

## The History of Missaukee County, 1871-1917 (1941)

*Third transcription edition, updated September 2022 by Steven Koster*

### [Preface]

[George Spencer Stout (1866–1950) was a newspaper man through the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Lake City, Michigan, and a Missaukee County Road commissioner from at least 1929-1939.

Stout apparently wrote this history circa 1941.<sup>1</sup> Stout's history begins with the political organization of Missaukee in 1871 and ends somewhat abruptly with events in 1917. Perhaps is it an unfinished work. Stout's sources seem to be his own *Story of the Year* from 1891, county records, meeting minutes, and especially newspaper archives. It predates the courthouse fire of 1944, in which many records were lost.

What is surprisingly missing from Stout's history generally is much sense of the Dutch-American immigration and culture that drove much of the growth of Missaukee county's earliest years. Perhaps the tight-knit Dutch-speaking community seemed foreign to Stout's intended audiences.

In 1964, Fred C. Hirzel, a Missaukee County native and local historian, transcribed Stout's history from "Copy 111," making comments and adding additional content along the way.<sup>2</sup> The resulting document is a dialog of sorts between the two men on the early history of Missaukee. In his version, Hirzel added in parentheses some explanations, comments, etc., most of which have been moved to footnotes in this version. Hirzel's transcription also introduced omissions and glosses, in part due to the low-resolution copy from which he worked, which are hopefully restored in this version to Stout's original.]<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> The original typed manuscript can be found in the Lake City Ardis library. The work is typed (with handwritten edits and corrections) on the backside of spare "Northern Michigan Road Commissions Association" stationery, which dates to 1939. Stout himself is listed on the stationery masthead as the association's Secretary. The president noted in the masthead is Frank N. Smith, who served in 1939 (County Road Association of Michigan, "2019-2020 CRA Member Directory," page 12, 2019). Stout also comments about the state of Missaukee roads in 1941 on page 30 of his original, so the work is at least as recent as 1941. Hirzel (and earlier editions of this transcription) assumed the authorship date was 1917 because the events covered end abruptly in that year.

<sup>2</sup> "The Fred C. Hirzel Collection" includes this note: "Copies of the Fred C. Hirzel Papers are from those at the Clarke Historical Library, Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant." This collection appears to have been photocopied and bound for other libraries, including the Grand Rapids Public Library (call number: M977.466 M691). A cleaner copy of Hirzel's collection can be found in the Missaukee Library (<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/c/clarke/ehll-hirzel>).

<sup>3</sup> For the ease of reading, punctuation, spelling, and style corrections are added throughout but are unmarked. Occasionally a paragraph has been moved to keep the events mentioned in chronological order. Hirzel appeared to be trying to document Stout's original page numbers, but these are omitted here.

## [1870s: Creating a County]

### [1871]

#### *[Organizing Missaukee]*

Prior to the act of the legislature in 1871 organizing Missaukee County, it had been attached first to Manistee, and then [when] Wexford was set off from Manistee, it [Missaukee] became part of Wexford.<sup>4</sup>

In 1869, the supervisors of Wexford, it is supposed, organized the whole of Missaukee County as one township, called Reeder, and the first tax [was] levied that year [by Wexford county].<sup>5</sup>

Later, probably in the act of organizing the county [in 1871], the township[s] of Pioneer ([and,] embracing the whole tier of townships,) Quilna (including what is now Caldwell only), Clam Union (comprising [also] the present township of Holland), and Riverside (including the present Richland) were organized. The rest of the county [townships that emerged later], which comprised West Branch, Enterprise, Butterfield, Aetna, Forest, Reeder, and Lake, were left in Reeder [township].

The Organization Act of the Legislature, passed in 1871, provided that a temporary County Seat should be located at Falmouth until June 1873, at which time the voters of the county would fix the permanent location.

#### *[First County Government]*

An election was held in the spring of 1871. No official record of it remains, but it appears from later records that the following persons were elected to the several county offices:

- Judge of Probate: John Vogel
- Sherriff: Gillis McBain
- Clerk and Register: E.W. Watson
- Treasurer: Ira Van Meter
- Surveyor: Abraham Stout

There being no lawyer in the county, the circuit Judge, Thomas J. Ramsdell of Traverse City, appointed Lyman H. Gage, of that city, prosecuting attorney. Unofficial records say 41 votes, all Republican, were cast at this election for state officers. [Presumably, township Supervisors were also elected to serve on the County Board of Supervisors.]

---

<sup>4</sup> In the fall of 1866, the Manistee supervisors organized Wexford as a single township and held elections in April of 1867. Wexford was set apart as an independent county by the Michigan legislature in March 1869, including all of Missaukee. The top tier of surveyed townships in Missaukee were attached to Wexford's Hanover township and the remaining three-quarters to Colfax. (Peterson, William R. "The View from Courthouse Hill", 1972, 26-27.)

<sup>5</sup> "At the annual meeting of Wexford supervisors in 1869, Reeder township in Missaukee was organized, and Daniel Reeder attended the Wexford board meetings for the next year and a half, until the legislature organized Missaukee County as an independent political unit in 1871." (Peterson, William R. "The View from Courthouse Hill", 1972, 27.)

The first Board of Supervisors met at what was known as the Perley Farm, a couple of miles northeast of Falmouth. This was the farm and headquarter camp of a lumber firm known as Perley-Palmer & Co. The book-keeper for the company, E.W. Watson, was the County Clerk. Present [at this meeting]: Daniel Reeder of Reeder, Wm. J. Morey of Pioneer, John Vogel of Clam Union, and Henry Van Meter of Riverside. This was June 6, 1871. Next day, James White, supervisor of Quilna, arrived and took his place on the board.

Finances were of first importance, and the treasury was empty, no county tax having been spread the previous year. A bond issue of \$5000, bearing ten percent interest, was authorized, \$3000 to be sold at once for running expenses. Salaries of county officers were fixed as follows:

- Clerk, \$500 per year
- Treasurer, \$250
- Probate Judge, \$100
- Prosecuting Attorney, \$200

Treasurer Van Meter resigned, disappointed at the salary fixed, and Washington Reeder was named in his stead.



A bargain was made with Pearly, Palmer & Co., to build offices [in Falmouth]; 12 x 16 feet each for the Clerk and Treasurer, with a second story to be used as a court room, for which the board agreed to pay \$115 per year rent. The *Osceola Outline* of Hersey was designated the official newspaper.

It was agreed that pine lands should be assessed at \$4 per acre, first class farm land at \$2, and pine stump land at \$1.25 acre.

The first equalization by the Supervisors was as follows:

	Real Estate	Personal
Clam Union	\$88,117.33	\$2,175
Reeder	287,102.69	2,864
Pioneer	83,199.10	1,280
Riverside	22,921.15	1,695
Quilna	7,581.16	144
[Totals]	[\$488,921.43]	[\$8,158]

Total of Real Estate and Personal: \$497,169.13 [\$497,079.43]

In 1869, [when] Wexford County had been organized with Missaukee County attached, a tax had been spread on some lands in Missaukee County in 1869 and 1870. On July 4<sup>th</sup> [1871], the Board of Supervisors met at the home of James White in Quilna, and went from there to Sherman, then the County Seat of Wexford County. In the party [were] Supervisors James White, John Vogel, Wm. Morey, and Dan Reeder, and Treasurer Washington Reeder. The settlement showed Wexford County owed Missaukee \$43.85, which was paid.

In October 1871, it was voted to pay the Sherriff a salary of \$100 per year. Prior to that, he received only fees, if any. [Also in October 1871,] North end supervisors opposed southern on choice of official [county news]paper, and the North won, the award going to the *Grand Traverse Herald*, three votes to two.

### [1872]

At a special session of the Supervisors in January 1872, a Board of Superintendents of the Poor was named. First incumbents were Otto Herweyer, Ira Van Meter, and M.D. Richardson.

At another meeting in March of the same year, what is now Bloomfield was detached from Pioneer and made a part of Quilna. After the spring election of 1872, the new board was composed of B.C. Bonnell of Pioneer, Thomas T. Caldwell of Quilna, John Vogel of Clam Union, Wm. H. Cavanagh of Riverside, and Daniel Reeder of Reeder. The latter was chosen chairman.

Surveys for new state roads were under way. One was known as the Manistee and Tawas, near the present route of M55, and another as the Ionia and Houghton Lake, but the latter branched off and continued on into Norwich, where it met what was later called the Fife Lake Road. (At this point, I, F.C.H., wish to say that the Ionia & Houghton Lake Road actually made a junction with—what if not then actually made, was known as the Midland to Traverse City State Road—the junction being at what in 1964 and for many years has been known as Reedsburg. And the Midland to Traverse City State Road did go via Houghton Lake, Fife Lake, Mayfield, etc.).

At this April [1872] session of the board, the name of Quilna was changed to Caldwell [presumably in the name of the newly elected township Supervisor].

The first general election [that included federal and state issues] was held in the fall of 1872, the [US Presidential Ulysses S.] Grant [vs. Horace] Greeley campaign. Grant received 111 votes, and Greeley 8. For county offices, Probate Judge Vogel was re-elected without opposition, as was also Otto Schaap for Sherriff. For Clerk and Register, M. D. Richardson defeated E.W. Watson 84 to 49. For Treasurer, Washington Reeder defeated James Cavanaugh, 76 to 58. Arlington C. Lewis, having been licensed to practice law, was chosen Prosecuting Attorney. B.C. Bonnell was elected surveyor; Thomas T. Caldwell and Addison R. Smith were elected Coroners.

