

# Rooted family traces its own black history

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

In 1853, Aaron and Ellen Wilson made one more try for freedom. Already, the slaves had managed to escape once from their Freemont, Virginia owner and had come to Michigan.

But the Fugitive Slave Act made it possible for the Wilsons to be captured and returned. They made a second attempt with three other slaves. Using their mistress' horse, they traveled to Michigan. They were pursued by their owners who eventually caught up with them.

But the determined hand managed to beat the three white men who were chasing them. They left without ever knowing if the men were dead or alive.

They made their way to Windsor, Ontario and became Canadian citizens. Although the naturalization forms state the couple lived in Canada for three years, their descendant, Pete Hulm, of Farmington Hills, doubts it.

His only comment about their sojourn into Canada is a knowing, amused smile.

The Wilsons were Hulm's maternal great-grandparents. They settled in Farmington Hills on a five-acre orchard on what is now Eleven Mile east of Orchard Lake Road.

They chose the area because they took a liking to it during their first, ill-fated trip north, according to Hulm.

THEIR FIVE ACRES helped to support them but Wilson still found it necessary to work on other farmers' land to make enough money to raise his family.

Aaron died on Aug. 11, 1908. His wife died five years later after she was severely burned trying to check a fire in her stove. She was attempting to turn the damper in her stove and create a smaller fire when her clothes began to burn.

His granddaughter, Emma, married Darius Hulm and set up housekeeping in Detroit. Their son, Wellington, came back to Farmington when his wife was a child to live with his aunt Mary Wilson.

His aunt promptly changed his name to Pete.

"Farmers couldn't appreciate a name like that," she told her nephew.

Hulm preferred to stay with his aunt and attended Farmington High School, graduating in 1928. His parents bought him his first car when he attended high school. It was a spanking new Model T with a cloth top and celluloid windows.

The windows cracked during the winter cold and the crankshaft started turning too quickly on Hulm and knocked out one of his teeth. A local dentist replaced the cracked tooth with a peg tooth which has stayed with Hulm for the rest of his life.

THE NEXT YEAR, Hulm was driving a coupe without a crankshaft starter and with real windows.

Hulm, 70, was the only black player on the Farmington High football team. When the team played Dearborn, he remembers a portion of the opposing team coming after him specifically.

While still in high school, Hulm began to repair radios in the area. Later on, he would branch out to repairing refrigeration and television sets.

Electricity fascinated him. As a boy, he went to the Detroit Urban Railway stations and watched the power being transformed along the lines to make the trains run.

A cousin, Claude Wilson, worked for the D.U.R. Hulm still has the key used by D.U.R. employees to open the train's power stations.

Wilson eventually became the first black man to work as an Oakland County Sheriff.

Aviation was another interest of Hulm's. In the early 1930's, he and his aunt watched as two planes went through dogfight maneuvers over the Farmington area. They dove lower and lower. Ms. Wilson turned to Hulm and told him the planes were about to crash. But Hulm had a reserve of youthful doubt and contradicted her.

ONE OF THE PLANES crashed on land which is now part of Oakland Community College. Hulm and another youth from the area rushed to the site. They discovered one of the aviators had been thrown from the plane, his nose crushed in by the impact of the crash. He was dead.

The youths had been reading books on aviation and began to look for the gunner, Hulm remembers. The gunner and the pilot sat back to back in the small early plane.

Hulm's friend climbed over one wing of the plane. Reaching into the wreckage he began to pull at something. It was the gunner. He too was dead.

"We told them, there's another one out there. You have to get him out," Hulm remembers with some of the original excitement still in the telling.



Pete Hulm, who has a long ancestry connected with the Farmington area, has many tales to tell about his family. (Staff photo)

Before World War II, Hulm made housecalls to his clients, repairing their radios. One large home of a wealthy local family had difficulty keeping servants. Finally, one day an English couple were hired to take care of the house. Hulm spoke to the new butler once while on a repair call.

The man told him he was moving after the next payday. He and his wife couldn't work there anymore.

Signal Corps instead of the infantry.

When the troop ship stopped at Cape Town, South Africa, he wasn't allowed to disembark. But when he reached India, he was able to hire a native boy as a servant.

"We had to. We didn't have the time to polish our shoes and od our laundry," he remembers.

Hulm was appalled by the way the English officers treated the natives. "We had to carry our guns to protect ourselves from the English," he said.

IT SEEMS the mistress of the house was a Nazi sympathizer and conducted meetings in the wee hours of the morning. The couple had to wash the dishes after the late nights and then be up four hours later to serve breakfast to the master of the house, who was unaware of his wife's political preferences.

The family eventually moved from the area. With the advent of World War II, Hulm was sent to India as a member of an all black signal corps. The officers were white.

His aptitude in electronics helped him to pass the army's tests with honors, enabling him become part of the

AMONG THEIR initial pieces of advice the English gave to newly arrived signal corpsmen, was to avoid kicking their Indian servants so hard as to burst their spleens. That was one way to avoid a manslaughter charge.

Hulm and his wife Helen raised three children, Tracy, Adrienne and Dwight. Mrs. Hulm died last year.

Hulm still lives in the house he built to replace the original family home built in 1870.

In a long, narrow box made by his Aunt Mary, Hulm keeps the scraps of paper and photos which connect him to Aaron and Ellen Wilson.



Joyce Regan (left) demonstrates the method she used to save a heart attack victim's life only hours after she had learned the cardio-pulmonary resuscitation technique. Looking on is instructor Barbara Seafort. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

## AAA trip ends in lifesaving via CPR

For Joyce Regan, a routine trip to the Twelve Mile branch of AAA turned into a lifesaving mission when she found an elderly man stricken by a heart attack in the office's foyer.

