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THE LOWELL LEDGER

SECTION B

July 4, 1968

Opposition Helped Launch Ledger in 1893

In the colorful days before the turn of the century, Lowell got its second newspaper when Frank Marcus Johnson and his wife, Myrtilla, came to town.

The Johnsons had published a paper in Mayville when they were urged by a group of area Republicans to come to Lowell.

In the so-called "good-old-days," newspapers in a small community were the only means of mass communication. The other paper in Lowell was supporting the Democrats and, so the Republican leaders sponsored the birth of the Lowell Ledger.

Johnson had only a few hundred dollars worth of hand type and an old George Washington handpress, but with the aid of his friends, managed to succeed.

The editors of the two newspapers were bitter enemies and looked for chances to knife their opponents.

One such opportunity came when short, round little Uncle Marcus was attacked by a dog on Main St. and he fought off the dog with a park bench. The Journal editor, J. M. Hutchinson, came out with the story making Johnson look like a dog-hater.

In the next issue of the Ledger, Johnson replied with the opinion that dog lovers must be a little mad. The Journal reply to that was to attack Johnson's great love for squirrels as proof that he must be nuts. Readers almost had to buy both papers to keep up with the constant exchange.

Editors as well as citizens took strong stands in political and civic affairs and many irate readers who did not approve the writers' stories would come in to take a poke at the editor. Uncle Marcus did a little planning ahead and kept a baseball bat standing in the corner by his desk.

In June of 1930, R.G. Jefferies bought the Ledger from Johnson. On the trip to town to sign the papers, Jefferies was accompanied by his good friends, former Secretary of State Coleman Vaughn and Schylur Marshall, editor of the St. Johns paper. After the signing, as the group started out of town and were stopped by motorcycle officer Bill DeLaney for speeding, they tried to impress the officer with their new purchase, but were given a summons.

Soon after Jefferies took over the Ledger came the "big depression" and money became scarce. Barter became a way of life; the Ledger editor exchanged advertising for groceries and took in wood and maple syrup on subscriptions.

In 1932, people woke up one morning to find all the banks closed and most with no cash with which to do business. The Ledger presses were put to work printing scrip which was used to pay school teachers and was passed freely around town.

Rem Jefferies suffered the misfortune of losing his sight in 1936, but he still continued to write by dictating his stories. He kept up with the news of the community with the help of his many friends.

At this time, his son, Harold, began to do the outside work of the paper, visiting advertisers, attending council meetings and running down breaking news. The father and son team with wife and mother, Frances Jefferies, operated the paper until 1947 when severe illness prevented the elder Jefferies from going to the newspaper office.

Rem Jefferies died in 1951 and Harold Jefferies continued the operation of the paper and expanded the operation to include Suburban Life in 1955.

The Ledger has now been passed along to the third family in its 75 year history. The Fran Smith family now has its opportunity to enjoy the privileges and the problems . . . of the Fourth Estate.

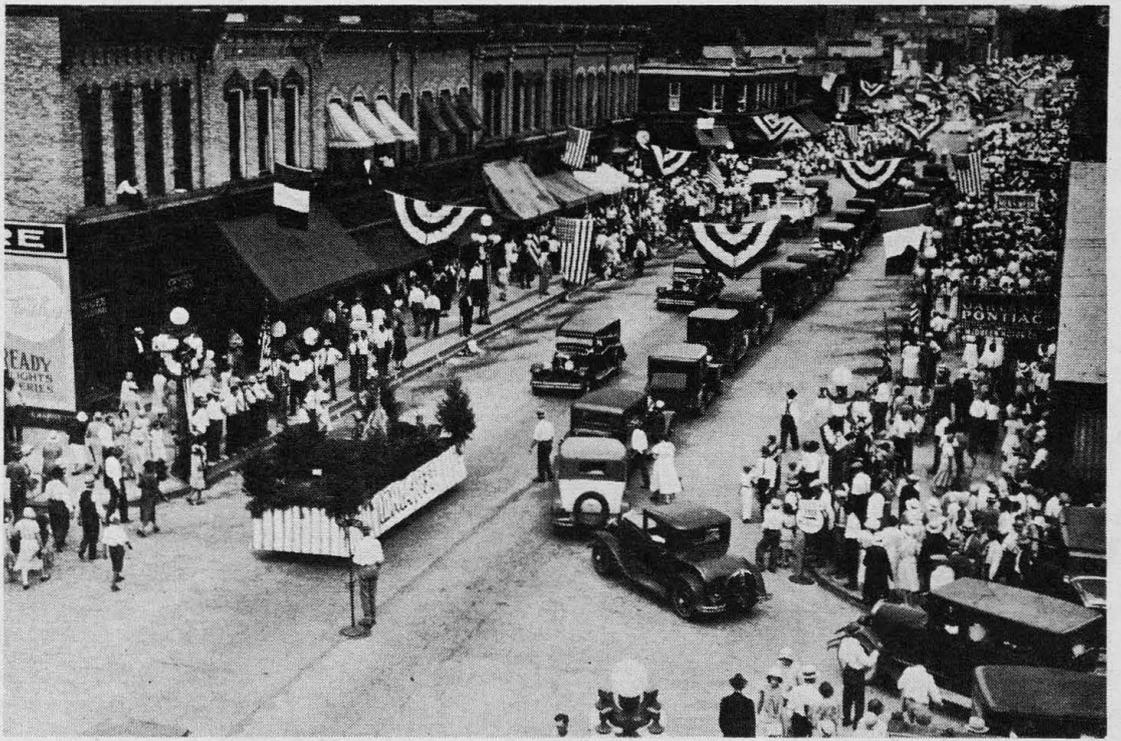
'Uncle Marcus' Hated Booze

"Uncle Marcus" Johnson, the Ledger's founder, was an ardent Prohibitionist.

Oldtimers, however, recall that Uncle Marcus—while vehemently "agin" advertisements for booze—eagerly accepted ads for patent medicines, which contained undisclosed amounts of alcohol.

The first chair used by the first interlocutor of the Lowell Showboat is still around . . . in the Ledger office.

Lowell, after 100 years as a village, became a city in 1960. Results of the census that year showed the new city's population to be 2,545



ONE OF THE BIGGEST stories in Lowell history was the 1931 Centennial Celebration, shown above on the day of the big parade.

Today's scene shows not much structural change in the buildings along the street . . . but some have disappeared by fire or razing.

Once It Was The 'Star'

George S. Spafford, upon learning that a meteor was to appear over the Grand River Valley on Sept. 12, 1860, concluded there couldn't be a better day to start publication of his Lowell "Star," this community's first newspaper.

The Star's course following Volume One, Number One is lost to history. It's likely, however, that somewhere along the line it was merged into the Lowell Journal, which was established in 1865.

The Journal continued to publish in competition with the Ledger when the latter was established in 1893, but in 1936, the Journal was merged into the Ledger. Earlier, in 1917, the Alto Solo—established in 1904—was consolidated with the Ledger.

The Star's beginning signaled the start of 108 years of newspapers in Lowell.

Spafford boasted in his first edition of the Star that it would be "Independent, Not Neutral" and for a time this motto also was used by the Ledger.

Spafford lived up to his creed. The four-page Star listed candidates of both parties for the presidency in 1860—Abraham Lincoln, a Republican, and Stephen A. Douglas, a Democrat.

"We have established our paper on the eve of a powerful struggle," Spafford wrote in forecasting the Civil War that was to follow.

The "independent" stance was taken, he said, because it

"purports we are willing to work for any party or sect that will remunerate our labor."