[1873: County Seat]



Figure 1: Missaukee County circa 1873

In June 1873, as directed by the Legislature, an election was held to determine the county seat. What is now Lake City, then called Reeder, won, 131 to 95. This is the only vote on the county seat ever held in the county. Most of our neighboring counties later had some hot county seat fights, some lasting for years. Even this one left some sore spots that were not forgotten for a long time. Each side accused the other of “colonizing” voters and probably both indulged in it to some extent. It was never denied that several men were guests of the Reeder about that time, and hunted and fished for a couple of weeks. Some of them became permanent residents, but others moved on, so perhaps they were just prospecting for a location.

The first meeting of the Board of Supervisors [that met] at Lake City was held in October 1873. A small two-story building, about 16 x 26, was built for a court house [in Lake City, a copy of the building built

two years earlier in Falmouth], across the street to the west of the present [circa 1941] county building, with two small offices for the clerk and treasurer downstairs, and a court room upstairs.

The township of West Branch, including the present township of Enterprise, was organized in January 1874. Sylvanus Siddall was the first supervisor.

In January 1876, it was voted to build a jail at a cost of not over \$500. In April, it was agreed to change the plan and make it two stories, the upper floor to furnish living rooms for the sheriff. A contract at \$897 was let and the building was erected that summer. That jail could hardly be duplicated now for five times the price paid. The outer walls of the lower story were built of 2 x 6 planks laid flat, one on top of the other and spiked solidly together. Two cells were made, and the partitions were made of 2 x 4s, laid flat and spiked. When the building burned down in 1888, it made a very hot fire, lasting for hours, and came very near causing the destruction of the courthouse, which was not over twenty feet distant.

In January 1877, the township of Richland was organized. Abraham Stout was the first Supervisor. In April 1877, Forest Township asked to be set as a township. It was opposed by the townships of Reeder, Pioneer, and Caldwell, but the other four Supervisors voted favorably, and it was admitted. Henry Nowlin was the first Supervisor.

#### **[1877: State Roads]**

In April 1877, it was recorded in the Lake City Journal that the "Tawas City and Manistee" state road was under construction, and it was known locally as the "Mare's Tail." The name was said to have been coined by a local wit to indicate that the corduroy being placed was really only weeds and brush in many places, and "Mare's Tail" was the local name of a weed that grew plentifully along the route.

When "State Road" appears in this story of early days in Missaukee, it must be understood that something very different from what we know today as a "State Road" is meant. The "State Road" of that day was usually a trail that wound around swamps and hills to reach its destination, seeking the driest available route through a country that was much wetter than present residents could possibly imagine as ever having existed here. The trail so made was only the width of a wagon track in most places, and no grading, as we understand grading, was attempted. The ground was leveled off roughly, enough to permit a wagon to get over it without upsetting. Wet spots were "corduroyed" with logs eight or ten feet long, and of varying sizes. Later, in some cases, earth was placed on the logs, but at first that was too much luxury to expect. Usually the timber [growing along the side of the road] was either untouched, or merely cut away wide enough to permit a wagon to pass. Later on, some of these state roads were required to have the timber cleared for two rods wide and a twelve-foot grade made, but most of them were built as above indicated. The old state road from Falmouth to Stittsville is probably the only one in the county that was cleared out and placed on a Section Line. All others in the county wound and twisted around swamps, hills, and even large trees to reach their destination.

They were called "State Roads" because they were built by the state, and paid for in what was known as "state swamp land scrip." This scrip was redeemed by the state only when offered in payment for what was known as "state swamp land." When the original survey was made, the surveyor marked on his maps all the swamps encountered by him in running the lines, and all the land touched by the swamps

so marked became “state swamp land,” no matter whether the swamp covered one acre or forty. Every forty-acre description so touched became “state swamp land” and could be purchased with this scrip at the standard price of \$1.25 per acre, without regard to the character of the timber, soil, or location. Consequently, the scrip had a value, as much of this land had only a little swamp on it and the rest might be covered with valuable timber, or it might be good farming land. And [so,] it was in fair demand for speculators in timber lands. But scrip usually brought only 70 to 80% of its face value in cash, and so the contractor who took a state road job had to allow for that in bidding. There was much friction between these contractors and parties interested in having the roads built. This “Mare’s Tail” was a source of trouble for many years after this.



At this time, April 1877, the village previously known as Reeder received the name Lake City. It received mail once a week by stage from Fife Lake. In this same month of April, the stage had difficulty getting through because of fire, and reported driving through a blazing strip half a mile wide. The stage was damaged but got through and saved the mail. Some months later, the mail service was switched to Cadillac, then known as Clam Lake.

### *[Logging]*

The summer of 1877 was dry, and apparently the previous year had also lacked moisture, as it was reported that a “drive” of logs was still hung up in “The Cut” between Higgins and Houghton lakes; for the second summer it had been unable to reach the latter lake. Watson Brothers appeared to be the largest operators near Lake City, and they reported having 75 to 80 million feet of logs in the West Branch (of the Muskegon River), and also a big drive in the Butterfield; and thereby hangs a tale.



To present day residents of the county, it may be necessary to explain a “drive.” During the winter months, logs were cut, hauled, and piled on the banks of the streams until the spring breakup, when the “rollways,” which were piles of logs on the river banks, were “broken,” [and] the logs [were] set afloat and “driven” to a market. When snowfall and rainfall in winter and spring months was light, it often happened that there was not enough water in the streams to float the logs, and the drives were “hung up.” This happened on the Butterfield creek in this spring of 1877. To relieve this drive, the Watsons sought water from Muskrat Lake [now called Lake Missaukee, the lake for which Lake City gets its name], and entered into a contract with William Reeder for permission to cut a ditch or canal through his land from the lake, at a point near what is now known locally as “Sunset” corners, traces of which can still be seen [circa 1941].

The contract provided that he should not lower the water in Muskrat Lake more than ten inches below the then level, which was marked. Opposition arose and the town board of Reeder Township notified the Federal authorities, and a U.S. Marshal arrived with an injunction and stopped the action, only about 48 hours before it was planned to let the water in the ditch. This ditch intersected a water course across the farm now owned by Lloyd Ardis, near the east corporation line, which is the headwaters of the west branch of the Butterfield creek. Drives on the Dead Stream and Clam River were hung up, as well as on the Butterfield. None of them got out that year.



Watson Brothers boasted 12 miles of logging railroad with two locomotives at that time. Paul Lux had a tram road three miles long, ending at the West Branch River. It is said that the first logging railroad with a real locomotive was built by Thomas Stimson in Holland Township. These early railroads used plank for rails, with in some cases strap iron spiked to the planks for the wheels to run on. Sometimes the strap iron pulled loose from the plank and curled up at the ends so as to

catch the cars with unpleasant results. Other tram roads were operated with oxen for the motive power.<sup>6</sup>

*[[ail]]*

It was boasted in June 1877 that the county had a jail a year old but had never had a prisoner in it, and that the county had never had a saloon. It was explained that Ira Van Meter took out a liquor license for his Falmouth hotel the previous summer but had probably not used it and did not have it renewed when it expired.

In August [1877], the jail got its first prisoner. Calvin French of Pioneer was arrested, charged with assault with intent to kill his wife [Laura Ocobock Johnson French] and stepdaughter [Vera Johnson]. French was a pint-sized man, weighing about 90 pounds, while his wife and stepdaughter were both

---

<sup>6</sup> (At this point, I, Fred C. Hirzel, wish to here note that since Mr. George Stout wrote this history in the year 1917 [1941], there has been [an article] published in Michigan History Magazine, published by [the] Historical Society of Michigan, December 1952, Volume 36, Number 4, Page 351. In [this] article by Wm. C. Rector, he writes of Winfield Scott Gerrish's Lake George & Muskegon River railroad, in 1877, and of which some writers have said this was the first strictly logging railroad in the world. A metal plaque has been erected near Lake George, in Clare County, claiming this to have been the first logging railroad. And while it was probably the very best and most thoroughly practical, Mr. Rector says it was not the first, since as he said, "a quarter of a century earlier there had been a wooden rail, steam logging railroad in New York state." Mr. Rector writes of some other steam-operated logging railroads in "the south" and even in northern, lower Michigan, in the late [18]70s. And the Cadillac Evening News carries some items [and] indications that Ephraim Shay was hauling logs on a mile and a half wooden railroad in Herring Township of Wexford County as early as 1876. It does seem quite unlikely that anyone really knows who or when railroads built strictly for logging purposes were conceived.)

heavier and more active. It appeared they had a row, and French at least threatened them with an axe. The jury found him guilty of assault and battery, and he served four months in jail.<sup>7</sup>

The winter of 1877-78 was a mild one, with very little snow—not enough for sleighing, and not very cold weather. Spring seeding began the first week of April—not a good winter for the lumbermen. This combination of mild winters and light rainfall probably hastened the use of railroads as the principal method of moving logs to market, instead of depending upon the rivers, and their use was soon common with all the operators.<sup>8</sup>

## [1880s]

### [1880]

At the October 1879 session of the Supervisors, a petition for organization of the east half of Clam Union (now Holland) was presented. Action was postponed until January [1880] and then denied. In January 1880, Bloomfield asked admission and it was granted, [with the] first Supervisor [being] Minot Shippy.

In April 1880, the supervisors appointed a committee to select a suitable farm for a county farm and report at the next meeting. Committee [included] C.L. Ostander of Reeder, Shippy of Bloomfield, and Koopman of Clam Union. They reported in October [1880], recommended the purchase of the Perley farm on Section 32, Aetna, where the first meeting of supervisors was held [back in 1871]. In January [1881], the supervisors authorized purchase at a price not to exceed \$2500. Apparently this was not accepted and the purchase was not made.

In the spring of 1880 occurred the wholesale slaughter and the wiping out of the wild pigeons in this section. That year, the woods were crowded with them. They were shot, clubbed from their roosts, netted and slaughtered in every conceivable manner, until their extermination proved complete. It was the last time they appeared in great numbers.

