

CHAT ROOM



KEN KEMP

All repair shops would be honest in perfect world

Wouldn't it be nice to know that in all auto repair shops, the mechanics and owners are honest and competent? Wouldn't it be nice to be able to take your car in for a minor repair and not be called again and again by the repair shop informing you that your car needs this, that and the other thing and ending up virtually bankrupting you? Wouldn't it be nice to be quoted a price before any work is done and no matter what, the repair shop sticks to that price? Wouldn't it be nice?

I seem to have always had a special knack for taking my car to disreputable places. I get panic attacks when I have to take my car in for repairs. I would like to share some good fortune I and a friend have recently had, with those of you who may feel the way I do about auto repairs.

I purchased a used car last year that seemed to be in good condition, but I did not have it checked out prior to buying it. Everything seemed to work well enough. But the brakes began to feel kind of mushy. I took it to a muffler shop in Farmington Hills. There the proprietor, Roger, had one of his mechanics take off the wheels and look over my entire brake system very carefully. While still on the car,

Please See **CHAT ROOM, B2**

Farmington rebuilt from ashes

■ On Oct. 9, 1872, fire destroyed much of downtown Farmington. City records were lost, but life was spared.



By DAVID LITOGOT
SPECIAL WRITER

Urban fires have always been tragic disasters. The San Francisco Fire of 1906, which destroyed three fourths of the city and took 700 lives, was caused by the Great Earthquake.

The Chicago Fire of 1871 destroyed \$200 million worth of buildings and left 100,000 people homeless.

Even the Detroit Fire of 1805, ignited by hot ashes from a workman's pipe hitting dry hay, left the city in ashes.

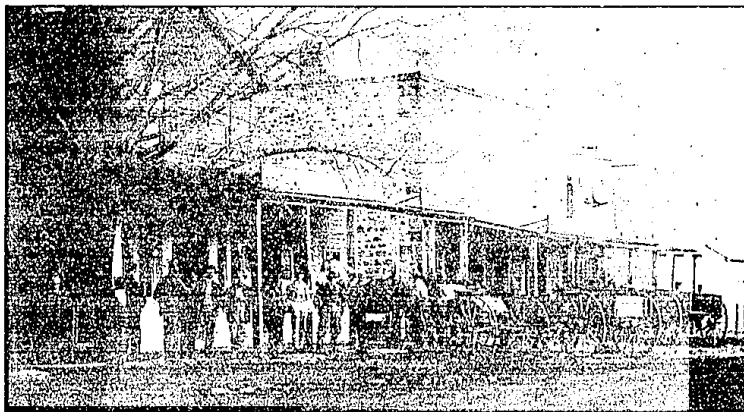
Farmington, too, had a great fire. The summer of 1872 was a dry one. Most of the buildings in downtown Farmington were made of wood and built close together.

About 2 a.m. on Oct. 9, fire broke out in the dry goods store of O.B. Smith on the north side of Grand River. Cowley's Inn is located there today. The fire spread eastward and destroyed a millinery shop, a jewelry store, a shoe shop and two dry goods markets.

Since there was no fire department, a bucket brigade was formed using two nearby wells as sources. The effort saved only the Farmington Hotel, later called Owen House. The site is a parking lot today.

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 a large part of the early history of our town.

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."



The fate of the downtown area looked bad until a local farmer came to the rescue. Chumney W. Green lived nearby and was awakened by the fire. He dashed to town on his horse and quickly sized up the situation.

"Born to command, with a voice that could be heard above the roar and din," he ordered the house belonging to Thad Kent to be torn down. Giving instructions, Green had ropes found and men and women pulled down that stubborn house. The lumber was pulled away and the fire stopped at the break.

The next day, a travelling salesman rode into town. An aggressive Republican still joyous over his party's success in the recent elections, he told the citizenry, "Gentlemen, we have lost a city, but saved the country."



Downtown: Top, the north side of Grand River, 1870, from Lee Peel's book "Farmington: A Pictorial History." Above, a historic marker on Cowley's tavern wall tells of the great fire.

Please See **FIRE, B2**

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