

# Memoirs reveal city's early life

By Jean Adamczak  
staff writer

After lying dormant for more than 90 years, pieces of Farmington's history are finally getting some attention.

Previously unpublished sketches, watercolors and memoirs of Lillian Drake Avery come alive in a book published by the Farmington Hills Historical Commission entitled "A Farmington Childhood: The Watercolors of Lillian Drake Avery."

Written by Jean Fox, publication chair for the Hills' Historical Commission and John B. Cameron, professor of art and art history at Oakland University, the book holds many treasures for local history buffs.

The book will be unveiled at a garden reception Sunday at the original Avery homestead site at 25220 Power Road.

The memoirs, written by Lillian Drake Avery when she was 70 years old, recall her childhood spent in Farmington during the Civil War era.

"They depict her childhood, her whole way of life as she very clearly remembered it," says Fox.

"We would have published the book just for the memoirs; they're very valuable and there aren't too many around," she says.

Avery was born in 1856 on North and South Road (now Power Road), in what was then known as Farmington Township.

THE FAMILY house burned to the ground in the early 1870s but was rebuilt on the same foundation and still exists today.

Avery captured the home where she and her four siblings were born in a watercolor painting entitled "Our House." She painted the picture from memory in 1927 when she was 71 years old.

The book contains 10 full-color reproductions, most of them dated 1890, depicting various rural scenes of

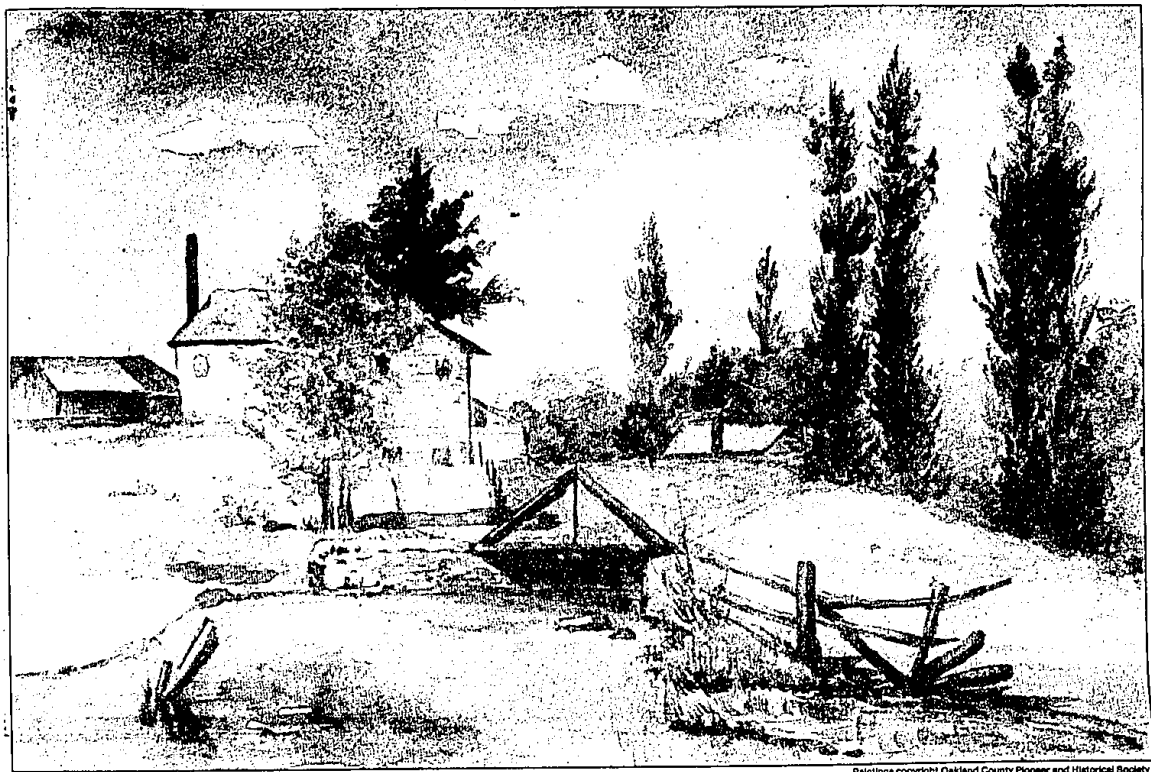
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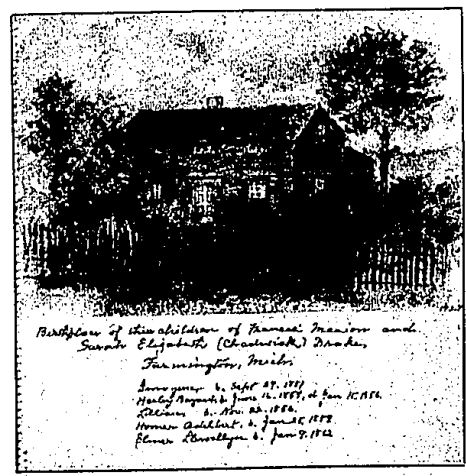
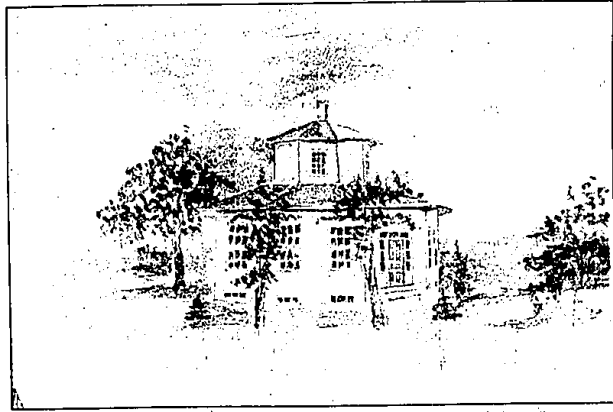
Mrs. Lillian Drake Avery  
1890-1980

## Avery and her art

Lillian Drake Avery chronicled 19th century life in Farmington Township and Oakland County through her water colors, sketches of maps and memoirs. The painting she entitled "Paddock Mills, Pontiac" left, depicts a grist flour mill located on the east side of Pontiac. The painting is believed to have been painted about 1890.



Paintings copyright Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society



## Early local sites depicted

Born and raised in Farmington Township, Lillian Drake Avery often painted rural scenes from her childhood. Drake painted "The Octagon House," upper left, about 1890. The house was built by her father, Frances Marion Drake, on the family's property at the north end of what is now known as Power Road. "Our House," lower left, shows the original Drake homestead where the artist was born. Below the picture are the names and birth dates of Drake and her siblings. The feeble printing is indicative of Drake's age (71), when she created the painting.

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