

## Influence Of Mesmerism, Work Of Early 'Dentists' In Farmington Told

Interesting anecdotes of early days in Farmington, including a number of stories known to few residents of the town, and not previously published, are included in "Some Facts Concerning Farmington City," read before the Farmington Exchange Club by Nathan H. Power Wednesday noon. It is as follows:

The land on which our city is located was surveyed by the U. S. Government probably as early as 1815. Section lines had been run and markers placed so that the first settlers that came in 1824 were able to locate their claims by section number. A dense and magnificent growth of trees covered the land. They were of many varieties and some of them were centuries old, fine specimens of the Creator's handiwork.

Why was this particular spot chosen for the pioneer settlement? There was more than one reason probably. First the soil was dark and rich and was suitable for farming purposes. There was also the creek near at hand and a much larger stream than it is at the present time. Also the Indian trail which was the direct route to Detroit and over which the Indians headed by their Chief Okemos went to get their bounty from the Government. Shiawassee street and the Old Farmington road follow this trail.

"Howl of Wolf"  
One of the very first acts of a pioneer after his arrival upon his claim was to build a log cabin to live in. It usually had only one room. Many had no windows. Some only dirt floors. The better ones had floors of bass wood logs split through the center. Most of the fire-places were made of sticks gathered from the woods. A lamp was made by placing some grease and a cloth wick in an open saucer, and lighting it. After this came the tallow candle. Table and benches were made by split logs supported by posts driven into the ground. Their slumber on rudely constructed beds was at times disturbed by the howl of the wolf or the screech of the wild cat. Friction matches were unknown and if the fire went out some one had to go to a neighbor's house after coals.

There were no roads for a time and visits were made on foot. Settlers frequently passed a period of sickness and might die and be buried before friends at a distance were told of their condition. What a change these early settlers of our city saw when they left the old established civilization of New York State with all of its comforts and came to the forests of Michigan, with its wild animals, its Indian trails, its privations and hardships. Notwithstanding these hard conditions,

most of them were happy and contented. They worked hard, slept well and enjoyed good health.

In the latter part of the year 1826 Arthur Power had his saw mill completed. It stood nearly back of where the Baptist church is located. It was operated by water power, and speedily for that time, at least, cut into lumber the logs drawn to it. With lumber chest and plenty, business places began to be erected and frame buildings took the place of log cabins. Among the very early stores was one conducted by James Mead. He was a good business man and well liked. One night his store was entered and goods were stolen. The thief left no clue to his identity, and the officers were unable to locate him.

"A Strange Power"  
At that time a strange power called mesmerism and made its appearance, and was much talked about. It is better known at the present time by the name hypnotism. There was a man in town, who, under its influence, developed a power of solving mysteries. Mead, the owner of the store, knew this and sought his aid. After he went into this hypnotic state Mead asked him if he could tell him who it was that robbed his store. He said he could not describe the man but he could see some of the goods that were stolen and that they were hidden in a large hollow tree that stood on the farm now owned by Mr. Webber of Detroit. Search was made and the goods were found in the place he described. I have this story from sources I think that are reliable.

About 1840 Mead sold his store, went to Lansing and became proprietor of one of the largest stores in the capital city. Among the early stores in the little village was that of Mr. Wells who committed suicide in 1836 on the banks of the creek, nearly back of the Fred Stuman house. He cut his throat with a razor. I think he was the only business man in Farmington that ever went out that way.

About 1829 Arthur Power built a grist mill at the foot of the McGee Hill. Part of the dam and some of the foundation timbers can still be seen. In the early years of the settlement it was necessary to go to Birmingham for flour. Near where stood the mill Mathew Tays built a distillery. He made whiskey principally from corn. It sold for about 50 cents a gallon. People went there and got their jugs filled. Many people used it. There were no restrictions and no tax. Then as now there was some drunkenness. One day in the late fall he sold a man a jug of whiskey. The weather was cold. The man drank too much of it, laid down on the ground where he was

found nearly frozen. He died shortly after. Some time after this the distillery went out of business. About ten or twelve years after the first settlement the street we call Shiawassee became a village. The road was good in the summer.

"\$125 An Acre"  
People built any type of a building they wished to. There were no restrictions. Most of the land was sold for \$125 an acre. Most of the families had a cow or some of them two. They ran wild through the woods. Many of them kept hogs which they fattened, in a pen on the back end of their lot. It might be close to the spring or well where the family got drinking water but nothing was thought of it. At times the hog pen might smell to Heaven but the neighbors were accustomed to it. Perhaps some of the typhoid fever that at times was epidemic might be based on this condition.

Marked advancement has been made by the medical profession in the treatment of this disease. In the early days of Michigan it claimed its victims by the score. Then the patient was allowed no water to assuage his thirst, but little restriction was placed on his diet. Modern medicine has just reversed this practice and deaths from this disease are not many.

