It stood originally about half a mile from its present location.
And was moved to where it now stands March 13, 1837, with 15 yoke of oxen.

The first blacksmithing was done by Esek Brown in 1825.

The first school in the town was taught by Nathan Power in the year 1826. Its sessions were held in a small log building that stood on the south bank of the creek a little east and across the street from the house now occupied by David Ross and for many years the M.E. Parsonage. Mr. Power taught the school until 1830. After that time he gave his attention to his farm until his death in 1874. In 1855 he represented his district in the Legislature at

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Lansing. Kinsley S. Bingham was Governor at the time. He and Mr. Power became warm friends.

Some time after the legislature had adjourned the Governor had occasion to go to Pontiac. He stopped at the home of Mr. Power with his wife and had dinner. At this time several negroes who had been slaves were in the employ of Mrs. Power. They were in the habit of eating at the same table with their employer and his family. The sons of Mr. Power, young men at the time objected to this custom at this particular occasion. But in vain did they plead with their father. He would make no change. He nor his family suffered no harm from the presence.
of the negroes at their meals. Neither would the Governor. Eat they must and eat they did much to the disgust of Mr. Power's sons. The first Grist Mill was built in 1827 by Edward Steele and his brother on Section 17. It stood just north of the home now owned and occupied by Elliott Sprague. It was completed in the fall of that year and the first grain was ground for Orange Culver who brought the grain and carried away the flour on his shoulder a distance of a mile and a half. It became famous for the excellence of its work. Was known as the "Steel Mill" and the settlers
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with the single exception of a horse team which brought its load from an adjoining town. In 1850 the tavern which stood near where the Baptist Church now stands was consumed by fire. It was kept by Horace Swan. He immediately commenced to build a new Hotel on what was then the New Detroit and Howell toll road. Now Grand River Ave. This was completed and opened as a public house in 1851. It remained as such under successive ownerships until 1921 when it was moved back off from the street to make way for a modern Bank Building. For 70 years its
patrons went in and out of its doors. What sights it has seen, what stories it could tell if it but had the gift of speech.

Stephen Page was the pioneer merchant of the town. His store stood on the North side of the street near where the Baptist Church now stands. Henry Miller opened another store soon after. James T Mead also ran a general store. It proved profitable, and after a successful career he sold the business and went to Lansing where there was a wider field for his activities.
P. Dean Warner the author of the greater part of this work was born in New York State in the year 1822. He came with his parents to Michigan in the year 1825. They came by the way of Dearborn to Farmington and settled in Sec. 15 in the northwest quarter. His childhood was spent upon his father's farm. He felt the privations and endured the hardships incident to the pioneer life of his time. As a boy he was studious industrious and easy to learn. The training that he received at the simple country school added to his intense application with the soundness of his judgment.
early made him a thorough business man. Exact in his dealings sound in his judgment
of values and strong in his intuitive knowledge of men. He married Rhoda Botsford Nov. 8, 1845 and lived happily
with her for 65 years. Early in his young manhood he entered the mercantile
business in the Village of Farmington. It was a time of depreciated
currency of Wild Cat Banks and of reckless speculation. While
others failed he succeeded and laid the foundation of a competence that grew with the years. He
was active and influential in all the public matters of his town. Politically he voted just with the Democratic party but
the arrogance and wickedness of slavery intensified by the
Repeal of the "Missouri Compromise" and the brutal enforcement of the fugitive slave law in the Northern States caused Mr. Warner to early become a member of the Free Soil party which was soon absorbed by the Republican party. His fight against slavery and for the preservation of the Union was untiring. Alert able and convincing in argument he established a leadership that was unquestioned among his fellow townsman. They honored him by a three times election to the Legislature, twice to the House of Representatives and once to the Senate. He proved to be an able and influential.
member and at the session of 1867 was elected Speaker of the House.

