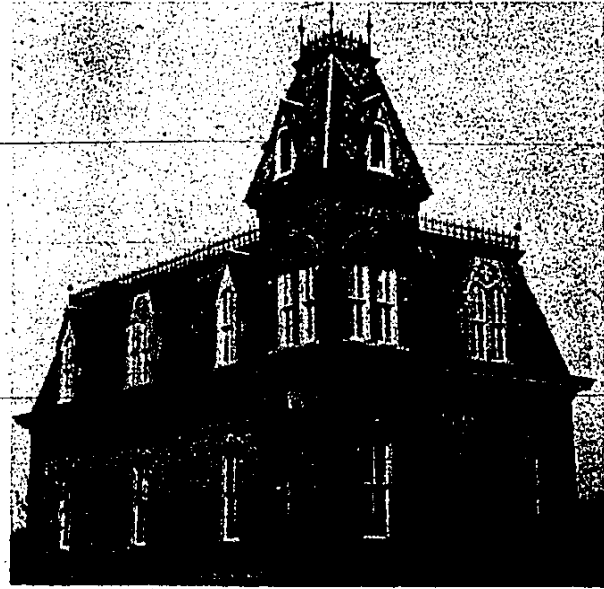


# Farmington - 150 years old and rich in history



FARMINGTON'S best known landmark the Masonic Temple stills stands where it was built before the turn of the century at the intersection of Grand River and Farmington. The building is nearly 100 years old.

Farmington was founded 150 years ago by five members of the Society of Friends (Quakers), who journeyed here in the middle of winter from Farmington, New York.

It was probably the lure of inexpensive land (\$1.25 an acre) and the chance to build a legacy for his large family that brought Arthur Power, his sons John and Jared, and David Smith and Daniel Rush to this area in 1824.

This month, Farmington celebrates its founding 150 years ago with a sesquicentennial celebration incorporated as part of the annual Farmington Founders Festival.

This area today is very different from the area that Arthur Power found. Fortunately, many good historical accounts of Farmington's beginnings are available, including the Oakland County history published in 1970, the book by Lee S. Peel, and the diary of Arthur Power's son, Nathan, who joined his father here in 1826 at age 25.

These documents and many others give a remarkably clear account of Farmington's beginnings 150 years ago.

BY 1820, the government had made large tracts of land available to settlers. In 1823, Arthur Power came to the Farmington area and made arrangements to purchase large parcels of land in the area presently between 11 Mile Rd. and Nine Mile Rd., along Power Rd.

Power returned to Farmington, New York (located in Ontario County in the western part of that state) and made arrangements for the trip west.

He, his two sons, and the two hired men, Smith and Rush, left New York about Feb. 1, 1824 and arrived in Windsor on Feb. 15. Their mode of travel was apparently a sleigh drawn by a pair of horses.

After a stop in Detroit for supplies, they traveled along Saginaw Road to Royal Oak and then to the small settlements then called Jenks, Sly, Durkee, and Baker. Just before sunset the five arrived at their destination, and in what may have been a gesture of relief or happiness, they cut down one of the giant oak trees in a clearing. The location was about where Power and 11 Mile Road cross today. The date: March 8, 1824.

The settlers immediately built a log cabin and began clearing land, including a plot for Nathan Power, who had remained in New York with the rest of the family.

Arthur Power and many other early Quaker settlers are buried in the old Quaker cemetery on Gill Road, just south of Grand River. The two hired men went different ways. Rush apparently had an attack of plain homesickness and left a few weeks after he arrived. However, David Smith completed a year's service to Power, bought some land, and was still alive in 1877 when the Oakland County history book was first issued.

Power Road remains as a reminder of the founders of Farmington, as does Power Junior High, named to honor the area's first teacher, Nathan Power. Among present descendants of Arthur Power are Eugene B. Power, former University of Michigan regent, and his son Philip Power, co-publisher

of the Observer-Eccentric newspapers.

OTHER SETTLERS soon followed the Power footsteps. About seven weeks after Power and his sons arrived here George Collins and his wife located on a tract of land. Cynthia Collins was the first white female settler in the area, and on Sept. 26, 1824, she gave birth to John W. Collins, the first white child born in Farmington.

Another early settler was Dr. Ezekiel Webb, a friend of Power's and also a Quaker. He was the area's first physician and also its first postmaster. Among the settlers the next year were Holland Mason, brothers George and Rufus Thayer, and Timothy Tolman, who, according to the records, built the first frame dwelling in Farmington on 12 Mile Rd. near Middle Belt.

One of Farmington's best known families the Warners, arrived in 1825. The Warners' son, P. Dean Warner, was three when they arrived in Farmington in 1825. He left home at 14, returned to Farmington several years later and engaged in business ventures. He was elected to the Michigan House of Representatives; he had married Rhoda Botsford, and while the couple had no children of their own, they adopted a son and a daughter. The son, Fred Warner, later became a state representative, then secretary of state for Michigan and finally in 1906, governor.

In May, 1827, a little more than three years after Arthur Power and his group cut the first trees for the first Farmington home, the township government began, with the first meeting held at the home of Robert Wixom.

EARLIER IN THE year the state legislature had laid out the present boundaries for Farmington Township, thereby separating it from Bloomfield Township.

The little settlement had come to be known as Quakertown (not to be confused with the present Quakertown in this area) but both Power and Dr. Webb suggested Farmington as a name, to honor the founders' former home in New York.

According to early records, the small village developed along Shiawassee and centered at the road's intersection with Farmington Road.

This "old city" area still exists today with several homes still standing dating back to the 1840s.

After the 1840s the village's center shifted a bit south to Grand River and Farmington. Grand River had become a main road between Detroit at the new state capital of Lansing.

The year 1850 brought the Fugitive Slave Act and Farmington's Quaker population led by Nathan Power, quickly became associated with the anti-slavery movement and the Underground Railroad. The extent of their involvement is disputed by Lee Peel in his book; he notes that while rumors and stories persist about certain Farmington homes being way stations in the underground route to Canada, the evidence is "shaky" and "dubious". Various stories about the house at 11 Mile and Power Road and the basement of the First Baptist Church being hiding places for runaway slaves cannot be proven, according to Peel.

AFTER THE Civil War, the people living in the square mile of territory around Grand River and Farmington Roads voted to become a village. The village common council held its first session on May 9, 1867. The village did not become a city until 1928.

Other important dates appear in the documents of Farmington's history. In 1823, the first school in the township was built, a small log hut on Shiawassee. Nate Power, the school's first teacher also built other schools in 1835 and in 1852.

Besides the Quakers, other religious groups came to the Farmington area. A Baptist church was constructed at Halstead and 12 Mile Road, with the Rev. C. D. Wolcott as the first minister in 1827.

Methodists met in a private home, and then, in 1840, built a church at the corner of Warner and Shiawassee. It burned in 1920 but was rebuilt later on its present site at Warner and Grand River.

Another important event in Farmington's early history was the Plank Road Act passed in 1848. A plank road made of oak was constructed from De-

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## About this section.....

This section was compiled by the advertising department of the Observer and Eccentric Newspapers, Inc. Stories in the section were written by Doug Johnson and W. W. Edgar. The photographs—including the reproductions of the old scenes—were completed by Fran and Ralph Evert; story ideas under the direction of Farmington Editor Dan McCosh.

We are grateful to the many people we interviewed for the individual stories in this section who gave their time to help tell the story of Farmington's rich heritage.