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The Farmington Forum

October 21, 1976

Township Hall Dates Back 100 Yrs.

by Ruth Moehlman

Farmington's Masonic Temple – Township Hall is one hundred years old this year. It is marked by a bright green sign, put up by the Farmington Historical Commission which declares: "This building was constructed in 1876 by the Township of Farmington and the Farmington Masonic Lodge Number 151. The township government occupied the first floor of the building until 1963 . . . The structure is a fine example of Victorian and French Renaissance Architecture, making it one of Oakland county's most attractive buildings."

The Township Hall was built four years after a fire destroyed most of the business section of the little village of Farmington on Oct. 9, 1872.

By the Civil War, this area of Michigan had become an important agricultural area. It was a grain producing and general farming area. Orchards and dairy farming were soon to become important. The Farmington community was busy enough to have been incorporated as a village in May, 1867.

The general stores, drug store, mills and blacksmiths provided services for the surrounding farmers. A stage coach line operated along the Grand River Plank Road on a regular schedule. Hotels in the village provided a stopping place for passengers on the stage line and others who traveled the busy road.

A block of stores that became the main business district were built in 1850. These buildings which not only housed businesses, but were also the meeting place of the Masons and provided storage for township records burned in the fire of 1872. Many of the early township records were lost.

The business block was quickly rebuilt by P. D. Warner, Farmington insurance agent, banker and village president. These stores and apartments were known as the Warner Block. The Masons, who had met previously over Oliver Smith's dry goods store, had lost their Masonic clothing, furniture and records in the fire that destroyed the Masonic room.

They soon were meeting in a building owned by Norman Lee, one of their members. Next they moved to the new Warner building when it was completed.

Meanwhile, with the growth of the area, the Township government was becoming too large to continue to meet in the local inns or public houses where they had met since the township was first organized in 1827.

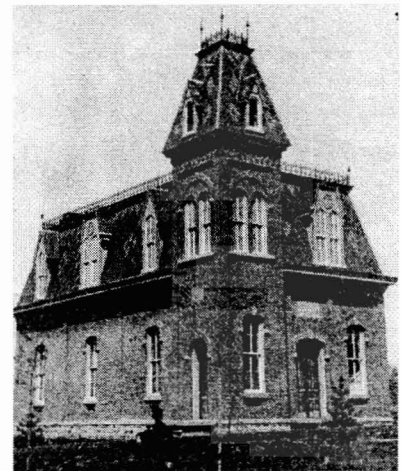
The townspeople and the merchants raised \$500 for a new Township Hall and the Masons decided to take part in the project. They agreed to pay \$1,150 of the construction costs for a perpetual lease.

The Township purchased a cow pasture that belonged to Mrs. Cynthia Collins, the first woman settler of Farmington. She was also the first woman settler to have a baby in Farmington township.

The cow pasture that was at Grand River and Farmington rd. was five-eighths of an acre. It cost \$800 at the time.

Johnston Prall of Pontiac was hired to build and design the Township Hall. Prall at the time was the chief designer for the city of Pontiac.

Prall designed his buildings from a vast library of books. He was not an architect by formal education. He built the township hall during 1876 with the help of his sons, Justine and Mark, and his brother David. Johnston Prall's work is considered some of the best of the Victorian-French Renaissance architecture of the era. Examples of his work are being preserved in other parts of Michigan.



Farmington's Town Hall was a two story building, 30 feet wide by 60 feet long. It was located near the center of Farmington business of the 1870's. It was completed Dec. 27, 1876. It cost a total of \$4,300 to build which was \$200 more than was estimated at the time.

The building was heated with pot bellied stoves and the lighting was

furnished by kerosene lamps that blackened the ceilings. The second floor where the Masons held their meetings was reached by a spiral staircase.

The Masons had a special office held by a person who made sure that the lamps were filled and that there was fire wood for the stove.

The building was the true center of community activity. All the township business was conducted there, taxes collected and voters registered. Local plays and other community activities were held in the Township Hall.

The Farmington Community Band which was organized at the turn of the century played in the Town Hall square. In 1918 one of the bandmen, Bert Gates, who was a carpenter by trade worked with the other band members to construct a white band shell in the Town Hall square. On Saturday evenings during the summer the band played in the park.

Inside the Township Hall lectures, barn dances, dinners and basketball games were held.

As early as 1905 the Masons had put electricity in the upper story of the Town Hall. They were using electric current from the Detroit United Railroad which was direct current and had to be used in cluster lights.

In 1911 electricity of the alternating kind that was used in homes reached Farmington. The basketball team wanted electricity in the Town Hall for their games. The Hall was lighted at that time with gasoline lamps.

Albert Bruder, son of the local tailor, was the president of the basketball team. The team gave a dance to raise the money for the lights and then Bruder wired the Township Hall so that the team could continue to play there. (Albert Bruder later became a banker in Redford.)

It was about 1913 when the women of the Ladies Literary Society, the social club of Farmington saw numerous books being

kicked about the entrance of the Town Hall. The books had been part of a library that had been operated by the schools as early as 1881. Books circulated on every other Saturday at the schools. When the library could no longer be operated by the schools, the books were stored in the entrance of the Township Hall. In 1913 the Ladies Literary Society established a library in the First Baptist Church on Shiawassee.

The library, which soon outgrew the room in the church, was briefly in the basement of the Farmington bank. In 1915 the Township Hall was remodeled by Henry Wieberg, a Pontiac contractor. A room was added in the back for the Farmington library. (The Farmington Chamber of Commerce uses that room now.)

Miss Mary Kennedy became the librarian. She never received any salary for her work. Books were scarce but Farmington had the beginnings of a library which was reorganized in 1938.

In 1924 additional remodeling was done to the Town Hall with Art Lamb, Farmington carpenter doing some of the work. Art Lamb was active in the community. He came from a pioneer Farmington family and he was also a member of the Masons. Care was taken during the expansion to duplicate the original architecture of the building.

In 1963 the Township government built a new building and moved out. It almost was the end of the Township Hall. The city owned thirty-five per cent of the building, the Township sixty-five per cent and the Masons fifteen per cent. In December 1963 the Masons purchased the entire building. In 1967 the Masons did extensive remodeling.

