

Farmington's past is progress essay

Farmington was founded 152 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 152 years ago.

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 Peel and the diary of Arthur Power's son, Nathan, who joined his father in Farmington in 1828 at age 25.

These documents and many others give a remarkably clear account of Farmington's beginnings 152 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 located between Eleven Mile and Nine Mile, along Power.

Power returned to Farmington, New York, 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 Eleven Mile cross today. The date was 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, 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 School, 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, Phil 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. 9, 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 and also a Quaker. He was the area's first physician and also its first postmaster. Among 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 Twelve Mile, near Middlebelt.

One of Farmington's best known families, the Warners, arrived in 1825. The Warner's son, P. Dean Warner, was 3 when they arrived in Farmington.

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 and married Rhoda Botsford.

While they had no children of their own, they adopted a son and a daughter. The son, Fred, later became a state representative, secretary of state for Michigan and finally in 1906, governor.

In May 1827, a little

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