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# PIONEER RECORD



April 1999

Volume XIX, No. 4

## Recollections of SE Michigan 1810-1885, Part 3 of 3

BY Ephraim S. Williams, of Flint

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*EDITORS NOTE: This is the third part of an article which gives quite a bit of Fur Trader history in Midland. We intend to reprint four articles from the Michigan Pioneer Society collections. These give some family and southeast Michigan history. Since these are lengthy, they will be given in several installments.*

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It has been mentioned that the ancient Chippewas imagined the country which they had wrested from the conquered Sauks, to be haunted by the spirits of those whom they had slain, and that it was only after the lapse of years that their terrors were allayed sufficiently to permit them to occupy the "haunted hunting grounds." But the superstition still remained, and in fact, it was never entirely dispelled. Long after Saginaw Valley was studded with white settlements, the simple Indians still believed that mysterious Sauks were lingering in their forests and along the margins of their streams for purposes of vengeance; that the "Manesous," or bad spirits in the form of Sauk warriors, were hovering around their villages and camps and the flank of their hunting grounds, preventing them from being successful in the chase and bringing ill fortune and discomfiture in a hundred ways. So great was their dread that when (as was frequently the case) they became possessed with the idea that the "Manesous" were in the immediate vicinity, they would fly as if

for their lives, abandoning everything, wigwams, fish, game, and all their camp equipment, and no amount of ridicule from the whites could convince them of their folly or induce them to stay and face the imaginary danger. Some of the Indian bands whose country joined that of the Saginaws, played upon their weak superstitions and derived profit from it by lurking around their villages or camps, frightening them into flight and then appropriating the property which they had abandoned. There was a time every spring when the Indians from Saginaw and the interior would congregate in large parties for the purpose of putting up dried sturgeon which make a very delicate dish when properly cooked, and was much used on those days by the first families of Detroit. We used to purchase considerable of it for our use. The Indians would select the best, flay them, hang them across poles in rows, about four feet from the ground and two feet apart, then a gentle smoke was kept under them until they were perfectly dry, then packed up in bales of perhaps fifty pounds each. Where they accomplished this was on the Point Au Gres (as it was then called). At a certain time every spring the sturgeon would come upon this point, which was very shallow a long distance out, and in the warm sun would work themselves to the shore until they would lie and roll like cord wood, perfectly helpless, and here the Indi-

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ans would go among them and select the best. I have been on the point at these times and seen the performances. It was great sport. A little Indian will wade in to about a foot of water, find a big sturgeon (some are very large), strike a small tomahawk in his nose, straddle him; the sturgeon will carry him through the water at quite a speed, the little fellow steering by the handle of his tomahawk, not letting him go to deep water, and when he feels tired of the sport he runs his fancy rig ashore. When their sturgeon was dry and often put up in bales for summer use, then poor, lazy, worthless Indians from a distance, having an eye to supplying themselves with provisions which they never labored to obtain, would commence, in different ways, to excite their fears that the "Manesous" were about their camps, until at last they would take to their canoes and flee, often leaving almost everything they possessed. Then the "Manesous" (the thieving Indians from the bands who had cunningly brought about the stampede for the sake of plunder) would rob the camps of what they wanted, and escape to their homes with, perhaps, their summer supplies of fish, and often of sugar and dried venison. I have met them fleeing as above; sometimes twenty or more canoes; have stopped them and tried to induce to induce them to return, and we would go with them (as we were going by their camps); but no, it was the "Manesous," they said, and nothing could convince them differently, and away they would go, frightened nearly to death. I have visited their camps at such times, gathered up their effects that were left, and secured them in some one camp from destruction by wild animals. After a while they would return and save what was left. During these times they were perfectly miserable, actually afraid of their own shadows.

It was not alone on their annual fishing expeditions to the lake that these things occurred; similar scenes were enacted by their hunting parties in the forests of the Shiawassee and Flint, and at their summer camps, the beautiful inland lakes of their southern border. I had had them come from places miles distant, bringing their rifles to me asking me to examine and re-sight them declaring that the sights had been removed (and in most cases they had, but by themselves in their fright). I always did, when applied to, re-sight and try them until they would shoot correctly, and then they would go away cheerfully. I would tell them that they must keep their rifles where the "Manesous" could not find them. At other times, having a little bad luck hunting or trapping, they became excited and would say that the game had been over and in their traps, and that they could not catch anything. Have known them

to go so far as to insist that a beaver or an otter had been in their traps and gotten out; that traps were bewitched or spell-bound, and their rifles charmed by the "Manesous" so that they could not catch or kill anything. Then they gave a great feast, and the medicine man or conjurer, through his wise and dark performances, removed the charm, and all was well, and traps and rifles did their duty again. These things have been landed down for generations, and so through all the domains of the Saginaws their lives were made miserable by their superstitious fears; and they expiated the crimes committed by their ancestors against the unfortunate Sauks.

