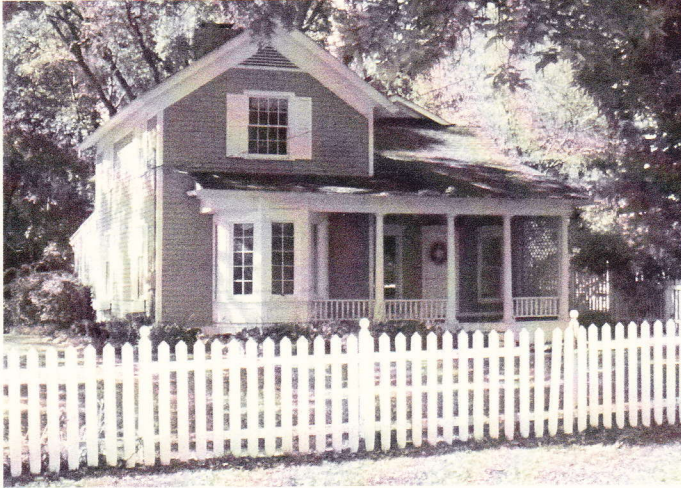


## The Snow House: Then and Now



Janette Parkhurst was born in 1830. She lived with her parents most of her life and worked as a domestic. She married Alonzo Snow in 1873 and was widowed ten years later. Around 1885, she built a house on Franklin Road. Who were her neighbors?

As she looked out her front window, she could see the foundation left from the Odd Fellows hall that burned down in 1872. It wouldn't be until 1900 that the George Bingham store (Market Basket) would take its place. George Bingham's brick home (Perlmutter's) which was next to his store had not been built when Janette moved into her house. Albert Rust's home (Cranbrook Realty) was not erected until 1890. She would have had a clear view to Kelvin Street. The structures in the historic district were not yet historic. Many of them were constructed from 1840 to the 1900's.

From her kitchen looking north, there were no immediate structures. It was probably farm land. Two homes and a Community Center (later the site of the current fire department) would be built in the early 1900's. The Bullock Tavern (Gorback's photography) would have been the closest establishment followed by the Franklin Hotel (Beadworks) and the Thomas Midgley (Wright & Zelazny) home. Across 14 Mile stood the Van Every Grist Mill (cider mill) and caddy corner was the Van Every Mansion and hotel. Both the Franklin and Van Every hotels were stagecoach stops. She surely witnessed weary travelers coming through the village.

Going south from the Van Everys was Congleton's Buggy Works (Franklin Grill.) She would have heard the clamor of the hammer on the anvil as the blacksmith shaped tools. Next to the shop lived George Congleton, his wife, 5 children and his mother-in-law (Déjà vu.) Dr. Julian Buel (Slade House law

offices) was Congleton's neighbor and practiced here.

On the corner of Franklin and German Mill Streets (on the current lawn of Cranbrook) was Albert Rust's General Store. He had bought it from John Bigelow who enlisted in the Civil War. More than likely, Janette walked across the street to shop there. On the next corner (Franklin and Carol), stood the Broughton Buggy Shop (current post office.) Across the street, was the Broughton residence (Village hall.) Our village green was Sammy Green's cow pasture.

Janette could walk to the church that was on German Mill where she would socialize. She experienced the loss of villagers that would be laid to rest at the cemetery on the hill and where she would be laid to rest in 1909.

Many of the buildings that are still standing when she lived here have become commercial. This phenomenon occurred prior to 1969 when the historic district was created to protect these structures. Through rezoning, buildings can change from residential to business.

In fact, in the 1970's, there were efforts to rezone the Snow House, and the three houses to the north, from residential to commercial. The planning commission and the village council as well as villagers eager to protect the historical character of the village, successfully resisted these efforts.

Last fall, the Snow house was purchased. For the first time in more than 30 years, again there was a request to rezone it from residential to business. Plans for an addition to the building were presented.

When faced with the plan to rezone the Snow house to business, these neighbors to the north, believed that once one residential property is rezoned, all similar properties would be given the same legal treatment. The door would be open to rezoning all nine residential properties on Franklin Road and thus drastically diminish our rural character. More than 150 people in town signed a petition opposing the rezoning.

The Historical Society has documented the history of the Snow House and the efforts of the community to preserve historical Franklin. Anyone interested can contact Bill or Ann Lamott.

In order to protect these properties, Roger and Suzanne McClow, who live in one of these homes, bought the Snow house. Their neighbors generously agreed to a deed restriction that these four houses must remain residential. The village will be welcoming a new resident in the Snow house soon. Residential and business will once again live in harmony.

## In Their Own Words

Otto Berger enlisted as a private in the 5th Michigan Infantry Company D on 19 June 1861 at the age of 22. He left the service as a captain in May 1865. What transpired during those years can be told through his Civil War pension files.

A soldier had to show cause that his disability was due to the effects of the war. Fellow soldiers who were in combat with him or folks from home wrote testimonies to support or not support his disability claims. The following quotes were taken from handwritten responses from the people who lived on our village streets, worked on our farms and traded at the mills. They were found in records at the National Archives in Washington, D.C.