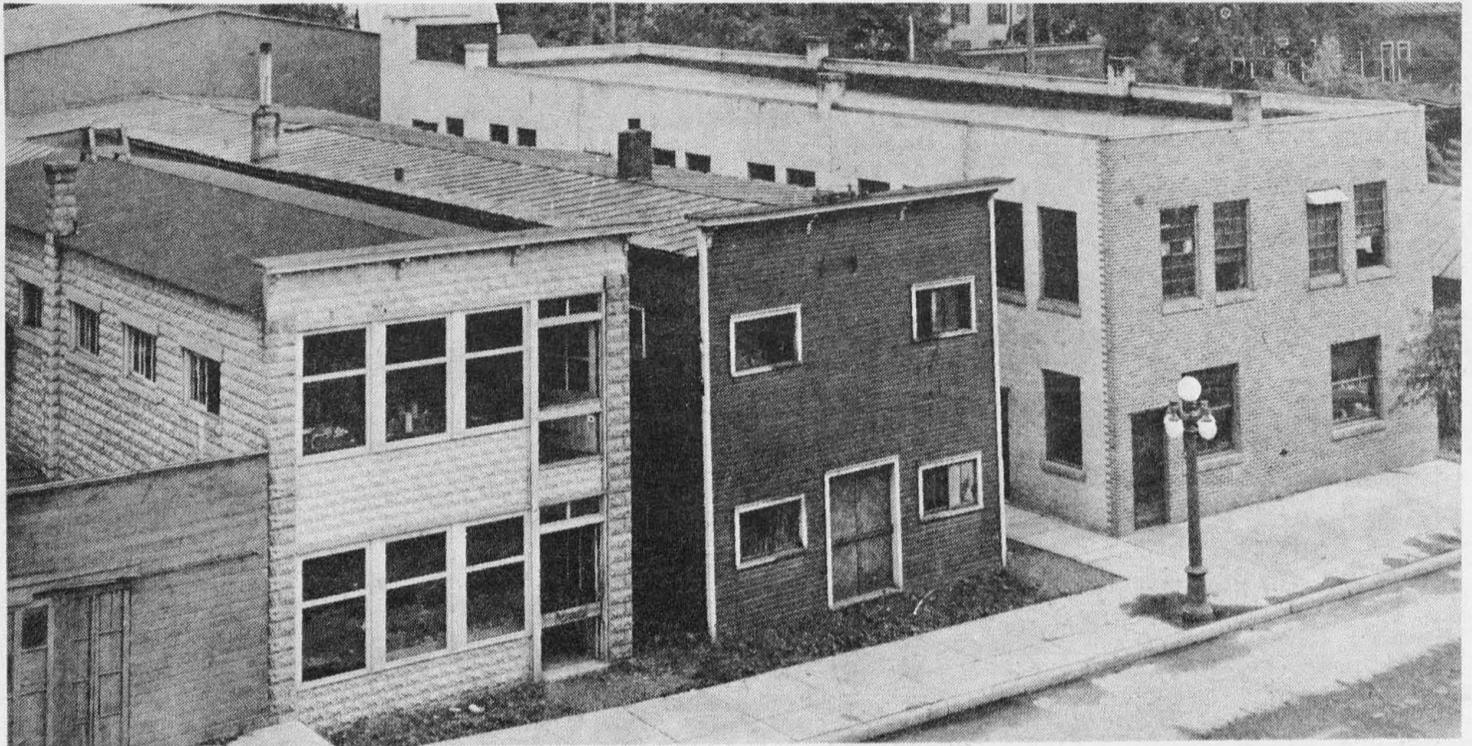
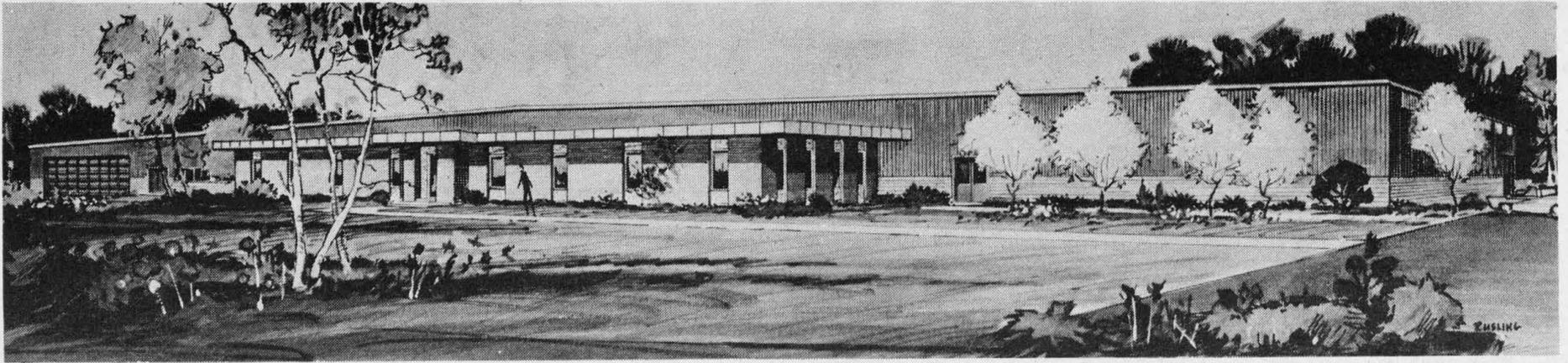
Spafford also promised his readers (the first press run was 700 copies versus the 5,200 subscribers of today's Ledger-Suburban Life) "a faithful record of all local, county, State and foreign news." Somehow the eager new editor failed to mention he'd also cover "national" news.

Unlike today's newspaper, The Lowell Star did not carry a line of real "news" on page one. Instead most of the page was consumed by a short story about virtues of honesty. Also included were such vignettes as these:

(Continued on Page 12)

75th Anniversary Edition

Company's Growth Reflected in Newspaper



FEW COMPANIES in Lowell claim a longer history than Root-Lowell Manufacturing, which has occupied quarters at Main and Hudson for most of the life span of the Ledger.

All that will be changed when the company moves into its new building next December.



This ad, taken from an early file, depicts a cream separator...one of the many products manufactured by Root-Lowell and its predecessor companies.

Almost from the time of the inception of the Lowell Ledger, it has chronicled the growth of a company that has made the name of Lowell famous throughout the world.

plant manager Roger Roberts, the company has consistently contributed newsworthy events to Lowell and the Ledger.

That company is Root-Lowell Corporation, which just last week contributed the major story on the Ledger's front page with the announcement of a new \$1,000,000 manufacturing facility.

It took three votes before voters approved a new high school in Lowell on January 29, 1915. (This same building is now the junior high school).

The company first made news when it was just a one room shop owned by C. W. Parks.

Charles Doyle scared a few horses and frightened some bystanders in 1910 as he drove down Main Street in a Model 10 Buick, a curiosity as Lowell's first factory-produced automobile.

Parks invented a product called a potato sprayer, the first in a long line of inventions to aid the farmer in the control of pests.

In 1905, the company once again made a newsworthy move with its incorporation into the Lowell Specialty Co. and the expansion of its facilities into new and larger quarters.

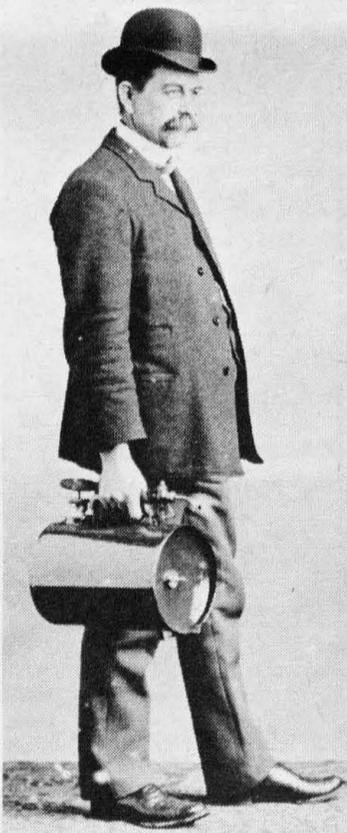
Through the years, the company sponsored or originated many new products, and was often mentioned on the pages of the Ledger.

With the sale in 1928 of the company to H. D. Hudson Manufacturing of Chicago, the rapidly growing corporation was front page material.

In 1953, it made the headlines again with its merger with the Root Manufacturing Company of Malta, Ohio, and became known as the Root-Lowell Company.

The merger gave Root-Lowell complete coverage in the sprayer and duster field, and a business that has dealings on five continents and in 32 countries.

Under the leadership of President R. F. Brush and



When C. W. Sparks invented a sprayer to help farmers in this area, he set the wheels in motion for an industry that has been a mainstay in Lowell during most of the Ledger's 75 years.

The Tuxedo, or English dinner jacket, was named after the American summer resort. It was used for stag affairs, for home dinners, but not for formal occasions, if ladies were present.

City Hall was built in 1909 at a cost of only \$13,500... less than a small home would cost these days and only a fraction of what a new city hall would cost.

Congratulations

To Fran Smith, his family and fine crew on the

Ledger's 75th Anniversary

We are proud to be a part of placing you in the fine City of Lowell

The Len Feighner Agency

Licensed Brokers Since 1920

WOODWARD C. SMITH - W. SIDNEY SMITH
Mount Pleasant, Michigan



Want to send your hostess the ideal weekend gift?

Ball Floral Shoppe

517 East Main St., Lowell
Ph. 897-7150

Evenings and Sundays
Phone 245-4440

Showboat Biggest Newsmaker

Color Ad
Appeared in
1906 Paper

Probably no one single event in Lowell has created a greater demand for space in the Ledger over the years than the annual presentation of the Lowell Showboat.

Through its columns since 1932, the Ledger has extolled, suffered with, and . . . on rare occasion . . . criticized the depression-born project which has become a rallying point for the community at large.

