

Kite & Key

Franklin Historical Society Newsletter

Fall 2021

Within My Rings

(Recollections of the 1860 catalpa at the Franklin library)

I've spent my time living history. I listen to the daily routines of people as they go about their day. I hear the cries, the joy and the frustrations that occur. I see the struggles of working in the fields, pulling wagons out of muddy roads and burying loved ones. I am amazed at the strength, confidence and determination of villagers to rise above the tribulations they face each day and how they make them manageable. Franklin and surrounding communities had grit. Life posed challenges and they met them. For many, their journey began and ended here. They did not look back. They moved forward and faced challenges head on. Sit back a spell and join me as I recall events that impacted my life and will surely impact yours as we both gain insight and understanding of our past.

There is one story that I am unable to get out of my head. The incident happened some sixteen years ago before I was rooted on the village green. It is evident that the traumatic event was kept fresh in the minds of those who experienced it because there was still talk of it.

I am familiar with the family today. Let's fast forward to the 70's, the 1870's. Samuel and Elizabeth Beatty are of Irish descent. Samuel

is a successful farmer in Bloomfield living there with his wife; his children are grown. Together they raised nine young'ins. In the early years of this decade, they had a banner crop: two hundred bushels of wheat, one hundred bushels of Indian corn and three hundred bushels of oats. They boasted ownership of three horses, five milk cows, twelve other cattle, sixty sheep and four swine. The golden years were treating them well.

Now, let's take a look back when life wasn't rosy. This is not my story. What I am about to tell you is the reminiscences from the folks who lived the experience. In 1844, a terrible disease called diphtheria swept through the area taking five of their children in a month's time. Matthew was 7, Elizabeth 9, Sarah 2, William 14 and Ellinor 5 months. Three of the Beatty offsprings survived! To call this occurrence a tragedy would be an understatement. Unfortunately, these stories were not unusual for the times. When disease of any kind invaded a community, it was rampant. It altered the lives of

many families with a domino effect. Small gravestones are a testament to that. It was a tragic time, but we know that the Beattys and other families supported each other, picked up the pieces and moved on. They continued to build a life together.

It was not uncommon for men to work in the fields from dawn to dusk. This work kept the family fed, and if lucky enough, provided extra money if produce was sold in town. Women's work was in the home not only caring for the children, but also scrubbing clothes and hanging them to dry on bushes, making butter, bread, soap, candles and spinning wool. Children were not exempt from chores. Wood needed to be chopped, eggs collected, cows milked and stalls cleaned. All of the labor kept the family functioning and the reward of an occasional ball game or oyster supper even sweeter.

Oyster suppers you say! Michigan doesn't have oysters! A truer statement couldn't be said. I must remind you that the first pioneers were not native. Many hailed from New York and New England where oysters were commonplace on the table. It was a treat to receive a case of oysters from Baltimore, gather villagers and celebrate a little back home feel at the Community Hall.

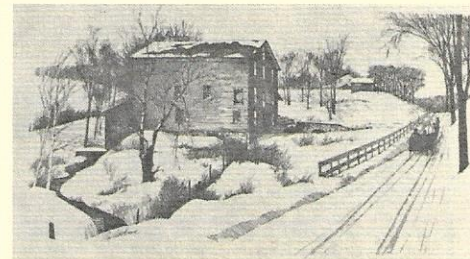
It was a familiar sight to spot Henry Spicer, whose farm was on the Oakland Hills Country Club, picking up people along Maple Road in a bobsled. It warmed my heart to see everyone huddled under a blanket to fend against the chill of the night. As I watched the sled glide through the snow, there was laughter and anticipation in the air for the evening ahead of them. There were other sleds en route. Passersby waved and greeted one another as they made their way by the Van Every mill and mansion. Spicer would board his team of horses at the Van Every carriage house after dropping off his passengers at the Community Hall. Work and worries were put behind them at least for a while. Everyone was primed for an evening of comradery!

