

HOPKINS TOWNSHIP REMINISCENCES

Hopkins
Willis Parmelee

WRITTEN BY WILLIS D. PARMELEE, FEB., 1956

I wonder if the young people of today ever stop to consider the hardships that our forefathers endured when they left their friends and homes to venture into the vast unknown with their ox teams and covered wagons, or whatever means of travel that might be available, and to select a plot of land, all covered with vast forests, that was best suited to what was their idea of making a home for themselves and their family.

There were many things to consider in making a choice of location. Some might have thought of the possibility of having water for their stock and for household purposes, others for the possibility of having water power for running their mills, others seemed to pick a spot on higher ground so that there would be better drainage, but none seemed to pick the low land and swamps.

Some time ago I was talking with a man that came to Michigan in the early days and he said he could have bought the land just west of Hopkins, now owned by Mrs. John Zylma for \$1.50 per acre, but it looked then like a vast swamp, so he went west and south and located on higher ground.

One of my uncles, James Parmelee, from Twinsburg, Ohio, when he came to Michigan located on one of the high hills in Watson Township, near Big Lake. Later he disposed of that and located at "Ohio Corners" later known as the Otis Parmelee farm, where so many of the people from Ohio were locating, which was a wonderfully good move for him and his descendants.

Another uncle of mine came to Michigan with the idea that there would be a village at the center of each township, as was the case back in Ohio, so he came through the woods to the center of Hopkins, and there he found that it was so low and swampy that there would never be a village there, so he started north from the center of Hopkins township through the woods, crossed the Rabbit River on a log, and located 1-1/2 miles north of the center, and known as the William Parmelee farm, later as the Mason Parmelee farm.

The first settler in the township was Johnathan Olin Rounds and he settled on the farm now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Lesley Wise. This evidently was a case where a good water supply was to be had, as there is a nice stream of water running through the farm and flows from some of the lakes in Watson Township.

As there was no feed mill or flour mill near by at that time, Mr. Rounds would go to Kalamazoo with the ox team to get flour and feed. This meant a trip of 4 days and 3 nights away from home. This left Mrs. Rounds alone with the children for this length of time and she would set up a stick cross-ways of the door to show that they were friendly with the Indians; then during the night sometimes the Indians would come in and get warm by the fireplace while the mother and children were in bed, and when they had warmed themselves by the fireplace, they would go out and on their way. These children of the Rounds family were Olive Rounds who later married Mr. Lyman Atwater; another sister married Mr. Wm. Kenfield, and a brother, Hopkins Rounds, who died young and was the first death in Hopkins Township, and after whom the township was named. This information was given to me by Mrs. Ida Atwater Parmelee, a grand daughter of Johnathan Olin Rounds.

Among other early settlers were Wm. Ingerson who settled near the Rounds farm and Erastus Congdon, Sr., father of Erastus Congdon, Jr., and Albert Congdon.

Soon there came the need of a flour and grist mill in the community, as there was no other power available and gasoline and electric power was not known of at that time; the only power that was possible at that time was water power. This was accomplished by the neighbors banding together and building a dam across the creek east of the J. O. Rounds farm and digging a mill race from there westward along the high bank for nearly 2 miles and then over a water wheel just south of Hopkinsburg, where there they built a grist mill, ran by water power and operated by a Mr. Richmond. Mr. Richmond also built and operated a store on the N. E. corner of Hopkinsburg. This store was later operated by Frank Watkins, also by Roderick McKinnon. The mill burned down about 1885 and the store burned many years later.

The village of Hopkinsburg had a tinshop and hardware store, a shoe shop,

several doctors, among whom were Dr. Fox, Dr. Darling, Dr. Peters, Dr. Lafayette Stuck, father of Dr. Howard Stuck of Allegan, Dr. A. H. Wicks,

The Burg also boasted of board sidewalks, one of which extended north about 1/2 mile, across the creek north of the first Congregational Church ground. There were 2 blacksmith shops, one owned by Geo. Lines who did general work and horse-shoeing. The other shop was owned by Robert Edgell and son, Earl, and did general work and built wagons, both heavy and light, and bob-sleighs, also heavy and light.