---

<sup>7</sup> Some details can be found in Note Book 6 of the Hirzel collection. French apparently beat his wife with a double-bitted axe, mostly using the flat side but cutting her some. Step-daughter Vera Johnson was “desperately wounded, with great cuts in her head and arms.” After the row, French “went to Moreys after whiskey.” The Jury convicted him in 12 minutes, but only of assault and battery. This was the first jury trial in the Circuit Court of Missaukee. He was released after serving his four months on 13 March 1878 according to the *Lake City Journal*.

<sup>8</sup> This paragraph is muddled in the Hirzel transcript version and the Missaukee Historical Society version due to an omitted line, but restored here from Stout’s original typewritten manuscript. Fred C Hirzel comments: (This paragraph surely is muddled: I, FCH, suspect that some person, copying Mr. Stout’s story may have left out a considerable number of words which may have told of the advent of railroad logging, which began in 1877 on iron rails but a bit earlier on wood rails. This method of moving logs, either direct to saw mills, or at least to the larger rivers, while not eliminating the use of smaller streams, did lessen the need of the smaller streams for which water was often too little.)

A mail stage now ran twice a week from Cadillac to Lake City, but the roads still left much to be desired. No one had yet proposed grading up a road so the water would drain away quickly, still less of putting a surface of gravel on top. Concrete and asphalt were still undreamed of.<sup>9</sup>

Up to this time, 1880, the county had two residents that had been licensed to practice law—A.C. Lewis and M.D. Richardson, neither of whom ever seriously practiced, although both held the office of prosecuting attorney in early days. In 1880, two attorneys located here—Horace N. McIntyre and S.W. Skeels. They proved not greatly different from their predecessors. McIntyre served one term as prosecuting attorney, but soon turned to other sources of making money. Skeels returned to his former occupation of teaching school.

*[Census]*

The census of 1880 gave [these counts of residents:]

- Clam Union 402
- West Branch 63
- Caldwell 104
- Riverside 152
- Forest 51
- Reeder 322
- Richland 76
- Pioneer 299

Total 1554, a gain of 948 in six years [since the 1874 Michigan census

---

<sup>9</sup> Stout's history originally included the following paragraph, but since it was oddly placed here out of chronological order, and since the paragraph is now known to be incomplete and erroneous, it has been moved to this footnote. "Dates of some of the early homestead holders may be of interest. In Pioneer, Wm. J Morey and Washington Richardson in 1867; M.D. Richardson in 1868. West Branch, at what is now known as Star City, all on Section 24; R.L. Williams, James Nixon, and N. Putnam, 1872; C.A. Miller and Chancey Brace in 1875. Daniel, Washington, William, and Charles Reeder, all in 1868, and John Howe, 1872." See Koster, Steven, "The Earliest Settlers of Missaukee County" 2016 for a more accurate list of names and dates. See "[United States Bureau of Land Management Tract Books](#), 1800-c. 1955," for original homesteading documentation.

### *[Liquor]*

In the fall of 1880, Sylvester (Vet) Stevens, [of] Lake City, was building an addition to a frame building previously built for a dwelling, where the Ford Garage now stands [circa 1941], which became the Northern Hotel. Both he and John Armstrong, then landlords of the Lake City Hotel, where the present hotel of the same name now stands, took out licenses for the legal sale of liquor, save the one exception noted above.

Prior to this, there had been at least one attempt to sell liquor in Lake City. Alex McLennan, better known as "Mack," purchased a small barrel of whiskey and a keg a beer. Reaching Lake City near nightfall, he deposited what was to be his stock in trade that he had intended to offer to the public the next day, in a small building he had secured, near the corner of Main and John streets. In the morning, his stock had disappeared, and all attempts to recover it or [to] locate the thieves were unsuccessful. This happened in the late summer or early fall [of 1880]. What became of the whiskey is not known, but the beer reappeared later. During a session of the Board of Supervisors in April 1881, Wm. Minthorn was piling up a quantity of stove wood which he had cut and hauled the previous winter, and thrown it loosely on a vacant lot, [at the] corner of Canal and Prospect streets, in full view of the court house, when Marion D. Richardson, then prosecuting attorney, acting on a tip from someone, went over and helped Minthorn in what seemed to be a big job. Richardson worked industriously for a few minutes, and shortly announced he found something, and uncovered the missing keg of beer, which was taken to a convenient spot and consumed by the supervisors, county officials, and anyone who happened along. That ended poor Mack's attempt to open a saloon, as his stock in trade had disappeared, and he lacked credit or cash to replenish it. An echo of this returned for several years, each time the supervisors met. Acting on someone's advice, Mack [at] each session presented a bill for one keg of beer, but never received any compensation.

In October 1880, Aetna was admitted as a township, with Butterfield included as a part of it. R.J. Porter was the first supervisor. At the same session, Norwich was admitted with the same area of two surveyed townships as it still has. John T. Stitt was the first supervisor.

### **[1881]**

#### *[Bradford Township]*

At the April session of 1881, F.L. Decker made his first appearance as a supervisor, coming from Forest. This was his first entrance into Missaukee politics, in which he remained a conspicuous figure for many years.

At this [April 1881] session, P.H. McCracken appeared and was seated as the Supervisor of Bradford Township, composed of the east half of Clam Union [now Holland township]. The board of supervisors had refused to organize the township, and it apparently was organized through some action in the courts. Its history as a township [named Bradford] was short but sensational.

At the session in January 1882, no supervisor appeared for Bradford, and no tax roll was in evidence. The supervisors ordered the Sherriff to go to Bradford, get the tax roll, and investigate conditions. He returned with the roll and other papers. Something appeared to be wrong, and Supervisors Gregson of

Richland, W.H. Cavanagh of Riverside, and Shippy of Bloomfield were appointed [as] a committee to investigate. To this committee F.L. Decker was added later. The committee reported that they found the assessment roll was not completed; the supervisor and clerk had disappeared, and with them went about \$1200 belonging to the township, and the town board was left without a quorum.

A warrant was issued for the arrest of supervisor McCracken, and he was found in Petersburg, Virginia by Sheriff Lafayette Charter. He opposed being brought back, and was extradited, tried in Lake City, and acquitted on a legal point. It appeared that the money, which came from Clam Union Township on the settlement with the new town [of Bradford], was turned over to him without legal authority. It should have been paid to the Treasurer of Bradford, but on settlement day, that officer did not appear, and the Treasurer of Clam Union, who had drawn the money from a bank miles away for the purpose of paying it over, wanted to get rid of the currency and turned it over to Supervisor McCracken to deliver to the Treasurer. This failure to deliver the money was termed a “breach of trust” and not a theft by the court under the law as it stood at that time. The money could only be recovered by a civil suit.

About the same time, S.B. Ardis of Lake City lost \$400 in the same way. He asked a friend to get from the express office in Cadillac a package containing \$400 in currency and bring it to him. His “friend” got the money and kept it, leaving the country promptly. The next legislature passed a new law, making “breaches of trust” criminal acts.

To resume the Bradford story: In April 1882, John Creith appeared as Supervisor from Bradford and was seated. No one appeared from Bradford at the June session. In October, no supervisor from Bradford appeared. The Sherriff was sent after Creith and the assessment roll. He returned without either. The matter was referred to the Prosecuting Attorney, who reported that it was too late to make an assessment of Bradford. The Sherriff was sent back to make further search, but without any results of interest. No taxes had been spread in this town in either 1881 or 1882, so a state and county tax was ordered spread in 1883 and the township surrendered its organization.

#### *[Logging]*

The winter of 1880-1881 was more to the liking of lumbermen, and operations were quite extensive. On January 25<sup>th</sup> it was reported [that] snow was three feet deep in the woods, and on April 12<sup>th</sup> it was announced there had been 150 days of sleighing up to that date.

Logs banked along the rivers as reported April 1<sup>st</sup> [1881] were:

- Clam River, 38 Million
- West Branch, 31 Million
- Manistee, 20 Million
- West Branch of the Clam, 8.5 Million
- Butterfield, 9 Million
- Muskegon, 4 Million
- Muskrat lake, 350,000 ft
- Total for the county: 110,365,000 [110,850,000]

Logging by rail grew rapidly [earlier,] following the mild winters of 1877-78-79. According to figures compiled by the *Lake City Journal*, the yearly totals from 102 to 122 million feet yearly up to and including the winter of 1881-1882. Names of the harvest operators in the last years included:

- Clam River: McGraft & Montgomery, Cody & Moore for Man & Moon, D.A. Blodgett, J.W. Weaver, Dick Miller, Shelvin Davis & Company, Torrent & Ducey, and Tom Stimson, each credited with more than a million feet.
- Butterfield: Shelvin Davis & Co., Haymarsh Creek, Col. Fuller, each with a million at least
- West Branch of Muskegon River: Paul Lux, Wm. Coach, J.H. Moores, White & Swan & Smith, and J.L. White with a total for that stream of 18,525,000
- Muskrat lake, for local consumption mostly: Dan and William Reeder, James Dyer, John Armstrong and others, 937,000
- Manistee River: N. Taber & Sons, Charles Marthinson, Bowen, Dempsey & Catier, Stronach Lumber Co.,
- West Branch of the Clam River: Torrent & Ducey, John Ryan, and others.
- Dead Stream: E & C Eldreds, Col. Fuller, Blodgett & Byrns, Bigelow Brothers, George Newcomb
- Muskegon River: Charles Marsh, D.A. Blodgett, Wm. F. Seeley, Farr & Co., S.C. Hall, Torrent & Ducey, L.D. Gleason

#### *[Courthouse]*

In 1881, a small building fund had been accumulated for the purpose of building a court house. A motion to build the following year was defeated. A motion to move the county seat to the center of the county was defeated with a record vote.

