

~~Civil War~~

June 1980

YPSILANTI GLEANINGS

PAST SCENES and OLD TIMES

YPSILANTI HISTORICAL SOCIETY ~ PUBLICATION ~



Ypsilanti Historical Museum
~ 220 N. Huron Street ~

June 1980

ARMY DRAFT DURING THE CIVIL WAR & 'OLD DAYS'

REPORT ON YPSILANTI HISTORICAL SOCIETY CONTEST

"The old days in Ypsilanti" for those over sixty five years of age, had more promised stories than actual written ones. However, the Judges continuing to remain anonymous have selected "My Life in Ypsilanti" as winner of the \$25.00 First Prize. This interesting and memorable paper was written and submitted by Genevieve Ward Williams. A remarkable performance with many forgotten names and places!

Martha Stadtmiller Walton was persuaded to submit one of her mother's poems of old times. It was awarded the \$15.00 Second Prize. Mrs. Mabel I. Stadtmiller (1888-1973) was Treasurer of the City of Ypsilanti 1924-1957 and a Charter Member of the Ypsilanti Historical Society.

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MY LIFE IN YPSILANTI

by Genevieve Ward Williams

I was born November 8th 1890 on Ridge Road two and one half miles north of Michigan Avenue, one quarter south of Fowler's corner in Superior Township. The fourth child of Archibald and Rebecca Luvenia Ward who lived as tenant farmers on the McDougal farm. (East of Prospect on Ford Rd.)

About three years later my father hired-out to George Seymore and moved his family in a house owned by Mr. Seymore who lived on what is now Geddes Road.

I started to school with my brother and sister in the one room school known as the Fowler School which had only one teacher. I attended the school one year then my family moved into the city of Ypsilanti and lived in a rented house at 53 E. Forest, owned by Charles Peck.

Father secured a job at the Flat-Iron Factory which was located by the river south of the street which is now Factory Street south of the Water Works Plant.

His wages of \$9.00 a week went to support his family which was not too hard to do because food prices as well as clothing and heating was at an all time low. During the two years we lived there with a little help from the work mother was able to get they were able to save enough money to make a very small down payment on a home at 722 Norris Street where they lived until they passed away, father in 1924 and mother in 1948.

My time in the 4th Ward School was short because the Board of Education announced that any children living within the City limits of Ypsilanti could enroll in the Michigan State Normal Training School now known as Welch Hall.

I entered the Training School in the 4th grade with a

Miss Plunket as the Critic Teacher and Mr. Dimon H. Roberts as Principal whom everyone liked very much.

I remember so well the school janitor was a Mr. Thomas and hard to deal with. No one liked him so the students named him "Tom Cat".

The attendance at the school grew so fast additions had to be added and a room was supplied to give the children Manual Training for both boys and girls.

Soon a room was outfitted with cooking facilities for the girls and Miss Florence Swain was hired to teach cooking. Then another room was outfitted for a sewing class. I remember winning first prize for the most and neatest sewing for the year. I was very proud to get an eighteen inch tall doll the largest one I had ever owned.

My grade teachers after Miss Harriet Plunket were Miss Mary Steagle, Miss Abbie Roe, Miss Mattie Martin and Miss Alma Cook, eighth grade. My main subject was spelling. I never had to take the final exam because my average was one hundred.

After finishing the eighth grade I went to the old Ypsilanti High School but dropped out before finishing.

Back in the 1900's many colored came to Ypsilanti from Canada. Some came before marriage and many married after arriving here because the opportunities of making a better home life was much better here.

Very few decendants of those people are still in Ypsilanti. The Kersey family, James and George have left many.

My mother was a Canadian coming to Ypsilanti and living with an older brother who with his family lived on North River Street near Highland Cemetary. Mother came here at the age of eighteen and after her brother James moved to Detroit she secured a job with the Helen Swift family who owned all the property where the Gilbert Residence is now located.

My father was born in Indiana but his parents died when he was very young. His mother passed when he was five, his father when he was seven. So father knew very little of his family except that his grandmother was a full-blooded Indian. He was raised by foster parents who made him work hard and he got very little schooling.

My parents never talked about how they met and married.

Farmers who had live stock for market drove their cattle down Forest Avenue to the stock yard for shipment to the slaughter houses, especially Chicago. The stockyard was along the railroad track just south of Forest Avenue.

Near the Cross Street bridge stood Duebels Flour Mill where farmers would bring their corn, wheat and oats to be ground and prepared for public consumption in different forms.

Up the river was the Woolen Mill. Their products were mainly men's underwear because more work was done outside than now, and winters were severe.

