

A platter, a replica of those used at the jubilee dinner given Queen Victoria at Marlborough.

Some Honolulu china, very fragile and delicate, to which a pathetic story is attached. The friend who gave the china to Mrs. VanDeusen went to the Sandwich Isles on her wedding trip, and one year later, as they passed through the Golden Gate on their way home, her husband died, leaving her with a three weeks old babe. The return trip was made on a sailing vessel because the husband's condition would not allow him to come on a steamer. She was the only woman on board and her babe was born while they were making the four weeks' trip. After a delay of four weeks in San Francisco she came to Chicago, where friends met her, and soon after she gave Mrs. VanDeusen the dishes mentioned.

CHAPTER XVII.

WHEATFIELD TOWNSHIP.

History by Mrs. S. A. Warner; sketch by Dr. F. N. Turner; George Traver, reminiscences.

Read at the Annual Meeting of the Ingham County Pioneer and Historical Society, in 1915, by the Writer, Mrs. S. A. Warner,

Originally what is now the township of Wheatfield formed part of the township of Ingham, organized on the 11th day of March, 1837, and including what now constitutes the fourth congressional township of Ingham, White Oak, Wheatfield and Leroy. The first town meeting was held at the home of Caleb Carr. However, previous to this, township lines were run by Joseph Wampler, and the subdivision lines two years later. On the 22d of March, 1839, the Legislature formed a new township from Ingham called Brutus, a name chosen by Ephraim Meech, the first white settler in Leroy. Brutus included the north half of the old township or what now constitutes Wheatfield and Leroy.

On March 10, 1840, the eastern half of Brutus was organized as a separate township under the name of Leroy, which left the present town of Wheatfield a congressional township bearing the name of Brutus. This name not being quite satisfactory, at the suggestion of David Gorsline a petition was drawn up and forwarded to the Legislature, which on March 20, 1841, changed the name to the present one of Wheatfield.

This was proposed by Mr. Gorsline, who emigrated from the township of Wheatfield, Niagara county, N. Y. He was the first white settler within the limits of Wheatfield Township: He entered land on the northeast quarter of section 34 on the 15th day of June, 1836, and settled there with his family in October of the same year,

Mr. Gorsline stated before his death that the township of Wheatfield had never had a store, a tavern, church, saloon or practicing physician within its borders. The present church was built in 1900.

Mr. Gorsline kept travelers occasionally, and Joseph Whitcomb was accustomed to prescribe in mild cases of sickness, though he had no medical education.

Mr. Gorsline and family experienced many hardships during their first winter spent in a log cabin, with no neighbors within a radius of six miles.

The next settlers were Daniel and Jacob Countryman, who settled in the spring of 1837 on section 13. In November, 1837, Wm. Drown located in the neighborhood, and Mr. Gorsline, assisted by Randolph Whipple and Wm. Carr, of Ingham Township, rolled up a log house for the newcomer. Just thirty years from that day these three men, with Mr. Drown, met at the home of Harvey Hammond and had a pioneer supper.

The first death in the township was that of an infant child of Wm. and Betsy Hammond. They came from Niagara county, N. Y., in the fall of 1839 and settled on section 2, Wheatfield. In the fall of 1840 their first born, after a short existence, sickened and died. The nearest physician was twenty miles distant through a trackless wilderness. The occupation of the undertaker was then unknown in this vicinity. J. M. Williams, of an adjoining town, had a few joiners tools and made for them a coffin. With the assistance of Mrs. Elijah Hammond, a relative, they laid the little one in its narrow bed. The funeral at the house, though few attended, was a sad one. An old gentleman, Sidney King, who settled on section 23 in 1839, headed the lonely procession with a spade on his shoulder; next came Mr. Williams with the coffin, then Mr. and Mrs. Hammond, and lastly Mrs. Elijah Hammond; these five constituted the first funeral procession in the township of Wheatfield.

Other early settlers were Elias and Jeremiah Kent, Gardner Fletcher, Stephen Curtis, John Rehle, the Putman family, Wm. Bleekman and George Beeman.

The first town meeting for Wheatfield was held in the spring of 1841 at the home of Wm. Tompkins, at what was then, and still is, known as "White Dog Corners." Sanford Olds was the first supervisor, Rufus Carle the first town clerk, and David Gorsline the first treasurer.