The Indian trade was attended with many strange incidents. Where there was opposition each party was on the lookout to get the advantage of his opponent in starting on expeditions for trade unknown to him or, wherein it was thought they could not follow on, to get by the opposition's traveling posts so they would not know it. I started one bright, cold winter morning about sunrise for the bay and lake shore, with one man. We had an old style French cutter, with high back, loaded full of goods and provisions for the trade; the ice was fine, and with skates on we shoved the sleigh before us. We were going with great speed down the river, when, about in front of where East Saginaw now stands, we found ourselves on new ice formed the night before, over an air hole. We left the cutter to save ourselves, on strong ice, when our cutter dropped into the river. Our load consisted of corn, one two-bushel bag of flour, a large bundle of dry goods, silver ornaments, etc., for Indian trade, a bundle of traps, hatchets, i. e., chisels, etc. We soon worked our load up to the strong ice and got it all out, except the traps, etc., which went to the bottom. Our goods, being on top of the load with our blankets and provisions, were not wet. The corn and flour were pretty wet, and ourselves very wet. The question was should we return (being only about a mile from home) or load up and go ahead? If we returned the opposition would take our place and laugh at us, and get the trade we expected to get. We decided to go ahead. The ice being fine for skating we were not going to the mouth of the river, and running along the bay a few miles beyond O-kaw-kaw-ning (now called Kawkawlin) river, we drew up under a sand bank and evergreens where the sun came down warm. We made a good fire, dried ourselves, took a lunch and started on. Reaching an Indian camp, where we had a squaw trader, we left part of our corn and flour for her trade and what goods she wanted, and left and camped at the River Au Gres, making our day's run some fifty miles or

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more. Next day we arrived at the river Au Sable, where we had a trading post. We had sold our corn and flour before we reached the River Au Gres, where we camped the first night. The cotton bag with the flour had wet in, and considerable flour stuck to it. I requested the squaw to dry it and keep it until my return. While at the Au Sable a heavy wind broke the ice up, in the bay and lake, making it difficult to get back. Having to keep along the shore, we left our cutter, and with packs on our backs, made our way slowly homeward. When we got back to where we left our flour bag we had about used up all our provisions, always depending much upon the Indians; but the ice being gone, we found them very destitute, in some cases almost starving, as the lake Indians depended on fish for their living, going out a great distance to fish through the ice, often getting camped down for the night by a fire. The young men came in from hunting, but had killed nothing and they had nothing to eat. I asked the squaw if they had cleaned the flour off the bag that stuck to it, being wet. I supposed she had, she said she had not, thinking we might want it on our return she brought it forward, and it being heavy I told her to scrape the flour off and cook it up for our suppers. She was more than pleased to do so. I told her to cook it the way she could make the most of it. She made a large kettle full of *Per-quish-a-gan-nor-bo*, flour mush made about like our paste, only thin so you eat it with a spoon. I asked her then to give it out to all her family. She gave us a good pan full, which made us a good supper. This night was very cold and the following morning extremely so. I supposed our repast was all gone, but no, this good woman had kept a pan full for our breakfast, which she gave us hot and good. As we were about to leave and bid them good-bye the old father of the large family who laid in one side of the wigwam almost helpless, fumbled over his bags near him; he took out a dried fish, about the size of a medium whitefish, and addressed me with, "My son, this is a very cold morning, you have a very cold trip, you will find it very cold traveling on the ice on the other side of the point, you have nothing to eat and you will find the Indians on your route very poor and hungry, take this fish. It's the only thing we have left; I have kept it in case of necessity; this cold spell will make ice so my sons can go out and catch more; you will need it more than I." I thanked him and said "no," and handed it back to him, we would not take it but insisted I should do so. I cut the fish in halves and handed him a half, and told him I could not take it all from him; he accepted the half, and we shook hands and departed.

We soon crossed the point and found it as the

old man said, severely cold and the ice slippery, obliging us to keep nearer the shore on the old ice and snow. We traveled until in the afternoon, it was so cold we could not stand it, and, seeing a smoke in the woods, we concluded to make for it, and take quarters for the night. We found the women and children all out digging in about eight or ten inches of snow for acorns, which was all they had to eat. These they boiled and made a kind of mush, which was not very bad. We took quarters for the night with them, for it was a long distance before we should find another camp. About dusk one or two hunters came in with a large raccoon, and there was much rejoicing all around. They soon had him dressed and in the kettle, and, when cooked, the lady of the house kindly presented us with one shoulder of Mr. 'Coon, in a clean wooden dish, which was really more than our proportion, and, with our half fish, we made our supper. It was awful cold; they kept fire all night, till we could sleep but little. We started in the morning, without breakfast, traveled all day and until after dark, when I became about tired out, and told my man we must go in shore and camp, for I could not go much further. He thought the same. He said we must be near the Indian camp, where we left corn and flour on our way out, and just at that moment he said, "I smell smoke," and he gave an Indian whoop, and a dog answered. This was a cheering sound, so we rushed in toward shore, and soon arrived at the camp, where lay beside the camp a dozen or more fine, large, fresh trout the old man had just brought in from the bay. Oh, how good they did look! We never saw a more gratifying sight than when the woman and her two daughters met us at the door and welcomed us in (they were our trading women I spoke of). They had a nice, clean warm camp. They soon laid down some mats and made a place for us. The old man said, "You must be tired and hungry." We replied, "Yes." I said, "I am almost dead." We laid down and the women took our moccasins and leggings, which were frozen on our feet. They were cleaned off and hung in the smoke for morning use. The girls pounded some corn, and soon a kettle of hominy was cooking, with a kettle of those beautiful trout, and a cake of bread baked in the ashes. "You bet" we had a feast and plenty kept warm for breakfast. Never could any one be more kindly treated and cared for. We were now a good hard day's walk from home. I was not used to such marches and it was very hard for me. My man could stand it better, being an old traveler for years and used to it. The next morning we started for home, both with pretty heavy packs on our backs. We soon entered the mouth of the Saginaw River, where we found plenty