In April 1882, supervisor Decker of Forest offered the following resolution: "Resolved, that Missaukee County build a court house on the lots now owned by the county, situated in the village of Lake City; that the cost of said court house shall not exceed ten thousand dollars." [The resolution was] adopted; only A.J. Becker of Aetna, Creith of Bradford, and Vis of Clam Union voting against it. By the same vote, a special election was ordered to be held June 19, 1882, to vote on a bond issue of \$7000. The election was held, and the bonds were voted 187 to 137.

A committee to locate the building and grade the grounds was composed of Becker, Caldwell, and Gregson. Daniel Reeder gave the county a deed to the lots selected, where the building now stands [circa 1941 (this building burned in February 1944)]. A building committee composed of Minot Shippy,

Thomas T. Caldwell, John Murray (of West Branch) and F.L. Decker was appointed. Next day, Arlington C. Lewis, the county clerk, was added to the committee.



Figure 2: Lake City Court House, built 1882, burned in 1944

The ground was graded in the summer of 1882. Thomas T. Caldwell, supervisor of Caldwell, died that year and Henry H. Long of Reeder succeeded him on the committee. John G. Mosser of Cadillac was the contractor.<sup>10</sup>

The building was erected in 1882, the committee making final report at the January 1883 session.<sup>11</sup> It was built nearer to the original estimate than most public buildings. The final figures were:

- Stone for walls \$279.18
- Laying wall \$208
- Plans \$40
- Lettering \$16

---

<sup>10</sup> (I, F.C.H., noting that Mr. Stout had failed to mention that the plans for that courthouse and also the Presbyterian Church were drawn by George Nelson of Norwich Township. I here record that which appeared at the time in the *Lake City Journal*.)

<sup>11</sup> The *Lake City Journal* of 20 February 1883 includes an illustration and narrative of the courthouse development.

- Contract \$7.50
- Surveying grounds \$3
- Paid Contractor \$9447
- Total: \$10,014.88

In October 1882, a petition was filed to organize a township under the name of *Missaukee*. Organization was granted, but the name was changed to *Lake*.

At this October session of the supervisors, the question of a county poor farm came up again, after having been ignored for several years. A committee was appointed to consider the matter, and [they] recommended a [second] committee be appointed to negotiate a purchase, but the report was tabled.

In April 1883, John Murray and Chas. Miller both appeared, each claiming to be the supervisor from West Branch. Miller had a certificate of election from the election inspectors, and Murray one from the township clerk. A motion to accept the report of the election inspectors' certificate was carried once, and then reconsidered. Finally, the certificate of the clerk was accepted, and Murray was seated. But at the next session of the board [likely October 1883], Sylvanus Siddal appeared in his stead, having been appointed by the town board.

#### *[Newspapers]*

In the summer of 1883<sup>12</sup>, H.N. McIntyre started a second newspaper in Lake City [called the *Leader*] in opposition to Ren Barker's *Journal*. Early the next spring [of 1884], fire destroyed the newspaper office and much of its plant. McIntyre bought the *Journal* [from Ren Barker] and consolidated the two, changing the name to the *New Era*. In 1887, the *Plain Dealer* and the *Republican* were both launched as new papers. The *Republican* and the *New Era* consolidated not long after, dropping the name *New Era*.<sup>13</sup> The *Plain Dealer* (first called the *Independent*) continued for nearly fifty years, and it was then sold to and consolidated with the *Republican*.<sup>14</sup>

#### **[1884]**

##### *[Jagt Murders]*

At a special session of the supervisors in March 1884, they appropriated \$1000 for investigation of the murder of an old couple named Jagt, who had been killed and their home near Vogel Center burned to conceal evidence of the crime. After many delays and a sensational trial, a man named Arnold, who ran a small hotel at Vogel Center, was convicted of the crime. The Jagts were supposed to have kept several

---

<sup>12</sup> Stout records this event as occurring in 1884, but the newspapers themselves show his memoir was off by a year.

<sup>13</sup> (At this point, I, F.C. Hirzel, wish to say that I have read and otherwise browsed through many volumes of the *Lake City Journal*, *Plain Dealer*, and *Republican* at irregular intervals beginning in about 1945 to last December 1963. I have never seen a copy of the *New Era* except as taken off the walls in an old house which I was wrecking in about 1945. [I saw] portions of three copies of that paper which were published, I believe, in about 1884. The fire at the *New Era* probably accounts for the missing files, which no doubt contained a lot of history of Lake City and Missaukee County, which now is for all time lost.)

<sup>14</sup> George Stout himself was behind the *Plain Dealer*. For more detail on newspaper history, see [http://dutchroot.com/uploads/1/0/7/5/107522547/earlymissaukeene newspapers\\_0.8.pdf](http://dutchroot.com/uploads/1/0/7/5/107522547/earlymissaukeene newspapers_0.8.pdf)

hundred dollars in their home. Arnold died many years later, protesting his innocence, and many people doubted if the right man had gone to prison.

### *[County Farm]*

In the spring of 1884, a committee to secure prices and terms for a county farm was appointed, composed of supervisors Porter, Shippy, and Siddal. In October [1884] the committee reported, recommending as first choice the John Breen farm in Forest at \$2000, [and as] second choice, C.L. Ostrander and Thos. Howe's farms in Reeder at \$3400. A new committee was appointed. James Cavanagh and George Wood joined in recommending as first choice the farm of Wm. Doyle in Reeder Township (now [circa 1941] part of the Potato Experimental Farm). And as a second choice, [they recommended] the present farm, then owned by M. Vanarsdale and Wm. Hayes, priced at \$2500. M.D. Richardson submitted a minority report recommending the farm in Pioneer then owned by B.C. Bonnell, later [owned] by Louis F. Pitz. The board turned down the Doyle and Bonnell farms and purchased the present farm.

In the summer of 1884, a new law firm, McClear & Gaffney, located in Lake City. McClear served one term as prosecuting attorney, then the firm dissolved, and McClear went to the Upper Peninsula. Gaffney stayed and became one of the prominent figures in Lake City and Missaukee County business and political life for many years, until he removed to Cadillac in 1910, and then still retained many interests here. He served Lake City as its president twelve times, and [he served] four terms as prosecuting attorney. And this in a county that was heavily Republican while he was a Democrat. He won a reputation as an attorney and was recognized as one of the best in Northern Michigan.

### **[1885-1886]**

At the October session of the supervisors in 1885, George W. Moore, supervisor of Reeder, called attention to the need for a new jail. No action was taken then, but in January following [of 1886], it was agreed to submit the question of bonding for \$5000 for a new jail. Vote resulted was Yes 462, No 291. Forest was the only one to vote heavily against it. In June [1886], a building committee was named, consisting of Porter, Moore, and Doyle of Caldwell. Contract was let to George E. Nelson. Total cost of the building [was] about \$6000.

[In June 1886, Milon Brass was murdered in his Norwich home by his wife and her lover, who fled to Petoskey.]<sup>15</sup>

Lake City was incorporated as a village in the winter of 1886-1887 by the supervisors. A.C. Lewis was the first president.

### **[1887]**

In April 1887, the superintendents of the poor urged the need for a new building on the [Poor] farm. Action [was] delayed for financial reasons. In October, a motion to raise \$2000 for a new building lost.

---

<sup>15</sup> Details are in Note Book 6 of the Hirzel collection, but the story is too long to recount here.

### *[Lumbering Struggles]*

In 1887, it was noted that the Haymarsh [lumber] drive went out (that is, it reached the Muskegon River) about May 1<sup>st</sup>. That was earlier than usual. The Clam got out about June 1<sup>st</sup>. Thayer Lumber Company had logs in Muskrat Lake that spring, which they rafted across the lake and had then loaded at the “slide” by Cody & Moore and hauled to the Clam River.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Hirzel comments: (At this point, since Mr. Stout has already several times mentioned the getting “out” of the log drives, and since I have been pretty well briefed on some of the parlance of river men and lumbermen on the meaning of getting drives “out”, and the possible consequences if they were not got out, I feel that some further information may be appreciated. I have received my information from such men as Lewis L. Torrent, residing in Muskegon, the only son left living of any of the big timber barons, whose father was John Torrent. Also, I have been advised by Mr. William J. Brinen, now several years dead.

All big lumber companies stated in their contracts with logging contractors--such as Cody & Moore, Watson Brothers, Dick Miller, Paul Lux, only to name a few--[that] they not only had to see the logs rolled into the smaller river and streams, but they must [also] see them safely afloat in the main Muskegon River, and Manistee [River], etc. From there on, a company known as a booming company took over and got the logs to the mills at Muskegon, etc. The stockholders of the booming company were made up of the large timber owners. The booming company, which was known as the Muskegon Booming Company, charged each lumberman whose logs they handled a set price per thousand feet of timber the booming company delivered to the mills.

A case where failure to get the logs into the main Muskegon River resulted disastrously to the Watson Brothers of near Falmouth in about the year 1887 was related to me about two years ago by one Mr. Koopman still living in Falmouth. This man is a son of Mr. John Koopman, who owned a grist mill, saw mill, and creamery at Falmouth, powered by water from Mr. Koopman’s dam on the Clam River at that place.

And incidentally, Mr. Koopman had a great deal of trouble with lumbermen holding back floods, which when released damaged Mr. Koopman’s dam. Mr. Koopman won in a court case and D.A. Blodgett had to pay Koopman a sum of money to defer his milling business for a term of years, until the lumberman could get his logs through to the river.