There was still discussion about a new modern Masonic Temple. At the meeting of Sept. 26, 1975 the Masons made the decision to keep and preserve the historic building.

Now the building has been designated an historic site and the fine architecture is recognized as worthy of preservation in the Farmington Historic District.

The Masons have raised funds for restoration with government funds matching their efforts.

Gardens have been planted in the Township Hall Square and new curtains and other work has been done on the inside of the building.

The building is still a center of community activity with the Masonic Temple sponsoring youth activities as well as activities for senior citizens.

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Farmington, Michigan

80 Pages

Fifty Cents

Jefferson influenced Farmington bank designs

By Linda Ann Chomin
special writer

After World War I ended in 1918, a building boom soon followed in downtown Farmington. Two bank structures arose within a year on Grand River.

On March 18, 1922, the Farmington State Savings Bank opened at Grand River and Farmington Road. A massive structure, it not only housed the new savings bank, but 11 other businesses as well.

Bank structures followed the lead of Thomas Jefferson's institution designs, built in the style of a classical Roman empire.

Twin Ionic columns grace the front corner façade of the Farmington State Savings Bank, founded in 1898. Six columns line the side of the building on Grand River, six more columns adorn the side of the building on Farmington Road.

This is how the Farmington Enterprise described the new bank building in March 1922:

"The bank building proper is constructed in a most substantial manner, the exterior being of Bedford stone and granite base coupled with reinforced concrete and tile, making the same fireproof."

Bedford limestone is named after the town it is quarried from: Bedford, Ind. The newspaper also noted that the interior is of Missouri marble and Kansas walnut.

PEOPLE'S STATE Bank opened to the public on Feb. 16, 1923. Paired Ionic columns adorn the façade of the bank. Stahl & Kinsey were the architects and engineers.

The Farmington Enterprise described the bank in the Feb. 23, 1923 edition:



Ionic columns adorn the façade of the People's State Bank

"The exterior of the building is shown of white artificial stone and especially designed with heavy Corinthian columns flanking the main entrance and extending the full height of the building, supporting a handsomely patterned entablature, the structure presents a substantial and pleasing façade."

After World War I, banks were designed to relay the idea, they were stable and secure.

"There's a little Roman influence in the People's State Bank," Gaiser said, "very much like the Parthenon with the fluted columns."

WHEN BUILT, People's State Bank, except for the position of its clock and a baluster along the roof line, was identical to the Plymouth United Savings Bank on Main Street in Plymouth, Mich.

The caps on the columns of the People's State Bank building in Farmington have since been removed, Gaiser said.

The ornamental scrolls on the capitals were dangerous to pedestrians walking by because they were disintegrating. They were removed and what remained, smoothed nearly flush with the columns. They now appear as columns of the Doric order, instead of the Ionic.

Today the engraving in the stone, People's State Bank, no longer remains. It has been sandblasted off the façade.

"The Farmington State Savings Bank shows French influence, with the urns and entablature," Gaiser said, "also a little Roman."

Farmington State Savings Bank is now the Village Mall.

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Site a key element in shaping town's architectural style

By Linda Ann Chomin
special writer

A MERICAN ARCHITECT Frank Lloyd Wright said, "In any and every case, the site is the beginning of the building that aspires to architecture."

In February 1824, Arthur Power and sons Jared and John left their home in Farmington, N.Y. to pioneer a settlement in the wilds of Michigan. Traveling by horse-drawn sleigh, they journeyed two long weeks. Finally, they reached their destination.

On March 8, they felled the first tree to build a shelter from the cold, the wolves and the panthers. A log house arose in the midst of the wilderness, created from the only material available: Michigan trees.

Building after building sprang from the barren landscape in what was soon to become the township of Farmington, in the county of Oakland.

Arthur Power was the first builder-architect in the village of Farmington.

He built a shop for shoemaker Ebenezer G. Stevens; a store for Henry Miller; the first sawmill and dam; a grist mill and dam; a potash works for making soft soap; a log house and buildings for his son, Nathan; a large log house on high ground on the northeasterly side of the creek for himself; and two

years later, another large, long log house.

Arthur Power was at the forefront in the "encouragement of all years later, another large, long log house.

Arthur Power was at the forefront in the "encouragement of all enterprises" and promoted growth in the village. He built the first frame mill in 1826.

IN SPRING 1827, the township of Farmington was formed by an act of legislative council. Then came the first frame house built by Timothy Tolman in 1828. Two years later, Arthur Power built a frame dwelling.

In summer 1837, Sergius P. Lyon emigrated to Michigan from East Bloomfield, N.Y.

Lyon and his wife, Lucinda, settled in the town of Farmington, where he built barns, houses and businesses. Evidence of his building and design skills can still be seen in the family mansion of Joshua Simmons, built in 1841 and now referred to as the Hill House in Livonia's historical village at Greenmead.

As an increasing number of settlers arrived, they built dwellings and businesses within the heart of the village of Farmington. In winter 1866-67, the village was incorporated.

On Oct. 9, 1872, tragedy struck the village as fire roared down Main Street.

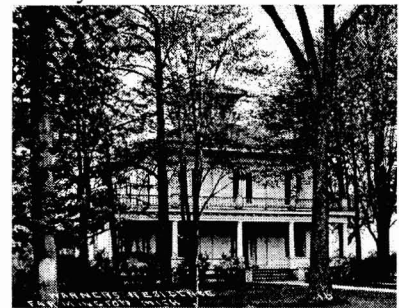
Timber structures lining Grand River burned with fury, leaving nothing but charred wood and ashes. The lone building to survive the disastrous fire in Farmington's business district now houses the Korner Barbershop, at Grand River and Farmington Road.

"The Korner Barbershop was built sometime between 1860 and 1870," said Lee S. Peel, author of the 1971 book, "Farmington: A Pictorial History," out-of-print but being revised.

"It is the oldest known business structure in downtown Farmington," Peel said.

The oldest known business is not significant from an architectural standpoint. It is a plain, boxy building constructed strictly for function.