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of snow. We arrived home about sundown and all were glad to see us. This was New Year's day and Mrs. Williams had gotten up a New Year's dinner for all, my brother, his wife, expecting me home. After washing, changing clothes, and a general cleaning up, we sat down to a splendid table and happy home and happy New Year. We should not have had as hard a trip but for the ice breaking up. I always had pleasant trips every spring in a birch bark canoe, going as far as Thunder Bay (where I suppose Alpena is now located), gathering furs along the coast and bringing home the store and men from Au Sable. They also had a large bark canoe and we usually had them both loaded, their capacity being two tons each. Often we could only make the river and run up as far as where Bay City now is, where we would make our camp on an old Indian camping ground, not being able to run the river in the night.

The Indians are peculiar for telling stories, and delight in listening to others from the traders. They will lie, smoke and tell stories, which are very long, half the night. When we get camped down with them for the night, a chief, perhaps or the head of a family, will say, "Well, come, tell a story," as they call it, *art-soo-kay*. They usually begin and make it mostly as they go on. One I heard told was as follows: He commenced to explain how the beaver came by his large flat tail, and the muskrat by his round one. He said: "Originally, the beaver had the round tail and the muskrat the flat one. The beaver was at work, building his dam across a small stream, for the purpose of forming a small pond to live in. After cutting his timber and brush, floating and placing it in his dam, and getting it ready for sand and gravel, he could not contrive how he should transport his sand and gravel, to make his dam water tight. While in this state of mind, a muskrat came along, with his broad, flat tail, examining the beaver's works. He inquired how he would get his sand and gravel for his dam. Beaver said he had been thinking it over, and thought perhaps they had better exchange tails for a time, or until Mr. Beaver could finish his dam. Muskrat having no particular use for his flat tail, consented to accommodate his friend beaver and they exchanged. Beaver went on and carted sand and gravel on his flat tail and finished his dam. Then muskrat wanted to trade back, but beaver, finding it just what he required for his work, objected to changing back, and beaver being a large, stout fellow and muskrat a small one, the latter stood no chance to contend with beaver, and so they have always remained to the present time." This story relates to many facts of the beaver's life which my

friends are acquainted with. Their working in past years — remains of their dams — are to be seen at this day in very many places in our State, showing their wonderful ingenuity. When they are at work, building their dams, they keep an old experienced beaver as sentinel on watch, and upon the appearance of anyone, or hearing any strange noise, he will strike his tail upon the water in such a manner as to give a loud sound, upon which signal all disappear in an instant and remain until the watchman, by another signal notifies them all is right again, and they go to work.

If an Indian discovers the beavers at work, and has ever so good an opportunity to kill one, he never fires upon them, fearing it may break up their work. He prefers to trap them in a quiet way. The Indian first discovering their works claims them as his own property, and preserves them from year to year, only catching a few each year, as he may require, to pay his debts, in case he has had bad luck otherwise. No other Indian presumes to set his traps without the owner's consent. Somehow, they know if an intruder has trapped their game, and soon find out, through the traders or otherwise, who it was, and demand pay for what they stole, unless otherwise satisfactorily settled. The following is another story they often tell: "The animals called a convention, to meet at a certain time and place, to consult upon grave matters for their mutual benefit. After being called to order, a chairman chosen and many big talks made in great confusion, the turtle arose to make a few remarks, in answer to what had been said by some of the members of the convention, when he was called to order by the skunk and others. The turtle became displeased, and withdrew from the convention in disgust, and leaving he was followed by Mr. Skunk. Turtle being followed closely, and much annoyed by his pursuer, he ran up a tree, getting out of the way of skunk, and soon the convention broke up, and the turtle came down and went home." They will spin these stories to a great length. I have thought we have some modern conventions, with troublesome skunks in them. I think this must suffice for stories, although I could give you many more. You already have the Ne-war-go affair.

I would like to give you a few instances of the Indian cures which I have witnessed. The old chief speaker, O-Gee-Maw-Ke-Ke-To, was the head chief and business manager of the Saginaw Indians. He was stabbed across the body so the lower part of his liver came out about an inch. The conjurer or Indian doctor said he must die unless a piece of his liver was cut off and cooked and eaten by him, which was done and he

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was cured and lived many years. Another fine man and splendid hunter, at one of their feasts (on the ground where East Saginaw stands), became intoxicated as well as the rest. He rolled against the fire, and being unconscious one side of him was literally cooked; the flesh came off his side, leaving his ribs bare, and his thigh and arm to the bone. No one supposed he could live but a short time, but they went to work and cured him, and he was able to hunt and carry a deer on his back. They caused the flesh to grow over all the bones perfectly. He lay on his back six months before he was able to get up and about. I often visited him, and the whites rendered all the assistance and little necessities they could for his comfort. I suppose our doctors would call that patent-medicine treatment. It was done without the drugs of the present day. Their medicines were all taken from the woods and the ground. It was perfectly wonderful to see the cures they would perform. Another one was the case of a young married man, whom I knew very well, living near us at Green Point. He was in the woods, a short distance from his camp. He cut down a tree for a coon, and in falling it, somehow caught his foot as it fell, so fast he could not extricate himself. Night coming on, he unjointed his ankle and crawled home. He was cured and lived to good old age, and was an excellent trapper, — going in his canoe.