Now, [to continue] the story of the Watson Brothers, [they] were operating 12 miles of railroad which used wooden rails but was powered by two steam locomotives. It seems that a large lumberman gave a contract to the Watsons to harvest, and put into the Clam River, and to get into the Muskegon and “OUT” a large acreage of timber, work that would take several years to accomplish. The main trouble was that the big timber owner had overlooked the fact that he, or they as the case may have been, might be for some reason confronted with the necessity of curtailing logging or of stopping it for a time altogether.

This very thing happened when the lumber market became glutted with too much timber and what we know as “hard-times” (later called a “depression”) struck the lumbermen. They tried to get the Watsons to stop logging for a while, but they refused to do so, continuing to put logs into the rivers as fast as ever. So long as the Watsons could get their drives “out”, the timber owners had to saw them into lumber and pile it up, pay insurance on it when they couldn’t sell it at a profit.

Finally, Watsons, with millions of feet of logs on the banks of streams and small rivers, and winters of little snow and scarcity of rain, [found] the streams would not float them and the logs were “hung up” two years in succession. Watson had put the logs in against the wishes of the owners. Watsons [were] unable to get them “out,” [and] the owners of the logs--[logs] which were completely destroyed by rot--sued the Watson Brothers and completely ruined them. Not willing to stop logging for perhaps a year or two, and then not being able to get the “drive out,” was the undoing of the Watsons. The importance of getting “drives out” will now be taken up by resuming with Mr. Stout’s story after his mentioning [the] Thayer Lumber Company’s logs being loaded out of Muskrat Lake at the “slide” by Cody & Moore, who hauled them with their train to the Clam River. F.C.H.)



Figure 3: A Muskrat Lake & Clam River / Cody & Moore locomotive, the *DM Moore*

Some time prior to this, Cody & Moore, a partnership composed of Larry Cody and George W. Moore, held a contract from certain owners of pine timber mostly in Reeder Township and vicinity. [They] had built a logging railroad from Muskrat Lake, as it was still called, to the Clam River at a point known as the wide water, a couple miles upstream from Falmouth. Timber near the lake was cut and sleigh-hauled and banked on the ice of the lake in winter, and in summer, by means of what was called the “slide,” which consisted of endless chains running over pulleys and operated by a steam engine, the logs were lifted from the water and placed on cars to be hauled to the Clam River. They had timber also east of the lake, and this too went over the railroad to the river.

R.M Bielby and Edward and Matthew Malone drove the locomotives that hauled the logs on this road for years. One of these locomotives that hauled the logs can still be seen in Clinch Park in Traverse City.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Hirzel erases this sentence and notes “Thus erased is an error. The [engine] at Clinch Park was originally Port Huron & NW Railroad.” As of 2014, research by Steve Zuiderveen of Missaukee on this locomotive suggests the engine once in Clinch Park, known as the *DB Harrington*, (named for Daniel B Harrington, founder of Port Huron) was both, first a PH&NW and then a Muskrat Lake & Clam River (Cody & Moore) locomotive. Since then, it has also served at Cedar Point and Lake Erie amusement park railroad, the Henry Ford Museum, and then spent some time



Figure 4: The *DB Harrington* was built in 1878 and was originally owned by the Port Huron & Northwestern Railroad.

In June 1887, Herbert Fisher, a druggist then in Lake City, purchased 40 acres of land in Caldwell Township and platted North Lake City.

In this same month, the Ann Arbor railroad was being graded through what is now Lucas. It was then operating as far north as Mount Pleasant and reached Cadillac in December following. The village of Owens, now the city of McBain, was platted in September [1887], as was also what is now known as the village of Lucas, at first called Marysville.

It was reported in August [1887] that fire had destroyed the crossway or corduroy across the Clam River swamp, south of Lake City, and the road was closed. It was reopened soon afterward, but for years remained a sample of the worst road in Missaukee County.

Up to this time, eleven hours was a common day's work in sawmills and in most other occupations. A strike was reported at Jennings in the Mitchell mill and yards, asking for a ten-hour day. The request was granted as soon as the news reached the Mitchell office in Cadillac. Labor troubles as we know them now were undreamed of.

The following winter of 1887-1888 brought heavy snows and storms. Three feet of snow on the level was reported in the woods. The Ann Arbor [railroad], just being built, had distributed poles for a

---

at a restorationist in Ohio. As of 2014, it is in half-restored storage at the Port Huron Museum (Cf. [http://www.stclairfoundation.org/news/more/db\\_harrington](http://www.stclairfoundation.org/news/more/db_harrington)).

The ML&CL had two locomotives. The other is pictured here loaded with lumber, on the "wide spot" in the Clam River, also known as the Henderson Dam. The ML&CL, also known as Cody & Moore Lumber Co. railroad, basically followed the ditch line of Burkett Road from the Clam River to Jennings Road, and then arced over to the north side of Lake City to the log slide.

telegraph line, intending to complete it during the winter, but in January [they] abandoned it as hopeless, unable to find the poles in the snow. Railroads had plenty of trouble keeping trains moving.

### *[Fire Protection]*

Beginning early in 1887, Lake City people had become aroused to the danger from fire that threatened the town and began agitating for a water works system. But it was not until June 1888 that Daniel Reeder came to the aid of town and signed a contract to construct and operate a water system. It was too late to save many citizens from heavy losses.

On the night of July 4<sup>th</sup> [1888], fire was discovered under the outside stairway of a building owned and operated as a saloon by Martin Vanarsdale. The village was destitute of fire-fighting equipment of more than [a] purely volunteer pail brigade. The flames spread with little to check them and destroyed the entire principal business block on the east side of the street. [The fire] then jumped the street and took the Grand Central Hotel, a nearly new three-story brick-veneered structure, with two or three buildings north of it, besides Washington Reeder's residence south of the hotel across Prospect Street. It also wiped out a small store building [and] a dwelling owned by Washington and William Reeder, on the east side of Main Street, south of Prospect. The water works were completed and put into operation on the 19<sup>th</sup> of July.

While the losses fell heavily on individuals, the town as a whole was benefitted by the fire, since the buildings burned were largely replaced with brick. What were rebuilt as frame structures were later burned in another fire, in 1912, so that the whole block became more nearly fireproof and was immensely improved in appearance.

### **[1889]**

#### *[Confrontations: Poor farm, robbery, water rights]*

In October 1888, the supervisors voted to raise \$1000 towards the cost of a building on the county farm, with the Supervisors keeping control of the money. In April 1889, \$2500 was appropriated for the building and control placed in the hands of a building committee of Supervisors, consisting of Rumsey of Norwich, Danberry of Bloomfield, and Olmstead of Lake. This committee pointedly ignored the Superintendents of the Poor, and this was resented by the latter. The row broke into the open over a certain pile of lumber which the superintendents had in their control, which had been cut from timber on the farm. This lumber the Supervisors told the contractor he could use in building, but the Superintendents saw to it that he didn't get it. Then the Supervisors' committee preferred charges against the Superintendents of the Poor and summoned them to appear for trial before the whole board. The case collapsed when the committee of Supervisors all confessed under cross examination that they had never asked the Superintendents for the lumber. Superintendents at this time were C.L. Ostrander, Thomas McManus, and Martin Duffy. The building cost \$2975, plus \$326 for a furnace. The Superintendents then and since have criticized the plans of the building.

What was probably the only “holdup” robbery ever committed in Lake City occurred on May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1889.<sup>18</sup> Owen McGovern, proprietor of the hotel and saloon known as the Northern, had a large safe in the hotel barroom and was known to keep considerable sums of currency there. He had a habit of getting his money out of the safe every night after closing up and counting it under a strong light, in plain view of any passerby on the street. He had been warned of what might happen, and it did. Three men gained entrance through the back rooms and attacked him without warning, overpowered him, and got away with what was reported [to amount] to about \$1300. During the struggle, they fired a couple shots to intimidate him, but did little harm otherwise. The thieves were never captured.

In May 1889, trouble flared up over the outlet to Lake Missaukee. Cody and Moore were operating the “slide” camp near the outlet and were hauling logs to the Clam River. George W. Moore, a member of the firm, had [earlier] taken up a residence in Lake City and interested himself in local politics. At first he only asked for a justiceship, which would place him on the town board, but when refused a nomination by the local politicians, he seized an opportunity afforded him by swinging his heavy voting power of his employees for an independent ticket and elected himself supervisor. With this demonstration, the local politicians subsided, and he retained the office as long as he wished. This position gave him a chance to keep the town board quiet when, as sometimes happened, he desired to open the outlet and take [Muskrat Lake] water to run his drive out of the Clam [River]. For this purpose, the sandy ridge that kept the lake water from flowing into the pond that then formed the headwaters of Mosquito Creek had been cut through and closed again when the need for water had passed.

But now, Lake City had been organized as a village, and the village authorities had succeeded the township board in jurisdiction over the outlet. The village was perhaps feeling its new powers and dignity—and the village officers were not particularly friendly to Mr. Moore anyway. And so, when someone blew out the earthen dam with dynamite one night, the villagers were aroused. Under the direction of village president Howard Owens and the village council, with the blessing and co-operation of Sherriff Robert D. Barry, the outlet was closed with timbers and earth. A representative of Hovey & McCracken, owners of the timber Cody & Moore were lumbering under contract, appeared and ordered the villagers away, claiming they were trespassing on his land. They advised him to seek a warmer climate. He disappeared, but later a crew of 15 or 20 Swedes and Finns, who could not or would not understand English, appeared, armed with peavies and shovels, expressing by motions their desire to open the outlet. Demonstrations of force and threats of attack caused the foreigners to retire without coming to blows, and an armed guard was set. No further attempt to open it was made that year.

