## Thursday, August 14, 1980 O&E Major blazes mark area's history



the Farmington Historical Commission marker, posted in 1977, on Cowley's Old Village Inn, on the site of the Great Farmingon Fire of 1872.

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## By Duvid Lilogot special writer

special writer INASTERS HAVE always and fires are always given space in bistoric writings. In the Mikeys, fires are the ca-lamities that arouse attention: the cara Chicago Fire, the Great Fires in the Mikeys, fires are the ca-lamities that arouse attention: the foreat Chicago Fire, the Great Fires in the Mikeligan Thumb region in 1881 that killed hundreds and left thousands tomeless. Detroit's only great fire tother than during the roits of an e Ubility or-curred in 1883 and resulted an a total replanning of the city by Judge

replanning of the city by Judge Woodward, including wide streets

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that radiated from hubs or parks. Farmington, too, had a great fire, ire year was 1872 and it was a dry ore. Most of the buildings in down-town Farmington were made of wood and built close togethul to lose of the broke out in the dry goods store ut 0.B. Smith (Cowley's Inn is locat-d there today). The fire spread easi-ward and destroyed a millinery shop, a jewelry shop, a shoe store and too dry goods stores.

SINCE THERE was no fire de-partment, a bucket brigade was formed using two nearby wells as sources. The effort saved only the

stroyed several shops. Farmington Hotel (later called the Owen House) across the street. The Masonic Temple, housed in the second story of Smith's store, was destroyed along with all of the township clerk's records and, thus, the carly history of our town. The fate of the downtown area tooked bad until a local farmer came to the rescue. Chauncey W. Green lived nearby and was awakened by the fire. He dushed to town on his borse and quickly sized up the situa-tion.

According to the 1928 anniversary issue of the Farmington Enterprise, "buildings near the burning area were covered with wet robes and blankets. These dried quickly by the heat from the fire and had to be wetted down time and again."

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FROM THE ashes, Farmington rebuilt. A new Masonic Temple and Town Hall was built — a building that still graces Farmington's down-town.

town. Another fire in 1909 berned its Another fire in 1909 berned its way up to Farmington Road, start-ing just north of Grand River and eding short of the Bapits Church. Another of barns and houses: includ-ing crists of Sergius Lyon, the local maker of Sergius Lyon, the local barn by youths playing with fire and the start of the season start of the barn by youths playing with fire The fire.

crackers. The prove that the The first high school in town was called the Union School. It sat ap-proximately where the retirement high-rise sits today. It was built in 1888 and burned in 1918. The early morning fire in January of that year destroyed a good portion of the building before the alarm was turned in. The 15 tons of coal in the basement probably made lirefight-ing difficult.

Fall Suiting

A NEWER school building next door was huckily spared. The 115 stu-dents in the lower grades were given a few weeks of vacation before classroom space could be found. A building to replace the destroyed building was constructed later that year.

The first Methodist Church in town sat on a hill on Shiawassee. It burned to the ground In 1920, thanks in part to a twisted hose and low wa-ter pressure. The Methodists rebuilt on Grand River.

There have been many fires since. Fortunately today, we have depend-able firefighting service, fire hy-drants and an alert cilizenry.

Sources: The Farmington En-terprise, 1928 Anniversary Issue; Heritage Home of Farmington; Ruth R. Moehlman; Farmington; A Pictorial History, Lee S. Peel

antina an ance Simmons House dates back to the Civil War days of 1861.

## Historic site put on registry.

The Lawrence Simmons House, 3742 (2) Able, west of Farimington Road, has been honored with design ration a the Machigan Regrety of Ibstore Sites and with a state marker for the property. "The home, an example of victo-film Gome Retwan arcontecture, is built of Mengan stone, and has seen different types of ginger-bread 'trim as devorative adorn-ment. The house, as south in 1861 by Serguis Lyon, Farmington car-penter, for Joshua Summans of Livonia, who built a home for each of ins three sons. The hone on 12 Mic was built for son, Lawrence, who used there for 12 years. Lyon, architeet and builder of the bouts was also noted as at out-

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standing Formington craftsman, He was also Formington's first un-derinder as well as a stove manu-derinder as well as a stove manu-ton the store of the store of the followersalist Church in Forming-ton Lyon also built Greenmeade in Journal for Joshua Stimmons. Other owners of the lorne, which is Site No. 301 in the Formington Phils Bistoric District, were Haldwin Courley, Wallace B, Grace and R.K. Floyd of Kendall Off Co.; Floyd subdivide the surrounding farmiland, which had always been part of the property, lints kendall

part of the property, into Kendall-wood in the early 1950s.

Publicing into differs for their pro-fessional use, under the acgis of the listore District Commission. The century-old trees that from the property not only act as a par-tial noise barrier, but help keep the 19th-century aura of the property, which has an icehouse in the rear. "Working in an historic home helps deflect some of the stress of the 20th century." sail Needels, who renovated an older home in Dearborn before moving to Farm-ington IIIIs in 1985.

In the library of the Simmons House, the murals depicting the Floyd children on horseback in a pasioral Farmington have been preserved.



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The Great Farmington Fire of 1872 broke out in the dry good stores where Cowley's Inn is now. It spread castward and de-