IN 1873, local businessman and politician P. Dean Warner replaced the structure that he lost in the fire of 1872 with a two-story brick building known as the Warner Block. Its vernacular architecture style was popular in the late 19th century.



"The structure is primarily a combination of turn-of-the-century architecture," said Carl E. Gaiser of

Farmington, an architect for 35 years.

Seven double-hung windows, with surrounding eyelid brickwork, graced the façade of the building's second floor. Twin rows of dentils decorated the area below the roof line.

Shortly after the turn of the century, the building was revised to give it an "early art deco look, terra cotta brickwork and a single row of dentils" Gaiser said.

"A palladian window was added and a parapet, where the façade continues up beyond the roof structure."

The seven windows became five. From 1873-76, the second floor of the building was used as the Farmington Masonic Hall.

IN 1876, a combination Town Hall and Masonic Temple was built by Johnson Stout Prall, a prominent Pontiac builder.

"The structure includes the influence of French, Victorian and Roman architecture," Gaiser said. "The Victorian influence can be seen in all the gingerbread and ironwork."

The French influence is noted by the Mansard roof. The roof was named after the design of the 17th century architect, Francois Mansart.

The roof was the keystone of the Second Empire style of architecture. The style originated in France during the reign of the Second Empire, that of Napoleon III (1852-57,) under whose use it was extensively revived.

The Town Hall/Masonic Temple was built for \$4,300. In 1915-16, an addition was constructed on the west side of the building at the cost of \$6,200.

The addition duplicated the original style of the architecture, including the woodwork on the eaves and dormers. Farmington's

first library was housed in this historic hall.

Today, all the ironwork is gone from the 114-year-old structure, now known as the Masonic Temple. Alongside the Governor's Mansion, the Town Hall/ Masonic Temple purchased by Farmington Lodge No. 151 F. & A.M. from Farmington Township in 1963, is one of Farmington's most notable pieces of architecture.

BUILT IN 1867, the Governor's Mansion ranks among the most notable architectural structures in Farmington.

"The Governor's Mansion shows a Victorian influence," Gaiser said. "It is traditional, colonial-looking with round columns. There's eyelid brickwork around the windows."

There are decorative brackets under the overhanging roof of the second story and lantern. A balustrade decorated the entire length of the first-floor roof line.

The Governor's Mansion, when first built was known as the Senator's House. Pascal De Angelis Warner was elected senator from the fifth district in the Michigan Senate in 1869. His son, Frederick Maltby Warner, was governor 1905-11.

P.D. Warner built the house two years before he became a Michigan senator, therefore it became the Senator's House. When Fred M. Warner became governor, his father, P.D. "Dean" Warner, built himself a smaller house alongside and let his son use the senator's house as the Governor's Mansion.

SINCE 1980, the mansion has been home to the Farmington Historical Museum.

The front porch has been joined by a side porch. A porte cochere was added that allows vehicles to drive under and release passengers without exposing them to the elements.

The balustrade that ran along the first floor roof line is about to be returned to its rightful place on the roof.

A \$6,000 grant from the International Organization of Questers, plus \$50 from the local Quakertown Questers chapter, plus \$4,400 from the museum budget, plus the donation of services by Gaiser has made replacing the balustrade more than just a dream.

Restoration of the Farmington Historical Museum's balustrade is a significant step toward preserving history for generations to come.

"The site is the beginning of the building that aspires to architecture," said Frank Lloyd Wright. Arthur Power and pioneers after him built structures based on the site, using the only material available, Farmington's trees.

Farmington as a site "has a fine rolling surface and a most productive soil" watered by several small streams.

As buildings constructed on this site aspired to Farmington's fine historic architecture, it is our responsibility to preserve their integrity and beauty for future generations, so that they will be able to relate Farmington's history to the next generation of children.

The Farmington Enterprise

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FARMINGTON, MICHIGAN, FRIDAY, JANUARY 27, 1922.

5 Cents Single Copy. \$1.50 A YEAR.

OLD VILLAGE LAND MARK TOTALLY DESTROYED BY FLAMES. FRIDAY

Friday morning about 2:30 a.m. fire started in the building used jointly by Mark Owen and I. Parsons. The fire was discovered by Mr. Parsons, who occupied rooms above his establishment, the restaurant. He was forced to jump from the second story window as the fire had gained such headway. He sprained his ankle in the jump but was able to reach the telephone office and notify the night operator of the location of the fire. The origin of the fire is presumed to be that of an over-heated stove, starting in the rear of the building, but this has not been definitely ascertained. A high wind from the south endangered the property across the street as well as the adjoining building used by the Michigan State Telephone Company. This building has been covered with sheet metal and due to this and the work of the firemen the building was saved.

Telephone Operators Show Worth

Once again the telephone operators showed their worth by continuing to give service in spite of the fact that their own building was liable to catch fire at any moment. Miss Powell, the night operator, and Miss Sara Cairns, chief operator, stayed by the board until they were forced to leave the building by smoke and water. As soon as the fire was under control they again resumed service and the telephone company had men repairing wires in an hour. By morning, telephone service was again complete.

The eastern half of the building was used by Mr. Parson as a restaurant, and had been established about six months. The

west half was used by Mark Owen. Mr. Owen had just started up with all new equipment for a tire and battery repair shop and had worked up a nice trade in the tire and battery line. Mr. Owen has secured a new place of business in the new bank building on the arcade, and will resume operation as soon as new equipment arrives. Mr. Owen's loss was covered by insurance. The building was owned by W. G. Newcombe and Henry Pauline. In both business place everything was a total loss.

The February 3, 1922 Farmington Enterprise had this follow-up story.

INTERESTING FACTS OF BURNED BUILDING

The building destroyed last Friday has a history remembered by a few and while now it is nothing but a blackened heap of red wood, it once was a place where acquaintances met and slept on their way to the city.

The building was one of the oldest landmarks in the village, having been moved to its present location from Shiawassee street, some sixty years ago, and was first used as a general store by P. D. Dean Warner and O. P. Hazard, and afterwards changed hands a number of times and was used for various purposes. The last one to use it as a general store was James H. Murray, and finally for a saloon, kept by Dennis Toomey. In '61 and '62 it was used for a recruiting

station for the 4th Michigan Cavalry by Wesley Green.