One full file drawer in the Ledger office is devoted to clippings, pictures and souvenir programs collected down through the 35 previous presentations of the yearly event.

Missing from the collection are the years 1941 through 1945 when Showboat became, like many other entertainment forms, a "casualty" of World War II.

Earliest accounts of Showboat are somewhat sketchy and devoted primarily to selection of acts for amateur



NORM BORGERSON

night, in those days an outstanding feature of the show.

Stories and pictures abound in great profusion of C. H. Runciman, who was interlocutor and skipper of the Showboat for more than 25 years;

of Norm Borgerson who was general chairman of the event for 30 years; of Frank Stephens, who headed the event in later years; and those who have managed the event more recently.

It wasn't until more recently that Showboat took on a "big name" look, bringing to the community such outstanding stars as Bob Crosby, Herb Shriner, Eddie Peabody, George Gobel, Louis Armstrong and, this year from August 19-24, Dinah Shore and the Dukes of Dixieland.

Each year, pictures appeared showing boats that have been used for the production, starting with the George Washington and continuing with the original local version of the Robert E. Lee and its successor, to be named Robert E. Lee XXXVI this year.

Long descriptive stories about the boats and the people who performed on them show the strong impact that Showboat has had on Lowell since the day that Norm Borgerson and C. H. Runciman met and discussed the need for an annual event to take the place of the great 1931 Centennial Celebration.

Historically, the Ledger has noted many times, the first Showboat drew 2,800 people per night for three nights and showed a profit of \$800 from total receipts of \$1,200.

This can be compared with receipts of \$54,887 in 1967, of which \$14,076 was added to the Showboat fund. Through last October 31st, Showboat had more than \$44,000 on hand to be used, hopefully, for creation of an entirely-new complex on the banks of the Flat River.

The Lowell Board of Trade, with Ernie Foreman as president, and the American Legion, then commanded by the late C. W. Cook, served as co-sponsors of Showboat from its beginning until 1965.

The event almost floundered and was given new blood by formation of Showboat, Inc., and the change to big-star status.

Of the many stories associated with Showboat, probably one that best reflects the ap-



C. H. RUNCIMAN

prehensions of the initial offering is told by Norm Borgerson.

"The theater was run by the late Harvey Callier," recalls Borgerson, "and he looked upon Showboat as competition to his movies."

"Since we were in the depression, there weren't too many dollars available for entertainment."

"But we went ahead anyway," he adds "and the place was so packed all 3 nights that many people who couldn't get seats for Showboat wound up at the theater. After that, Harvey was our biggest booster."

So, too, it may be added, has the Ledger.

Use of color in newspaper advertising may not be as new as many believe.

The January 4 edition of 1906 featured A. L. Coons' seventh annual Red Mark Sale and the ad was, quite naturally, in red ink.

In the same edition, the City Bank advertised that it had a "responsibility" of \$150,000.00 and was offering 3 percent "on your money" if left 3 months and 3½ percent "if left one year."

Marks Ruben Dry Goods & Clothing informed customers that "my store is open the year around until 8 o'clock except Saturdays, then until 10:00 o'clock."

Doctors and lawyers of the day also advertised in those days and this edition carried listings for O. C. McDannell, M.D.; M. C. Green, M.D.; R. E. Springett, attorney-at-law; Bernard C. Wieck, attorney and counselor; and Milton M. Perry, attorney and counselor.

In those days, it's also interesting to note, many of the stories were of state, national and international import.

One of the spicier items penned by Editor F. M. Johnson was as follows:

A Pittsburgh man has just shelled out \$10,000 to a St. Louis girl who wanted to be his 'Easter eg'."

That's how much of it was back in the "good old days."



COMMAND Performance

\$125

A "COMMAND PERFORMANCE" by the Ray Conniff Singers, Jane Morgan, Percy Faith and seven other top recording stars... A Regular \$4.98 Value!

This great Columbia Special Products stereo album, "Command Performance" features 10 of the top Columbia and Epic recording stars singing such all-time hits as: "Georgy Girl," "King of the Road," "Michelle," and many more.

Stop in at any service station where Regal-Ride Shock Absorbers are sold and pick up your album. And while you're there—take a minute to have a free shock absorber test. It could save your life. Worn shocks can't keep your tires on the road. Regal-Ride shock absorbers will—it's as simple as that. And you get top quality at a popular price. So stop in today.

*The Village Stompers, Andre Kostelanetz, Damita Jo, Bobby Hackett, Jerry Vale, The Brothers Four and Joanie Sommers.

NAPA Regal-Ride SHOCK ABSORBERS LOAD LEVELER
stabilizing units

GET YOUR "COMMAND PERFORMANCE" ALBUM FROM THESE DEALERS

Best Wishes,
Ledger, from

Lowell Automotive

- Wayne Dowling, Owner
201 E. Main St., Lowell Ph. 897-9235
- | | |
|--|--|
| KING'S CITGO SERVICE
1002 W. Main St., Lowell | L & A CITGO SERVICE
552 Ada Dr., Ada |
| MC QUEEN MOTOR CO., INC.
1450 W. Main St., Lowell | JERRY'S ADA TEXACO
Ada Shopper's Square |
| ALTO GARAGE
11591 Depot St., Alto | JIM'S SUNOCO
M 21, Ada |
| SLATER'S CASCADE SERVICE
6820 Cascade Rd. SE | CLIFF'S STANDARD
7123 E. Fulton, Ada |

- ### BUSINESS DIRECTORY
- POOL TABLES & SUPPLIES
Amusement Machines
MILLER-NEWMARK
3767 28th Street, East
949-2030
- THORNS**
Appliance, TV & Record Center
Quality Always—Best Values
949-0220
- GILMORE SPORT SHOP & LIVE BAIT**
8154 E. Fulton Rd., Ada
OR6-5901
- WHITE ROSE GASOLINE
Open six days a week 'til 9 p. m.
Closed All Day Thursday
- Fairchild Oil Company**
Home Heating Oil
24 Hour Furnace Repair
Insured Budget Payment Plan
897-7590 — 897-8221

The Ada Laundromat Will Not Be Open

ON THE
Fourth of July

DOWN THROUGH THESE 75 YEARS

We have been proud to join the Ledger in long and continued service to the growth and prosperity of our community.

Best Wishes

FROM

KING MILLING CO.

LOWELL

Recount Major Fires in Lowell

BY DAVE SMITH

Fires have proven a menace to Lowell ever since the early lumbering days when blazes commonly consumed timber sites... lumberjack camps and all.

The Lowell Ledger has chronicled some spectacular conflagrations in the area, ranging from a turkey farm blaze that gobbled up 15,000 of the big birds to fires that have nearly wiped out Main Street

in Lowell's recent history, although a major blaze also occurred just five years ago here.

Major fires hit the downtown business section twice in 1958. On Jan. 2, seven business establishments were leveled by a blaze that took three hours to control even though six fire departments fought it. On Nov. 23, another Main Street fire broke out and damaged four stores.

Estimates of the damage vary in both major fires. The Jan. 2 blaze, called the worst since a \$200,000 fire destroyed the King Milling Co.'s flour mill and granary during 18-degree below weather in 1943, ranged in damage from \$175,000 to \$200,000.

Firefighters from Lowell, Saranac, Ada, Ionia, Cascade, and Grattan fought the Jan. 2, blaze which reportedly was started when a defective oil heater in Mel's Tavern caught fire and spread to the rear of the building where it ignited an oil tank and three tanks of propane gas.

Discovered just before 7 a. m., the fire quickly spread to six other businesses including the Showboat Inn, Wepman's Clothing Store, 2 barbershops and two empty stores.

The fire finally was halted as it licked at the brick wall of Avery's Jewelry Store. The Levee restaurant also narrowly missed damage. No one was injured, however.

The second big fire in Lowell during 1958 broke out early on Sunday morning, Nov. 23, while nearly everyone in town was attending church.

Again a faulty oil burner was reported as starting the fire which began at the Ralph Townsend Furniture & Appliance Store on Main Street and spread to damage the C. H. Runciman Building, the Roth Furniture Store, and the Hills' Shoe Store.

Volunteer firemen from Grattan, Grand Rapids, Ionia, Ada and Cascade joined Lowell fire fighters in bringing the blaze under control. In the process, two Grand Rapids firemen narrowly escaped death when a portion of the roof of Townsend's store collapsed onto the second floor where they were fighting the fire.

Both men—Jack Nederveld and Seymour Stancliff—were rescued by fellow fire fighters who fought through the debris. They were rushed to Blodgett Memorial Hospital in Grand Rapids and treated for minor injuries. Two other firemen, including one of the rescuers, were overcome with smoke during the battle.

Perhaps the most expensive fire in Lowell history was that which hit the Runciman Co. bean processing plant in June, 1965. Estimated loss: \$500,000.