I went one spring with a canoe loaded, and three Indians, with supplies for our store at the Forks. The water was very high, flooding the settlers on the river bottoms. Mr. Whitney was one flooded out. He was at Saginaw when I left, and wished me to look into his house and see how things were. Mrs. Whitney was at a neighbor's, on the opposite side, on a high bank. We ran up to the door, opened it, and found the floor afloat, about three feet of water in the house; their dog and cat on the floating floor. we took them in the canoe across the river, to Mrs. Whitney, and went on our journey. At another time a sudden freshet raised the ice, which was a foot thick, from the shores. It being necessary to get supplies to the store at the Forks before the ice broke up, we laid timbers from the shore, on to the ice at Saginaw, got a loaded pony and sleigh onto it, and I went to the Forks, stayed over night, covered up the pony, and fed him in the sleigh. He stood on the ice all night. We took the load off on poles, laid from ice to shore. Next day we loaded with furs and returned to Saginaw, not getting off the ice the entire distance, some thirty miles or more.

Small-pox broke out among the Indians and the poor creatures were frightened and fled in all direc-

tions; a great many died. Although some of their villages were only a few miles from Saginaw, there never was known one of them to expose a settler on the river and come into town. We had several men who had the small-pox; they ventured to take supplies to them and the citizens joined and would send a canoe load every day to the nearest families. I went to the Forks in the summer after, in a canoe (this was the only way we traveled). I found two persons partly buried in the sand at the water's edge, where they had crawled down to drink and died there. The settlers turned out, upon being notified, and buried them. Some were found dead in their camps, when their friends had fled and left the sick to die.

I was appointed postmaster at Saginaw by President Jackson and held the office several years until the spring of 1840. I built the first postoffice with boxes. I was also elected register of deeds and county clerk. I procured the first record books for deeds and also record of mortgages and had them approved by the judges. In the spring of the year, in high water, the ice being gone, the wall-eyed pike would run up the Saginaw in great numbers, running on to the Shiawassee meadows which were over-flowed for miles, from three to six feet deep. One beautiful warm spring morning, Major William Moseley and myself proposed to go up the Shiawassee River about four miles and have a little sport, spearing in the evening by torch-light. I took a large canoe, one man, our lunch basket, blankets, etc., expecting to stay over night. Arriving at the Indian camps the water for miles was like a mirror in the hot sun. We went out a short time and found the water alive with fish. We speared a good many, with much sport. The Indians proposed if I would buy the fish they would all go out and spear enough to fill our canoes. I agreed to do so, and in an hour or two they came in alongside my canoe. I would count the fish, taking each Indian's name and number of his fish on a pass book. We loaded our canoe, and I engaged two others, loaded all, and got home before dark, when we set men to work cleaning and packing for market. Next morning, the result of our day's sport was thirty barrels, then worth and sold for five dollars per barrel. These fish were in schools and the water black with them. An Indian stood in the bow with a spear, while one in the stern would hold the canoe still on one of these schools and the spearsman would fill his canoe, often bringing up three and four fish at a time, averaging from three to six and eight pounds each. We used to take a good many with seines in the Saginaw, opposite the city, but it was not a success, there being so much sunken floodwood.

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Daniel S. Ball and Hon. Sanford M. Green built the first grist mill at Owosso, Shiawassee county. I think they purchased the mill site from my brothers, A.L. and B.O. Williams, of that place. Our sloop "Savage" brought the mill-stone and all the machinery from Detroit to Saginaw. Judge Green and a gang of men, with much hard labor and vexation of spirit, boated it up the Shiawassee to Owosso. The judge is still well, residing at Bay City, and is judge of that district. These were pioneer days in earnest.

In the winter of 1830 I left Saginaw, in a cutter, for my father's at Silver Lake and Pontiac, with Mrs. Williams and daughter, whom I left on a visit until the summer of 1830. Mr. Louis Moran [*ED Note: Should this be Louis Mashue & Peter Moran?*], who carried the Mackinaw and Sault Ste. Marie U.S. Mail from Saginaw to Detroit once a month during the winter months, accompanied us. He had Mrs. Antoine Campau, who was going to Detroit for a visit with her friends until spring. We took the ice up the Cass River, and on one of the rapids my sleigh broke through, letting the water into the cutter enough to wet our clothing, lunch basket, my wife's and daughter's feet and lower part of their dresses, and our robes some. We got out into strong ice, got the water off us as well as we could, and I wrapped their feet and clothes up in the dry part of the robes and blankets, and finding the ice unsafe, we made our way through the woods for the road, and got as far as Pine Run, within about twelve miles of Flint, where we camped for the night on an Indian camping ground. We found part of an Indian camp of barks, which we placed so as to break off the wind, and, with a good fire, we passed the night, Mr. Moran and myself keeping a good fire all night. I dried all I could of our wet effects and had them dry for wife and daughter in the morning, for the rest of our journey, arriving at father's that day. Several times on leaving Saginaw in the spring for Silver Lake, I went with the family up the Flint River in a canoe, rather than by road through the woods. At that time of the year, on account of high water, the road was almost impassable. It took two hard days work to make the journey to Flint, the river being high and very rapid. I had the assistance of two or three Indians to work us up.

