

Early Founders Were Real Pioneers

Old Town Hall Undergoing Remodeling

July 28, 1965

THE FARMINGTON ENTERPRISE

7C

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A route then was established from Beech, Michigan, serving Farmington, Clarens, Redford and Bell Branch. Almost all goods sold in Farmington were hauled from Detroit by Samuel Blanchard. He would make two trips a week, each trip being a two-day ex-

pedition. For most of the distance between Farmington and Detroit, Grand River was laid with oak plank, but only in a single lane. Detroit-bound traffic had the right-of-way, and out-bound vehicles had to get off into the mud to clear the lane.

Have A Toll Road. The way in the 1870's, one at the Farmington-Redford Line, one at Mill Road, another at Monnier Road and a fourth at Warner Rd. The toll-charge for a two-horse vehicle was two cents per mile. For a loaded wagon, a one-way trip took from four to six hours, but a single buggy with a good driving horse could make it in only 3 hours.

In the boom days of the 1870's a farm hand could expect to be paid \$20 a month, plus his find and keep, for his work. Day laborers were paid about \$1 for a workday of ten to 12 hours. A carpenter's rate was 15c an hour, brickmason's was 20c. Fresh eggs were priced at 10c a dozen, butter sold for 20c a pound; pork, 8c to 10c a pound; the best steaks, 25c a pound; good suit of clothes, \$15. Very few homes were more than \$10,000 and a house and garden rented for about \$100 a year.

Business Activities. The first newspaper was printed on November 2, 1883 by Edgar R. Bloomer. The Enterprise was a hand made newspaper and Fred Cook was printer's devil, whose chief task was pushing the ink roller across the face of the type between impressions.

One of Farmington's early practitioners was Dr. J. J. Moore, who built the home later occupied by the Amos Otis family. His son, Harry W., had a general merchandising business in the '90's and later became City Clerk.

In 1894 Fred M. Warner, the boy who had been adopted by P. Dean Warner, had a hardware store and was manager of the Farmington and Franklin Cheese Company, having established the Warner Dairy Co. in 1892. He was also a partner with Fred Cook and Clint W. Wilber in what was listed as a "mercantile establishment."

P. Dean Warner at this time was a private banker. James L. Hogle had a drug store. L. W. Sowle was in the dry goods business. Henry W. Lee was a harness maker. Custom-made boots and shoes were the specialty of H. W. Habermach. Miss Marie Gill catered to the ladies with her millinery and dress-making. James W. Hat-

ten sold farm implements. Henry Schroeder had a meat market and vegetable store. Rival blacksmiths were Thomas L. Irving and William Kennedy, and the town's two tonorial artists were M. B. Pierce and C. W. Chamberlin. In addition to his barbershop, Mr. Chamberlin also sold clocks and did watch and clock repairing. E. C. Grace's general store was another of Farmington's many business places. The year 1898 also saw the opening of the Farmington Roller Mills under the management of Louis Gildenstein.

After the turn of the century, the one outstanding event that put Farmington on the map was the election of Fred M. Warner as governor of Michigan in 1906. Gov. Warner served three terms in Lansing.

Electricity Comes. Electricity came to Farmington toward the end of the 19th century, the old stage-coach passed away and the nearest railway stations were at Novi and Northville. Grand River Ave. afforded the only link with Detroit and the capital, but traffic still moved no faster than the horse. Then the Detroit and Northwestern Railway laid tracks to Farmington and the service began in 1900. There was no station at first, just a freight pick-up spot on Farmington Road as the cars swung around from Grand River to Northville. The railway had a power plant where the LaSalle winery is now, and across the street were the car barns. This was the connection place for the

Orchard Lake Road line to Pontiac. The telephone came to Farmington near the turn of the century, when several pay stations were set up in the stores by the Michigan State Telephone Co. The local exchange was operated by Mr. and Mrs. C. M. Doherty.

Another fire threatened the town on July 5, 1909, the flames spreading to the roof of the Baptist Church before the fire department brought the blaze under control.

Starts Dairy Business. On Jan. 1, 1921 Joe Himmelspach took possession of a milk business from John Lathrop on Gill Road. Driving his horse and wagon, he made delivery of some 80 quarts of milk each day. The milk bottle washing department conducted its work in the laundry tubs in the basement. In 1923 he remodeled the old bank and made it the Farmington Dairy. After the Royal Urban Railway went out of business, Mr. Himmelspach bought the former Farmington depot in 1931, built a new dairy and moved in in 1932.

The townsfolk voted in 1925 to become a city and adopt a city charter. The charter was adopted by the commission on Dec. 14, 1925 and approved by Gov. Alex. Groesbeck on the following Jan. 7. In the election immediately afterwards, Wells Butterfield was chosen mayor by a majority of some 15 votes over Howard Warner, and the city commission held its first meeting on March 1, 1926.

The old historical brick building in the center of town, the Farmington Masonic Temple, is presently under going major repairs and alterations. The "Old Town Hall" has become a landmark to the people of Farmington.

With the thought of preserving the ancient traditional architecture few changes to the exterior of the building were recommended by Merrill, Cole and McCallum Architects. The main exception will be the addition of a porch with columns at the main entrance on Farmington Road. The building will essentially remain the same as it was designed in 1876 by Johnson S. Prall, prominent builder from Pontiac.

The architecture seems to be a mixture of Victorian, French, and Renaissance and certain innovations which Mr. Prall used to a large extent on

all his buildings. The exterior has finely detailed corbels and delicate dormers and detailing along the roof line which were made in the wood-turning shop operated by Mr. Prall.

To Permit Scroll For Only 90 Days

A letter from the Farmington Historical Society requesting permission to put up a scroll in the Municipal Building listing the names of those who contributed to the cost of obtaining a special historical marker for Farmington was received with mixed emotions by councilmen at their regular meeting Monday night, July 19.

It was agreed by councilmen that to allow such a scroll on a permanent basis might establish a precedent for numerous similar requests in the future. The decision was to allow the scroll to be put up but to permit it for only a 90 day period.

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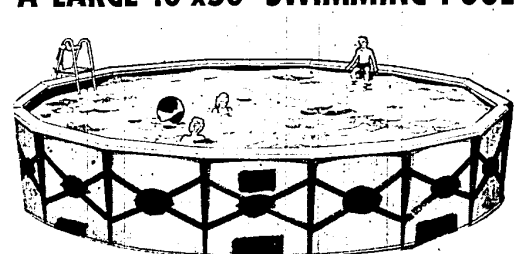
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