Women cleaning the company offices discovered the fire at about 6 a. m. It raged out of control for nearly two hours, destroying or heavily damaging the elevator building, and six silos fully loaded with beans.

The plant, built in 1917, was rebuilt after the 1965 fire.

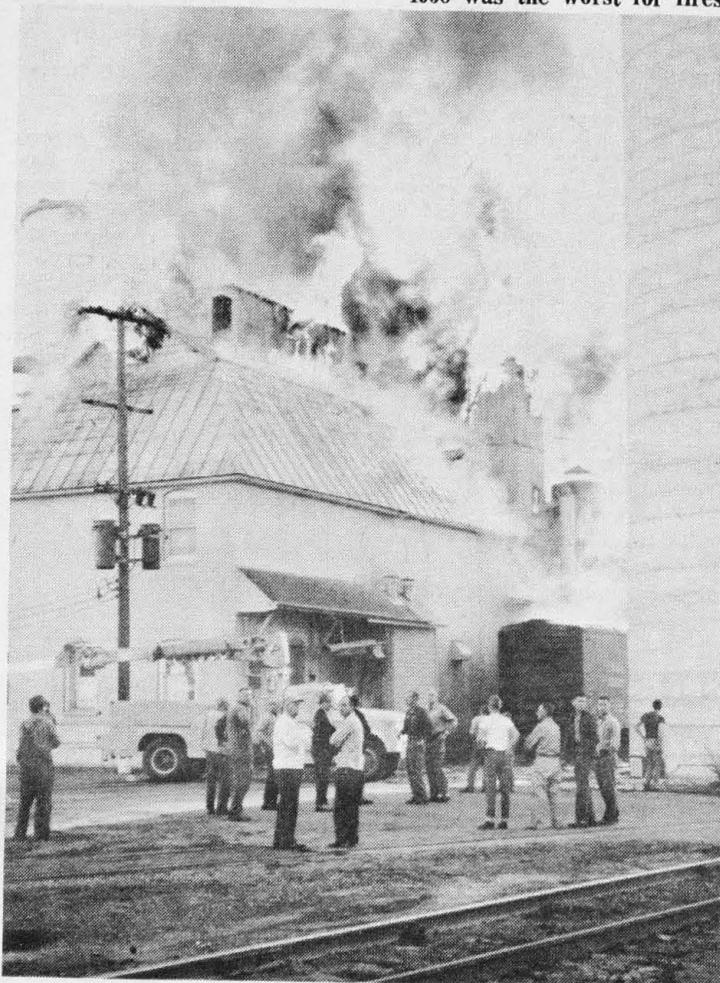


STORIES ABOUT FIRES, especially major conflagrations, always make great reading. The old bean elevator at the Runciman Company was consumed by flames and was later re-built to a larger and more modern facility.

Town 'Wags' Hazed Editor

Frank M. Johnson, legendary editor of the Ledger, hated smoking and made no bones about it in his news columns.

Knowing this, town wags would catch him at Village Council meetings, get him in a corner, and "fog him up" with smoke from their cigars, pipes and cigarettes.



Smart Skippers Carry
MARINE INSURANCE



Sail Safe With
Full Protection

Complete boating insurance to fit your special needs. Get details here!

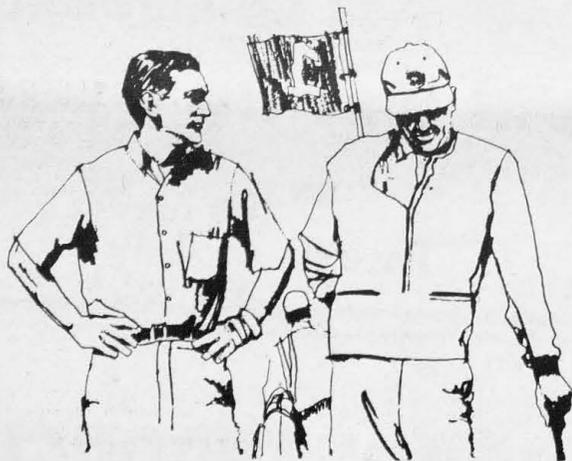
JOHNSON, CARRINGTON & RITTEGER, Inc.
INSURANCE

Ada Shoppers' Square
Ph. Ada 676-4761

835 West Main, Lowell
Ph. 897-9253

79 Bridge, Saranac
Ph. 642-4841

When you need money for that
fun-filled vacation



ASK GAC

for a cash advance

Getting the money you need for vacation fun is a simple matter at your nearby GAC office. You get prompt, personal service... ready cash to help you meet along-the-way expenses... and monthly payments to fit your budget. Stop in or call. Get a cash advance from GAC for a vacation... or any purpose.



LOANS UP TO \$1000
GAC FINANCE CORPORATION
OF LOWELL

LOWELL
109 West Main Street..... Phone 897-9255

GAC FINANCE CORPORATION OF NORTH GRAND RAPIDS
GRAND RAPIDS

2152 Plainfield Avenue, N.E..... Phone 361-7387

GAC FINANCE CORPORATION OF MICHIGAN
GRAND RAPIDS

2800 South Division Avenue..... Phone 241-5661

Pleasant Valley

Mrs. Bert Blank
693-3434

Over the years since the settlement of this pleasant valley, before and during the Lowell Ledger's seventy-five years of publication, the land itself has been this area's most important resource, changing hands many times throughout the years.

Two of the oldest residents in this community, themselves descendants of the early pioneer families are Mrs. Flora (McKenzie) Hooper, 84, and Mrs. Erna (Shepherd) Neeb, 91.

According to these two venerable ladies, the original name of this community was the North Fish school, later Pleasant Valley and now officially known as District No. 3, Lakewood.

The community, originally named after the John and Will Fish families, built a school house made of logs soon after the first settlers arrived.

Located on property donated by the Fish family from their family farm, the roster of owners of this particular piece of property from that day to this reads like a history of the area. Sold by the Fish family to the Van Wormers, the next owner was Fred Klahn. More recent owners were Darrell Anderson and Paul Kauffman.

And so it goes, the ever-changing, yet ever the same, panorama of this Pleasant Valley.



ONLY A FEW OLDTIMERS can recall what the Village of Ada looked like back in the "good old days". It was then, as now, the

thriving hub of a small community located near the juncture of the Grand and Thornapple Rivers.

South Lowell

Mrs. George Wieland
897-7243

Present day residents of the Snow area may look to the past for inspiration and courage. There is no greater symbol of the pioneer's great spirit and foresight than the Snow Church and schoolhouse.

Still a focal point of community activities, its history has been reflected in the Led-

ger's columns for the past 75 years.

Previous to settlement by the white man, this area was an Indian camping ground and Snow Avenue an Indian trail leading to the Grand River. Artifacts are still being found dating to this period.

After the settlement of the area much of the history of the late 1800's and early 1900's revolves around the Snow Church and school.

Classes were first held in a log schoolhouse situated on the northwest corner of land in Lowell township now own-

ed by Richard Doezema. Later a new frame school was built across the road in Cascade township and was known officially as Cascade No. 7 fractional.

Church services were held in the school until 1897. Then their pastor, Rev. J. M. Westover, preached a sermon on the verse "So built we the wall, and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof for the people had a mind to work." Neh. 4-6.

The people did go to work and built the Snow Methodist Church under the direction of Rev. W. W. Stee.

In the 1950's, when layman Sidney Baarda was pastor, a basement was dug under the church and is now used as classrooms for Sunday School.

The head carpenter on the construction of the church was Edward Ballard, the only worker to be paid. All others donated their time and Mr. Ballard donated two weeks of his time toward the project.

Some of the volunteer workers were Martin Schneider, Dan Erb, Thomas Leece, William Hesche, Wilbur Burras and Sherman Reynolds.

The old frame school house burned to the ground in February, 1922. The fire was caused by a faulty chimney flue. Classes were held temporarily in the old Grange Hall until James Green built the present building.

The generosity of early residents of the area helped with the establishment of church and school in the community. James Lewis and Urial Snow donated the land for the school and Mr. Snow donated land for the church and cemetery. He also gave much of the lumber used in the construction of the church and gave money to be used for the purchase of the church bell. The bell, moved from the belfry when that was declared unsafe, is now a feature of the church lawn.

The 118-year-old Forest Mill was demolished into history in 1965 when it was leveled to make way for a city parking lot on Main Street.

Samuel VandenBroeck of Vergennes Twp. was charged with simple assault in 1905 when he peppered several young men with bird shot at a charivari which followed his wedding.