An amusing jail breaking occurred in July [1889]. A horse racing program was in progress at the fairgrounds, and Sherriff Barry, an enthusiastic horseman, was in attendance there. A workman, repairing some plumbing, had been given the keys of the jail, and he dropped them on the floor, not far from a cell door, and had forgotten them. Two prisoners, confined for some misdemeanor, were in the cells. Somehow, they got hold of a piece of wire, and after some fishing with it, they secured the keys

---

<sup>18</sup> This robbery was reported in the *Missaukee Independent* of 8 May 1889, page 1, as occurring Sunday night, May 5. The first robber, dressed as a lumberman, asked “Mac” for a cigar and paid with a ten-dollar bill, necessitating the opening of the safe for change.

and let themselves out. They went to the fairground and tried to get in at the gate to see the races. The gatemen refused them admission, since they had no ticket and no money. So, they went around to the back of the grounds and climbed the fence without molestation and watched the races. Just as the last race ended, a messenger notified Sherriff Barry his prisoners were missing. Just then the latter appeared, tendered the keys to Barry, and said they were ready to go back now.

In October [1889], work had begun on a two-story, four-room school building in Lake City, on the site of the present one [circa 1941]. The building [was] erected in 1889, [and] burned in 1904, [which is] when the south two-story section of the present building was built. The first school in the county was held at Vogel Center in 1872. The first schoolhouse in Lake City was built in 1873, on the site now occupied by Mrs. D.D. Walton's residence.

## [1890s]

### [1890]

In November 1889, it was announced that Louis Sands of Manistee had bought the pine lands in Missaukee County formerly owned by the Grand Rapids & Indiana railroad, and that a mill would be built in Lake City to manufacture the timber, and [that] Lake City would get a standard-gauge railroad.

Sometime [earlier] around 1884 or 1885, the Cummer Lumber Company of Cadillac had built a narrow-gauge (36-inch) railroad, primarily to haul logs to their mills in Cadillac, to the west shore of Lake Missaukee. They built a dock there, and began to carry passengers and freight, which they ferried across the lake on a small steamboat.

The following year [circa 1886], the road was completed to Lake City coming around the north side of the lake. Two passenger trains daily were placed in operation. Service was excellent, better passenger service than Lake City ever got from the Pennsylvania, but of course, the reloading at Cadillac of all freight, both ways, was an extra expense and a handicap to shippers. So, the town was anxious for a standard gauge road. Grading for the railroad began on December 10<sup>th</sup>, [1889] at the east end of John Street. On April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1890, the first train over what then was called the Grand Rapids & Indiana railroad reached Lake City.

Local dissention was reported over the high water in Lake Missaukee, some wanting to open the outlet and lower the lake, others opposing it. No definite policy was decided upon.

The census of 1890 gave the county a population of 5040, and the village 735. The September term of circuit court had 32 cases on the calendar. A surplus of attorneys was just passing, and that might have had something to do with the litigation. F.O. Gaffney had just returned from a year's experiment of practicing in Ionia. Three brothers named Turner (Jerome, Charles, and Willard) and a brother-in-law of theirs named Gates, also an attorney, [along] with C.P. Thomas, A.W. Scoville, and C.L. Goll, made up the members of the bar. A.G. Smith came the following year, but the Turners, Gage, Thomas, and Scoville had left before that.

### [1891]<sup>19</sup>

In 1891, there was considerable [damage] done by forest fires, not only in this county, but in many others, especially in Clare and Osceola, where trains were delayed several times.

A new law created the office of School Commissioner, and the Supervisors appointed Georgia Roche as the first commissioner. Previously, there had been an officer known as the secretary of the board of school examiners, with duties similar to the new office, but considerable added duties and power was given the new officer.

Mitchell Brothers' lumber yard in Jennings burned and the village was threatened but saved by favoring winds. Loss estimated at \$200,000.

The winter of 1891-1892<sup>20</sup> was mild, and practically no ice formed on lakes and streams south of this county. Grand Rapids Ice companies purchased and rented lake frontage, cut, shipped, and stored ice from Lake Missaukee. The business continued for several years until the manufacture of artificial ice caught up with the demand.

### [1892]

In March 1892, the G.R. & I. took over the mail carrying contract, and the Cummer road announced it would discontinue operations in few weeks.

In June [1892], Edd Lapham built a sawmill with a capacity of 40,000 feet per day and began operations at what is now known as Sunset Corners, where the Watson Brothers [had] before tried to tap Muskrat Lake to get water to float a drive down the Butterfield. The G.R. & I. built a [rail] branch east to near the Ellis Hill, to supply logs to the new mill. This branch was later extended to Falmouth.

1892 again brought forest fires that threatened damage many times. A train on Sands' logging road had a thrilling experience. With James Flynn as engineer and Jos. Middleton as fireman, they found themselves cut off by fire. The engineer decided to take a chance and run through the flames; [he] opened the throttle and let it go. Unfortunately, a tree had fallen across the track, derailing the engine and train. Engineer and fireman were thrown clear. Middleton was bruised and burned considerably, but Flynn escaped unhurt.

There were four teachers in the Lake City School in 1892, and the wages paid may interest present teachers. C.L. Goll, the Principal, received \$65 per month for nine months and each of the others received \$40 per month. Other teachers in the county were at least not paid more than those figures on the average.

---

<sup>19</sup> George Stout authored another history of Missaukee in his newspaper in 1892, called *The Story of a Year in Missaukee County*. It details the day-to-day events in Missaukee throughout the previous year, 1891.

<sup>20</sup> Stout wrote "1892-93," but that makes little sense. Given the context, 1891-1892 seems to be the intent. Since Mr. Stout is not always chronological in his listing of stories, it could be 1892-1893, but he references that winter separately below where it would be expected, and he describes it as having deep snow.

## [1893]

In 1893, agitation began advocating placing the county under the newly authorized county road system. First mention of a snowplow in Lake City was made in a newspaper, but it was built of wood and drawn by oxen.

The winter of 1892-1893 brought deep snow and drifts. In March [1893], residents of Jennings had to drive by way of Lake City to reach Cadillac. The road from Jennings to Lake City then came around the north side of the two lakes and was well protected by timber from drifts. The road from Lake City to Cadillac ran through timber not yet cut over, for the most part, while the road from Jennings to Cadillac was across cut-over land and drifts were high.

In 1893, McBain was incorporated as a village. Gillis McBain was the first president.

Water in Lake Missaukee was high and continued to rise through April and May. All the smaller lakes north and west were spilling over their banks and draining into Lake Missaukee. Water was threatening to put out the fires in the boiler room at the water works and at Sands' mill; cellars on Main Street were filling with water, and the village council was appealed to for some action. The village attorney informed the council that [their] body had power to declare a water nuisance and open the outlet, but it had no power to spend money for the building of a closed fume or covered drain to carry the water through Sands' lumber yard, and Sands refused to allow the open channel for water across his property. Daniel Reeder began suit against Louis Sands, claiming damages from the high water and alleging that there had been an open stream from the outlet for years until Sands filled up the channel. Sands and the council finally reached an agreement, [with] Sands furnishing the lumber for culverts under the railroad and permitting an open ditch elsewhere.

### *[Sands' camp forest fire tragedy]*

On Saturday, May 20, 1893, occurred the worst forest fire tragedy in the history of the county, when ten employees of the Sands Lumber Company lost their lives. What was known as Sands Camp 4, situated near the south line of Section 11, Forest Township, and fifty or sixty rods east of the west line, burned. The southwest quarter of this section had been cut over during the winter preceding, and the tops of branches of pine trees nearly covered the ground. These were now dry, full of pitch, and burned rapidly. A forest fire had been burning over cutover lands north and west of this section, but no attention was paid to it as it was nothing new and rarely endangered life or property. On this particular day, a high wind sprang up and fanned the flames, which bore down on the doomed camp, at a speed as fast as a horse would travel. The logging railroad track passed close to the camp shanties, and an engine and train of cars being loaded with logs was east of the camp. When the fire came, the train and most of the crew took refuge in the uncut timber, east of the camp. Fire would not run far in standing timber. From accounts of the survivors, a local reporter compiled the following account of what followed:

To understand the situation of the men, the location of the camp must be borne in mind. It stood beside the railway, well to the west side of section line 11. To the north was a strip of nearly half a mile wide country covered with pine tops which burn like powder when dry, as these were. On the east it was about the same. On the south it varied in width, but [it] averaged less than on the north and east. On

the west it was about forty rods wide, ending at the wagon road. West on the wagon road was an old cutting which had been burned over before and had little fuel left to feed a fire. On this side, most of those got out who escaped from the fire zone, although fire came from this direction.

After dinner Saturday, the men started to work as usual, the fire being then some distance to the northwest. Before all of them had got to their work, foreman Campbell called some of them back to help fight the fire. The fight was soon seen to be a hopeless one, and some proceeded to save themselves, and advised the rest to go too. Some stayed on, still trying to save some of the property. Of these, everyone died while trying to do what they thought was their duty.

Edward Sullivan, a man with a wooden leg, took the alarm about this time, and (draping himself with a wet horse blanket), he started west. He doesn't know, but he probably followed the railroad. He fell several times, was burned considerably, but reached the wagon road and safety. He saw Mulholland fall behind him, but was unable to help him. David Rubel escaped by way of the railroad, and also saw Mulholland fall. Had he known that safety was as near as it proved to be, he might have saved the other man. When Sullivan left camp, he met foreman Campbell and asked him to come along, but the latter said no, he was going to save the books. A man named Cleveland mounted one of a team of horses, made a run for it and escaped. He was probably the last man to see any of the dead men alive. He invited Campbell to mount the other horse, but Campbell said he preferred taking [his] chances in the well.