The first highway laid out in the township was on sections 34-35

in 1839, and this neighborhood organized the first road district, called No. 1.

The first school in the township was kept by Susan Cochran, in a log building on the west half of the northeast quarter of section 34 about 1840. Another early teacher was Saphronia Worden, a niece of Mrs. David Gorsline. The school house in the Whitcomb neighborhood was built in 1841 or 1842. It was a shed roofed log building, the second one in the township. The third was probably built about 1846, in what is now District No. 3. Mahala Blanchard was the first teacher.

There had never been a church edifice erected in the township until the present M. E. church, in which religious services had been held for many years in various school houses. The religious denominations presented in the township are Methodist Episcopal, Wesleyan Methodist, Baptists, Congregationalists, Catholic, and perhaps others. Many of these attend religious services in Williamston. The first Protestant minister who visited the township is said by the oldest settler to have been Elder Fiero, a prominent Baptist clergyman.

WHEATFIELD TOWNSHIP.

By DR. F. N. TURNER, North Lansing.

The township of Wheatfield was rightly named, for fifty years ago it was one vast field of wheat. It had a virgin fertile soil adapted to growing this grain, and the farmers got good return, for their labors. From 1866 to 1890 wheat was the money crop. During the decade preceding 1890 the great wheat belt of Dakota was opened up and many of the Michigan wheat growers went there.

The millers were compelled to put into their mills the roller process, instead of using the old-fashioned mill stones, to grind their hard wheat. Bakers bought the new process flour for it would absorb more water and they could get more loaves from a barrel of flour. The competition that followed lowered the price of winter wheat, and the farmers of Wheatfield were forced to raise other grains. The large wheatfields of the township vanished with the pioneers.

A ripening field of wheat is a beautiful sight. It is a source of satisfaction to the grower, for he sees in it dollars for yearly expenses and bread for his family the ensuing year. The student of political economy recognizes in it surplus food for the millions of non-producers, the wage earners.

The artist dreams of material for his pencil or brush. In my boyhood I have watched the nodding heads and bending stalks when stirred by the passing breeze, the ever *changing* color from passing clouds, 'seen the lark on fluttering wings poised above it, breaking into sweet songs of praise for its well spread table, giving in fact melody for the stored up bread of mankind. The rabbit pauses at the edge of the field and with pointed enr listens for enemies that would harm its **sheltered home** and little ones. A quail, from the top rail of the fence, **calls** to its mate, "more wheat, some more wheat."

Examine the kernel of the **wheat** and you will find the outer wrappings folded in the crease, like a military guard or sentinel wrapped in his cloak, guarding the delicate germ and starch **cells** from **moisture and** insect enemies. The picture is beautiful; no artist can make it complete in all its coloring; no scientist can describe its **utilities**, or poet can, in words or phrases, **tell** us of the pleasant dreams it excites in the minds of men.

From memory I will have to divide the early pioneers of **Wheatfield** into sections, not of land, but settlements or neighborhoods. The northern part of this township was settled by Germans, or people of German descent. Among them were the Zimmers, Linns, Emmers, Rehles, Karns, Lotts, Stoffers and **Rohrbachers**.

Mr. Caswell, the oldest ettler **in** that section, came when the township was a wilderness. Many times I have heard him relate how he went to Dexter, the nearest grist mill, and packed the flour for their bread home on his back. He depended upon the work of his hands and his faithful gun to furnish food for his growing family. He **had** no horses or oxen for the first two or three years. His son **told me** they **had** no neighbors, **the nearest** settler being miles away.

For amusement he (the son) trained his dog to call the wolves, so whenever the father was awny, they did not dare do this when the father was at home, the dog would go outside the cabin and howl during the evening until he heard the varmints coming, then

he would scratch at the door and whine. When the door was opened he would sneak under the bed and remain quiet till morning. His dogs' share of the entertainment was over and he would rest from his labors.