**WANT ADS
PAY OFF!**

STRAND THEATRE

LOWELL—MICHIGAN

THURS., FRI., SAT., SUN.
JULY 4, 5, 6, 7

**They're young...
they're in love
...and they kill people.**



**WARREN BEATTY
FAYE DUNAWAY**

BONNIE AND CLYDE

Written by DAVID NEWMAN and ROBERT BENTON. Produced by WARREN BEATTY. Directed by ARTHUR PENN. TECHNICOLOUR FROM WARNER BROS.—SEVEN ARTS W

WEDS — JULY 10
SURPRISE NIGHT
All Seats 35c
1 - Show at 7:00 P. M.

NEXT WEEK:

"The Sound of Music"

One Performance
Thursday through Sunday
at 7:45 p. m.
1 Performance Wed. at 7 p. m.
Closed Monday and Tuesday

If we had been in business then...



We Still would have been in style!

Ada Shoppers' Square

Ph. 676-9231
Daily 10-6
Thurs., Fri. 'til 9

THE

Debonaire
SHOP

100 Main St.
Lowell

Ph. 897-9396
Daily 9-6
Fri., Sat. 'til 9



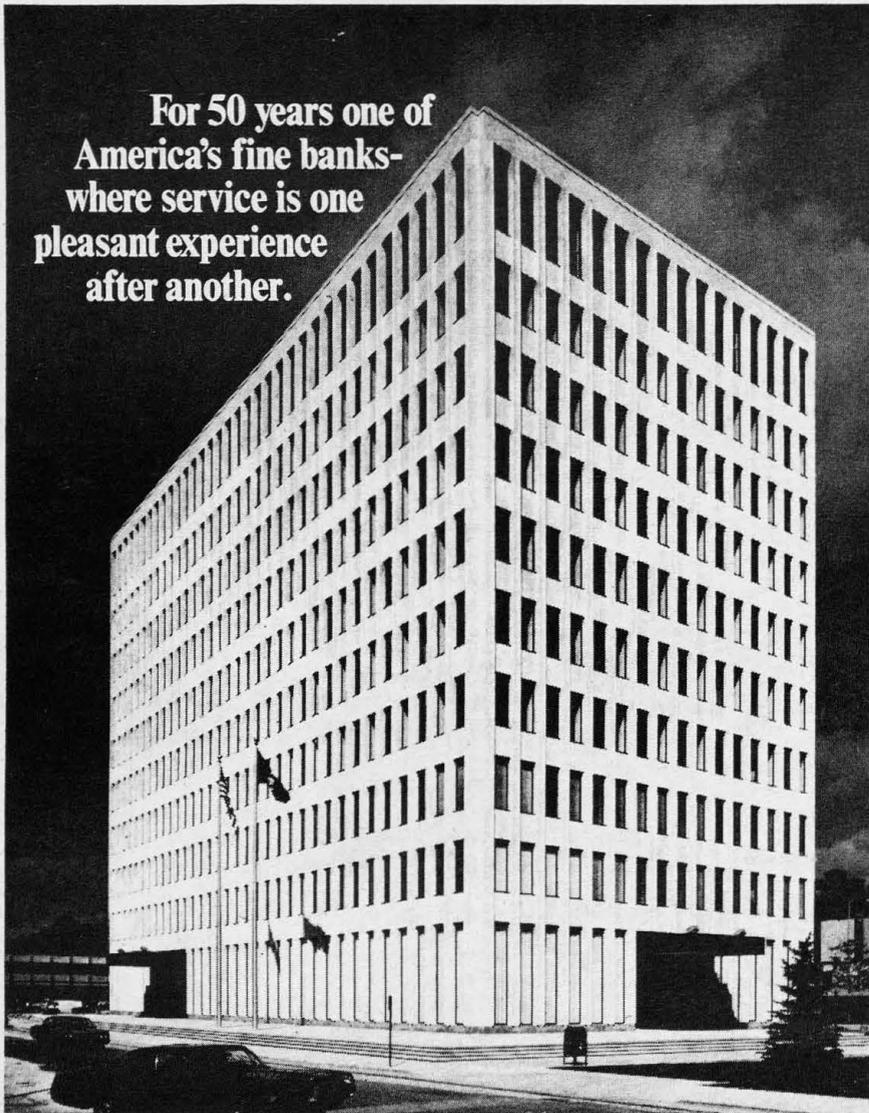
ADA Floral & Nursery

Ada Shoppers' Square
676-9441

Black Dirt—Crushed Stone—Wood Chips
Peat Moss
Delivered by the Bag or Yard

Patio Blocks, Railroad Ties—Flower & Vegetable Flats
Trees—Shrubs—Annuals—Perennials

— Summer Hours: Tues., Wed., Thurs., 10 to 6. Friday., 10 to 8 —
Sat., 10 to 6., Sun., 10 to 2
Closed Monday

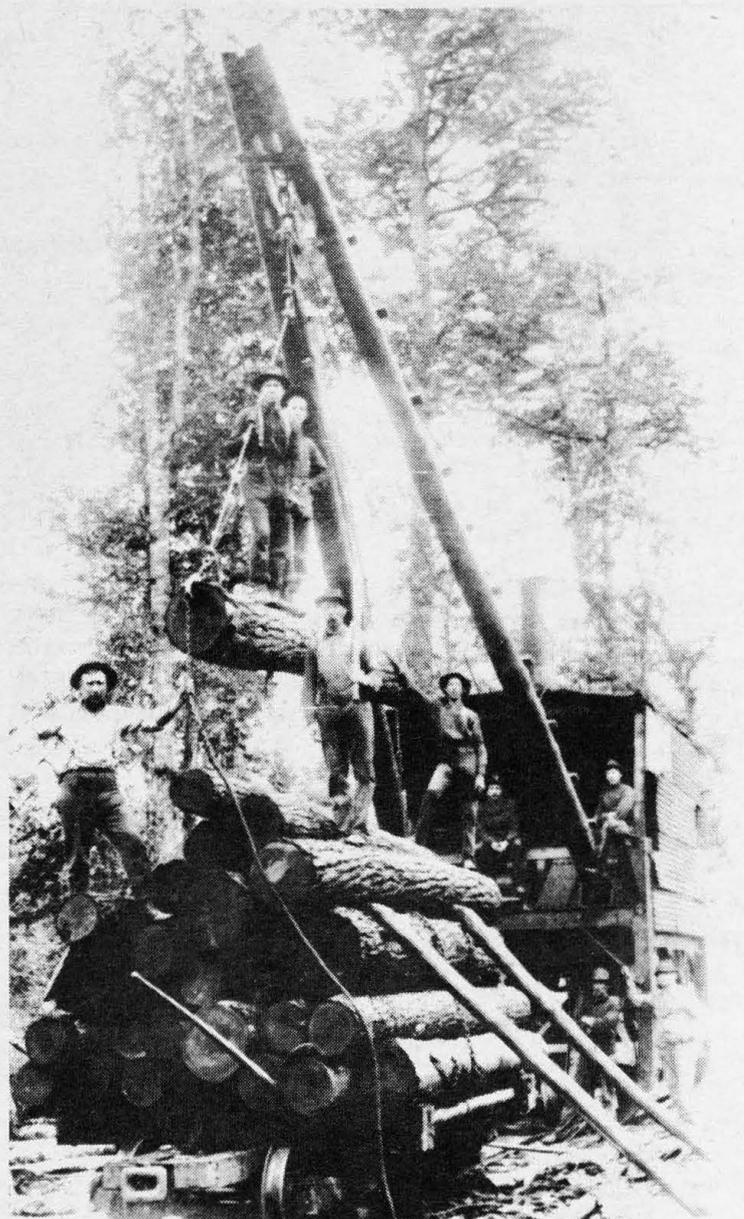


For 50 years one of America's fine banks—where service is one pleasant experience after another.

Assets of over 235 million dollars place us in the top 2% of all United States banks. And offices in over 20 areas place us in every neighborhood in greater Grand Rapids.



Conveniently nearby with pleasant people and pleasant facilities to provide complete banking services.



MANY STORIES about early Lowell and environs had to do with logging operations which prevailed throughout the area.

Power Plant's Slide into River Recalled

What started out as a bleak day in December, 1917, turned out to be a black one indeed. That's the day the power house plunged into the river. This wasn't the first mishap for Lowell's proud municipal power plant, but it was the worst.

Thrifty members of the town council decided in 1895—two years after the Ledger was established—that the village electricity costs were too high.

They decided to build a dam at an estimated cost of \$23,000, big money in those days. Voters sanctioned the proposal by a 363 to 68 margin on Dec. 20, 1895, and construction was completed the following September.

As old reports tell it, "the plant has had its ups and downs." Just after the dam was completed, for example, "a flood took out the east bank and, in addition to replacing the bank, a flood gate had to be installed."

Then there was the flood of 1905 that snipped off the top of the dam. Both banks were raised and a new dam top was constructed "at considerable cost."