From what remains of the root cellar and the well, it is believed that four and perhaps six of the victims took refuge in the root cellar, and when driven from there by the heat and smoke, in desperation, jumped into the well. The others were already there, thinking to escape in this way. The well was an open one, about 25 feet deep altogether, with about three feet of water in the bottom. It was about four feet square, curbed with boards, and had a roof and pulley at the top. When the whole eight who were found there got in, they were packed in like sardines. One was under foot of the rest, and the other seven were all out of water except their legs. It was believed they died of suffocation, and what burns they had were mostly inflicted after death, as the well roof and upper curbing burned and fell in on them.

Besides those found in the well, Mike Mulholland, teamster, was found west of the camp, near the wagon road. Another man, Edward Rorabacher, fled east. His body, nearly consumed, was about eighty rods east of the camp, about halfway to safety. The eight in the well were:

- Samuel Campbell, foreman. Lived in Cadillac with his mother, unmarried
- Fred Sager, sawyer. Father and brothers near Howard City
- Hans Jacobsen, a Dane, camp blacksmith. With his wife and two children lived in Sandstown (Since then within the corporate limits of Lake City)
- Frank Sandgren, choreboy. Little known about him
- Mike Ghagen, filer. Has a sister in Maple Valley
- Charles Taylor, cook. Lived in Cadillac, married
- James Hugh, outside choreboy, Mother at Elk Rapids

- John Hill, swamper. Been in USA about a year, family in Finland
- Rorabacher was the carpenter, found east of camp; relatives were located later, but were unknown when this account was written.
- Of Mulholland, a teamster, little was known, then or ever.

All known relatives were notified. Four bodies, besides that of Jacobsen, a local resident, were not claimed, and [they] were buried side by side in the old cemetery after an impressive funeral, with the entire population of the village plus employees of the Sands Lumber Company as mourners.

The same day [of the fire], the village of Falmouth had a narrow escape. A change in the wind saved the town after a couple dwellings had burned.

### [1894]

Main Street of Lake City was graveled in the spring of 1894, perhaps the first real gravelling job of any size in the county.

On May 7, 1894, the village of McBain had a close call from fire. Several buildings on the west side of the main street burned, and only a hard fight and exceptional width of the street saved the other side.

In August [1894], more forest fires were reported. The train from Lake City to Cadillac was halted at Round Lake by fire and had to return for help to get through.

The original Bell patents expired this year, and independent lines began to appear. One of the first in northern Michigan was built from Stittsville, via Pioneer and Morey, to Lake City, in the fall of 1894.

In September [1894], two wooden bridges in Reeder Township burned.

### [1895]

#### *[Fires]*

In 1895, fires continued to do much damage. Moorestown was swept by a forest fire that left only two buildings, the church and the Godfrey Hirzel residence.<sup>21</sup> Several sawmills around the county were burned. Citizens of McBain were badly frightened, as they had only an old hand-pumper fire engine for protection, and a water system was planned for the future.

A local paper said [on] July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1895, "Some excitement in town Sunday. One funeral, five fights, and one runaway."

---

<sup>21</sup> Fred Hirzel adds details: The Moorestown fire occurred on Monday, June 10, 1895. Sixteen buildings, including the J. Henry Moore's sawmill, barns, warehouses, residences, and the Hirzel store, [all burned]. Mr. Hirzel was severely burned after going into the store to lock a safe and remove the cash drawer from a counter. Sixteen large hogs perished; board fences surrounding the 110-acre farm were burned as was the turf from the ground to depths of four to five inches. No rain had fallen for weeks. The fire was caused by a fire in the forest adjoining the village, forty rods to the west. A forest of hardwood timber was up against the north edge of the village. Timber had been cleared off land to the south and to the east and the land was being farmed. Had the village been surrounded by timber, the residents would most surely have also perished. This additional information has been added by Fred C. Hirzel, son of Godfrey Hirzel, Fred being past 10 years at the time of this fire.

### *[Smalley Robbery-Murder Case]*

In August 1895, the county in general was much excited over the "Smalley Case." A Grand Rapids detective boarded a GR&I train in that city, seeking a train robber who had held up and robbed a train on the Lake Shore road [in Fennville] a short time before. As he entered the last car, a man arose near the door and began shooting; [he] killed the detective and escaped. A man supposed to be the robber was located in McBain. Sherriff Tennant was out of town. Former Sherriff Gillis McBain, now a deputy, reinforced by Deputy Sherriff Spafford of Cadillac, both armed with rifles, went to the house where Smalley was reported, [and] found him sitting just inside the door with the door partly opened. The officers called for him to surrender, but his only reply was to kick the door shut. Both officers fired through the door. A woman and a couple of men ran out the back door, but no Smalley, and no sound from inside. After a while the officers entered the house and found him dead. He had two heavy revolvers on him, both loaded. The body was positively identified as the man wanted by policemen from Grand Rapids and by other persons. Some people tried to throw doubt on the identification, but there appeared little reason for their claims.

In October 1895, the township of Butterfield was organized. At the session of the supervisors which gave the new town existence, the question of adopting the county road system was first proposed, and action postponed until January. A motion to submit the question to the voters lost, 7 to 6.

### **[1896]**

Lapham's sawmill finished its cut in 1896, and was wrecked.

On July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1896, Sands' mill cut its last log, and was wrecked and removed soon afterward. The payroll from this mill and yard, while in operation, was said to have been about \$2000 per month, which is about half the present [circa 1941] payroll of the county road commission,<sup>22</sup> which employs less than half as many men. Wages were \$1.25 to \$1.50 per day for common labor. Highest pay, to skilled men who worked in the mill, was \$4.00 per day, and there were only five such employees.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Stout was a Missaukee County Road Commissioner for a number of years through the 1930s.

<sup>23</sup> Hirzel comments that he believes Stout is exaggerating the historical wages given low retail prices of lumber, as he demonstrates below at length.

(At this point, I, Fred C. Hirzel, feel that since Mr. George Stout's comparison with wages paid in 1890-1896 with wages paid presumably in 1917 [1941], at which time he wrote this history, [is an unfair comparison]. We need to consider that though the standard of living has risen a great deal from 1890 to 1917 [1941], we should consider that Mr. Sands--or nobody else lumbering or whatever business he was in--was not getting for his product what is being paid, often times for a somewhat inferior article, today.

In the *Lake City Journal* of Jul 25, 1877, Daniel & William Reeder of lake City, owning a sawmill there, were advertising to sell dry pine lumber at retail; 2x4s and up to 2x10s at \$6.00 and \$3.00 per thousand feet if taken in 2000-foot quantities. One thousand feet would be sold at \$6.50 to \$9.00. In lesser amounts than 1000 feet, the price would be \$10 per [thousand] feet. If the Reederes were selling that lumber at wholesale and by the carload, it would have brought still less. I have no idea that Mr. Sands got more than \$10.00 per thousand feet for his lumber delivered aboard the cars at Lake City. In fact, my father in 1897 sold rough hemlock lumber to a Cadillac dealer, who sent a lumber inspector to Moorestown to grade the lumber. He accepted only the very best and paid my father \$5.00 per thousand feet delivered and loaded aboard cars at Stratford, 4.5 miles from Moorestown. The \$5.00 was just \$2.00 more than charged by the sawmill operator who cut the lumber.

On July 15, [1896,] it was reported that the lake had reached a low level, and had dropped five inches in the past two weeks.

In May of this year (1896), Grice Brothers contracted to and began the construction of a grist mill in Lake City.

### [1900s]

In May of 1900, construction of a full-sized basement under the courthouse was ordered by the supervisors, and completed at a cost of \$298.63. A heating plant was installed some years later.

In October 1901, on motion by Supervisor Servis of Lake, the county road system was submitted to the voters at the following April election, the vote standing 10 to 3. The voters approved, figures not available. Three [road] commissioners were to be elected in November, and this was done. Apparently, the supervisors didn't like the commissioners chosen or disapproved something they did. At any rate, the matter was resubmitted to the voters, and they voted the system out in April 1903.

### [Smallpox]

In 1902, smallpox broke out in some lumber camps and spread to some extent, so that cases appeared in McBain and Lake City too. It was two or three years before the county was entirely cleared of the disease. Only one or two deaths occurred.<sup>24</sup>

---

Another proof of low prices for lumber was told to me in 1938, by the late Mr. William J. Brinen, of Muskegon, a former member of the Thayer Lumber Company. Mr. Brinen said that until just prior to their finishing the harvest of the last of their pine timber in Missaukee and Kalkaska counties, did they ever get so much as \$25.00 per thousand delivered to Chicago. Today in 1964, that same lumber would be worth several times \$25.00.

It also strikes me that Mr. Stout was speaking more than conservatively when he wrote of the pay of men other than skilled workmen, getting \$1.25 to \$1.50 a day. They certainly didn't get that much in the 1890s. In the woods, they got their meals and a bunk to sleep in and a per month wage. There are articles of news items in the old *Lake City Journal* when wages were raised from \$12.00 to \$15.00 per month, and even that was considered something wonderful. And mind you, they worked 10 hours per day, and they really worked. But if a man lived close enough to the camp, had a family and could walk to and from work, he could get a little more wage. At the same time, he could buy dressed hogs at 5 cents per pound, beef at \$0.70 per half a carcass, overalls at \$0.50 per pair, good shoes at \$2.00 per pair, beef steak at 3 pounds for \$0.25, 6 packages of so-called "scrap" tobacco, or 6 good cigars, for \$0.25 and all other commodities accordingly.

My father operated a general store at Moorestown from 1892 to 1908, and I still have the account books. At times when I have told of wages and prices of past years, someone would occasionally ask, "Yeh, but who had the twenty-five cents to buy that three pounds of beef steak?" To that one, I, who worked in my father's store, feel that I am qualified to counter with, "More men went home with six pounds of beef steak then, on a Saturday evening, to provide a big Sunday dinner, than goes home now with six pounds of beef steak in a whole week." The final analysis of this matter of comparing wages paid in the 1890s with those paid in 1917 [1941], to say nothing of including 1964 against the 1900s, proves nothing at all, unless it [is] that the dollar now [in 1964], as compared with the dollar then, isn't worth very much. In the 1900s, the dollar was at least worth 100 cents. F.C.H.)