About where the D. U. R. truck turns south stood the store used by John W. Collins and his father as a grocery and post office. John W. Collins was Farmington Post master for many years.

On the ground where now stands the house of John Lapham, was built, in 1858 the "Green Mountain" hotel and about one hundred feet by the side of the Plank Road, was built the hotel barn and afterwards a shed reaching from the hotel west nearly to the barn and in the second story, was a dance hall, a popular place for public dances for many years.

As a paying proposition the hotel did not prove good, and it changed hands often. One of the late owners was Gilbert Bush a painter, with ambition but no capital. Bush soon tired of hotel life and concluded to wind up with a grand ball. He secured the help of one of his townsmen, who, like "Silas Wegg," occasionally dropped into poetry to write his notices of the farewell ball. They read, "Everybody come one and all, to Old Gib Bush's farewell ball, put on a clean shirt and a paper collar, and your bill will be just one dollar." The ball was a grand success and let Old Gib out handsomely.

The last one to occupy the hotel was James H. Murray, a strong temperance advocate, who advertised the hotel as a "Temperance Hotel." But as usual, it was non-paying and in April 1960 [sic 1860] fire started in the upper part of the barn in the early part of the evening and gradually worked its way around the dance hall to the hotel building and all was consumed, though all of the goods of the hotel were moved from the hotel and saved.

The Green Mountain hotel was one of a number of public houses that stood between Farmington and Detroit, nearly all of them being on the north side of the road. The only one now standing is the "Hotel" now owned and used as a dwelling at Clarenceville by Frank Botsford.

The Farmington Enterprise

FORTY-EIGHTH YEAR—No. 2

FARMINGTON, MICHIGAN, THURSDAY, MAY 21, 1936

3 CENTS a Copy

Farmington's "Old Mill," 108 Year Old Landmark Torn Down

Not a few expressions of regret by pioneer Farmington residents will greet the news that the Old Mill on Drake road between Eleven and Twelve Mile roads was torn down last week. One of Farmington's first commercial enterprises, it had withstood time and the elements for 108 years.

The following description and history of the Old Mill written by Frank Steele of the Eleven Mile road was originally prepared for the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society.

The First Mill

"One of the first men to anticipate the need of some means for converting the grain into flour and meal," Mr. Steele said, "was Edward Steele, father of the late Carlos Steele and my grandfather. He came to Michigan in company with his brother, Harmon Steele, in 1824, and they staked claims on land in this district.

"Through the center of the tract that they obtained ran a small stream with a natural location for a dam, flume and mill. These facilities were soon taken advantage of to satisfy the wants of the pioneer and a mill was built upon this location.

"The first grist mill was built in 1827 and was located on the west branch of the creek and about two and one-half miles north and west of Quakertown as Farmington was then called. The owners were Edward Steele, Harmon Steele and a small interest was also owned by Howland Mason, who himself performed most of the mill work.

"It is said the bedstone and runner were formed from boulders found somewhere in the vicinity. Show me today a number of men who will be equal to the task of hewing from the solid rock of a boulder the stones needed for such a mill. This was an example of the fortitude and independence of the pioneer. The first grist is said to have been ground for Orange Culver, who brought the grain and carried away the flour to and from his home in a sack upon his shoulder, a distance of about a mile and a half each way.

"My grandfather, Edward Steele, died in 1836, and the mill was sold to Joseph Coon. The next proprietor was J. T. Little, who designed to do a more profitable business than the former owners by selling flour in Detroit, named the mill and his brand of flour 'Pernambuco.' Thus the name of the place, now called 'Sleepy Hollow' became known as 'Pernambuco Hollow.' My father, Carlos Steele, drew flour to Detroit with a yoke of oxen for Mr. Little when he, my father, was but 16 years old.

Had Many Owners

"Among the list of owners of the mill are to be found the names Wise, Parshall, Rheume, Orvas and Delling. The latter sold the mill to Peter Hardenburg in 1867, and the long and continuous operating of the mill by two generations of Hardenburgs. Peter and his son John, established the name of the four and the name of the mill as 'Hardenburg' At that time, Farmington, or Pernambuco Hollow could boast of a cooper's shop, soap factory, store and saw mill, besides the grist mill.

I have often heard my father say that he could remember the time when there was more business done in Sleepy Hollow than in the village of Farmington.

"The saw mill was situated just below the flour mill and was owned and operated by Edward Steele and Byro French, the latter a young man who had worked for a considerable time in my grandfather's employ. The mill was destroyed by fire in 1837, when the irons, gearing and dam were purchased by Myra Gage, who, himself being a millwright, rebuilt the mill and afterwards sold it to Collins Miller. He in turn sold it to Warren Serviss and Mark Arnold, who were both coopers, and carried on their grade in connection with the mill.

Center of Social Life

"Here in the early days was the center of social and financial life of the neighborhood. Here the stalwart young men of the village bathed in the waters of the pond, caught fish from its sparkling waters in the summer and skated upon its smooth surface in the winter. On moonlight nights the hills which sloped downward to the mill were ever echoing and re-echoing to the laughter and joyous exclamations of boys and girls as they coasted downhill.

"At the mill we got warm after skating and coasting, sharpened our skates, mended our sleds, and talked over the events of the neighborhood as we listened to the splash of the water over the water wheel and the busy whirl of the machinery. Here it was that the flour covered miller with his white cap greeted his customers, asked them the news and in exchange passed to them the gossip told by previous customers of the day.

Beginning of the End

"In 1888 the shaft of the axle of the water wheel broke, and this was the beginning of the end. John Hardenburg, who still owned the property at this time, was persuaded by agents and millwright's men to install a new turbine water wheel. But this new up-to-date contrivance was out of harmony with the rest of the machinery, and was the beginning of the financial, sentimental and picturesque downfall of the old mill.

"Roller process flour came onto the market about this time and was in great demand by the housewife. So during the installation of the new machinery Mr. Hardenburg had lost a good share of his trade in the outside market as well as that of his neighborhood customers.