And, there were dances at the hall. The music filled the air with wonderful melodies! My, I could feel the rhythm down to my very roots!

Benches were pushed back against the wall where weary children would sleep. At the evening's end, they were swept into their parents arms to head home. Frivolity relieved any troubles or grief and prepared villagers to face whatever life had in store for them.

And then there was baseball which created another

"Within my..."Continued on Page 2



Within My Rings

diversion. If you could unravel an old sock, wind it into a ball, cover it with leather from an old shoe, grab a table leg to use for a bat, then you were ready to head out to the ball field. It was a gentleman's game. Swearing, spitting, scratching, chewing tobacco or wagering were frowned upon. Comments on an umpire's judgment were not allowed. I remember



many an umpire asking players and spectators for assistance in making decisions. That sure wouldn't happen on any of our ball fields today! Pitches were thrown underhand. The batter called for the pitch he wanted. . . high, low or waist high and the pitcher had to deliver it. Imagine that happening in one of our Little League games!

There were no mitts.

It was common for the community band to play music between innings. The Franklin band was formed after the Civil War. Some of the musicians were descendants or friends of veterans. Who doesn't remember the Bowdens, Cummings, Gravelins and Formans?!

Baseball games were festive. Not only could you enjoy the game, but also a picnic lunch and music!

Franklin boys joined teams called the Franklins in the early days and later the club was named the Franklin Unions. Notables were Harry German who became a pitcher for the Toledo Mudhens and Fred Blanding, a Sly family descendant, (not to be confused with Sly and the family Stone,) was a right-hand pitcher for the Cleveland Indians from 1910-1914.

After the Tigers won the World Series in 1968, the bells in the church steeple rang out the news. Trust me, I heard them! Al Kaline, a Tiger team member, lived in the village and attended the Community Church.

Leaving their homeland and settling in a new land had its trials and triumphs. The pioneers withstood the bad with the good. Dealing with the pain of losing family members was relieved with the joy of oyster suppers, dances and America's favorite pastime. Life had some necessary but mundane routines and the diversions helped them get through them. As one pioneer woman said, "We had most awful times at first. Many's the day I've worked from sunrise til dark in the fields. But that's all over now, and we've got four times as much land as we ever would have owned if we had stayed in York state." The woman was one of hundreds. As long as the land held out they kept coming.

The Evolution of Franklin Museum Exhibits

A collection of information and artifacts packed in boxes are the foundation for creating exhibits, but they are not exhibits until the relationship between them makes sense and their stories are told. For the past two years, we have been committed to researching their origin and uncovering their significance to Franklin history. We have been blessed with descendants of early settlers sharing family stories and original items that are Franklin based. As a result, we have a wealth of artifacts that are just begging to be remembered. Knowing the stories and having the artifacts was not enough. We needed to create a backdrop for them so that visitors could truly feel a part of their history. We confidently feel like we have accomplished that goal.

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:

P.O. Box 250007

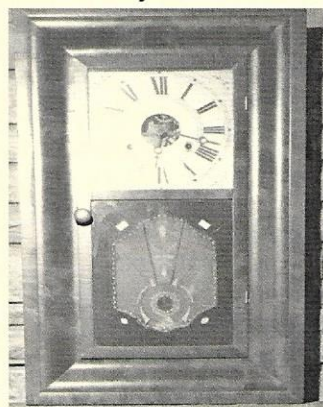
Franklin, MI 48025

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We can't wait for you to visit the museum and immerse yourself in our history. We hope that



you will discover how one artifact can speak volumes. Here is an example. We have a beautiful clock that was donated to us. Just looking at it gives you a sense of its worth. It is well over a hundred years old. It obviously was a prized possession noted by its excellent condition. It's hands no longer move, it doesn't chime anymore yet

its presence on the mantel in the pioneer kitchen speaks for it.

