



## *Hadley Township Historical Society-WINTER-2017*

### **When Hadley Was a Trading Center**

***Harry Myers had Roy Brownell write his reminiscences of the Hadley area for The Lapeer County Press, April, 1963. Here is part of his early memories. Editor's notes are in brackets.***

“Many men of later prominence or their ancestors were born or lived near Hadley. Gov. John T. Rich, Congressman Louis C. Cramton, Lynn Townsend, Senator Charles Potter, Lloyd Copeman, the inventor of the electric stove, Roy Brownell, a prominent Flint attorney and advisor to C. S. Mott of General Motors, and many others. Many local leaders and successful men—and women too—are the offspring of Hadley pioneers.

Consolidated schools are far in the future and the township was dotted with one room white school houses. [The restored school house located in Farmers Creek is a fine example.]

Physical education consists in helping with the chores morning and evening, walking a mile or more to school in all kinds of weather. Recreation is in the form of playing ball, anit-I-over and pom-pom-pull-away.

Opening the school day at 9:00 o'clock is observed by singing “America” or other songs from H. R. Pattingale’s paper covered book called “Knapsack”. Singing is led by the teacher who often has difficulty in carrying a tune. Most pupils have the same trouble.

The one room school house is heated by a pot-bellied wood stove up front. On a cold day those up front roast, while those in the rear shiver. Drinking water is kept in a pail by the teacher’s desk, and is consumed out of a common dipper used by all present. Many of the pupils have colds on and off all winter.

Upon completion of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade a few of the scholars will go to Lapeer or Oxford high schools. Very few will go on to college. [Hadley High School went through the 12<sup>th</sup> grade and later, through the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Those 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduates could attend Goodrich or Lapeer high schools.] Who is to say that their education such as it was did not stand them in good stead as they went through the years raising families, doing well the tasks of life and fulfilling the duties of good citizens. After all, Harry Myers observed, 'it is not how much education you have but how you use what you have'.

A hundred and thirty-three years ago Hadley had scenic hills, sparkling lakes and shaded country roads. Then too, it was a good land with prosperous farms, large white houses, big red barns in good repair and well fenced fields and some lightly graveled roads with others ankle deep in mud during the break-up in early spring. Grain crops, potatoes and cabbage were profitable to the farmers as was the feeding of cattle, sheep and hogs. Neighbors assisted each other at barn raising, harvest time, threshing and as other times of need for additional help. These people worked together without pay.

Hadley village was where some older people live in retirement. It was here that Rev. William D. Potter, who married one of the Dowd girls, was the first Baptist minister to hold regular services in the township. It was a trading center without a railroad. Mail is brought in from Metamora by way of Farmers Creek [Pratt Road ended at Herd Road. It was necessary to go North and then East to Farmers Creek, turn South back to Pratt Road and then on to Metamora. Pratt Road was cut through in the early 1950's.] John and Charlie Miller run a small

general store in Farmers Creek. In the early days there was a post office in the store. This is an attractive community with a church, general store, blacksmith shop, a school house and modern farm buildings, shaded by massive maple trees. John Miller did custom threshing in the old days of the steam threshing machine.

Farm produce from the township is hauled to Elba, Metamora, or Thomas Station where there are grain elevators, small lumber yards and facilities for shipping by rail.

No lawyers are needed here—there has been no litigation or disturbance that requires the attention of a lawyer since the oldest settler can recall. No crime or delinquency—except some horse racing on Saturday evenings after the young blades have spent an evening at Philips Hotel. [The hotel was first owned by Gary Truax. It was later owned by Charley Phillips. It is now the home of Bob Merrill and is located directly across the street from the Old Town Hall. The hotel portion was moved to Ortonville and is now the Boat House Bar.]

Barn raisings were always well attended and were social in nature. The carpenter hewed out the timbers for the frames which were later lifted into place by the neighbors who took part in the barn raising. These events usually took place in good weather and upon completion of the work a substantial dinner was always served on a long table in the yard.

Annual Town Meeting is an important event here. It is a day in April when the township officers are elected and the affairs of the township are discussed in an open meeting. Men are beginning to gather round the

Town Hall and Phillips Hotel across the street, discussing local happenings, spring planting and a little politics. Mr. Phillips, the proprietor of the hotel, is well liked by these people and they usually drop by to buy a cigar and have a chat.

Next door Phil Switzer, the barber, badly crippled for years with rheumatism and one of the popular men in the village, gives haircuts for 25 cents. Phil visits as he works and is conversant with all the local events.

Grant Stimson runs a general store at the corner. He and his sister Lois have run this business for many years. Earl Hemmingway runs a competing store next door. Today both stores are busy. They will exchange merchandise for butter and eggs. The women folks are doing some trading while their men are at the Town Meeting. Cheese is selling at 3 pounds for 25 cents today.