On Washington Street just south of Michigan Avenue was a livery stable. My sister and I rented a horse and buggy and drove to Saline to visit some relatives one Sunday and stayed too long. Dark caught us before we got back to Ypsilanti and you can be sure we were two scared girls. Matilda and Mary Morris still live in Saline and may remember the incident.

On the corner of South Washington and Harriet Streets stood the car barn that housed the street-cars that ran from Ypsilanti to Saline.

On the northwest corner up on the hill at East Michigan and Prospect still stands a brick building that was the 5th Ward School until the present Woodruff School was built, about 1900.

Mark Whitman who lived on the corner of Forest and Norris Streets was the caretaker at the old Michigan Central Depot. His flowers were so arranged they spelled "Ypsilanti". (Mark was also the Telegrapher for the Michigan Central Railroad.) For many miles along the route Ypsilanti was known to have the most beautiful station's surroundings.

Back then Ypsilanti boasted of having three hotels, namely the Hawkins House of which the building still stands, the Occidental Hotel on Huron Street and the Lewis House that stood where Sam's Party Store is on the corner of Michigan and S. River Streets. The Lewis Hotel burned one night causing the sky to be lighted up for miles around and that fire was the largest Ypsilanti has ever known. When the wine and liquor bottles got hot that were stored in the basement the explosion was so great it sounded like an army was near by.

After street carnivals were no longer permitted to set up tents on Main Street circuses that came to town were allowed to pitch tents on Ainsworth's farm (known as Rhinehart's Field).

The big boom for Ypsilanti came when Henry Ford began paying \$5. 00 for laborers. (1914)

These are the main things that have or did occur during my life time in Ypsilanti which grew from about 7,000 population to its present size.

Respectfully by
Mrs. Genevieve Ward Williams

June 1980

CHRISTMAS 1969

by Mabel I. Stadtmiller

The pictures of childhood are dear to my heart
May the memories they bring me never depart.
Three sons and three daughters - God gave them to me -
More precious than gold - you forever will be.
You've made my home a heaven - far more than I can tell -
You do it easily and lovingly - and do it so well.

Our home it was a humble place at the top of Maple
Street hill

And oh those childhood memories our page of memory
books fill

Five cherry trees grew on the east side of our yard -
A kind neighbor sprayed them each year.
You all climbed the trees with never a fear,
We sorted and pitted - and sorted and pitted -
We filled all our fruit jars - saw that each lid
tightly fitted.

The surplus you peddled to neighbors near
A dime a quart - some thought that quite dear,
Only half of that dime you kept for your share
To pick, and to peddle so you thought the price fair.

Two maple trees grew a few steps from the back door,
Their shade and their beauty we all did adore.
The straight limbs made place for good swins
And many good times our memory now brings.
The grass wore away and the tree roots became bare
So gravel was hauled and placed there with care.
To keep the place level it seemed very hard
So we made a good wall to terrace our yard.
Block upon block the wall was made strong;
It made our yard beautiful all the day long.
'Twas a place to rest and a place to play
Just as we liked it in childhood day.

A harsh winter came and the frost made a crack
The blocks fell apart - and they wouldn't fit back.
The old cement wall - that retaining good wall -
Fond memories of good times - we're keeping them all.
In the year SIXTY-NINE - In it's Christmastime weather -
Once again we are meeting and chatting together.
We look at those pictures of our good childhood -
And maybe like to live over - if only we could.

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FROM THE HISTORICAL ARCHIVES

Ada Holmes brought us this interesting story of the Army Draft during the Civil War. Solon Goodell, Ada's grandfather, was born November 30 1840 on a farm in Canton Township, Wayne County, near the edge of Washtenaw County on Proctor Road. He was a State Representative and State Senator - two terms each. He died in 1920.

The story as written by Solon was published in a Detroit newspaper in the 1890s.

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STORY OF CONSCRIPTION ORDER OF 1865 AND HOW IT WAS MET BY MEN OF CANTON TOWNSHIP

Solon Goodell and a man named Trumbull were the only ones out of thirty-six names drawn who reported for duty -

As there is much being written and said on the way to increase the membership and efficiency of the army, either by volunteer or conscription, my mind is carried back to the winter and spring of 1865, when, after the last call of Abraham Lincoln for 600,000 more men, a number of States failed to furnish their quota, and a conscription order was passed by Congress. Among the different States that had not furnished their quota of men was Michigan, and from memory and experience I will relate some of the things that took place in Wayne Co.

Wayne was short a few hundred men, and March 5 1865, was designated as a day that all the townships in the county and all the wards in the city of Detroit would be drawn on by the Provost Marshal for its lack of men. Then followed a table giving the number of each ward and township would be drawn upon for. The manner of drawing the names created great excitement and interest.