We know that the clock belonged to Jane German, wife of John German, the miller. She was widowed in 1884. At that time, she moved into the Broughton house and so did her clock. After her death, it was passed along to her descendants and ended up in the hands of Bart Kreger, her great, great grandson. Bart graciously donated the clock to the historical museum.

So that is a brief history of what we know about the clock, but we think it also tells another story and here it is. When pioneers traveled to the Michigan Territory, they had to decide what items to take with them. For the most part, they were practical and

"The Evolution..."Continued on Page 3

took the necessities. A clock, although precious to them, was not a consideration. We discovered a letter written by Josiah Barkley to his sister in New York. He was telling her about his settling in Franklin and encouraging her to tell people to come to the new settlement, especially tradesman. Tradesmen were needed. And then, he mentioned that his wife wanted her clock and would she please send it. That's when the story made even more sense. The clock in our pioneer kitchen exhibit belonged to Jane German, not Josiah's wife, but it represented the feelings of every settler who left prized possessions at home and the importance of being reunited them. We hope that when you observe this exhibit, you too will be absorbed in the meaning and worth of the clock that is now silent yet speaks volumes. To schedule a sneak preview of the museum, send an email to info@franklin-history.org

Recent Events

Crow to Go!

Cemetery Tour (The Women Behind the Men)

Haunted Kreger Barn for Franklinstein

Acquisitions

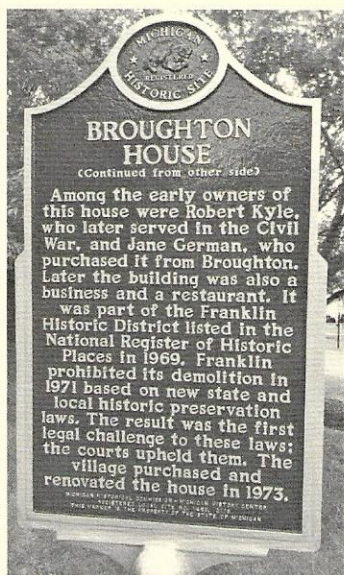
Bob Kreger: A ringer doorbell and chandelier that were part of the Kreger house and a family photo album that we were able to scan.

Jane Polan: Chopper utensil and wooden hat stretcher. Both will find a home in our general store at the museum. **William Barnum** was a brother-in-law of Dillucena Stoughton, our first landowner and a Franklin settler. In 1850, Barnum was a hatter living in Detroit. Although

the hat stretcher did not belong to him, it is likely that he had one in his shop.

Jeff Stehle: A portrait of Francis Xavier Stehle and his first wife Sarah Day. Jeff drove to Virginia to visit a cousin, retrieved the portraits and donated them to the Historical Society. Stehle had a sawmill on 14 Mile Road just east of Inkster.

Historical Marker Dedication



In October the Broughton house historical marker was dedicated. It emphasizes the importance of the building as well as the people that lived there. It is dedicated to Gini Rodgers, the individual who diligently worked to restore and preserve the structure. Gini's daughters funded the project. Many family members were in attendance. After the ceremony,

everyone was treated to cider and donuts at the Kreger house.

Franklin Historical Society Financial Report

2020 Fiscal Year (July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021)

INCOME	
MEMBERSHIP & DUES	\$10,622
GRANTS	\$29,624
FUNDRAISING EVENT	\$583
TOTAL	\$40,829
EXPENSES	
ARCHIVAL WORK	\$1,920
MAILINGS	\$1,550
TECHNOLOGY	\$370
MUSEUM FACILITY	\$8,144
COVID AIR FILTERS	\$5,098
EXHIBITS & MISC.	\$14,960
TOTAL	\$32,042

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A WHILE AGO IN FRANKLIN

Eccentric May 9, 1879

The "Franklins" ball club played their first game of the season against the "Sooners" of Birmingham. Result: Tie Game. The next week the result was Franklins 25 and Sooners 14.