On the farm now owned by Ward Thomas, formerly owned by Stevan Carver, was a small spring creek where Stevan's father diverted the water through a small mill-race and over a water wheel for power to run a turning lathe to manufacture sap buckets built of pine lumber and hooped with wooden hoops. My father bought two hundred of these buckets and most of them are still in use, the wooden hoops all are replaced with metal hoops, and inside of buckets painted white.

Among other early settlers in the 1850 to 1860 period was Heman White, who located on 80 acres north of the Burg, now owned by Arnold Ross. On this place he built a log cabin, and in it he had a home made table, and chairs made of slabs of wood with holes bored in them and sticks stuck in them for legs. One evening he went to call on a neighbor, Mr. Buskirk, and while there they says to Heman, "Why don't you get married?" and he replied, "No one will have me, " and Miss Jane Buskirk replied, "I will have you," and later they were married. They walked eight miles to Wayland, bought a washtub and other things to keep house with, and carried them home in the tub between them.

On the west end of the White 80 acres were springs of water and the herds of deer would come there for water, and one could shoot a deer there most any time they wanted one, so they had plenty of venison in those early days.

Then a little later, Mr. Albert Lane came from Ohio to Mr. White's place looking for a prospective place to settle, and Mr. White said, I have a place picked out for you, and they went to the back end of the White 80 acres and Mr. Lane took up the land joining the White 80 acres. Then Mr. White says to Mr. Lane, "Now right

over across the creek is a young lady, Miss Andrews, that would be a good wife for you." And later they were married. Both the Whites and Lanes lived to celebrate their 50th Wedding Anniversaries with their children.

Hopkins Burg was quite a prosperous little village up until 1869 when the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railway went through, then "Hopkins Station" was a stopping place on the railroad and then the Hoffmasters and Bucks platted land there, and Hopkins Village began to materialize.

For some time the locomotives were fueled with wood, and north of Hopkins about 1-1/2 miles, on the corner near the Spahn farm, was a siding and a wood yard where the trains would stop and refuel. People would cut and deliver wood to the yard in the winter time; among others were Kendall Baird who delivered wood there at that time, also Joseph Correll who lived on the corner where the wood yard was at that time.

Mr. Correll was a Civil War Veteran and was one of the blacksmiths in the early days of Hopkins. He was rather frail for many years and when he passed away an autopsy showed that he had carried a sliver of a bullet in the wall of his heart from the time that he was in the army.

The most interesting story of a pioneer seeking a location to take up a claim was related to me by a Mr. Hauwk. His grandson, Roger Kinney, was cow tester here in Allegan County some years ago, and through him we became acquainted with Mr. Hauwk and visited at his place near Ludington, on what is now 31, and owns a beautiful fruit farm. I asked him how he came to settle there and he said he came from the East to Grand Rapids in the fall of the year, and in the spring he started out on foot to look for a place to locate. He went north through what now is Cadillac and on to Grand Traverse, then from there westward to the lakeshore and down through Ludington. Twelve or fifteen miles south of Ludington he came to a tract of land quite high and rolling, and covered with hard wood timber. This looked good to him and he walked to the Capitol and took up the claim.

Now a few of my boyhood recollections. Mr. William Parmelee was the first one to own a silo in Hopkins Township. This was a square silo built inside of his barn.

To fill this he used a cut box with a carrier attached to elevate the cut corn into the silo. This machine was run by a sweep horse power, which was run by 3 team (six) of horses that went round and round, and from this power was a tumbling rod with a belt wheel on the end of it and belted to the cut box. When I was 12 years old I would stay out of school and drive the horses on the horse power. For this I received 75 cents per day. Later he used a 3 horse tread power for several years, which did not need a driver, just relieve the brakes and the horses had to go. This they used for a few years and then changed to a gasoline engine.

An event that we would look forward to was a trip to the Allegan Fair. We would start from home about 8:30 A. M. and arrive at the fair grounds, 15 miles, about 11 A. M., have a basket dinner at noon, and start home about 3 P. M., and by the time we got home the horses were tired enough, and so were we.

Another time there was a big show in Allegan and our parents took us to see the parade. At that time there was a covered bridge, all of wood, across the river where the new one was built in 1955 to replace the iron bridge which served for more than 60 years. When the elephants in the parade came to the old wooden bridge, they felt of it a little, they would not cross it, but instead they went through the river and while in the water they wanted to stop and play for a while. We saw the parade but did not see the show as that, with a 3 or 4 hour trip home, would make us too late home for the chores that had to be done.