I well remember the day and occasion. The Provost Marshal's was in or near the old Biddle House on Jefferson Avenue. The names of all men of military age in a given ward or township were placed in a circular glass; it was revolved something like a revolving churn, and a man blind folded and with both arms bare to the shoulders drew a ballet from the globe, handed it to a secretary, who read in a loud voice the name drawn.

The Township of Canton, in which I have had the honor of living for more than fifty years, had to furnish thirty-six men and thirty-six names of citizens of that township were drawn from the wheel of fortune. My name was one.

It is sad to relate that only two men could be found on whom personal service could be made. Among those drawn I recall the names of a few - Robert McKinstry, John Artley, Lee Lyonn, Seymour Howard, Oreseamus Trumbull and the writer of this article, Solon Goodell.

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And such a scattering of citizens. They left home on urgent business. Some, it was learned afterwards, wandered over into Canada, and it was stated at that time the draft in Wayne county for over 1,000 men did not produce fifty.

Well, I reported to the Provost Marshal and was complimented on my "patriotism". My comrade Trumbull, who was rejected on account of disability, also reported. I was directed to report at Fort Wayne at once. The Commandant, (I have forgotten his name) gave me a welcome I distinctly remember.

"Who sent you here?"

I replied, "Marshal Flanigan, Detroit".

"Oh, you're a conscript, are you? Where are the rest of the boys?"

"Oh, they will be along in a day or two,"

I replied.

"The h--- they will," said the Commandant

I was assigned to a certain company and was told to make myself comfortable until morning.

Well, I got supper and breakfast - black, strong coffee, no cream in it, good bread, but without butter. The next morning I applied for a furlough for a few days to go home and bid farewell to wife and friends but he refused with the remark -

"No, you're the only conscript that's shown up or likely to and we want you as an exhibit".

I wrote to Marshal Flanigan to intercede for me, telling him I had served my country - drove a four-horse team to pole raisings, marched and carried a banner in the campaign for Fremont, how I had stood around the country store urging the boys to enlist and save the country, etc., and Flanigan sent a request that I be given a short leave. I entertained a furlough came home and found my business in such shape it took a long time to get it settled. Soon General Lee surrendered, the war was over and there terminated by military career as a conscript.

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From the Historical Archives-3

A former donor of distinction, Frederick Cleveringa, now 90 years old, has returned to Michigan for his declining years, after spending several years in Florida.

Fred was born February 21 1890 in Grand Haven, Michigan, the son of Barney and Minnie Schroeder Cleveringa.

After graduating from Grand Haven High School, the family moved to Ypsilanti about 1912. His sister, Mrs. Edward Arnet (Florence) graduated from Ypsilanti High School in 1915 and in 1917 from Michigan State Normal College.

Fred had served as head draftsman for the Holmes Auto Works in Canton, Ohio and then also graduated from Michigan State Normal College in 1917, working at the College Library during his school years.

July 22 1918, he entered the United States Army at Camp Custer, Battle Creek, and served as Librarian, remaining as one of the office force there until after the close of the War.

Several years ago, Fred gave the Ypsilanti Historical Society a handsome antique five octave double bellows organ. It fits very nicely into the parlor of the Ypsilanti Historical Museum and completes the decor of that room.

Lloyd Shoemaker writes from Dearborn, Michigan, that Fred is now in the Veterans Hospital, 3415 Southfield Road, Allen Park, Michigan 48101. Fred is blind but Lloyd hopes to bring him out to Ypsilanti to perhaps visit his sister, Florence, who is in the Infirmary at the Gilbert Residence.

June 1980

Jack Harris and others have had a great interest in the 'Becker' house at 601 W. Forest Avenue.

Here is a recent letter from George Becker, son of Charles J. and Julia E. Becker which explains when the interesting house was built.

J.M.B. Sill, one of the first graduates of the Michigan State Normal College and former Principal of that school, lived on the north side of Forest Avenue but owned property on both sides of Forest which perhaps is why 601 W. Forest was known as the 'Sill' property.

April 10, 1980

Dear Mr. Fletcher:

Mr. Becker has been ill for over a year and is unable to answer your letter, therefore I am lending him a hand, so to speak. Mr. Becker has dictated this to me.

The property at 601 Forest, was formerly known as the Sill property. Mr. Sill was a Professor at the College. When the house was built is unknown.

Mr. Sill lived there and owned the property. My dad purchased it in approximately 1889. The house was square and very unattractive. My dad designed and had the tower built. The tower had no utilitarian purpose, it was only to improve the building, as the Street was very prestigious in those days. The new house my folks built on Perrin Street was built in approximately 1918.

We surely do appreciate you keeping in touch, as your letter was a bright spot in our days.

Sincerely,
George Becker
200 MacFarland Drive
Delray Beach, Florida 33444