"Mr Hardenburg struggled along for six years after repairing the mill, but in 1894 he left it in its financial ruin and going to the city entered a business where he soon prospered. Be it said to his credit that he paid off all debts and old obligations incurred in trying to place the property back into a paying proposition. He was killed by an electric street car on Woodward avenue in May, 1819.

Dam is Destroyed

"The mill passed through the hands of an old Scotchman, David Ross, and came into the hands of its last operator, Henry Wadenstorer, in 1902. The flood of 1904 swept away the dam, and it was no sooner rebuilt than another such downpour again destroyed it.

"Since writing the above I have wandered down through the valley by the dilapidated dam to see if the associations would bring new thoughts to my mind. As I stood upon the bridge and heard the latent waters bubbling down over the stones as they did 300 years ago I recalled the list of men who had owned and operated the mill and have passed on down the 'River of Life' to the Unknown. I was reminded of the words of Tennyson,

who personified the brook by causing it to say: 'Men may come and men may go, but I go on forever'."

Since the death of Henry Wadenstorer in 1934 and the recent death of his wife Rosena, the property has passed into the hands of Frazer Wadenstorer and his sister Stella Gates.

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Official Publication for Farmington City and Township

SEVENTY SEVENTH YEAR NO. 37

FARMINGTON, MICHIGAN, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 16, 1965

TWENTY-TWO PAGES

Old Grace Hotel Demolition Wipes Out 60-Year Landmark

few of the early landmarks still standing in the community.

The old Grace Hotel, home of the Farmington Elks Lodge for more than a decade and a prominent landmark in the community for 60 years, went under the wrecker's ball last week to provide badly needed parking facilities for the northeast quadrant of the downtown business section.

The Elks, who purchased the large, three-story building from the Grace family in the late 1950s, recently completed a swap of their building with one owned by the City of Farmington several doors to the west which formerly housed the Municipal offices. The razing of the Elks building will provide more area for off-street parking than would the clearing of the former City Municipal building. The Elks are also far enough away from church property to the east to qualify for a liquor license at their new quarters.

THE OLD GRACE HOTEL was built in 1915 by Benjamin F. Grace, great-grandfather of Gerald Grace who has the Grace Insurance Company and local Secretary of State's office in the building right next door at 33304 Grand River Avenue.

The Grace Hotel was the center of social life in the surrounding area with regular festive gatherings held in the large ballroom on the top floor. As many as 100 couples and more would journey by horse and buggy to the Farmington hotel for an evening of dancing and gaiety. Old horse stables were located behind the hotel as recently as the 1950's.

THE HOTEL WAS operated by Ulysses A. and Lydia Grace, grandparents of Gerald Grace, with their son, Clare J. Grace, who helped in the construction of the building.

The construction of the building featured a Mansard roof and solid cement blocks which were hand tamped on the site. The superintendent of the construction received \$2.25 per day in wages and the carpenters were paid \$1 per day. Workmen usually put in a full 12-hour day.

The Grace family began using the hotel as a private residence in the late 1920's. Five generations of them have lived there over the years. The Grace family, itself, located in the community some 135 years ago with Gerald Grace still maintaining residence here at 32329 Valleyview Circle.

THE GRACE HOTEL, at the time it was built, rivaled the Owen House which was razed in the 1950's, as the biggest building in the community. These two boarding houses along with the Botsford Inn were the only stopping-over places for travelers in the area for many miles around when Farmington was still a village. Farmington incorporated as a City in 1927.

The wrecking crews may have gotten into more of a job than they bargained for in the demolition of the old hotel. The foundations of the building are reported to be three feet thick. The cement-poured steps in front of the building will also require a good effort to move. Razing of the building leaves very

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Old mill brings back memories

Editor's note: At a time when farming was the main industry in the area, a working mill was a key industry in the community. This history of the Steele-Hardenburg flour mill written by a descendant of the owner recalls a time when the mill and life at the ancient house where she grew up revolved at a slower pace.

By ALMA ROSE
WADENSTORER MILLER

The property that was to be the site of the Steele-Hardenburg flour and Cider Mill was deeded by The U.S. government to Edward Steele on July 3, 1924.

A small house was built on the east side of what is now known as Drake Road that was the trading post and post office in the small settlement built beside the creek.

The cornerstone in the house dates back to 1924. Up until three years ago the hitching posts used by the settlers were still standing in their original locations in the front yard of the home known as 26570 Drake Road and Howard Road.

Several owners bought and lost the property due to taxes and other unforeseen circumstances.

After the mill was erected in the spring thaws with their high waters continued to take the dam out. Of course the dam had to be reconstructed before there was water to grind the grain and operate the cider mill, this was one of the main reasons the property changed hands so often.

In fact a neighbor, whose property abutted my grandfathers at the top of the hill, told my grandfather that he was a fool for buying the property and that he would go broke just like everyone else and be without a home in a year.

My Grandfather's answer was, "No, I will make a go of the business" and as history will verify he did indeed prosper and was the last owner of the Mills.

MY GRANDFATHER, Corbennin Wadenstorer was assigned the property now known as 26570 Drake Road at the corner of Howard Rd. on March 18, 1902 from the Farmington Exchange Bank.

On July 20, 1908 a certificate of co-partnership between Corbennin Wadenstorer and Roseane Wadenstorer, his wife, and the Farmington Exchange Bank was filed with Oakland County.

The following persons comprised the firm under the name and style of The Farmington Exchange Bank: P. Dean Warner; S. D. Holcomb; Fred M. Warner; Mary E. Sprague, Administrator of C. J. Sprague, Estate; G. Gale Collins, C. W. Wilber and M. B. Pierce.

A Discharge of Mortgage was recorded from the Farmington Exchange Bank by C. W. Wilber, Cashier to Corbennin Wadenstorer and Roseane Wadenstorer, his wife on March 22, 1912.

The mill was operated by my Grandfather Wadenstorer beginning on July 29, 1908 as a flour and cider mill.