Temperate in his habits he hated the liquor traffic and waged an unceasing warfare against it. In this overthrow and was an active member of many of the temperance organizations of his time. In the fight against intemperance as in the fight against slavery he was an effective public speaker. His addresses on important occasions were unwritten and in some cases could not have been prepared yet in vigor of thought, consistency and accuracy of diction could not be surpassed. He was a versatile man. He
could turn his hand to a score of employments. As a farmer as a merchant as an advocate as a legislator he
was a success. Few men outside of the Bar had the knowledge of law that was his. For years he occupied
the office of Justice of the Peace. Recourse to the law to settle injurious wrongs and grievances
were often sought. In most instances he discouraged litigation and many a quarrel and contention was
settled without a lawsuit by his kindness and tact in dealing with those who thought themselves aggrieved.
Through his long years of service as justice he drew most of
the deeds, mortgages, wills and legal papers of the town. When inspected by those whose duty it was to examine them carefully, they would be found without a flaw, so careful and painstaking had he been in their preparation. He believed in God and had implicit faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. A loyal follower of the Master he ever advocated his cause and the expansion of his Kingdom. His was a well spent life and the world was made better because he lived in it.

He died at Farmington Aug. 28, 1910

N.H. Power
This account of a journey from NY State to Michigan made in 1825 by Mr. Warner in company with his father's family was written by himself. At the time of this journey he was only three years old. Unfortunately only a part of the narrative has been preserved.

My father Seth A. L. Warner left his house in the town of Hector then Tompkins but now Schuyler County New York with his family consisting besides himself and my mother three children all boys of which I was the youngest and a maiden sister of my mother the latter part of March 1825.
On his reaching Buffalo the family and a very small quantity of household goods were on the 1st day of April put aboard a schooner bound for Detroit at which port it arrived in safety after a few days contest with the wind and waves of Lake Erie. After arriving in Detroit word was sent by my father to a brother-in-law already located in the south part of Oakland County. After a tedious and exhausting journey by the way of Dearborn through a low flat country covered with a dense growth of brush much of which had to be cut away before we could proceed. We came
to an elevated plain with scattering trees and hazel shrubbery. Driving up under the protecting branches of a large oak we halted for the night. My mother was not a strong robust woman but of rather feeble health and seemed to realize more fully than the others the many miles that separated her from the friends and associations of her life as they had been measured by the anxiety and weariness which had been experienced by her in her three weeks journeyings from a quiet home on the pleasant shore of a beautiful lake in the interior of New York to the unbroken wilderness of Michigan.
One of the first physicians in the town was Doctor Wixom. He came from New York about 1829. He was a man of great courage and skill, with a rough exterior but a kind heart. It was a time of considerable sickness. Day and night he went on horseback through the woods where there were no roads and often no trail to guide him. Many are the tales told of his practice and of his surgical operations which were performed often under the most difficult circumstances in the log cabins of the Pioneers. He lost few patients and was trusted implicitly by the people he served so well. On one
occasion he was passing along the road where a barn raising was in progress. Just previous to his arrival a man had one of his toes crushed by a timber falling upon it. The Doctor was called in and having no surgical instrument to his liking called on a carpenter's chisel and with it and a mallet cut the toe off. He then bandaged it and the patient got well. He became widely known for his surgical skill and in the Civil War served his country well in treating the wounded and maimed. He died at Argentine Mich at an advanced age.
One of the things indispensable to the progress of a country are good roads. Farmington because of its situation geographically on almost a direct line between Detroit and Lansing was early favored by the building of a Toll road known as the Detroit and Howell Plank Road. It was built in the years 1851 & 52. A great portion of it between Detroit and Farmington was constructed of Oak Plank. The travel required two four-horse stages daily each way with frequent extra's as far as Howell. 24 passengers were carried by each coach and they were usually loaded to capacity. It was not uncommon to see passengers riding on
the top so great was the travel at the time. To accommodate this travel taverns were built at a distance of a few miles from each other at convenient places along this road. They furnished food and lodging to man and beast and did a thriving business. The road opened a fertile farming country and it was crowded most of the time by farmers hauling produce to Detroit. With the building of what was known as the Detroit Lansing and Northern R.R. and also the Flint and Pere Marquette R.R. this traffic ceased almost entirely. With its business gone the road fell into decay.
And after a time surrendered its charter to the state and ceased to collect toll. The old substantial taverns with one exception are gone. The one built at Clarenceville in 1836 by Stephen Jennings and in later years widely known as the Botsford Hotel is still standing at this writing in 1921 a reminder of the pioneer days that are gone never to return. With the coming of the automobile came the necessity for better roads. Wayne and Oakland Co.'s led the way in cement construction. A few miles were built at a time until the year 1919 saw the completion of one of the best roads in the state extending from Detroit to a mile west of Farmington Village.
Farmington Village was incorporated in the winter of 1866 and by its first charter election was held May 6, 1867 and resulted in the election of P. Dean Warner as president. John A. Fairfield, Clerk, and J.A. Webster, Anson J. Cloyes and George Matthews as trustees. Mortimer Serviss was appointed Marshall and Henry Riley Pound Master.

