

Farmer's Command to Tear Down House Saved Village in Fire of '72

Conflagrations and floods have long been classed as the two most destructive agencies in our civilization. From the latter our city happily has never suffered. But from the former we have not always been exempt.

The summer of 1872 will long be remembered as one of excessive drought. Because of this condition, buildings had become as dry as tinder. About 2 a. m. on the morning of October 9, 1872, fire broke out in the dry goods store of O. B. Smith.

It was long before the days of a fire department. The water supply, what little there was, came from two wells, one in the street in front of the shop now occupied by Ben Myers and the other on the Owen Hotel property. A bucket-brigade was formed, but while it proved effective in saving the hotel, it could do little in preventing the destruction of the business part of the village.

Roofs were set on fire by hot cinders and at one time it looked as if the whole town was doomed to destruction. Among the buildings destroyed was Dr. Woodman's drug store, the store of W. B. Selly, and O. B. Smith, the dry goods store of Porter Shepard and the Masonic Lodge—with all of its records and furniture. One very unfortunate feature was the destruction of the Township clerk's office, with all of the early history of the town and the official records of his office.

Buildings near the burning area were covered with wet blankets and robes. These were

dried quickly by the heat from the fire, and had to be wetted down time and again. The roof of the Owen House was among those protected in this way.

On some of the ground now occupied by the Boston Shoe Repairing Shop and back from the street stood the dwelling house of Thad Kent. It was directly in the path of the on-coming flames. Aroused by the light of the conflagration Chauncy W. Green, well-known farmer, who owned and occupied the farm where Elmer Empson now lives, mounted one of his horses and rode into town with great speed. He sensed the situation at once.

Born to command, with a voice that could be heard above the roar and din he shouted, "Why men, don't you see what you've got to do? You've got to tear that house down—take the fuel away from the fire."

Then he began to give intelligent direction to the work of the frenzied fire fighters.

Stout ropes were procured and attached to the timbers of the Kent house. Men and women, too, seized the ropes and with all the strength they possessed tugged and pulled at the resisting building, until it came tumbling down, and the greater part of it was hauled out of the path of the fire. Foiled by this act and cheated of its prize, the fire subsided.

I was 12 years old and this event made a vivid impression upon my mind. I recall one or two incidents clearly.

About 10 a. m. of the day succeeding the fire and while some of the citizens were mournfully viewing the work of the fire-fiend, a travelling salesman, well known to the merchants drove into town. A successful salesman, he was also a Republican in politics and one of the stalwart aggressive type. In state elections of the day before, his party had carried the day everywhere. Approaching the group of citizens and speaking to them in impressive

tones he said, "Gentlemen, we have lost the city, but saved the country." The men to whom he spoke had lost nearly all the worldly goods that they possessed, but they could not help smiling at this remark.

One other incident I recall. Two men, residents of the town and not losers by the fire, renewed an old quarrel and came to blows. Norman Lee, a highly esteemed citizen of the village, made haste to separate them and while doing so rebuked them in words that they never forgot, shaming and denouncing "men that were willing to quarrel and fight at such a time," and in the face of the greatest calamity that the town had ever experienced. Norman Lee was the great uncle of Henry Lee, the hardware merchant and at the time I write of, resided in the house now occupied by Spencer Heeney.

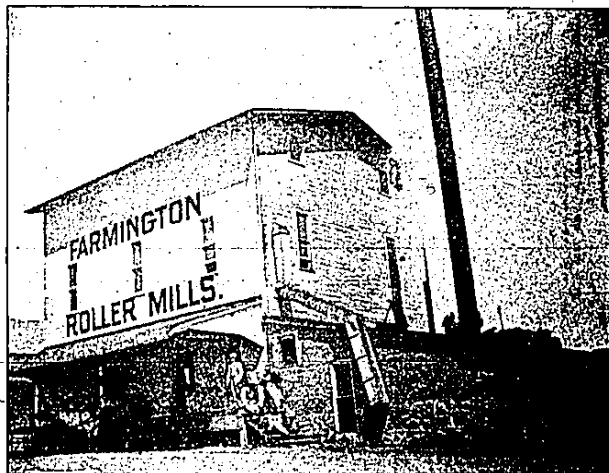
—N. H. Power.

Events Contribute To Anniversary Edition

An unusual number of coincidences has marked the preparation of this Fortieth Anniversary Edition.

The fiftieth anniversary of M. B. Pierce's business here, the 30th anniversary of Farmington Chapter, O. E. S., N. H. Power's recent review of Farmington school history before the school assembly, and the painting over of the old Town Hall curtain, all have occurred within the past few weeks and each has given rise to an article in this edition.

Its '50 Barrels A Day' Was Farmington's Pride



Of nothing was Farmington more proud 30 years ago than the Farmington Roller Mills. The Enterprise in 1898 said: "That was a great day for Farmington when the people of this vicinity raised a bonus of over \$1,000 to assist Louis Gilde-meister in starting his splendid roller mills. . . no one industry brings so much trade to Farmington. The custom trade is large, farmers coming long distances from every direction to have their work done by the genial German miller."



(From Enterprise, Oct. 19, 1894)

Mr. Thos. H. McGee, our well known druggist, has secured the agency for Foley & Co's reliable medicines, advertised in these columns. Be sure and try them.

Three Times This Farmington Man Was Chosen Governor of The State

When The Three-Time Governor Made His Bow

Fred M. Warner is making a hustling canvass for state senator and is making a most favorable impression wherever he goes. The Republican would like to impress upon the young men of all parties that in Mr. Warner they have a candidate whom they can all support and he will be an honor in the state senate and a credit to the young man in politics. And we say now most emphatically to the young men who have been clamoring for recognition in political circles show your sincerity and appreciation by rallying to Mr. Warner's support. Hurrah for Warner, the young men's candidate!—Pontiac Republican. (From Enterprise, Oct. 19, 1894)



The fame of Farmington, "the small town that is the home of a Governor," spread far and wide in 1906, when Fred M. Warner was first selected the State's chief executive. Famous, too, was "Warner's

Cheese." At the left is a picture of the Governor, which is considered an excellent likeness; above, the Warner home on Grand River and at the right his parents, Mr. and Mrs. P. Dean Warner.