The mill was known by farmers from as far away as Lansing as the Steele-Hardenburg Mill, home of Pernambuco Flour. The cider mill was erected on the east side of the flour mill.

Corbennin Wadenstorer and Rosenna, his wife, had three children while living in Farmington, with two still living—Estelle Bailey now living in Howell and Frazer Holcomb Wadenstorer, who lived in the valley for some 62 years, or until his retirement.

After the marriage of Frazer Wadenstorer and Ethel Wiles Wadenstorer in 1928 his father gave them the old house at the foot of the hill directly across from the mill site to repair and make into a homesite.

They made it their home for some 45 years. I was born and raised in the valley along with a brother.

THE ONLY changes ever made to the house were to tear off the old front porch on the Drake Road side and build an enclosed porch and also an additional room on the north side of the house.

The original house is held together entirely by large ax-hewn rafters held together by large wooden pegs. These can still be seen inside the house.

The basement under the house has walls of stone and in fact the basement window next to the creek closest to the road is constructed of the original wood casement and window frame that has been a part of the house for as long as I can at least recall.

The pine tree standing at the southwest corner of the house appears to have been planted there when the house, was built and is still standing.

“What a story it could tell if only it could talk. The age of this old tree can only be guessed at.”

Farmers drove their horses and wagons from as far away as Lansing to have their grain ground into flour at my Grandfather’s Mill via old Grand River to old 12 Mile Road before a portion of it was closed to Howard Road before it was rerouted by the now I-696 expressway, which in turn brought them directly to the Mill Site.

As a child my brother, Laverne Wadenstorer, and I helped my father tear down the Mill. The equipment from the cider mill was sold to Tibbits and moved to Inkster Road and Northwestern Hwy., where it was used by the local farmers to have their windfall apples made into cider for many years or until it burned down, and is now known as Cider Mill Village.

WHEN WE WERE children Drake Road was barely more than a one lane road and the creek at the foot of the big hill, for it was a big hill then, had a stone Bridge over it just wide enough for one vehicle to cross at a time. The old stone bridge can be seen in the earlier pictures of the valley.

The water used to operate the mill was diverted from the creek up above the mill, and indeed if you look alongside Howard Road as you come down around, the mill as we have always said to you the hill that ends at Drake Road, you can see the water bed that came down above the mill and operated the wheels.

There were two water pits, one on either side of Drake Road, and the water flowed under the road into the pit in the front yard of the house, then east for about 500 feet

and then angled back into the creek.

THE SITE of the old schoolhouse may be found by digging a few feet inside the two stone pillars north of the house about 500 feet. This was the school attended by all of the local children including my father until it burned down, then they relocated the schoolhouse at the corner of 12 Mile and Halstead Road, known as the West Farmington School, where my father and all of the local children attended school through the eighth grade.

The tree referred to in earlier stories about the valley as having a branch bent by the Indians does not appear in the earliest pictures of the settlement; and it would appear, that indeed the tree is the old Walnut Tree that stood about ten feet from the old pine tree beside the house. The branch was indeed bent and my Father tied a rope to it and all of the children in the neighborhood for many miles around swung on it.

The trunk of this tree is still there about four feet high. My Mother put an old wash tub on top of it and kept it planted with flowers and it is still there today.

This article was not written by hearsay, the dates were taken from the original abstract which belongs to my father and the rest from a true life experience as lived it by the writer.

The Farmington Forum

May 14, 1981

List Historical Homes Cemeteries & Bldgs. In Farmington Area

By Ruth Moehlman

Farmington Hills has a series of historical districts adopted by the City Council.

These districts tell much about the history of the community and are the reason that they are so designated.

During the earliest period of Farmington history, when a community was cut from the wilderness, pioneers built log cabins. These buildings were cold and drafty and the successful farmers were anxious to replace them with homes built of saw mill lumber.

During the earliest period of home building, farmers successful enough to afford a new home, built Greek Revival homes. Because of their architecture and well proportioned design, these homes are considered art works in architecture.

Nine Greek Revival buildings are in the Farmington Hills Historical District.

1. The Aldrich-Flora Home was built in 1840 by Royal Aldrich for his bride Jennet. The home was purchased later by a German farmer, Frederick Bade. It is an outstanding example of well balanced Greek Revival architecture. (Eleven Mile rd.)

2. The Cox-Wallendorf Home was built by Ezra Cox. (Thirteen Mile rd.)

3. The Botsford Walleret Home was built in 1858 by Lemuel and Lucy Botsford. The Botsfords were Quakers who came to Farmington because of its cultural community from their other Michigan homestead. All their children married into prominent Farmington families. (Farmington rd.)

4. The Philbrick Tavern was on the Lansing Post road. It is called the Philbrick-Juliano home now. The Lansing Post rd. was replaced in importance by the Grand River rd. so that the tavern was off the beaten path for travelers and it was converted to a farmhouse. Prior to the Civil War this home was reputed to have been a stop on the Underground Railroad that helped escaping slaves reach safety in Canada. (Eleven Mile rd.)

5. Stephen Yerkes Rodgers built a magnificent home of the Greek Revival style in 1834. It is still owned by a member of his family. (Nine Mile rd.)

6. The Green Dornan Home was built by Theron and Rebecca Murray near the legendary Minnow Pond. The home has hand-hewed beams in the basement. It was owned by Horace C. Green who

farmed potatoes and other crops on the prosperous farm. He was a member of a prominent Farmington pioneer family.

7. The Simmons-White House was constructed in 1843 and now has two buildings put together. There are some unusual interior architectural features. (Haggerty rd.)

8. The Clarenceville store was originally on Heise street in old Clarenceville. It was later moved to Grand River and then put on its present location when Grand River was widened in 1946. It was probably built by William Jennings, an early inn keeper at the Botsford Inn. The house was first owned by William Heise, a blacksmith.

9. The Unitarian church has been moved to Halstead road from its original location on Shiawassee. It has been in continuous use as a church since 1853.

Other Pre-Civil War buildings are significant because of age or the roll that they played in Farmington history.

201. Little-Pas House was the 1835 millers home for the Steele Flour Mill. It was probably built by Howland Mason who did most of the mill work in the first mill in Farmington Township.