More woe was ahead. Decay dug into the timber

flume and wooden waste gate in 1909. Replacement, with concrete, cost \$17,909.

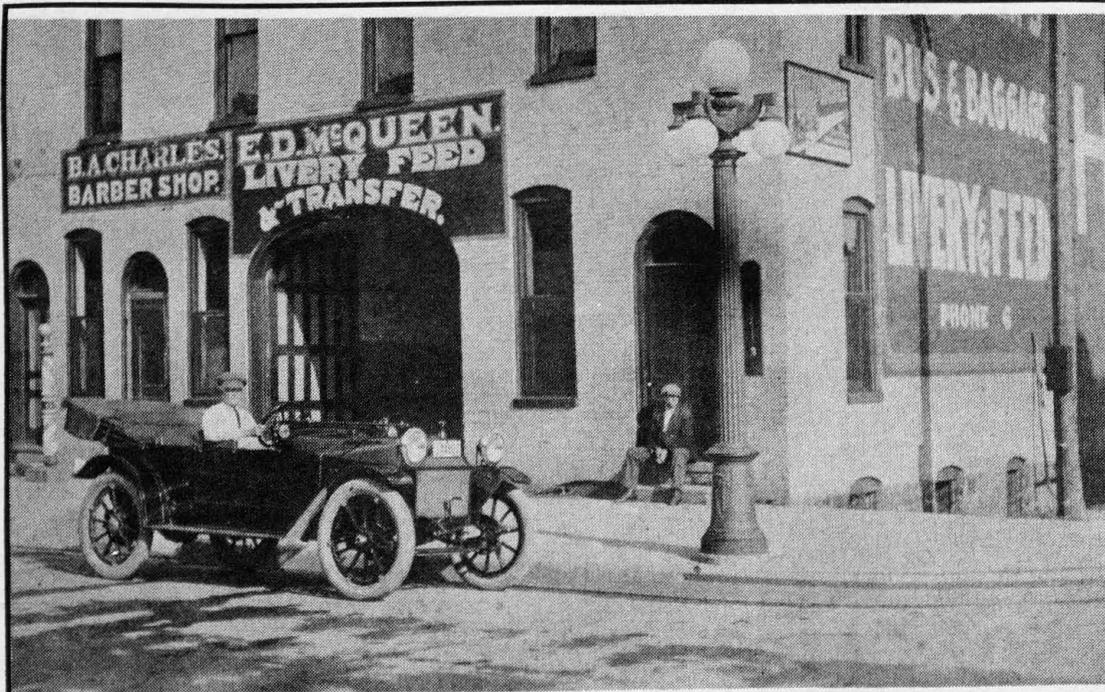
The original wooden power house was replaced with a file and cement structure in 1915, but within two years additional generating capacity was required.

So in that fateful year when the powerhouse, "undermined by quicksand," slipped quietly into the river, another \$10,000 had been spent for a new generator, water wheel and governor. "At this time (just before the big slide) it was believed that everything was taken care of as the plant was in good shape and practically out of debt."

After the December, 1917, catastrophe "we went to hardpan with steel and wood piling and put in the latest equipment," comments an oldtime report.

From that time on, Lowell's power plant has faithfully produced electricity for the city's homes as one of the most efficient municipally-owned plants in the nation.

But there are still many longtime Lowell residents who darkly remember the day the lights went out.



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SNOWSTORMS MAKE good reading, too, and the photographers were always on hand to record the event for posterity. The big storm of February 22, 1912, is generally regarded as one of the worst . . . but surely any of the several or more recent years rated as much space in the Ledger's columns.



Oldtime Political Campaigns Sizzled

In this very political year of 1968, echos of past campaigns can be found in old issues of the Lowell Ledger.

In the memory of some of the community's now senior citizens, the old time political rallies combined the number one society get-together of the season with the excitement of circus day.

Candidates favored long dramatic speeches in those days, although on one memorable occasion, Grover Cleveland spoke a thrifty ten minutes from the back of his campaign train stopped at the Grand Trunk depot.

Torch light parades were featured as a climax to political activities. In at least one such parade in Lowell, one party used all white horses and another all black making a clear cut distinction between the two.

Indoor rallies were held in the biggest buildings available, most times the local churches.

Rivalry ran high in the early days of the 20th century turning many spontaneous betters into instant losers when the election returns were in. Horses, money and drinks frequently changed hands in this way. It was a common sight to see the losers pushing the winners up Main Street in a wheelbarrow.

One year early in the 1900's, both the Republicans and the Democrats installed flag poles at Alton. During election night, someone cut down the Republican pole—a mystery that went unsolved until almost fifty years later when the guilty party finally admitted his part in the incident.

Paying for votes was prevalent in the early days. Some were paid for their votes with money—some with whiskey. During one election, local party leaders paid \$2 per vote—\$1 at the caucus before election and the other dollar if their candidate was the winner. When they won, people lined the streets to collect their second dollar.

The editorial columns of the Lowell Ledger were instrumental in correcting this shameful situation. Editor Johnson appealed to the conscience of the community with some strong articles and the vote-buying was soon outlawed.

Conservative estimate of the number of visitors to the Court of Honor at Columbian Exposition in Chicago was 12,000,000—one out of every six people in the U. S.

The dance called the "hootchy-kootchy" originated with the so-called "Egyptian Dancers" on the Midway at the Chicago Columbian Exposition. A couple of decades later, the same dance was called the "shimmy."

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3 games, 3 diamonds at Thornapple
Little League Ball Park on Thornapple River
- BAR-B-QUE — Annual Ada Masonic Chicken BAR-B-QUE ... 12 Noon
—Ada Masonic Hall—
- PARADE — Forming at Shoppers Square to Ball Park ... 12:30 P. M.
- BOOTHS — Games, Fun for children at Ball Park ... After Parade
- TOM SAWYER Contestants Costume Contest 1 P. M.
- TOM SAWYER Book Quiz (Verbal) for Contestants 1 P. M.
- TOM SAWYER (Father-Son) Raft Building Contest 1 P. M.
- CASCADE-ADA Firemans Water Ball Fight, Ball Park ... 2:15 P. M.
- TOM SAWYER (Father-Son) Raft Race, Thornapple River ... 4 P. M.
- TOM SAWYER Michigan Regional Fence Painting Contest
for \$300. Expense paid trip for two to National Contest at
Hannibal, Missouri 3 P. M.
(All Tom Sawyer Contests at Thornapple Dr. at Buttrick)
- SOFTBALL LEAGUE GAME — (Adults) Ball Park 7 P. M.
- BIG 4TH of JULY Fireworks Display at Ball Park At Dark

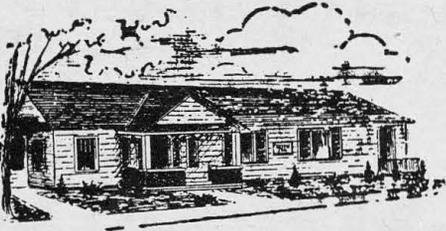
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NOT TOO MUCH has changed as far as Lowell's City Hall is concerned. The picture above shows how it looked in the old days

... and the one below as it appears today. The bell tower and potted plants have disappeared, but most everything else looks the same.

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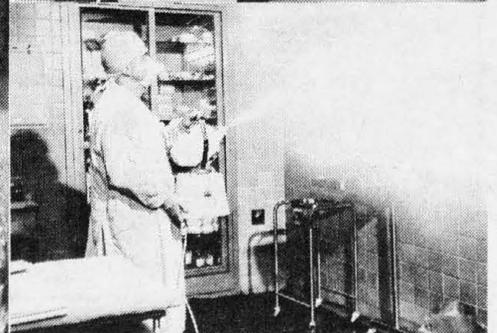
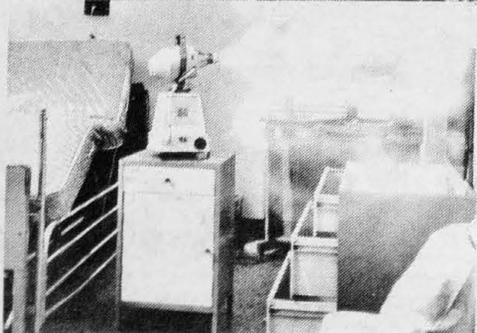
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Salutes The Lowell Ledger

"75 Years of Community Service"





THIS EARLY PHOTO of Lowell's telephone switchboard was manned by (from left) Agnes Perry, Glenna Delk, Hattie Lynn and Irene Stone. Then, as now, the telephone has been a vital force in the publication of today's newspapers.

'Hello Girl' Traces History's Path Here

One of the original "hello girls," a lifelong resident of Lowell, embarked upon her career at the turn of the century.