The physicians who ministered to the wants of the people of Farmington in the early days of its history were heroic men. Bold, fearless. They went at any time of night or day, often on horse-back over roads that were impossible to travel in any other way. Sometimes where there was only blazed trees or an Indian trail. Previous to 1846 surgical operations were performed without the use of anesthetics. Ethereal was used that year for the first time. A broken arm or leg had to be

set or a bad flesh wound sewed together with the patient entirely unconscious. They were present at the birth, often signed the will and frequently sat at the death bed of some poor soul.

"He Saved Others"  
Among the doctors who were successful and popular in the pioneer days were Dr. Wixom, Dr. Hudson, and Dr. Steinhoff. The latter's home was the place now owned by Spencer Heene. He was noted for his kindness and his skill was held in high esteem by the entire community. His untimely death by accident was deplored by all. Without a family, a bachelor, and no near relatives his friends laid him away in Oakwood Cemetery and over his resting place erected a marble shaft which bears these lines: "He saved others but himself he could not save."

Shortly after Grand River avenue was laid out, built and used for traffic, a disease that baffled the physicians, swept over the town which had grown to considerable size. There had been a number of deaths and some of the citizens were in a state of panic about it.

Where the Methodist Church building now stands, on this corner there had resided for a number of years a wagonmaker by the name of Jacob Drake. His shop faced Grand River as did the small frame house which he and his wife occupied. He was a disciple of Tom Paine, read his books, never was seen in church, was a short thick set man with a belief and philosophy that scouted the teachings of the Bible in regard to future rewards and punishments.

"Fears He 'Had It'"  
As the disease that I have mentioned became more prevalent and fatal, Drake seemed much disturbed and fearful. He talked with his friends and inquired about the symptoms that foretold

the onslaught of the malady. One day he came from his shop and informed his wife in despairing words that he was sick—very sick, with the awful complaint and to call the doctor at once.

The doctor came, looked at the patient's tongue, counted his pulse, spoke encouraging, left medicine, and departed. He told Mrs. Drake to keep him in bed and said he did not have the dread disease. Drake was not satisfied and as the day progressed insisted that he was much worse and was probably not long for this world, and told his wife to call a minister without delay. This she did and the preacher submission to Thy will O Lord, but we ask that if it is not too much to ask that thou wilt restore this man to health and to his family.

"Dwell On That"  
As the minister said this Drake spoke up from where he lay and said, "Brother, dear brother, dwell on that point," do dwell on that point. Drake did not have the disease, was up in a few days but it was some time before he heard the last of this incident. The village was many years old before there was a graduate dentist with an office in town. Loat Smith, who came about 1870, was the first that I can remember. And I think the first one who cleaned teeth and filled the cavities. He was noted for his wit, liked a good horse and had a passion for amateur theatricals. He organized a company and they presented several plays using the church for the purpose. "Ten Nights In A Bar Room" was their first undertaking. The writer of these lines, then a boy, was there. Since that time it has been his

privilege to see some of the men and women who have become world famous because of their wonderful delineation of life and character upon the stage. But at no time or no place has he derived more satisfaction than at that amateur performance, crude, though it was, where he caught his first glimpse of the mimic world. Truly, it has been said that "All the world is a stage and men and women were merely players."

Part of the work of a doctor worse and was probably not long in pioneer days was to fill teeth and they usually carried a set of old-fashioned turnkeys with them. This instrument never failed to induce an aching molar to leave its firmly imbedded place in your jaw and come out into the open. It might and sometimes did bridle a piece of the jaw with it but the victim then, as now, was ready to pay the price if he could rid himself of the toothache. One of the first schoolmasters in the town would and did pull teeth when the occasion demanded.

One day a man came to his home with a raging toothache and asked to have it extracted. He sat upon the ground and leaned his head back against a stump and pointing to the offensive tooth as best he could calmly awaited action on the part of the amateur dentist. Soon a tooth was yanked out which on examination proved to be entirely sound and not the one wanted. Again the instrument was used and this time the tooth that ached was pulled. The patient much relieved, thanked the operator and went away smiling and satisfied. He did not even tell the operator to charge it.

(Continued next week)  
If any member of the family is driving a car, the head of the family is responsible, and it need not be shown that the driver was acting as the agent of the owner

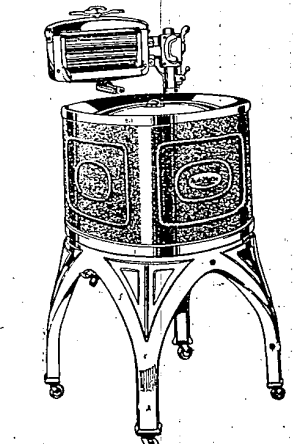


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