Mr. Caswell had four sons—Chester, Adelbert, Ira and Charles. They were choppers and later took jobs of felling timber for the settlers that came in. Each **man was** an expert with an axe. They knew all the good points of that tool as a skillful workman knows, his hammer, plane or **chisel**. The artist was Ira. Many times **I** have watched him at work on a log swing his five pound a.x, saw the flying chips, and timed his cut. How easy the great shoulder and arm muscles worked, the ax was buried in the crackling wood with hair-like accuracy, and the cut was so **smooth** that it looked as if it was planed. He and his brother Chester in the month of March, 1866, cut thirty acres of heavy timber in twenty-two **days**. My father let them the job and paid them six dollars per acre.

Nicholas Emmer was a hard working farmer, who, by his own efforts and frugal German ways accumulated a fortune in a few years. In after years, when he had retired from active work, he told me he did not enjoy himself as he did when he arose at **4 a. m.** worked until **10 p. m.** and came home so tired that he slept on the hard floor beside his kitchen stove. **In** his opinion **he** rested better and was more refreshed **than he** was when he slept on a spring mattress.

Mr. Rehle had two sons. The younger, Charles, was a school-mate in the Williamston school, I cannot recall among my boyhood friends a young man of more happy disposition or more sterling qualities. That dread disease, appendicitis, claimed him and he "went west" in the pride of his early manhood. Jacob, his brother, still living, has been sheriff of Ingham county.

Peter **Zimmer** was a rival of Nicholas Emmer. For years each tried to get more land or make the most money, and Nick's death **was** the only thing **that stopped** this rivalry, I think **Pete** was lonesome after this, but in the following years he **met** with a bitter disappointment. His son, that for years he had educated. for a priest, chose law instead of theology for his profession, and by so doing nearly broke his father's heart, ,

Two brothers from the state of New York settled in the eastern

section of the township, Lemuel and Joe Dennis. Lem, the elder, had four sons, while his brother's family were all girls. Lem was a hard worker, a shrewd investor, and left a large estate to his sons. The boys after his death added farm after farm to the original acres until they owned land from Williamston to the brick school house, five miles south. All of them were in the stock, elevator and banking business in Williamston, Two or three of these brothers have passed away, but left behind a good record, a faithful stewardship of their inheritance.

On the opposite side of the road lived David Gorsline, another prosperous farmer, who left sons that inherited all their father's sterling qualities.

North of the Gorsline farm and adjoining it was the Hammond or Sunnyside farm. H. Hammond was a progressive, prosperous farmer fifty years ago. He had all the comforts and blessings of independence, but in the midst of his prosperity he went to Williamston, engaged in the manufacturing business and lost all his property. After this loss he drifted west in hopes, no doubt, he could start anew and make another fortune. In this he was disappointed and a few years ago he drifted back a disappointed, broken down old man and died in a few eeks.

Jacob Stoffer was the king bee in the western part of the township. He was an ideal farmer, progressive and up-to-date in all his operations and prosperous in all his undertakings. He came from northern Ohio or Indiana and introduced a certain style in his barns. His bank barn, with overshot sills, two double floors, one above the other, created a sensation and was the talk of the neighborhood. It was a Pennsylvania bank farm, such as we would find in Berks county, Pennsylvania.

Near White Dog school house, in the center of the township, lived the Cole boys, Henry, John, Jesse and Frank. They came from New York state. In the winter of 1878-9 while teaching at the Westgate school I boarded with Frank. I never met a more happy family. Frank's laugh or his wife's happy disposition could not be duplicated. One year later I visited them and all was changed. Death had entered the home and taken the only son. The father had met with financial losses in building, and I found him gloomy and sorrowful. In a few days the sad tidings came that he had, by his own hand, ended his life. This

was an hereditary curse to these men, but we will draw the curtain of Christian charity over their deaths.

A short distance from the White Dog school house lived G. Stewart, the florist and botanist, For many years his flowers were admired at the fairs and other places where he exhibited them. In my conversations with him I always found him ready to explain the wonderful structures and various shades of color in plant life. He had that scholarly way and gentle courtesy that was interesting to a student in botany, In a talk with him he told me that Asa Gray, the noted botanist of Harvard University, had engaged him to make a study and collection of the oaks that grew in Michigan. He found and classified twenty-seven different species.

