

Kite & Key

Franklin Historical Society Newsletter

June 2021

FIRE!

(recollections from the 1860 catalpa tree by the library)

September 16, 1885 is a night to remember not only because of the fire, but also the circumstances surrounding it. Much of it is still a mystery. As an eyewitness I can relate my story and let you come to your own conclusions.

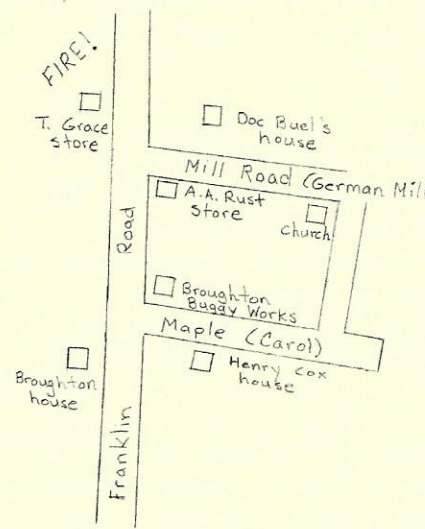
It was a rainy Sunday evening. There was a gathering planned at the Methodist church on German Mill which was turning 25 years old. I don't recall if it was a celebration for that anniversary or simply a church supper. At any rate, parishioners popped their umbrellas and ventured out.

I noticed Henry Cox, a Civil War surgeon and village doctor, leaving his home on Maple Street which was later renamed Carol. He sauntered up to Franklin Road, stopped for a moment at the Broughton buggy shop on the corner and then continued down the street until he reached the Rust general store at German Mill. It was then that I saw him peer in the direction of the church checking to see if the lights were on in the sanctuary. They were not.

I suspect rather than stand in the rain, he decided to retrace his steps to the buggy shop and chat with Daniel Broughton, the buggy maker. Broughton and Cox were both Englishmen and made the long journey from their homeland to eventually settle in Franklin village. Word was out that Broughton was interested in retiring and selling his buggy works. I wonder if that was the topic of their brief conversation.

Cox, with umbrella in hand, walked back in the direction of the church and once again paused at the Rust's store. Across the street was a store owned by Theodore Grace. He was once a villager, but now resided in Farmington. Two men, Barrett and Patterson operated the store. As the doctor peered at the church, he was distracted by the smell of smoke. He saw fire billowing from a window at Barrett and Patterson's establishment. Fire! Fire! Fire! Those words echoed throughout the village and people came running to help. The building was soon engulfed in flames from cellar to garret. It was impossible to save the structure yet alone its contents. Dr. Frank German's barn was in jeopardy as well Doc Buel's home. Fortunately, the rain was a deterrent to more destruction in the vicinity. With all of the chaos, I lost sight of Dr. Cox and other parishioners headed to the church that evening. I trust their supper or other doings were carried on as planned.

In a short time, the store was leveled to the ground. Now the focus was on Barrett and Patterson. They were nowhere to be seen. The word was that Mr. Barrett and his partner, Mr. Patterson, had started for Livonia about nine o'clock that morning and were not expected back until the following morning. There



was no explanation of what business they were tending to or who they were meeting. That, in itself, was a mystery.

It was determined that the fire was not an accident. Seems the first people to spot the flames, noticed that they could see the effects of some kind of combustible material having been well distributed through the store. The fact that no one had been in the

store for near 12 hours, would prove conclusively that the fire could not have started by accident. Now, I'm sounding like an amateur investigator, but I do have a right to my own scenarios.

I must say that I have watched this William Barrett. This is the not first time that trouble has landed on his door step. He was a shoemaker by trade. For a time, he was justice of the peace and sometimes used it as a cover for his own shenanigans. Once he put gunpowder in his own fireplace and then had three young men arrested for the crime. They were acquitted. As revenge, he had them rearrested for horse stealing. Some say power can go to your head. And now, there was suspicion of him concerning this mysterious fire.

I'm one to give a feller the benefit of the doubt. I remember when he was not a vile person. He came upon some hard times. Barrett emigrated from Ireland. He was one of a few shoemakers in town. In 1857, he married Susan Congleton. She was the daughter of George Congleton, a blacksmith and wagonmaker. They had two daughters. Martha who passed away at age 4 and Emma who died at age 8. After only five years of marriage, Barrett lost his wife. Such tragedy could make any man sour to life. He was an angry person. Now, I'm not condoning his actions, but trying to give some insight into his mindset.