On the morning of Oct. 9, 1872, there occurred a disastrous fire which destroyed most of the business structures in the heart of the village. Some of the buildings destroyed were a store owned by P. Dean Warner and occupied by Porter Shepard, the stone store of W. B. Selby and O. B. Smith, the drug store of W. B. Selby and O. B. Smith. The drug store
of Doctor Woodman. The Masonic Lodge room, and a millinery store owned by Miss Pierson.

The stores of Selby and Smith were erected in 1850 by Selby and Joshua Simmons. An irreparable loss was the destruction of all of the township records previous to 1872.

Mr. Warner at once rebuilt upon his lots the substantial brick building now occupied by Fred Cook as a general store and Dickson and Hatten as a hardware store. For a number of years the village made slow growth, but with the building of the Electric Road in 1900 it began to show a substantial increase in the number of its inhabitants. This road coming...
from Detroit branches at Farmington junction one branch going to Pontiac by the way of Orchard Lake and the other branch going to Northville. Hourly service is given during most of the 24 hours. The frequency of this service together with its nearness to Detroit makes it an ideal suburban town. Its banks do a substantial business under a safe conservative management. When its new building is completed the Farmington State Savings Bank will have a home second to none for beauty utility and convenience. Hon. Fred M. Warner and his associates have spared no pains or expense in the construction of this building and when completed it will
be something that the town can well be proud of. The buying and shipping of milk is an important industry and affords a large source of revenue to the farmers of the vicinity who furnish this important article of diet. Its stores are well conducted and well patronized. Its Auto-mobile Agencies do a thriving business. Most of the citizens are owners of these modern vehicles.

At the present time two Church Organizations, the Universalist and Methodists hold regular Sunday services at their respective churches. The Church building of the latter that had been in use since 1844 burned to the ground on the
night of Feb. 7, 1920. The Society at once leased the Baptist Church which was not in use. Here they have continued their worship and will do so until the completion of their new church on Grand River Ave. which is located on the lot so long occupied by Jacob Drake with his dwelling house and shop.

Farmington Lodge No. 151, F & A.M. was chartered January 30, 1865. Its first Secretary Oliver P. Hazzard is still living (1921) and at 86 retains his health and his mental vigor to a remarkable degree. His memory of men and events of pioneer days have been invaluable in the preparation.
of this work. The Lodge first met in the hall over the Stone Store. The fire of Oct. 72 compelled them to move over the store of Norman Lee. Whence they moved to the hall in the Warner Block. Which they occupied until the completion of their own hall Dec. 27, 1876. About 5 years ago this hall was enlarged and is now commodious and convenient and well adapted to the purposes of the Lodge. It has nearly 250 members and is in a prosperous condition.