<sup>24</sup> (I, Fred Hirzel, knows something about this small pox. We have records of provisions sold to pest houses, one of which was established on the Modi farm, three miles east of Moorestown. At one time, something like 20 men were confined in that place. The disease was especially present in the camp [of the] Maltby Lumber Company of Bay City, who were lumbering in Norwich Township, [on] the Dead Stream swamp. As Mr. Stout said, "only one or two deaths occurred." But some of the victims were terribly sick. The crude manner of not taking proper preventative measures, in today's terms of thinking, was appalling. I know a man, still living in Lansing, who, with

### [various events: missing boy, autos & electricity]

In May 1902, Missaukee County had a mystery disappearance, which was never solved. Little Joey Heath, a lad of 11 years, left school at Turnerville for his home a mile west and a half mile south, on well-traveled roads, and was never seen again by his friends. Hundreds of men searched the surrounding country for days, without finding a trace.

In 1903, the township of Enterprise was set off from West Branch. In October of that year, the east half of Clam Union, once known as Bradford, asked to be made a township again, under the name of "White." Request denied.

It was the year of 1903 that the first automobile reached this county. It used steam for power, and its driver, a traveling salesman named William Richon of Cleveland, Ohio, reported he could make about ten miles per hour over all kinds of roads.

As the year 1904 closed, the first electric lighting plant was placed in operation in the county. It was owned by C.L. Ostrander and was operated in connection with the water works. Up to this time, the courthouse and the jail had been heated by stoves. In 1905, an attempt was made to get the supervisors to purchase a heating plant, but it was defeated, and a long controversy followed. But it was not until April 1913 that a contract was let at \$1600.

In 1905, F.O. Gaffney was elected for his 13<sup>th</sup> term as President of Lake City, and [he thereafter] declined re-election. He had never been defeated, and that was a record for Lake City politics in those days. He served first in 1890. Then in 1894, he was again elected and re-elected each year thereafter up to and including 1902-1905. In 1906, F.O. Gaffney moved to Cadillac, where he had opened a law office some

---

smallpox, not at the time so diagnosed, boarded a train at Stratford, changed to another at Kalkaska, and went to a doctor in Cadillac who locked him in his office until the next morning, put him aboard the Ann Arbor train, and sent him to Clare at which place he boarded a Pere Marquette train and went to his parents' home in Harrison. And that, too, was in a day when passenger coaches were usually well patronized. Had the disease been of the more serious type, the population of a rather large area would no doubt have been pretty well peppered.

At this point I have decided to see what record I might find concerning the epidemic of the year of 1902 only. In a Norwich township record book, page 242, I find the names and home addresses of 20 men and the dates of their entering the pest house on the T.J. Modi farm. The 28 men entered from October 28, 1901, to February 22, 1902, and were discharged from November 8, 1901 to March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1902. Please note that the disease really started in the fall of 1901.

And though as Mr. Stout said, probably not more than a couple of men died of the disease, and I don't think they died in this vicinity. I do know of two men who had a very bad time and both came near to death. One of the men was a lumberjack whose name I once knew but cannot at the moment recall. He was of dark complexion and though he survived, he came out so badly scarred that even those who knew him well could scarcely recognize him ever afterward. Another whose name I do know and with whom I was well acquainted, and who I believe is still living in Flint, had a very bad time and a close communion with death. At that time, veterans of the Spanish-American War were fairly plentiful around here. Some of the soldiers had contracted what, at least the soldiers called, "the Cuban Itch". The man of which I write had not served in that war and hadn't contracted the disease, then on the rounds about here. He is known to have put one foot upon the hub of a friend's buggy and scornfully pronounced that he endured and survived, and in so far as he was concerned, whatever it was he said, he wouldn't care to experience another attack of the same.)

time before. He served the county [of Missaukee] as prosecuting attorney six terms, having been elected in 1886-1888, 1890, 1898, 1900, and 1902.<sup>25</sup>

McBain was incorporated as a city in 1907, and Johnson Wood appeared as the first supervisor from the first city organization in the county.

### **[County Roads]**

In October 1907, the county road system was again submitted to the voters. The latter approved in April. [The] first [road] commission appointed was composed of Abe Lucas, C.C. Crane, and R.R. Hoover. One mill was voted for [funding] roads, to produce \$2162. In April 1910, the supervisors again submitted the system to a vote, and again the voters turned it down.

In January 1911, the supervisors again submitted the system to a vote, and the voters said “yes.” Wm. Keelean, Martin Iverson, and Johnson Wood were named as the first [road] commission, and apparently won approval from supervisors and voters, as there has never been any serious attempt made since then to change it, although progress seemed slow for a long a time. There were so many bad roads and so little money. All sections wanted their roads first. Local jealousies flared and were hard to satisfy.

Presently, the state began to offer bonuses for the construction of gravel roads, and what was to be the state trunk line system was beginning to assume form as a possibility of the future. To get it started, double bonuses were offered for work done on any proposed trunk line route. The local commission seized on this plan, succeeded in getting several roads designated as trunk lines, and devoted attention to those to secure the added state money. The plan worked well, and it was not long until sufficient progress had been made to convince doubters that the county system would bring good roads, better than any township efforts could possibly do. Later, the state took over all the trunk lines, and the county began a system of county highways carrying the largest traffic, connecting up with the trunk lines. Then, in 1931, a new law provided the counties should take over all the township roads within five years. This is the system under which we now operate.

In 1911, when the county road system finally became operative, there was not a mile of what we would now call improved road in the county. In 1941,<sup>26</sup> there were very few farms in the county that were not reached by a well-graded, well-drained road, and few that were not reached by a graveled road.

### **[Temperance]**

In 1908, the question of local option as a temperance measure first appeared before the supervisors in January and was submitted to a vote in April. To the surprise of many, the voters said “dry,” 1153 to 828 “wet.” Two years later, in the fall of 1910, a second vote was taken. At the first trial [in 1908], the politicians were very cagey, for the most part, and avoided committing themselves; but when cornered, [they] usually guessed the vote would be “wet.” Now, in 1910, they thought they knew the county was dry and made themselves conspicuous on that side. The vote was “dry” 983, “wet” 953, and the politicians were shocked. In 1912, another vote was taken, and the wise guys thought it would be “wet”

---

<sup>25</sup> (Of course, Mr. Stout means that Mr. Gaffney served these terms for Missaukee County. F.C.H.)

<sup>26</sup> This is the latest date Stout mentions in this history, thus the work was completed no earlier than 1941.

this time, surely. Result: “dry” 1153, “wet” 789. Now what could a poor politician do? State prohibition followed a couple years later.

In January 1914, what had once been the township of Bradford again asked to be organized as a township. In spite of some opposition, the application was approved, and the township named Holland. In spite of the fact that the federal government, about 1885, required title to more than half of this township under the plea that it was “sub-marginal” land and not suitable for agriculture, the township appears to be getting along as well as its neighbors.

In October 1916, the supervisors first authorized the employment of a county farm agent, and in March 1917, H. Lee Barman took over the position.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> Stout’s history ends abruptly; perhaps he had hoped to continue adding material.

Hirzel adds closing remarks: (Thus here ends the copying of the history [of] Missaukee County for the years 1871 through 1917, as written by Mr. George Stout of Lake City, now for some years deceased [Stout died in 1950]. This [transcript] having been copied by Fred C. Hirzel, who knew Mr. Stout for many years, during which time he was owner and editor of one of our two county weekly newspapers. Mr. Stout was also a son of one of Missaukee County pioneer families, his father being Abraham Stout, who, as George Stout told me, built his house out of logs in a wilderness, his only tools being a cross-cut saw, axe, broad-axe, draw-shave, and a pocket jack-knife, with which sort of tools they built not only the house and barn, but also the major portion of the furniture.

I only care to further add that I have in no manner altered Mr. Stout’s writings. And since I have copied history only for the benefit of my family, close relatives, and a few close friends, I have added bits of information and historical matter, all of which can be documented.

I am not one of Norwich Township’s “pioneers,” but I am the oldest resident of the township who was born here. After reading old newspaper files at various times, over a period of more than twenty years, the man whose name dates back the farthest is that of one William Barkley, who was hauling grain to a grist mill at Cadillac with two teams of oxen hitched to his wagon—grain to have ground into flour for bread and pancakes and also corn meal. And Mr. Barkley was petitioning for the construction of [a] road to pass on the section line in front of his farm home in 1871. This was fourteen years before I was born. But at that time, I do not believe that more than ten per cent of the timber had been cut down in the township. And in those days, the harvesting of the timber was generally referred to as “letting daylight into the swamp.”

Of course, I am not regarding myself as being possessed of any degree of literary perfection, but I do wish to say that the pen corrections in these pages [of Hirzel’s typed transcription of Stout’s history] were made by me. And that is not saying that I don’t make mistakes. And in fact, I can’t spell and I can’t punctuate. The only punctuation mark that I do understand the meaning of is the “period.” When speaking, I use that when I run out of breath. Strictly speaking, I really don’t know very much, but I have managed to get by, for almost eighty years.

I am, sincerely, [signed] Fred C. Hirzel, born in Norwich Township, T24N,R6W, near the west edge of section 26. Which is to say, one mile south of Moorestown Methodist Church, thence west one half-mile thence about 40 rods, one 1/8 of a mile south.

©2022 Steven Koster [steven@dutchroot.com](mailto:steven@dutchroot.com)