John Little changed the name of the little town near the mill from Sleepy Hollow to Pernambuco Hollow after a place he had visited in Brazil. He was the miller for a while. This cottage has a stream running through the basement. (Drake rd.)

202. The Boorn-Halsted-Robinson home was built by James Boorn who was a cobbler and a farmer. After James Boorn, his daughter's son became owner of the property.

The Halsted family were leading apple growers in Farmington before the turn of the century. (Halsted rd.)

203. The Alice Warner Brown House was the home of the early minister for the Farmington Lutheran Society and Clarenceville Jonathon Society. It dates from 1845. (Nine Mile rd.)

204. The Erie-Prince-Regentik House was constructed by one of Farmington's early Presbyterian ministers. Erie Prince was also interested in mills. He constructed a saw mill behind his home along the river. The mill and mill site are gone now. (Howard rd.)

206. Drake-Ford-Campbell Home, a 1830 Michigan farmhouse, was owned by William and Theodore Drake. Their family named Drake Road. Extensive remodeling has been done on the house. (Drake rd.)

207. Schroeder-Ward Home, built in 1858 when the Erie Prince Saw Mill was separated from the rest of the farm. The farm was owned by the Shroeder family who were prominent in Farmington business before the turn of the century. (Howard rd.)

208. Botsford Inn. This building was used as a tavern from 1836 on. It was built by Allen Weston and owned by Milton Botsford and Henry Ford. It is listed in the Register of national Historical Places. (Grand River ave.)

209. Button Homestead. It is a French Mansard farmhouse built around 1830 by a prominent Farmington family. Charles Bissell Button built this elegant home next to the location of the log cabin on his farm. It is still owned by the original pioneer family. (Twelve Mile rd.)

210. Conroy-Rowe Home. This home was built in 1850 by the colorful Dennis and Eleanore Conroy who raised a large family in Farmington. (Power rd.)

211. Cox Lucas Home. This farmhouse, known as the Old Cox Place, was probably built by or for G. Garfield between 1831 and 1839. It was sold in 1839 to a J. McDole who sold it to John Cox. (Thirteen Mile rd.)

After the Civil War the price of Michigan farmland skyrocketed. The Farmingtonians turned to fruit growing and dairy farming.

302. The Crawford Mahoney Home was built around 1870 by Myron Crawford. It is Victorian Gothic in style. It has an enclosed staircase and original windows. (Thirteen Mile rd.)

303. The Davis Robertson Building was once the home of Martha M. Davis, who married Fred M. Warner; Fred Warner became governor of Michigan at the turn of the century. The home is elegant with beautiful woodwork. It has been converted to an office building. The Victorian architecture is excellent. (Twelve Mile rd.)

305. The Ludwig Home is one of the homes in the Historic District that has been moved. It was originally on Thirteen Mile and Middlebelt rds next to one of Farmington's early saw mills. This Victorian Home was built as his own residence by carpenter Eli Stodgell. It dates from 1899. (Spring st.)

306. The Wixom Douglas Home was built by Civilian Wixom, son of one of the original Farmington pioneers. He built the home in 1872 and it was owned by numerous outstanding Farmington families. (Twelve Mile rd.)

307. Jones-Bigelow Home was built in 1870 by Hamilton Jones. It is still in the original family. (Twelve Mile rd.)

308. The Halsted Ludwig Apple Barn, an 1891 building built by Thomas Jefferson Davis for the Halsted family to store their apples has doors large enough to roll a loaded wagon through them. Living quarters were later built above the barn. (Halsted rd.)

309. The Cooney Teeples Home was built in 1899 by a well-to-do dairy farmer. The barn is still standing. The interior of the home is generally in its original condition, (Fourteen Mile rd.)

310. The Eagle-Brown Home was the home of Ward Eagle, one of the early leaders of the Michigan Milk Producers Association. The home was built by George Eagle, his father, in 1890. An earlier home once stood on the corner of Fourteen Mile and Middlebelt rds. The horse barn, built of Michigan stone, is still in excellent condition.

311. The John Glick Home is also the Plum Tree Pottery and Studio of the eminent Michigan potter, John Glick. He reconditioned the 1870 Michigan farmhouse.

312. Sherman-Goodenough Home is the Farmington Community Center. The brick farmhouse built in 1867 by Palmer Sherman, became the summer residence of prominent Detroit attorney Luman Goodenough. He had his friend, architect Marcus Burrowes, turn the farmhouse into a Georgian Manor house.

313. The German School. The schoolhouse was constructed in 1870 in Fractional School District Number one on a site of an 1850 schoolhouse. The interior had been remodeled and is still used as a kindergarten. (Middlebelt rd.)

314. Sonsmith Home. This Grand River home was built around 1900, probably by William A. Gates. There have been extensive additions.

Other historical buildings were selected because of architectural or historical interest.

501. The Randall-Collet Home is on the site of the 1872 Springbrook Cheese factory in what was once North Farmington, a small unincorporated village in Northern Farmington Township. The home was built around 1900. (Drake rd.)

502. Burrowes Mills Home. This French Provincial home was built around 1930 as his own home by architect Marcus Burrowes. The interesting casement windows in this home provide maximum ventilation. (Locus dr.)

503. Mosema-Fox Home is an 1837 Cotswold Cottage of unusual construction by Marcus Burrowes. (Biddlestone rd.)

504. The Presbyterian Manse is another Marcus Burrowes design, dating from the 1930s. The country home of white clapboard is beautiful architecture. (Farmington rd.)

505. The Cudmore-Friedman Home is an 1916 addition around an original 1830 farmhouse. It was a 1920 estate home of one of the officials for the Detroit United Railroad. (Danvers dr.)

506. The Clubhouse for the Glen Oaks Golf Club is an excellent example of 1920 architecture. It was designed to be an exclusive country club of Oakland Subdivision of the early 1920s. (Thirteen Mile rd.)

507. Sarah Fisher Home. The unusual brick work was done during the 1920s. The original administration building and chapel are examples of this Georgian Brick. (Twelve Mile rd.)