In closing up our business every spring, before leaving for Detroit to sell our furs and prepare for the next winter's trade, I had a good deal of writing to do. The mosquitoes were so annoying, I would set a table in the middle of the store floor, with a kettle of smoke under it, and write until almost blinded. My eyes would

get so sore I could scarcely see for some time after, but this was the only way we could write. They were so bad the only way in the morning, going to the river for water, when twenty or thirty feet from the river, to shut eyes and mouth, run, dash the pail into the river and run almost for life. By eight or nine o'clock p.m., the cattle and horses would come rushing from the woods for the clearing, where we kept large smokes for them — they would be covered black with mosquitoes and blood. We had to enclose our beds, windows, doors, and even the fire-place with millenett, if not they would come down the chimney and fill the room full. I never saw anything like it. As we cleared and made improvements, they fell back, and in a few years they became less troublesome.

The first winter after commencing trade, in 1828 we put up five packs of muskrat skins, 500 in a pack, making 2,500, and this was more than the traders had been in the habit of putting up. The last year of our trade, at the end of twelve years, we put up fifty-six packs of 500 each, making an annual increase up to 28,000 muskrat skins, in those days worth from twenty five to fifty cents each. All other furs increased in proportion. Martin skins — we only took in the first year about 400 or 500. They increased annually, until we took in from 1,550 to 2,000. They were worth from one to two dollars each.

I left Saginaw in the spring of 1840 for Pontiac, where I went into business. Times changed and I did not make it a success. In the fall of 1849 Mr. Hiram Walker established a grocery store at Flint, under a Mr. Wright, who had been a clerk some years for Mr. Walker, and who, towards spring, got homesick and wished to return to Detroit, and said he could not stay any longer. The store was doing a good business, and Mr. Walker did not want to withdraw the store.

He proposed to me to go to Flint and take charge of the store, which, after our talking the matter over, I concluded to do. I was then living in Detroit, and Mr. Walker and wife and daughter (now Mrs. Theodore Buhl), boarded with me. The first of April, 1850, I left for Flint, to take charge of the store, managed it several years and had a large trade. In 1852-3 I built a three-story brick block, finished off a store, and in the rear a post office, the first one in Flint with drawers and boxes, and this was the first brick block in Flint.

I was appointed postmaster by President Pierce when he was elected, and held the office for eight years, until the election of President Lincoln. During that time I was elected mayor of the city of Flint, where I

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have since lived and have seen our city grow up from a wilderness, without a single house, to a beautiful city of ten thousand inhabitants. I used to camp on the river bank where is now Bay City, with over twenty thousand inhabitants. East Saginaw, from a wilderness to a city of equal population, Saginaw City to ten or twelve thousand, and several smaller towns, in fact the whole Saginaw Valley is almost a city its entire length. It seemed almost like a dream when I look back to its primitive state and now see the cities and railroads running in all directions, and the country covered with beautiful farms. Genesee county, I think, is one of the finest agricultural counties in the State of Michigan. When I first went to Saginaw we were a part of the town of Pontiac, where we had to go to vote and transact our town business. The first white child born in Saginaw was my daughter Julia (now Mrs. Charles Hascall), born September 9, 1833. The second female child was Mary Jewett, 1834. The first male child was William William's son, born March 12, 1834. When I was postmaster of Saginaw the mail was first carried by Joshua Terry in a valise, most of the time on his back; it used to come to Flint in mud wagons, and often through the Grand Blanc woods the passengers would

get out and with rails pry the stage wagon out of the mud, rarely arriving at Flint before 10 or 12 p.m., and often we had to sit up all night for it, to distribute and make up the mails for Saginaw to leave early in the morning. It is very different now.

The mails from Saginaw to Mackinaw and the Sault Ste. Marie were carried on the backs of half breeds, or on dog sleighs. I have put up ninety pounds of mail matter, leaving out all books and heavy newspapers. A man would carry that weight on his back, besides his snow shoes, blanket, provisions, hatchet and tin cup. Several times I took my man and goods and went with him as far as Thunder Bay collecting furs. I was astonished to see how easily he carried his load. All his provisions were parched corn pounded fine and Indian sugar, mixed with cold water and drank. He said he could travel farther on that than any other, even pork and bread.

I remember some other little incidents of my early days in Saginaw, and of Indian peculiarities, which I will try and give some other time.

*Editor's Note: This concludes Ephraim Williams personal reminiscences.*

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### Gay Golden Wedding Fete Gathers Families Friday Former Lee Township resident celebrate 50th year at Langport

Nov. 5, 1931 - Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Gay, once residents of Lee, celebrated their golden anniversary Friday at their present home in Langport, south of Breckenridge with five of their six sons and daughters present and neighbors other relatives and friends calling upon them to congratulate them upon the successful completion of the half-century together.