Although she learned the techniques for cardiopulmonary resuscitation only a few hours before, Ms. Regan helped another customer, John Urghart, to revive 79-year-old Harold Coats of Farmington and keep him breathing until ambulance crews arrived.

Ms. Regan, 32, had barely walked up to the door of the office when AAA administrator Gladys Chamie asked if she were a doctor or a nurse.

"She said that she had just completed CPR classes," Ms. Chamie said. "I

don't know why I asked her — I was turning everyone else away."

Ms. Regan relieved assistant branch manager Thomas Mulcahey, who was resuscitating the man.

"She just said 'Go it' and I did," said Ms. Regan of her encounter with Ms. Chamie.

"I needed that. If she hadn't said that, I would probably have offered to help, but I don't think I would have done it so quickly," she said.

"IT REALLY WORKS," Ms. Regan added.

Working with Urghart, a teacher at Power Junior High School, reassured Ms. Regan.

"I knew I wasn't alone," she said.

## THE INSIDE \* ANGLE

THE FARMINGTON Area Commission on Aging is conducting two meetings on March 12 which are open to the public. Between 1 and 3 p.m., the commission will be in the lower level auditorium of the Farmington Hills branch library on 12 Mile Road near Farmington Road. Between 7 and 9 p.m., the commission will be meeting in the lower level room of Our Lady of Sorrows Church, 23615 Power Rd. near Shiloh in Farmington. On the agendas of the meetings are a presentation of services available through the Oakland County Library for the Blind and Handicapped and an explanation of the new Senior Companion program sponsored by the Catholic Social Services. A speaker will explain the 1978 Michigan Home Heating Tax program, through which seniors can get a tax break. For further information, call 553-9848.

THE OAKLAND COUNTY Health Division is offering a free immunization clinic in Farmington at the First Methodist Church on Warner and Grand River. Immunizations will be given from 9 a.m. to noon on March 8. Immunizations for measles, German measles, mumps, polio, diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough are available. A parent or guardian must accompany a child under 18 years old and bring any records of previous immunizations.

ANTIQUe BUFFS who don't mind driving a way can attend the Penton-Dibleville Antique Show and Sale from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on March 10 and from noon to 5 p.m. on March 11 at the Penton High School, near the Owen exit on US-23 at Penton. There will be 25 exhibitors offering antiques for sale. Admission is \$1.50. Proceeds will benefit the Historical Preservation Fund in Penton.

RICK HALE OF Farmington Hills was appointed to the medical social work staff at the Harper Hospital Division of Harper-Grace Hospitals in the Detroit Medical Center. Hale completed his bachelor of science degree at Eastern Michigan University and received his master's from Michigan State University in 1977. Before coming to Harper, he was a social worker for the Sarah Fisher Home in Farmington Hills.

NATIONAL WILDLIFE WEEK is March 18-24. The Humane Education Service reminds animal lovers that it's better to wait until that squirrel or raccoon in the attic can walk its young out of the nest before sealing up the entry hole it used. To discourage adult animals from making the nest once they are inside, leave lights pointed at the animals day and night, continuously play a talk show or rock station loudly, spray dog repellent in the area, scatter mothballs, or throw pebbles at the area.

CATHERINE BENNETT, an Albion junior from Farmington, will be among the 72 voices in the Albion College Choir on tour under the direction of music department chairman Melvin S. Larimer. Ms. Bennett is the daughter of Mr. and

Mrs. Gerald Bennett, 21205 Robinwood.

THE EIGHTH annual coffee day for Oakland County is beginning to perk. On March 30, buttons will be available in 150 restaurants in the county. Those buttons, given for \$1, will allow the wearer to receive free coffee on Good Friday, April 13. Donations from this year's effort will go to support various recreational programs such as a summer day camp and physical and occupational therapy under the guise of the Easter Seal Society.

TAXES HAVE YOU in a tizzy? The Michigan Taxpayer's Guide is an easy-to-understand booklet with hints on filling out this year's forms. It's available through the office of State Rep. Sandy Brotherton (R-Farmington) at 517-373-1793. The booklet outlines new benefits for senior citizen taxpayers and contains information on the Property Tax Assistance Program and the Energy Assistance Program.

NAME THE TOP physical fitness person in Michigan. The State Health Department's Michigan Council on Physical Fitness and Health is looking for persons to claim the honor for this year. Persons eligible for the award are those who have demonstrated a maximum effort in the development of or participation in programs of physical fitness and health in Michigan. Nominees must be Michigan residents. Deadline for nominations is April 6, 1979. Print or type the person's name, address, telephone number and his or her qualifications. Descriptions of qualifications should be limited to a maximum of 250 words. Nominations should be sent to Award Committee, Michigan Council on Physical Fitness and Health, Michigan Department of Public Health, 3500 N. Logan, Box 30035, Lansing, MI 48909.

DR. JOHN OSBORNE COX has joined the Farmington Family Physicians P.C. Dr. Cox hails from Vail, Colo. At the same clinic, Dr. Bala Onda has passed the American Board of Family Physicians certifying examination.

### DEADLINE

Material submitted for the Inside Angles, 23352 Farmington Road, Farmington 48024, should include the name and phone number of the sender. Typewritten notices are appreciated. Items should be submitted at least one week in advance. No photographs, please. Materials become property of the Farmington Observer.

### TELEPHONE CONNECTIONS

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• Farmington Observer staff — 477-5450.  
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