Here is Berger's story in their own words. . .

**Otto Berger:** "I lost my hearing in my left ear at the Battle of Williamsburg, Va. on 5 May 1862 which was the first battle we were in. We were in line of battle and the man who was standing behind me in the rear went to shoot and his gun was so close to my head on the left side so that when he shot his gun, it burned my neck and caused me to become deaf. It at first affected both my ears, but the hearing in the right came back again."

**John Mentor, 5th Michigan Company D and F:** "I was laying down nearby while Otto Berger was on his knee in the act of firing his gun. And the rear man, do not remember his name, and also in the act of firing did not extend his gun far enough to the front. Burnt Berger's face and concussion from the retort caused him to complain from time to time after."

**Howard Bergo, 5th Michigan Infantry Company D:** "I remember that in our first battle which took place near Williamsburg on 5 May, 1862 he came near being killed by one of our own boys who was in the rear. We were in line of battle and I was right next to him and just before we charged the rebels, a man in the rear fired a shot that came so near hitting Berger in the head. No Berger did not quit, but remained right in line with us until the battle was over. I know it affected his hearing sometime after."



*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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Email: [info@franklin-history.org](mailto:info@franklin-history.org)

Contributors: Bill & Ann Lamott, Roger McClow

**Dr. Henry Cox, 1st Michigan Cavalry Company G and Franklin Village doctor:** "I have known the claimant for over 40 years. I knew him well before enlistment and have known him ever since his army services and he has always lived here in my vicinity since the war. He came back from war like the rest of us. . .all used up."

**Joseph Bowden, 10th Michigan Cavalry Company G and Bowden Street is named after his family:** "I have known the claimant ever since the war and we have lived as neighbors. I have worked a great deal with him since the war. I was not in the army with him. I saw him soon after he returned from the service. He has always complained of hard of hearing and pains in his head. He has told me that a gun went off close to his head and caused his deafness.

He had been wounded in his hip or thigh and was complaining with that and he was on furlough during the war on account of it. And he was on crutches. He was also complaining of rheumatism and some kind of heart trouble."

On 31 May 1862 Berger was promoted to Color Sergeant. He was assigned to protect the regimental colors.

**Otto Berger:** "In June 1862 at or near White Oaks Swamp, Va. I contracted a disease pronounced Physicians angina pectoris. The symptoms being severe pain in the chest and difficulty breathing. Remained with the regiment until September 1862 where I was left on the second battle of Bull Run sick and was sent to the hospital."

**James Chandler, 5th Michigan Infantry Company D:** "In the month of June 1862 while in the direct performance of his duty during the peninsular campaign at or near White Oak Swamp, said Berger contracted a disease of the chest - severe pain in the chest and difficulty breathing. He remained with the company for some months, but was unable to do regular duty and was constantly troubled by said disease.

In the fall of 1862, he was away from the company in a hospital for several weeks and after rejoining the company continued to be troubled and disabled up to the time of discharge."

**Chauncy Esterbrook, 5th Michigan Infantry Company F:**

"I am well acquainted with Otto Berger. He was taken with a cold and taken to the hospital. He rejoined the regiment about 26 July 1862 and took part in the Second Battle of Bull Run. Berger was sick most of the time. He was an ambitious and good soldier and although sick, would struggle along and keep up with the regiment as long as he could."



His disease was contracted while a soldier. I have seen Berger frequently and he appears to be sick and unable to do much labor to support himself and family."

On 15 August 1862, before Berger was sent to the hospital, he was promoted to Full Sergeant.

**Howard Bergo:** "After the Battle of White Oaks, he took a very serious cold that seemed to settle in his lungs. During the Seven Days Battle in the James River, he was at times with his company and part of the time, rode in ambulances."

Declaration for the Increase of an Invalid Pension: Berger fought at the Battle of Fredericksburg December 11th to the 13th, 1862. Fredericksburg is located in northern Virginia between Washington and Richmond. Within a seventeen mile radius of the city, more than 100,000 Americans became casualties.

In the Battle of Chancellorsville on May 1st to the 3rd of 1863, Berger was wounded. This battle has been cited as the greatest Civil War victory for Confederate General Robert E. Lee.

The Fighting Fifth, as Berger's unit became known, held their position at Gettysburg on 2 July, 1863 around 4:30 P.M. During the fight, Berger was wounded slightly in the shoulder and hand.

**Noble Roberts, Village Tinsmith & R.C. Cummings, Village Blacksmith: Witness to Berger's testimony below** "A rifle ball hit about 8 inches below the right hip shattering the bone. When I remain still, it is very painful and if I try to work, I suffer great pain from my hip to the sole of my foot. I am a blacksmith by trade, but had to give it up and then tried farming, but with no better success and I now do what I can when I am able. I cannot stand long on my feet without pain. I am badly disabled."