The Gay home in Langport was decorated in gold and white fall blossoms. A dinner was served at the home of their son Clarence Gay and the day was spent in visiting and reminiscences.

Mr. Gay was born in Pennsylvania June 11, 1861, coming to Michigan with his parents when he was four years of age. Mrs. Gay (once Emma Boroughf) was born in Fostoria, Ohio, and came to Michigan when she was 16. They were married at St. Louis, this state, October 30th, 1881, and have spent most of the years since in Michigan, living in Ohio for a period of a year and a half.

Three sons and daughters comprise their family, of whom all were present Friday with the exception of Mrs. Bessie Bott. They included Mrs. Eve Bradden, Mrs. Grace Bott, John Gay and the twins, Claire and Clarence Gay. There are 30 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Relatives from other places too were in attendance at the affair were Mr. and Mrs. N. V. Warner and daughter Orga, and Mrs. Edna Sunsen and daughter Barbara, of Lansing; Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Sterns of Beaverton; Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Gay of St. Louis; Mr. and Mrs. Alex Stewart; Mr. and Mrs. D. H. Boroughf, and Mrs. R. H. Bott of Breckenridge; and Mr. and Mrs. D. Snyder and Mr. and Mrs. Charles Seip of Wheeler.

Neighbors gathered in the evening to present the Gay's with a bridge lamp, which was one of several received, including a gold piece from a brother in Washington and another from Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Gay of St. Louis.

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**TELLS OF MICHIGAN WAY BACK IN' 33  
New Yorker Went from Chicago to Detroit over "Bleak Prairie"**

Midland Republican, Oct. 15, 1925 - Lansing, Oct. 15.-- The October issue of the Michigan history magazine carries a very interesting sketch of early travel relating to Michigan and nearby territory about the time the state was admitted to the union. It is one of a series of letters running through the Magazine during the year, written by C. F. Hoffman, a New Yorker, who visited the western frontier on horseback in 1833, and included Michigan in his tour. In this letter he is traveling the old Chicago Turnpike on his way from Detroit to Chicago.

He says, "Being now on the mail route between Detroit and Chicago, I am traveling very comfortably in a four-horse wagon, with the gentleman mentioned in my last letter. I found my horse's back so chafed at White Pigeon, that it was unpleasant to use him any longer under the saddle; and having met with my trunk at Niles, which was forwarded from Monroe by a friend, I am in a measure compelled to adopt what is certainly the most agreeable mode of traveling at this season through a bleak prairie country.

"The cold winter moon was still riding high in the heavens as we were carried over the Joseph's at Niles this morning. A low-sided scow was the means of conveyance; and after breaking the solid ice near the shore to loose us from our moorings, it required some

pains to shun the detached cakes which came driving down the center of the dark rolling river, while, near the opposite shore, they had become so wedged and frozen together that it required considerable exertion to break a way with our long poles, and make good our landing. At length, ascending the bank, a beautiful plain, with clump of trees here and there upon its surface, opened to our view. The establishment of the Carey Mission, a long low white building, could be distinguished afar off faintly in the moonlight while several winter lodges of the Pottawattamies, three or four hundred of which tribe inhabit this fine district, were plainly perceptible over the plain. The moon, indeed, shown with an effulgence such as I have never witnessed, except beneath the pearly skies of the west. Morning came at last; still, but excessively cold, our horses manes and our own clothes being covered with hoar-frost while each blade of grass that shot its wilted spear above the snow glistened like a diamond's point beneath the uprising sun."

This entire series of sketches is very readable, giving a vivid picture of early life in Michigan. The Michigan History Magazine is furnished free to schools and libraries. To individuals it is one dollar a year. It is published by the Michigan Historical Commission at Lansing.

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**Farmer Feels Better When He Remembers First 100 Years  
Tractors, Individual Drinking Cups for Cows Make Nice Contrast With Past**

The Midland Republican, Thursday, April 23, 1931 - With a wet and a dry season just behind them, with the price of milk down and feed up, Midland farmers get an occasional extra blue Monday, they say. But all they have to do is think back a ways to cheer up.

Adoniran J. Franklin snug in his Ingersoll farmstead home with furnace, bath, electric lights and all other comforts of home, knows what used to be like. So does "Tom" Reeves, Sr. These two are about the "longest" residents in Poseyville.

"Why, we had to carry our groceries on our backs from Midland," Mr. Franklin said Monday. "We were tickled to death when we got to the point where we could drive the cattle into town and bring out stuff that way. We didn't even have any horses for a long time. We thought we were getting well advanced when we got them.

"There were two pieces of corduroy on the road -- one on the line where they're digging the new ditch now, and the other just north of Doll's. The road turned east by Doll's there and followed the sand ridge around to come out by Cameron's.

"When I came here from Canada, I had a yoke of oxen and a plow and an ax," he said. "I cradled grain with a cradle. Now we have a tractor, a three-bottom plow, and a 10-foot binder. We don't work like we used to," he said. "Now we ride to do all our work."

The hardest day's work he ever did was chopping a clearing for his fine farm.

"You had to chop down the trees and log them and burn them up," he says. "The chopping was the hardest work I ever did. Then we had to dig out the stumps and have oxen pull them out."