Going back to the fire, Theodore Grace did have insurance. Nothing was definitive about who was responsible for the blaze, but life would never be the same for Barrett and Patterson, in fact, after this incident no one knew their whereabouts or perhaps didn't care to know. It was a sad state of affairs all around. The Pontiac Gazette published the story. Like most stories, people read'em, discuss'em and turned the page. The story gets put on the back burner, but not for me! Every once in a while I rustle one up from my memories and share them with you. Such is life.

One Family's Journey

The lure of adventure to a new land intrigued many pioneers. The news of purchasing property for \$1.25 an acre was an incentive for New Yorkers and New Englanders to pack up their prized possessions, corral their children and head for the Michigan Territory.

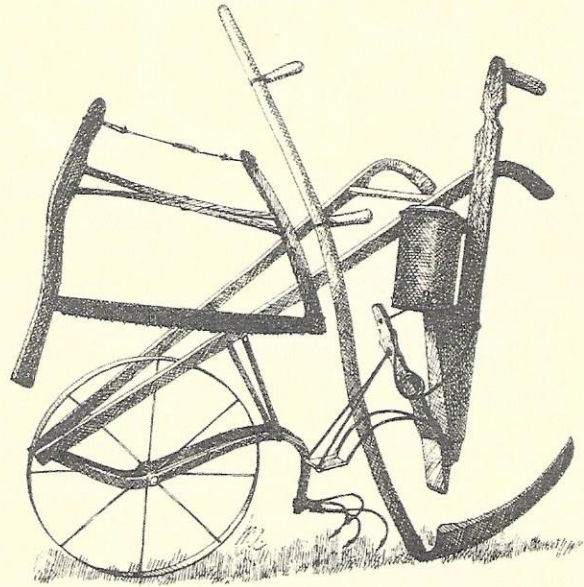
The Stoughtons were one such family that decided to leave Cayuga County, New York and travel to Oakland County, Michigan. They loaded up their wagon with provisions that would last for nearly a year. Sacks of rice, beans and flour, coffee, tea, sugar and bacon were staples. Pots, pans and other household items were stowed away. Tools such as a shovel, scythe, rake, hoe, saw, mallet and plane were needed. Seeds to plant corn, wheat and other crops were necessary once they were settled.

In 1824, Dillucene, his wife Sophronia and their five children made the decision to start a new life. Their children ranged in age from ten to one year. Little is known of the challenges of their journey. We do know that they bought 80 acres of land on the east side of Franklin Road along the river where the Ravine condominiums are today. On April 2, 1824 they bought their land through the Detroit Land Office. The deed was signed by President John Quincy Adams.

Their journey had ended, but their work had only just begun! The land that they bought was forested with hickory, elm, maple and oak. The forests were dark and fearsome. There was no time to waste. They needed to make this new place along the river their home.

The Stoughton family was the first to settle in this area. It would be six more weeks until the Bullock family would become their neighbors. This new place would have a name. It was the Stoughton-Bullock settlement!

With the help of men and boys from Bloomfield and Farmington townships, the log cabin was built! It was twenty feet square, seven feet high with a chimney of stone at one end. The



family had plenty to eat. There were whitefish and trout in the river. They hunted deer and partridge. Strawberries, plums and blackberries were plentiful. There was water to drink from the river, wash clothes and bathe. They planted corn and rye. Life was hard, but it was working.

In the summer of 1829, Dillucene built a brick house. It was the only one in Oakland County.

A few years or so after they left New York, Dillucene's brother William journeyed here with their parents Amaziah and Mary. William also brought with him two of their younger brothers, Charles and Amaziah. Eventually, the other siblings joined them. Many of them married and the Stoughtons became the fabric of the community.

Dillucene and his wife had six more children while they lived here. Around 1840, they moved to Phelpstown, later called Williamston. Their son Amaziah was born there. Their daughter, Sophronia, who was about a year old when they headed west, married Simeon Clay. They were the first marriage in Phelpstown.

The Stoughtons were real pioneers! They were a family of firsts. The first to settle in our village and a daughter that was the first marriage in Phelpstown. Their legacy remains here. Dillucene's parents and many siblings are buried in the Franklin Cemetery. As you pass through the gates on Scenic Drive, look to your right and you'll see the Stoughton plot that has been meticulously cared for by descendants of the family. Barnum, Miller and Warner were just some of the extensions of the family. Most were farmers and farmers were the first to build our community. That's how we started. And, now you know!