Prof. Beal, the botanist of M. A. C., recognized his researches and engaged him to do botanical work in the fields and forests of Michigan. His neighbors were mostly uneducated, hard-fisted farmers that did not recognize the beauties of flowers, ornamental shrubs and fine lawns, so his efforts to educate them met with disappointment and financial loss. In religious belief he was a Spiritualist, and this aroused a dislike among his fanatical orthodox neighbors, and he was ostracized. Like John Muir, the California naturalist, he had only his flowers to talk to and commune with. After his wife's death an adopted daughter was the only one left to cheer his lonely fireside. With his knowledge he could discern or see, as a transcendentalist, the creative spirit in every swelling bud and opening flower. Among-his equals he would have been honored and respected, but in this rural community he was scoffed at and called queer. Meeting with financial reverses he sold his farm, moved into Leroy Township, where he died. Besides his flowers and botanical studies, he was a worker in woods, a cabinet maker. He was old-fashioned, but an expert workman. When he knew death was not far off he made his own coffin and was buried in it. It was fashioned from black walnut, for in his opinion no other wood should hold his mouldering body. From his great labors in plant life I think he was worthy, and had earned this his last overcoat,

The Spauldings, who lived in the south section of the township, I never became acquainted with, but while teaching in the Westgate district I met the Kent boys, Simeon, Seth and Duane.

Their father, Uncle Jerry Kent, was an old timer, a great bear hunter and rail splitter. Many times I heard the story of his killing a mother bear and two cubs with a knot maul and an ironwood handspike.

He was once called as a witness in a law suit about some hogs, and his testimony was unique. After he was sworn he was asked to tell his story. He commenced: "Seth and I were in the woods hunting the cows when Tige treed a bar. I told Tige to sic him and Seth to go home and tote me Old Betsy" (his rifle). At this point he was interrupted by the other lawyer who told him to confine his remarks to hogs and not tell "bar" stories. Uncle Jerry's lawyer objected to this interruption and he was allowed to tell his story his way, but he had to loosen his tongue and warm up with a "bar" story before he shot the hog testimony over the bar of justice.

In the Pollok district lived Myron Pollock, the country schoolmaster, justice of the peace, and, on some occasions, preacher. He had to divide his honors as a successful teacher with a Mr. Westgate, but when the latter branched off into medicine Mr. Pollok was without a rival.

Mr. Butler, who lived north of White Dog, was an Oxford Englishman. His daughter Minnie I was acquainted with. For a long time she was a teacher in the Williamston schools but married Prof. Burgess, and now resides in East Lansing.

Fifty years ago Wheatfield had no churches, post office, stores or blacksmith shop. The people went to Dansville, Mason or Williamston for their mail, to shop or get repairs for tools, etc. Within the last ten years I have noticed that a church has been built near the Westgate school house, but it looked lonely and forsaken. During my terms of school in 1874-1879 religious services were occasionally held in the school house, and two or three families of Spiritualists held seances in their homes.

From the farms of this township have come many men and women who have made a success in other walks of life. The business, professional and educational world has been the field they have worked and labored in.

The fields and fertile acres have been the nucleus of many fortunes. Under the stimulus of a daily mail and good roads for

automobiles we may expect a large emigration of worn out cityites who want to try the beneficial effects of a quiet life.

August, 1919,

GEORGE TRAVER, SR.

George Traver, Sr., who resides in Wheatfield Township, is one of the oldest members of the Ingham County Historical and Pioneer Society, he having celebrated his ninety-first birthday on the 15th of this month. His father, Absalom Traver, was born in New York city in 1800, while his mother, Charlotte M. Miller, was born in Boston, Mass. The father conducted a grocery business on Maiden Lane, in New York, but in the fall of 1831, just a few months after the birth of their sixth child, George, the subject of this sketch, the parents decided to pull up stakes and go out into the wilds of Michigan and build up a new home. When the elder Traver told one of his neighbors what he was about to do, he gave him the following advice: "Now, Absalom, you were born and brought up in the city and know nothing about choosing good land, but if you go to Michigan you will have to buy new land; so let me advise you that if you want a good farm to choose land on which is good thrifty timber and plenty of running water." When Mr. Traver started he was accompanied by a friend named Hay Stevenson. It was in November, so navigation had not closed, and they took a boat in New York and went to Albany. From there they walked to Buffalo, where they were able to cross into Canada, and then continued their walk to Windsor, where they were ferried across to Detroit and again took up their journey on foot to Ann Arbor, which at that time consisted of two small villages about one-half mile apart. They first stopped at "Uppertown," as it was called, where Mr. Traver inquired for land. He was directed to 160 acres lying about one-half mile east of the village, which could be bought for \$5.00 per acre. Remembering the advice of his friend, he looked it over carefully, and found the timber on the scrubby order, and no running water near, so he concluded it would not make a good farm. (This land now forms a part of the campus of the University of Michigan.)