Across the street George Hutton runs a first class drug store. [This is the building that Elaine's Quilty Shop is now located. Before that it was a dress shop and an antique store. After the drug store closed it was converted into a frozen food locker plant.] Dr. Peter Stewart, the only doctor in town, has his office at the rear of the store. He assists Mr. Hutton on busy days when he is not busy or out on calls.

Albert Mooreland runs the hardware store and sells Rambler and Ideal bicycles for \$30 each. Later this store was owned by John Morton and his son, Charles. [This building is where the Rocking Horse Antiques store is now located.]

Frank Hadley operates the post office. Rufus Ivory had recently been postmaster. Across the corner Hugh Nowlin runs a small

jewelry and novelty shop. He can fix your watch or clock if it gets out of order. [The Nowlin shop sat where the Bald Eagle Sales used car lot is now located.]

Marshall Smith operates the sawmill down by the creamery. [The creamery was in the building located at the south end of town. It is now a used car lot and storage units.] There are active local chapters of the GAR and Sons of Veterans here.

Lou C. Cramton of Lapeer is an old-timer who spent his boyhood in Hadley, became an attorney, editor, a congressman for years, Circuit Judge and State Representative. Lou says the old Hadley Town Hall was built before 1884 because he was at the Town Hall in '84 when his father, George Cramton, was re-elected supervisor. The senior Cramton was supervisor for several years.

Virgil Bailey is the undertaker and has a furniture store. Lysander Farr is learning the business with him. [This business was in the building in which the Parlor is now located.] Pearl Green runs the meat market and operates his own slaughter house. Later Leo Plummer takes over this business. [This business was located in the building south of the Parlor. Later it became a restaurant, an electrical shop, our first library and now a home.] Will Rathrock has operated successfully the Hadley creamery since 1893. Lee Miller owns the Hadley Mills which is operated by a water turbine with water from Hadley Mill Pond. [Now, the Hadley Mill Museum.]

The Hadley Fair grounds are north of the four corners. The Fair is a popular enterprise of local importance. Usually for 6 days in October crowds of considerable size

attend. At the Hadley Fair one day in 1896, Mark Brown, brother of attorney W.E. Brown, engaged in a heated argument with an advocate of free silver. The campaign of 1896 was a vigorous one and long remembered after McKinley was elected.

It is 2 o'clock and the voters are now gathering in the Town Hall. The meeting will soon begin. Women can't vote as yet so they didn't come. Here is Alfred Townsend, a prosperous farmer who lives near the edge of town. His grandson, Lynn Townsend, in 1962 will be president of Chrysler Motor Company and will place this company back on its feet. He will be recognized as one of the outstanding men in the automobile business. It is often said that one-half of the people of Hadley Township were related and are the biggest part of the crowd at the Town Hall."

*A special welcome to our new Trustees, Reta Copeman, Barb Hartwig, Kirk Mancour and Joyce Ivory. Our new archivist, replacing Reta Copeman is Tim Lange. We are especially grateful that he has taken on this responsibility. Kirk Mancour, who has moved into a Trustee position, will continue to be the Building Supervisor and coordinator with the Township. His Township duties include the Hadley Mill.*

We are saddened to learn of the loss of three of our members this past December; Harold Sutherland and Doris Sutherland, brother and sister of our member Ray Sutherland. The third is Faith Aseltine, wife of Jim. Also, our secretary, Kristie Waldorf's mother passed away this December. Our condolences to these families.

## **Cut Nails**

Every so often we will find in the old buildings around Hadley a square, cut iron

nail. In the "early days" there were no machines to make nails. The nails our pioneer fathers had were all forged by a blacksmith on the anvil under his hammer and cut off without heads. Nails were bought in that form by the one hundred pounds. The buyers did their own heading, straightening and fixed the point up a little if necessary in winter time or any other odd spells. There was an assortment of sizes; smaller sizes were priced higher. Thus, No. 6s or 6 penny, 17 cents per pound; 10s, 15 cents, etc. In 1898, 3 penny iron nails could be bought for \$2.45 per 100 pounds at retail. That same size in 1817 would have cost about \$20 per hundred weight.

## **Edward Fortune**

*A little more history about our mill founder, Edward Fortune and his family. This information is found in the Herkimer County Historical Society papers.*

Samuel Fortune had established mills in the city of Newport in 1806 and had four sons, named John, Eli, Leonard and Edward and three or more daughters. Edward settled in Lapeer County, Michigan about 1860. Leonard, one of Edwards's brothers, became a gunsmith and carried on the business of making sharp-shooting sporting rifles, getting his barrels from old Mr. E. Remington, at the "Forge," as he was used to say when going for barrels. He rifled and finished barrels by hand. It was told that old Mr. E. Remington, the founder of the gun works at Ilion, NY had watched at Fortune's shop for hours to obtain some of his process which may be in use in the Remington works in reference to drilling and straightening barrels.