The second girl ever to work for the telephone company in Lowell, she took the job only to help out until a new girl could be found and trained. She ended up staying for 42 years.

Agnes Perry, who recently celebrated her 91st birthday, is a spritely, alert lady.

Raised in the family home on North Hudson Street, her days of youth are unfamiliar to many of us; yet in the same instance, something echoes hauntingly of our own childhood days.

Agnes and her sisters (there were three) were all born in their parent's home with the aid of a doctor and practical nurse.

She was born in a day and age when people didn't go to the hospital unless they were

suffering from an extremely serious malady.

Her childhood memories are filled with games of hop scotch, houses with fenced-in yards, dolls with china heads and cloth bodies, and walking board fences, the most favored of all childhood activities.

Homes with enough land around them had vegetable gardens, and the town was dotted with ice houses, where you purchased blocks of ice to keep food and drink fresh in your "ice box."

She was in her early teens when Carl English bought the first motor car in Lowell.

During her youth, clothing styles changed often, but the new styles never seemed to take into consideration any kind of physical comfort.

From full-skirted, one-piece dresses with many crinolines underneath, to simple one-piece dresses with stiff high collars, a lady was often beautifully and very stylishly dressed, but never comfortable.

Her father, typical of the men of those days, was never without a vest, and this was most often accompanied by a pocket watch and chain.

Agnes graduated from high school in 1895, in a time when it was somewhat unusual to finish high school.

Reading, spelling, arithmetic, geography, and grammar were the subjects taught. No science courses were offered, nor any of the many other subjects common to today's schooling.

As a young woman, Agnes worked as a photographic retoucher in Grand Rapids and Muskegon.

Soon her eyes became weak from constantly looking into the light that was needed to do the work.

In 1900, at the age of 23, she agreed to work for the telephone company, then owned by the citizens, for a short while "just until they could get someone permanent."

When she first started to work for the 'phone company, it was located in the back of what was then the Butts-Owens Shoe Store. Later, it was moved to a new location just across the street, over Althen's Clothing Store, now Townsend's.

Telephones at that time were crank operated, of course

everyone knew the operator by name.

Information of all kinds was funnelled through the operators.

The fire siren was located there, and consequently all fire calls were made directly to the phone company.

Once the fire alarm was sounded, the office would then be deluged with inquiries as to its location. Finally they had to put a stop to this, and answered with a final:

"We are not allowed to give out that information."

Doctors would call and tell where they would be if they were needed, and the police would do the same.

Many older people and those who couldn't see too well, would simply ask the operator to get a certain party or place of business for them.

Operators were even asked to call the undertaker's.

Agnes taught many new operators how to run the boards and also served as the book-keeper. She received payments, sent out bills and was even the paymaster.

Through the years, many new switchboards were installed, and finally the dial system came into effect.

Many people were worried, especially those who were older and had poor eyesight, about how they would get along without the ever-present telephone operator. They relied on her in time of need and trouble and so many other times.

The transition was made

Ornateness Accentuated Interior Style

In the early '90s, a bedroom emphasized tassels, curlicues & dark oak furniture; the living room displayed a group of horsehair-covered sofa and chairs, blockaded and almost vanquished by "decorative objects," bamboo jardinières, a stuffed owl, a sprawling easel displaying a chromolithograph, baroque stands bearing statuettes, a glass dome over wax flowers, vases of cattails, and heavy portieres.

The new electric lights were in, covered by fringed shades, but many of the old gas jets were still working on a stand-by basis.

The telephone, very hard on hearing, but marvelous despite that, was fastened to the wall.

without too much of a problem, though.

On the occasion of Agnes's retirement at the age of 65, a party was given in her honor at the agency headquarters in Ionia.

Since then, on the occasion of her birthday, May 27, many of her former students and co-workers annually join together to celebrate her natal day.

Although in excellent health, Agnes does not get out much due to a foot condition.

She is, however, an avid reader, and with the help of a reading glass, still reads a great deal.

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Early in the years of settlement of the Lowell area, the pioneers banded together to form organizations such as the South Lowell Grange, No. 113.

The groundwork they provided for community social life, projects and cultural improvements has been reflected in the pages of the Ledger from its inception to the present day.

South Lowell Grange, later known as the Alto Grange, combined with the Whitneyville Grange in recent years.

The following is an account of the early years of this organization.

On Oct. 27, 1873, thirty-one members were initiated in all four degrees into an organization named the South Lowell Grange No. 113. The initiation, conducted by Deputy John King of the Michigan State Grange, was held in the home of the Dave Skidmore's in Alto.

The charter was left open and by January of the year 1874 the membership had grown to sixty-two.

The Grangers had no hall in which to hold their meet-

ings, so they rented a large spare room in the William H. Stewart house, one-half mile west of Alto, for \$4 per year. This was known as Stewart Hall. This large house, which later burned, was located on the farm now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Stewart Thomet. In these early years, the Grange was called to order at 6:30 p. m. sun time.

In the spring of 1876, the Grangers decided to build their own hall. The contract for the building was let to Mr. Hawkins for \$500, the note signed collectively by all members. Brother D. H. Denise leased them a plot of ground about where the Merriman School now stands, one mile north of Alto.

The hall was completed in June of that year in time to entertain the Lowell District Council, an organization comparable to our Kent Pomona Grange. Several important officers and members were present for the socializing.

Due to the large crowd, a committee was appointed to take care of the teams and feed them hay.

Brother L. H. Merriman,

proud owner of the only organ in the community, offered the use of it for this entertainment and also for the very important occasion of the dedication of the hall on October 20th.

The State Grange lecturer was present at the dedication and delivered the principle address. After the program an oyster supper was served to well over 150 members and guests.

The early programs of the Grange often took the form of demonstrations. On one occasion five Sisters, Mrs. P. Perrin, Mrs. W. T. Remington, Mrs. William H. Stewart, Mrs. S. P. Curtiss and Mrs. D. H. Denise, were chosen to demonstrate the best method of making butter.

Much of the social life of the community centered around the Grange and they gave many parties, especially waltz parties, and socials to raise money. They also organized a literary society which gave entertainments every month. All monies raised were applied on the mortgage.

A committee was appointed to see if there were enough scholars to warrant the opening of a school in the Grange Hall. Twenty-three young adult students were signed up and a school was opened with Brother L. H. Merriman as the teacher. It became known as the South Lowell Grange Select School.

The ladies of the Grange gave a maple sugar supper in the spring of 1880. The menu included ham, eggs, pickles, biscuits and of course, maple syrup and tea which was more popular than coffee at that time. All this cost 25c for adults and 15c for children.

In 1884 Brother William Denise who had been employed as janitor announced that in his opinion "\$2.50 a year was an insufficient amount of compensation for the janitor work." He offered to do the job for \$5 a year and was accepted.

The question box was another important item in the Grange programs previous to 1900.

In 1884 the lecturer asked Mrs. S. P. Curtiss to explain the easiest and best method of washing clothes.

Quoting Mrs. Curtiss "I make the very best soap I feel useful for laundry and add one tablespoon full of kerosene to every tubful. Then with the help of my Little Joker washing machine, I do my laundry with ease and dispatch." This was probably the only washing machine in the community at this time.

Some of the questions asked were:

"Does it pay the farmer to buy too much high priced machinery?" The answer to that was—don't buy anymore than you can pay for and house easily.

"Is pie a farmer's necessity?" Absolutely yes.

"Is legislation needed in the interest of agriculture?" At times.

The Grangers all worked together, wrote letters to their senators in Washington in favor of RFD mail delivery, trying to get better prices for farm produce, to get better roads, stricter food laws and many other improvements in conditions.

In the fall of 1887 South Lowell Grange decided to move their hall to Alto. Brother D. M. Skidmore offered to donate the ground for the hall provided that the proposed railroad build their depot on his land. They agreed.

The hall was moved and placed on a lot now occupied by the Sislock store. They decided to rent out the hall on alternate nights to the Odd Fellows and Maccabees for

their meetings. Retail stores occupied the first floor.

Many new members were added to the list. A very successful branch of the Michigan State Library was started in the Grange Hall with Sister Rose Daniels as librarian. Many books were purchased and donated. This library was used for many years by the members of the Grange and the surrounding community.

The hall was carpeted with

all wool carpeting costing fifty cents per yard and the whole upstairs was papered for \$4.10.

Some questions of general interest asked in the question box were "If the New Woman marries a farmer, what will be her position on the farm?" The boss.

Another question, "Why are our children of the present day so discourteous and impolite?" Was never answered.