He then went to "Lowertown," just across the Huron river on

the north side, and there bought **160** acres of land from a Mr. Wilcox. From this he platted an addition to the village, then bought another tract nearby, which contained **80** acres. In the meantime his friend Stevenson had bought **320** acres north of the village of Dexter on the shore of North Lake, and began the erection of a house. In the spring of **1832**, as soon as navigation opened, the two men moved their families from New York city to their new homes in Washtenaw county. They came all the way by water to Detroit, by way of the Hudson river, the Erie canal and other waterways to Buffalo, then by steamboat to Detroit, where they took the stage to Ann Arbor. On the 160 acres purchased by Mr. Traver was a small creek which traversed his land from north to south. The land was covered with heavy timber, and the call for lumber being great the owner built a small saw mill in 1834, and in 1841, when the first University buildings were erected, he furnished all the lumber. This was what is now the north wing of University Hall. Mr. Traver does not remember the number of the section on which the home was situated, but says the south end of the land his father owned is now covered with a large garden and greenhouse, near the island. Mr. Traver says: "I was the oldest boy living in our family (there were four children born to the Travers' after they came to Michigan), so I was the drudge. If there was anything wanted, why George was the boy called for, so I was always kept busy. My father farmed it for twenty years, but never did a day's work with a team; he never wanted anything to do with a **team**; depended on hired help for that. So as soon as I got old enough to hold the lines I had to learn to drive, and as soon as I got big enough to walk behind a drag and guide a team I was put into that work, so I never could go to school except for a short time in the winter, and when I was seventeen I had to give up school for good. You know the old saying, 'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy,' and that was so in my case. My father organized the first school taught in the lower town in Ann Arbor, just north of the railroad track. He took some slabs from his saw mill and made some rough benches and fitted up a room upstairs in the old farm house, where they had school for a year or two. Then an old neighbor from the east who had just learned the carpenter trade came to Ann Arbor and Mr. Traver had him

build a small school house, which served until the district organized and built a brick house, on Traver street, where was held the first district school in the city. I attended the first school taught there when I was but a small boy, and little did I think when this young man was my teacher," says Mr. Traver, "that I would live to be a member of a school board in Ingham county and hire this same teacher for the **school** my children attended, the Dennis school in Wheatfield Township, the teacher a well known instructor in the State, John S. **Huston.**"

In July, 1855, George Traver and Catherine Ellen Kirk were united in marriage in Ann Arbor by Rev. Andrew **Bell**, and in 1858 they moved to Ingham county and settled in **Alaiedon** Township, but in **1861** they moved back to Ann Arbor and Mr. Traver run his father's saw mill for a time, then came again to Ingham county, and bought a farm near **Webberville**, but in **1865** moved to the farm where he now lives.

January 6, **1864**, Mr. Traver enlisted in Co. B, 6th Michigan Heavy Artillery. This regiment was in the Department of the Gulf, and was mustered out at New Orleans in August, **1865**, and paid off and discharged a month later,

Mr. Traver says, "When I enlisted I had a wife and three boys under six years of age, and it was a hard thing to step out and leave them, saying to the Government, 'here is my life, take it if needed.'"

Mr. Traver lost his wife some years ago, and he and his daughter live on the old home farm, which the daughter conducts.

He is a little hard of hearing, and uses a cane to guide his steps, but has never lost his interest in public affairs, and is always the first one present at the State and County Historical meetings, or at any G. A. **R.** gathering, ready at any **time** to tell his experiences.

F. L. A.