508. The Crawford-Rayner Home is an example of Queen Anne architecture around an earlier building. The barn was constructed in 1900 and the carpentry was done by owner Harry Rayner. (Middlebelt rd.)

The three historical Farmington cemeteries are also given district designation.

900. Is the East Farmington Cemetery 1824. It was the first burial ground in Farmington. (Twelve Mile rd.)

910. The West Farmington Cemetery was on the grounds of Farmington's first Baptist church. The church is gone but the cemetery is still there. (Twelve Mile rd.)

920. The North Farmington Cemetery was in the little village of North Farmington. The village is gone, but the cemetery is still there. (Farmington rd.)

(see map on next page)

Farmington Hills Historical District Site Map
Greek Revival Buildings

1	Aldrich-Flora Home	1840
2	Cox-Wallendorf Home	1840
3	Botsford-Wallaert Home	1858
4	Philbrick-Juliano Home	1827
5	Yerkes-Barber Home	1834
6	Green-Dornan Home	1833
7	Simmons-White	1843
8	Clarenceville Store	1840
9	Unitarian Church	1853
Pre Civil War Buildings		
201	Little Pas Home	1835
202	Boorn-Halsted-Robinson Home	1830
203	Alice Warner Brown House	1845
204	Erie Prince-Regentik House	1834
206	Drake-Ford-Campbell Home	1830
207	Schroeder-Ward Home	1858
208	Botsford Inn	1850
209	Button Homestead	1840
210	Conroy-Rowe Home	1850
211	Cox-Lucas	1840-1850

Michigan Farmhouses

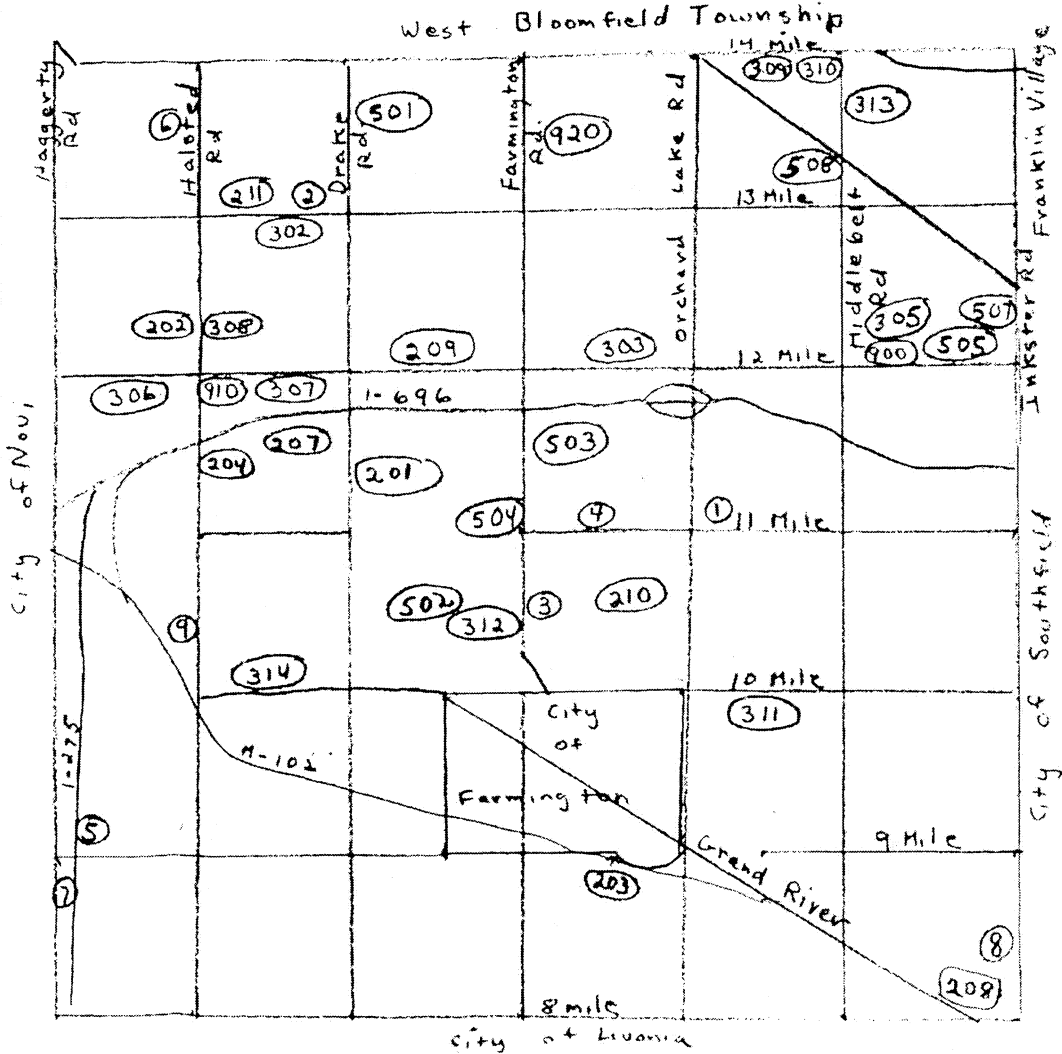
302	Crawford-Mahoney Home	1870
303	Davis-Robertson Building	1872
305	Ludwig Home	1899
306	Wixom-Douglas Home	1872
307	Jones-Bigelow House	1870
308	Halsted-Ludwig Apple Barn	1891
309	Cooney-Teeples Home	1899
310	Eagle-Brown Home	1890
311	John Glick Home	1870
312	Sherman-Goodenough Home	1867
313	German School	1870
314	Sonsmith Home	1900

Other Buildings

501	Randall-Collet Home	1900
502	Burrowes-Mills Home	1930
503	Moseman-Fox House	1937
504	Presbyterian Manse/Barn	1930
505	Cudmore-Friedman Home	1920
506	Glen Oaks Golf Course Club House	1920s
507	Sarah Fisher Home	1920s
508	Crawford-Rayner	1900

Historic Sites

900	East Farmington Cemetery	1824
910	West Farmington Cemetery	1835
920	North Farmington Cemetery	1837



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