

In Memoriam

Clark's death recalls days of urban train

Farmington lost a piece of living history earlier this month with the death of 92-year-old John Clark.

A charter member of the Farmington Exchange Club, he also was a member of the first basketball team in Farmington and a state doubles champion in 1926-27 for ABC Lawn Bowling.

One of the things Clark will be remembered for was his job with the Detroit Urban Railway (DUR). IN 1911, he came to Farmington as superintendent of the Orchard Division of the DUR.

When he was 87, Clark talked to the Farmington Observer about his days working at the building on Grand River and Orchard Lake.

Newcomers can only see the evidence of the DUR when they approach the towering building, which is now used to house offices.

It once was used as a powerhouse which ran trolleys from Detroit to Farmington and over to Northville. It also ran from Farmington north along Orchard Lake Road to Pontiac.

Later the powerhouse became LaSalle Winery, now also defunct.

"They talk about rapid transit today. We had them all beat," said Clark.

"The limited left Detroit at 5 p.m. and got to Northville in an hour and a half. The cars ran seven days a week, from 6 in the morning until 11 p.m.

"The 11 p.m. car would wait on opera nights long enough for the people going to the opera to catch their car. We'd wait if the opera was late."

Clark remembered that the DUR also had freight cars run along their lines and carloads of apples from Farmington orchards to put in cold storage in Detroit went down its line in the fall.

"We picked up milk in Northville, Farmington and the Boisford stop. We took as much as 1,000 cans of milk to Detroit each day."

The names of the employees were still in Clark's memory.

"The emergency crew was Clarence Bell

and "Polly" Edwards. Frank Allen, Bill Pauline and Hank Pauling ran the powerhouse.

"John Lapham was the first trainman out. The others were Bill Irish, Bill Goers, Herman Goers, Louis Thayer, John Turner, Dave Woodruff, Howard Osmus and Ernie Drake. Construction crew was Bill Mass and Fred Staman."

Persons living in Farmington will recognize many of these names. Some of the families are still here. Many of the area streets have been named after these people.

"And in the car barns is where Art Geisler worked.

"Power for the cars came from coal. The car barns were across the street on Grand River and Orchard. Cars were stored and maintained there."

Clark began with the DUR in 1904 as an office boy in Detroit.

"It was 25 cents to go to Detroit. Detroit to Northville was 35 cents," Clark recalled.

After the DUR went into receivership, Clark worked for the city of Detroit.

"Man hours put us out of business. That and everyone owning a car. And, of course, Detroit put its own street cars in."

Clark remembered that many street names changed over the years.

"Ten Mile was Conroy, Eleven Mile was Locks Corners, Twelve Mile was Stevenson and Thirteen Mile was North Farmington.

"Grand River wasn't paved. Part of it was the old plank road and the farmers paid a toll at a toll gate.

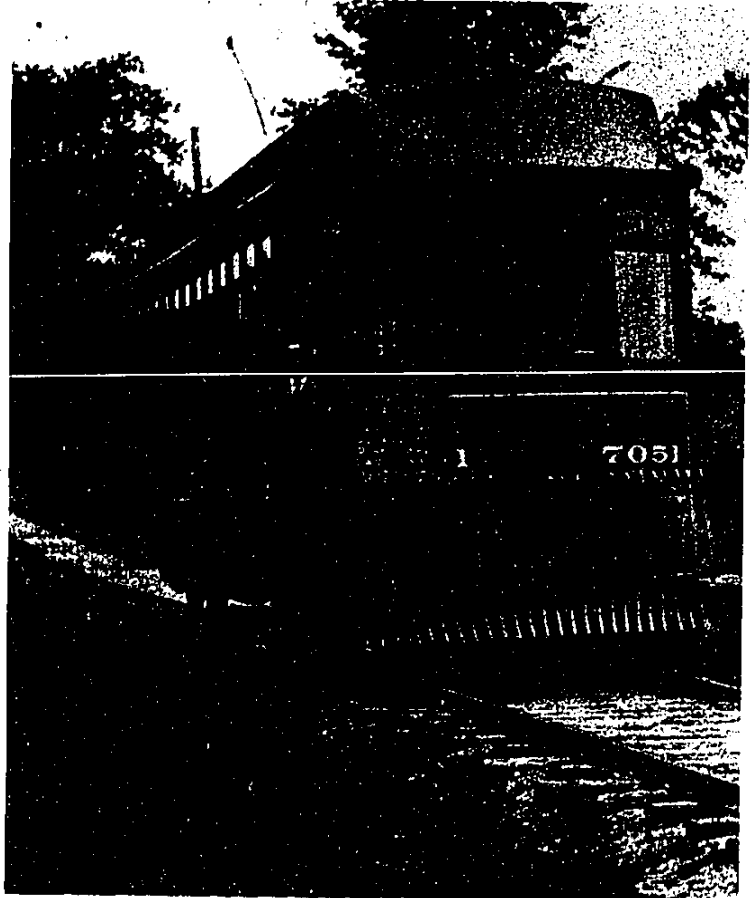
"We had the first Farmington basketball team sometime after 1915. We played in the Masonic Temple with light provided by gasoline lamps."

Work on the DUR could be exciting.

Accidents occurred mostly on foggy mornings when one car hit another. Cattle got in the way of the cars on the line to Pontiac and were killed.

The summer meant long hours as Detroit residents used the lines to get to the lakes

(Continued on page 6)



Trolley cars swept from Farmington to Detroit and out to Pontiac and Northville seven days a week during the prime of the Detroit Urban Railway.



Later to become a winery and now an office building, this building on Grand River and Orchard Lake Road served for years as Farmington's home for the Detroit Urban Railway.