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# President's Letter

I just re-read the president's letter of August 1998, in which I promised "a busy, challenging and satisfying 1998-1999 season for the Midland Genealogical Society.". So looking back:

We have had and will continue to have great meetings, with the after-meeting discussions and sharing that make this such a fine group. I enjoy it very much and hope you all do so too.

I guess we all thought that there might be a large computer/internet function within this group - but the turnout and interest in the special interest group for computers (Ron Snyder and Doug Applegath got it started, and many thanks to the Longsdorfs for providing a place for some meetings) has been very strong and shows signs of continuing.

A large contingent of folks will be going to Salt Lake City this month - and they will miss the April meeting of the MGS. First things first, though.

There's one item that we hadn't even considered earlier in this year - and it is good news and bad news from Ora Flaningam. The good news is that the Flaningams plan to start spending parts of the winters in sunny Florida, where the temperature will be much

more enjoyable than here in Midland. The bad news is that the Flaningams will be spending parts of the winters in sunny Florida - and we will have to find other folks to produce our newsletter (see Ora's statement in this issue).

This newsletter bears the imprint of the Flaningams - it has been their contribution for years. I don't know what the newsletter will be like without them . . . it will surely be different, I do know that. We will have to work very hard to make sure that whatever form it takes it will serve the members of the Midland Genealogical Society.

This is surely a hard act to follow.

I'll close with a re-run: ". . . remember, folks, that many of us are now Grandma and Grandpa and we should take the lead in telling our offspring all the things we wished we had asked our own grandparents. Get busy, write it down, and put names on all of those old photographs. Remember, if you want to archive anything, paper is still by far the best medium."

Bill

## THANK YOU... and a personal note from the Flaningams

It does not seem possible, but it was February, 1990 that Florence Wise first asked us to edit the "Pioneer Record." After 10 years, it is time for us to thank all those who have helped and to pass the job on to someone else. After our recent trip to Florida, we have surprised ourselves by making the decision to become "sunseekers" and spend the next few winters in the south. Since we will not be here for half of each year, we will not be able to continue as editor(s). We do expect to be able to help the next editor learn the methods we've used and with his/her first issue.

As recently as three months ago, we had no intention of changing our life-style. Then Donalee's family had to make the decision to sell her stepmother's little house in Bonita Springs, Florida. In our recent trip there, Donalee's arthritic problems were so much lessened that, in spite of her opinion that "snowbirding is stupid," we decided this is a desirable change for us. So we're making plans to buy the house and "keep it in the family."

Thanks to all the presidents for their support, Nancy Lackie for all the articles culled from microfilm for us, The Longsdorfs for their mailing, The Wordens for the Index to volumes 1-10, Maxine McCullen for years of "Shelfside," and the many people who have submitted articles, helped with typing, etc.

We'll still be here when we can, and best wishes to the Society and the next editor.

*Ora and Donalee Flaningam*

## "MIDLAND PIONEERS" BOOK IS COMING

The Genealogical Society board has authorized printing of 100 copies of the *Midland Pioneers* book. It is now at the printers and will be available at the May meeting and possibly at the April meeting of the society. Price is expected to be \$20 with the usual \$3 mailing and handling. The 259-page book, edited by Ora Flaningam, is a collection of the most interesting stories from the first fourteen years of the *Pioneer Record*. There is some humor, some genealogy, and some history. The book includes a comprehensive 39-page index and a preface by Judge Henry Hart. It will make a great Christmas gift, so GET 'EM WHILE THEY'RE HOT!

## LDS CD-ROMs — WHAT A BARGAIN!

By Mark Howells

As the commercial market for genealogy CD-ROMs has developed over the last few years, the Family History Department has appeared to be falling behind in the provisioning of CD-ROMs to the public. New CD-ROM titles were made available at the "Family History Centers" but, with the exception of a few limited-distribution trials, individual researchers could not purchase genealogy CD-ROMs from the Family History Department. However, extensive work has now been done to bring CD-ROMs to the public at a reasonable price.

In April of last year, the Family History Center released three new titles on CD-ROM. They are extremely useful indexes of millions of genealogical records as well as very easy on the pocket book. The first three CD-ROMs are the initial installment of an ongoing series of inexpensive CD-ROMs being planned by the Family History Department. The original three are:

### 1851 British Census on 1 CD-ROM

Available at the give-away price of \$5, this is an index to the 1851 Census for the English counties of Devon, Norfolk, and Warwickshire containing approximately 1.5 million individual records including names, residences, occupations, ages, birth-places, and more.

### Australian Vital Records Index (1788-1905) on 4 CD-ROM discs

Priced at \$20 for the 4-disc set, this title indexes nearly 4.5 million births, baptisms, marriages and deaths from New South Wales, Tasmania, Victoria, and Western Australia.

### Family History SourceGuide on 1 CD-ROM

Available for \$10, this is not a genealogical database but rather a family history research guide. It contains over 150 research outlines from the Family History Library, historical maps, genealogy word lists in non-English languages, plus blank forms and worksheets.

In September of 1998, two additional titles became available through the Family History Center in this series of value-priced CD-ROMs.

### British Vital Records Index (1538-1888) on 5 CD-ROM discs

At \$15 for the entire 5-disc set, this title provides an index to nearly five million records of births, baptisms, and marriages with the majority of the records being births and baptisms. These records were extracted from parish registers, civil registration, and other sources from the United Kingdom.