**J.J. Woodward, Brevet Lieutenant and Assistant Surgeon United States Army:** "Otto Berger received a flesh wound of the right hip at the Battle of Spotsylvania 12 May 1864. He

entered Camden Street Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland on the 18th of May with a gunshot wound and was transferred the 20th to the General Hospital in York, Pennsylvania. He was furloughed on 3 June 1864."

**Henry F. Lyster M.D.:** "On 12 May 1864, at the Battle of Spotsylvania, Berger received a gunshot wound from the enemy in his right thigh near the hip and was injured in the trochanta major. He was one of the best soldiers in the regiment and distinguished in gallant conduct."

**Mrs. Rachel Berger :** "The claimant is my husband. We were married on 4 September 1865. My maiden name was Rachel Van Every. I had known my husband a good many years before our marriage. I saw him as soon as he got out of the army and we were married in the September following his discharge. I saw him when he was home on furlough on account of this wound. When he came home at discharge, he was suffering with his wound and complained a good deal with his heart and also rheumatism. He has had several bad attacks of heart trouble ever since then. He has also been deaf since his army service. The left ear is the one he has been deaf in. He has complained a good deal with his head and says he has pains in it."

Berger was promoted to Second Lieutenant on 28 August 1864.

He participated in the Siege of Petersburg which lasted from the middle of June 1864 to April 1865. In October 1864 he sustained another wound at Boynton Road.

His final encounters included Sailor's Creek on 6 April and Appomattox Courthouse on 9 April 1865 with General Robert E. Lee surrendering.

Berger was promoted to First Lieutenant 8 May 1865 followed by a promotion to Captain

On the 23rd of May, the Army of the Republic was part of the grand review in Washington D.C. The event helped to take the country out of its mourning period for Abraham Lincoln.

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## Fighting 5th

In early April, Bill and I walked in the footsteps of the Fighting Fifth that served in Virginia. The 5th Michigan Infantry was part of the Army of the Potomac commanded by George McClellan.

Tracing the footsteps of Otto Berger, Henry Buckley, Michael Burns, James Darling, John Mentor, William Stoughton and George Van Every was humbling. Most of the men were wounded, plagued by disease or served in a POW camp.

Trenches were everywhere on the Chancellorsville battlefield. They were 3 feet deep and some were a mile long. There were rows of them. Soldiers hunkered down trying to provide as much protection from the enemy as possible.

As we walked the Battlefield at Wilderness, the terrain was rugged. There were downed trees and brush everywhere. During the exchange of gunfire, there was an inferno. Men

wounded on the battlefield were trapped and both the north and south were confused by the explosions.

Sailor's Creek (Saylers) was one of the last major encounters of the Civil War. John Mentor received the Medal of Honor in that battle for capturing the flag on April 6, 1865. We arrived at the site on the same date just 148 years later!

There was a mass surrender at Sailor's Creek. General R.S. Ewell, a Corps commander, several other commanders, 7,000 rank and file soldiers and a couple hundred wagons were captured. Three days later Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomattox Courthouse.

On Monday, May 27th is the Memorial Service in the cemetery to honor our fallen. Won't you join us at 11 A.M. to pay tribute for the price that they paid?

-Ann Lamott

## 5th Annual Community Center Event

Can you believe that this is the fifth year of our fundraising to restore the Kreger house, pig sty and barn for use as a community center in our village? The public rest rooms are complete and the house is almost ready for use.

On Saturday, June 8th is our 5K run, walk, strut your mutt and pancake breakfast will be held on Saturday, June 8th. The run, walk and strut begin at 8 A.M. on Carol Street in front of the Franklin Community Center (Kreger house.) New this year is a kid's run! At the finish line, every kid receives a kite. The breakfast is at the fire station from 8 to 11 A.M.

Register for the run, walk & strut your mutt on [active.com](http://active.com) or see the [kregerhouse.org](http://kregerhouse.org) web site for a registration form. No reservations required for the breakfast.

**For more details, please visit our website at [kregerhouse.org](http://kregerhouse.org)**

## Kreger House Update

The Kreger house has begun its new use as a community center. Several groups have held events in the house. While more furniture is needed to complete the decorating plan, the house is functional. The Kreger team is looking for simple Victorian tables (one coffee table and two end tables), two small Victorian upholstered side chairs and an antique sideboard or open cabinet for the main meeting room. There is also a need to raise about \$10,000 more to pay for central air conditioning and pay off the Franklin Baseball League loan.

Many thanks to all who supported the project. An official opening is being planned for early June.

### A While Ago in Franklin

After serving four years in the 5th Michigan Cavalry, Otto Berger returned home to his sweetheart, Rachel Van Every. On September 4, 1865, they were married in Pontiac. Sylvester Calkins officiated.

After the war, a soldier could apply for a disability pension. He had to show proof that his disability occurred during his service. Fellow comrades, physicians, neighbors and friends would testify on his behalf.

On Sunday, May 19th at 1 P.M. you can hear their stories in the Civil War cemetery tour. We'll meet at the gate on Scenic Drive. The cost is \$10.

## Civil War Cemetery Tour

Check out the new Franklin Historical Society Store offering Franklin logo merchandise at [www.franklin-history.org](http://www.franklin-history.org)

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