

Electric railroad modernizes area

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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 center shifted a bit south to Grand River and Farmington roads. Grand River had become a main road between Detroit and 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 participation 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, 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 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 didn't become a city until 1926.

Other important dates appear in the documents of the Farmington history.

In 1828, the first school in the township

was built, a small log hut on Shiawassee. Nathan Power, the school's first teacher, also built other schools in 1835 and 1852.

Besides the Quakers, other religious groups came to the Farmington area. A Baptist church was constructed at Halsted and 12 Mile, 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 Detroit to Howell.

The resulting increase in travel gave rise to several inns including the Botsford Inn, the Swan Hotel (later Owen House) and Wixom Inn. Botsford is still in operation today.

A charge or toll was levied to use the plank road.

At the turn of the century, the plank road operation changed hands and an electric railway was built — the Detroit Urban Railway (DUR).

The DUR lasted about 30 years until the automobile made inroads into the line's profits. It ceased operation in January 1931.

A power plant for the line later became the home of LaSalle Wines (Grand River and Orchard Lake Roads) which closed in the early 1970s. The building presently is used as an office complex.

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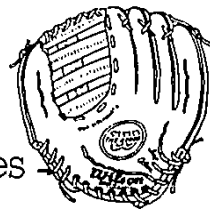
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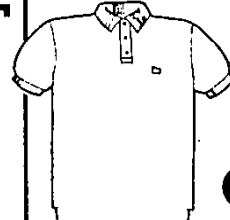
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