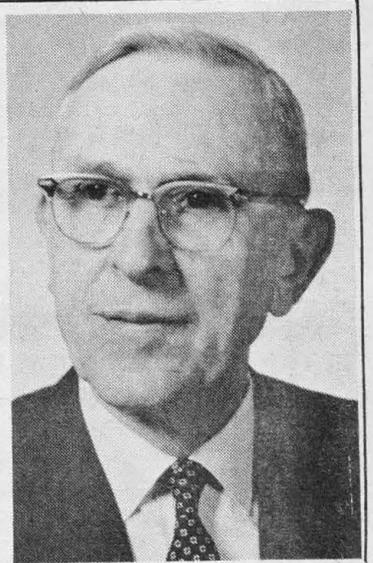
RE-ELECT Henry Romyn

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TREASURER

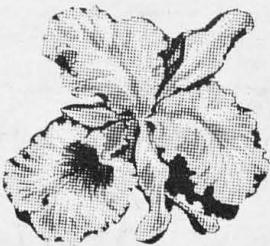
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picture taken
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Important Advances are Made

The world in 1893 was not too unlike three score and 15 years later... at least as far as scientific and technological advances were concerned.

The following are samples of top news stories of the day:

Famous early film studio constructed in West Orange, N. J. by Edison laboratories. It was a small structure able to pivot so that it could turn with the sun.

Henry Ford completed construction of his first gasoline engine to run successfully. He gave the first Ford automobile its initial road test in April.

Leo H. Baekeland perfected the process by which Velox paper was produced. Although not immediately successful, Baekeland received \$1,000,000 for his patent from George Eastman in 1899. With this money, Baekeland constructed his private laboratory in which he made his monumental discoveries in plastics.

Expiration of Bell patent on the telephone terminated the monopoly of Bell Company on telephone services in America.

Once It Was The 'Star'

(Continued from Page 1B)

"Brigham Young, the Mormon, had 217 children at last accounts."

"The cost of smoking in New York City is estimated at five million eight hundred and forty thousand dollars annually."

The Lowell Star faithfully carried quotations on the Lowell Market each week. Eggs in 1860, for example, were quoted at 8 cents a dozen. Butter was a dime a pound, dressed chickens 7 cents, and potatoes 15 cent.

According to the Star, a man could buy a glass of whiskey hereabouts for just 3 cents.

The Lowell Journal was established on July 13, 1865, by a returning Civil War volunteer named Webster Morris. A lively writer who liked a good fight, Morris soon built his newspaper up to a readership of 1,000.

An early associate of Morris was Capt. S. H. Smith (no relation to the present Ledger publisher) who owned a share of the Journal from 1868 to 1870 when he sold his portion

to James W. Hine, a local druggist. Hine then bought Morris' share in 1873 and operated the paper as "The Lowell Journal, Hine's One Dollar Weekly," until he sold out in 1886 to J. D. Elinwood of Detroit.

According to later reports, Elinwood "made an error which almost doomed the paper" in 1888. The error? "He sold space regularly to the Democratic organization."

The account continues:

"With the Journal proving itself a sinking craft, Mr. Elinwood sold out to Mr. Quick (no surname provided) who for twelve years tried unceasingly to wipe out the 1888 blot on the Journal."

There were other owners. A Baptist minister, the Rev. D. B. Davidson, tried the publisher's seat for five years, selling the newspaper in 1906 to a chap named Thomas Whitehouse. Whitehouse retired in 1910 and Roy Jackson became owner. He sold out in 1914 to the final owners of the Journal, Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Hutchinson, who had owned papers in Harrisburg, Ill., and Plainwell, Mich.

Mrs. Hutchinson died in 1930 and Mr. Hutchinson retired shortly afterward.

George J. Johnson and his two sons leased the plant and produced the Journal until it was purchased by the Ledger in 1936.

Frank M. Johnson and his wife, Myrtilla, founded the Ledger and published their first edition with a Washington hand press, a foot power job printing press and some used type.

The Johnsons had been in the publishing field for 13 years prior to establishing the Ledger, including seven years in Mayville "where they managed to quit square with the world."

The Ledger had a modest 150 subscribers at the outset, most of whom paid 25 cents for three-month subscriptions.

Nevertheless, the Ledger flourished and when it was sold in 1930 to R.G. Jefferies, the circulation had climbed to 1,400. Mr. Jefferies operated the Ledger until 1951 when he turned it over to his son, Harold, who relinquished his ownership six months ago and has since won a seat on the City Council.

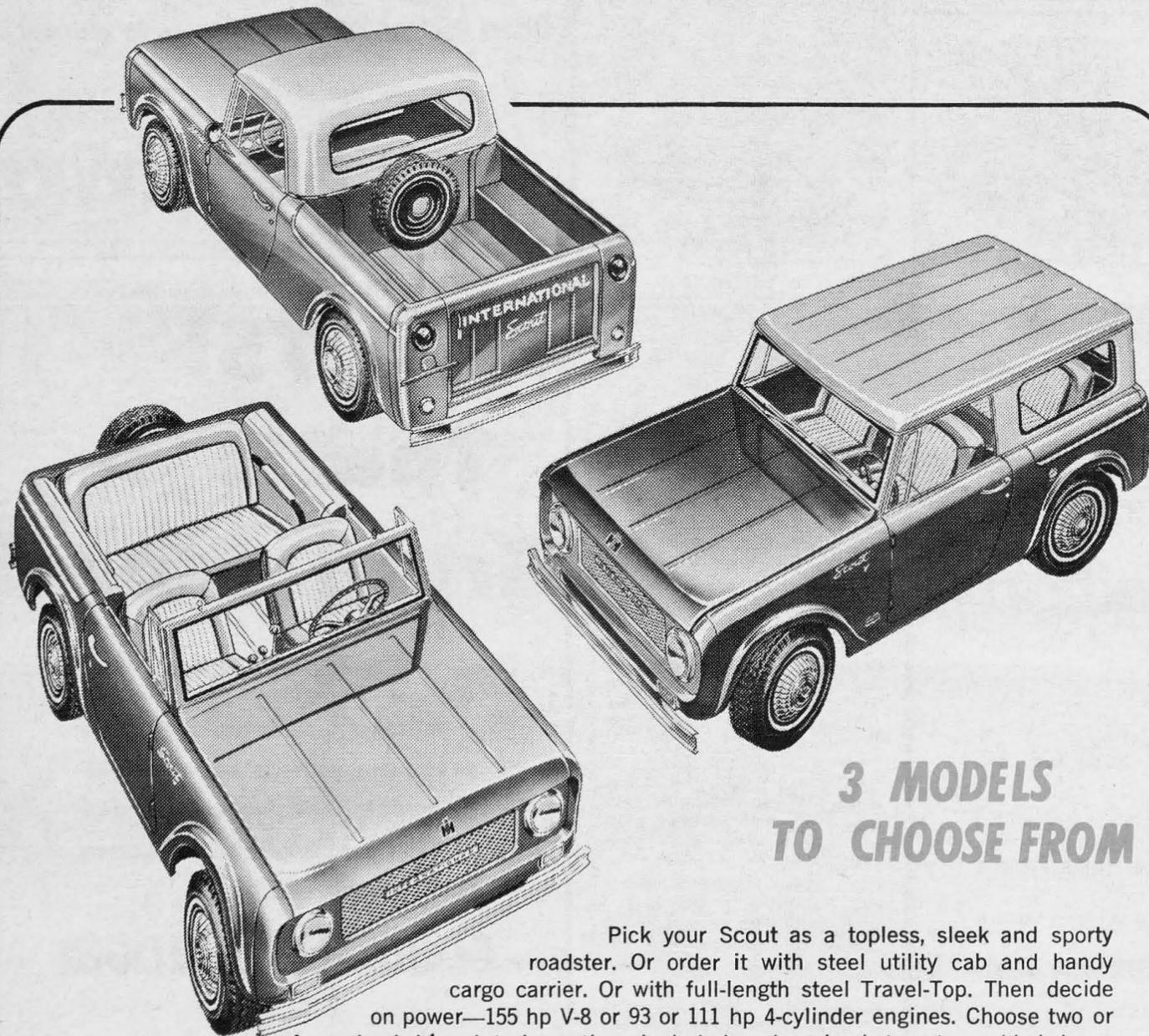
Through the years the Ledger has continuously improved its mechanical plant and readability. In March of this year the paper's old Comet Goss letterpress equipment was stilled for keeps, and the switch was made to the clean easy-to-read offset method that you are now reading.

On Memorial Day the Ledger produced its first full-color picture and another adorns the first page of this week's regular issue.

Over the years Lowell's newspapers have chronicled the fires, floods, lives, and deaths of the Eastern Kent County area. In the process, the sole surviving newspaper—The Ledger—has become an integral part of the community... a Showboat drum beater, initiator of the gala Centennial celebration in 1931, a vocal spokesman for good government and good schools.

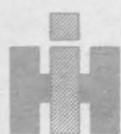
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