### North American Vital Records Index (1620-1888) on 7 CD-ROM discs

For \$19, this 7-disc set is an index to approximately five million marriages, births, and baptisms with the majority of the records being marriages. Various sources from the U.S. and Canada were used to compile this index.

Note that the titles published in this series are not exclusively related to records of the United States as most genealogy CD-ROMs have been in the past. Records from Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom have been indexed in the series also, and the Family History SourceGuide" provides excellent information on non-U.S. research.

All of the above titles are extremely easy to use. Their search features are intuitive and straightforward. The information includes the necessary citations to quickly direct the researcher back to the original source. These inexpensive CD-ROMs are ideal finding aids.

### THE FUTURE.

Expected in early 1999 are more additions to this series of inexpensive research tools from the LDS Family History Center. The first discs of the 1880 U.S. census and the 1881 British census sets should be available early in the year. When completed, these two combined titles will index over 80 million individuals from the two separate censuses. These and additional inexpensive CD-ROM titles from the Family History Center will be gratefully received by the global genealogy community.

*Mark Howells is a Certified Information Systems Auditor. He volunteers on the Internet as the host Norfolk-L genealogy mailing list.*

**FREE****GENEALOGY WORKSHOP****FREE**

**SATURDAY APRIL 17, 1999  
10:00 AM - 2:00 PM**

A Lineage Research workshop sponsored by John Alden Chapter, NSDAR will be held in the Grace A. Dow Library Lounge. This workshop is free and open to ALL who wish to research their genealogy. Reservations are not necessary. Members of the DAR Michigan Lineage Research Team and chapter Members will be on hand to give help with genealogy questions and provide information and assistance with research on a one-to-one basis.

**Bring any useful data about your family, such as birth, marriage and death certificates; Bible records; newspaper articles and obituaries; land, will and probate records; census records.**

*Call Kathy Bohl (839-9016) for more information.*

**MGS PROGRAMS FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE 1998-1999 SEASON**

Programs will be held, at 7:00 P.M. on the third Wednesday of the month in the lounge of the Grace A. Dow Memorial Library. Be sure to mark your calendars. The remaining schedule for the current year is as follows:

April 21, 1999:

Two accounts of personal research brick walls and how they were overcome.

May 19, 1999:

Panel discussion (questions taken in March and April) and Election of Officers.

**BOOKS FOR SALE**

The following books, published by the society, are available.

**MIDLAND PIONEERS**, edited by Ora Flaningam. This book is a compilation of the most interesting genealogical, historical and humorous stories from the first fourteen years of the *Pioneer Record*. The book is 6 by 9 inches, softbound, 259 pages in length, including a 39-page comprehensive index. The price is \$20.00 at any **MGS** meeting or by mail for an additional \$3 for postage and handling.

**MIDLAND COUNTY OBITUARY INDEX - 1872-1927**. The book consists of abstractions from the *Midland Times* (1872-1875), the *Midland Sun* (1892-1924) and the *Midland Republican* (1881-1927). From the 55 years covered, we have about 16,000 records of deaths from those publications. The book is 8 1/2 by 11 inches, softbound, and is 238 pages in length. The price is \$20.00 at any **MGS** meeting or by mail plus \$3.00 postage & handling.

**MIDLAND COUNTY CENSUSES - 1850-1894**. 450 PAGES, LOOSE LEAF, \$20 plus \$3 postage. (ONLY A FEW COPIES LEFT).

To ORDER A BOOK write:

Midland Genealogical Society BOOK  
G.A. Dow Memorial Library  
1710 W. St. Andrews Dr.  
Midland, MI 48640

WEB SITE ADDRESS OF THE MIDLAND GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY HOME PAGE:  
<http://members.mdn.net/billword/mgs.htm>



**MIDLAND GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY**  
 Grace A. Dow Memorial Library  
 1710 W. St. Andrews Drive  
 Midland, Michigan

# Pioneer Record

PIIONEER RECORD is published quarterly (Sep., Nov., Feb., and Apr., by the Midland Genealogical Society. Queries are free to members and should be sent to: PIONEER RECORD, Midland Genealogical Society, G.A. Dow Memorial Library, 1710 St. Andrews Dr., Midland, MI 48640. We welcome genealogical material which would be of interest to the general membership. Articles to be included in PR should be submitted to the above address by the 15th of Aug., Oct. Jan., and Mar.

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## INFORMATION about MIDLAND GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

Our society meets on the 3rd Wed. of Sept., Oct., Nov., Jan., Feb., Mar., Apr., May at 7:00 P. M. in the lounge of the Grace A. Dow Memorial Library, 1710 W. St. Andrews Dr., Midland, MI 48640. Visitors are always welcome. Watch the Midland Daily News or, local Midland MCTV, channel 5, for upcoming speakers, dates, and times.

Membership dues are \$10.00 for single and \$12.50 for a couple and can be paid after July 1, but must be paid by Sep. 30 to continue receiving the Pioneer Record. Dues may be paid at any meeting or may be sent to the Membership Chairman, Midland Genealogical Soc. at the Grace A. Dow Memorial Library, 1710 W. St. Andrews Dr., Midland, MI 48640.