Kite & Key is a publication of the Franklin Historical Society. The Franklin Historical Society seeks to preserve such material, structures and artifacts that help to establish the history of the Village of Franklin and to make it accessible to those who wish to study it. The Society maintains a museum and archival area at the Derwich House, 26165 13 Mile Road (at Kirk). Volunteers and donations are most welcome. *Kite & Key* and the society welcome mail at:



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A Work in Progress

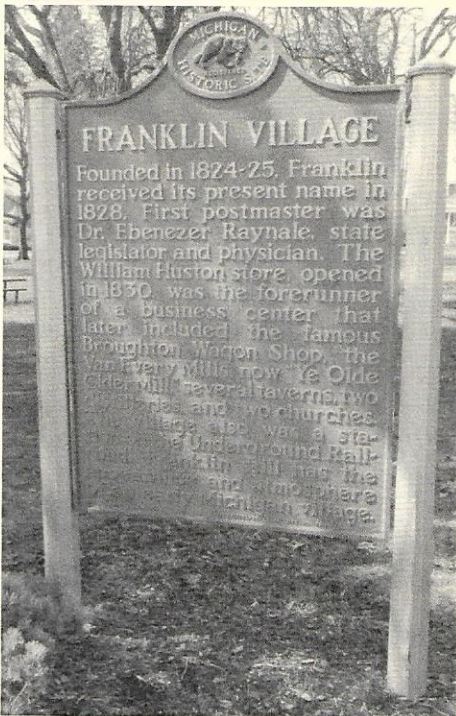
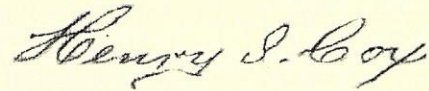
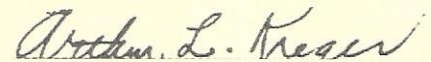
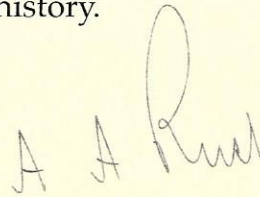
We continue to see our museum exhibits evolve! Pete Halik and his coworkers, Alex and Claude helped us transform the museum basement into another era. Projects that they completed included:

- Boxed in the steel beams with wood
- Installed reclaimed wood siding and a window in the general store
- Used recycled wood from the Snow house to create a mantle on the pioneer fireplace
- Added white washed reclaimed wood from a Detroit area home to a wall
- And installed track lighting.

We wanted to create a path that would lead visitors to the front door of the museum. Mike Flevaris, with the help of his dad, accomplished our mission by installing a round rail fence. If you're looking for someone to do a project for you, we recommend Pete Halik (248-388-3801) and Mike Flevaris (248-631-8006.)

We have been collecting settler autographs from draft registrations, bill of sales, wills, tax receipts, anywhere a signature was required to create a Signature Wall. It will become another link, another connection, another insight to the people who came before us. We are learning what they looked like, how they worked, where they lived, how they contributed, who they interacted with and now how they put a pen to paper. It doesn't get more real than that!

We are excited to watch the exhibits evolve as we tell our stories, explore our past, preserve our artifacts and continue to be caretakers of our history.



Historically Speaking...

Franklin has four historic markers, one on the village green, by the school, at the cemetery and the latest one at the Broughton house.

In order to obtain a marker, you must apply to the Michigan Historic Center and pay a \$250 fee to start the process. The significance of the building and the relevant facts must be presented and backed up with sources. The sources may come from a census, land records, newspaper articles, history books and historical studies on the property. The information is reviewed and questions asked to confirm that the information is correct and worthy of an historical marker.

The research is thorough, the process laborious and the outcome worthwhile. The markers tell the story of our village's history for generations to come.

Donations:

Rebecca Gale: Ken Bristol prints
Judy Shagna: Period clothing

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Crow To Go? or No?

Last year due to COVID, the Build A Scarecrow event which was always held on the green, morphed into Crow to Go. The Historical Society put together scarecrow kits, took orders ahead of time and arranged pick up times at the museum. This year we're hoping to return to the Kreger barn and build scarecrows there once again. It's a fun community event.

However, we have run into a glitch. In the past, we secured clothes to don the scarecrows from garage sales. Garage sales have become few and far between. We are asking for donations of jeans, pants, shirts, t-shirts and accessories. If you would like to make any donations, please put them in the box on the front porch of the Kreger house. A scarecrow is waiting and willing to accept them.

Thank you!