

The Detroit Conference

HISTORICAL MESSENGER
Published by The Friends of the Archives
Ronald A. Brunger, Editor

VOLUME XIX, Number 3

May 1991

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Here and There	Pages 1
Our Annual Meeting, June 4	1
Finnish Methodism in Michigan (II)	2-4
James E. Jacklin, Cane-Holder	5-7
An Early Preacher in Onaway	7-8

HERE AND THERE

Our call for more church researchers has been heeded: researchers from several churches are planning to come to work in the archives, on the history of their home churches!

On April 16, we received 10 of our archives books, nicely rebound, from the book binder in Lansing. Cost \$151. It cost us \$45.85 to have the 1990 Advocates bound.

Are you planning to attend the Second Historical Convocation of the United Methodist Church, to be held at Metropolitan U.M.C. in Detroit, June 28 to July 1, 1991? The program was given in the March Messenger, page 2. Register with Historical Convocation, P.O. Box 127, Madison, New Jersey 07940. It includes a Friday evening drama, outstanding lecturers, discussion groups, seminars, a banquet, etc. The meetings will be held in Metropolitan Church.

The Ramada Hotel at 400 Bagley Avenue, Detroit, MI 48226, is the official Convocation hotel. Register early.

The North Central Jurisdiction Commission on Archives & History will meet for an abbreviated session on Monday afternoon, July 1, following the Convocation. Take in this meeting and learn what our neighbor Conferences are doing in historical matters.

We received a note from Elizabeth Watkins of Holt, "failing eyesight prevents me reading Friends publications". She asks us to cancel her membership. We do this with gratitude for her long record of service.

OUR ANNUAL MEETING -- June 4th!

You are invited to attend and enjoy the Annual Meeting of the Commission on Archives and History, and of the Friends of the Archives. We meet in North Hall at Adrian College on Tuesday, June 4, just prior to the Annual Conference. Come early at 9:30 a.m. for coffee and fellowship

Our tentative schedule is as follows:

- 10:00 -- Devotions led by our President Dr. Richard Cheatham of Franklin.
- 10:20 -- Anecdotal History of the Franklin Church by Dick Cheatham
- 10:45 -- Paper, "Some Distinguished Ministers of Central Church, Detroit" by Ronald A. Brunger.
- 11:45 -- Discussion & Announcements
- Noon -- Lunch.
- 1:15 -- Opening Hymn
Paper, "The Canadian Content of the Detroit Conference at the Turn of the Century" by C. Mark Steinacher of Brantford, Ontario.
- 2:30 -- Break
- 2:45 -- Report of the Archivist
Other Business
- 3:10 -- "Writing a Church History" by Mrs. Philip Robinson of Ann Arbor First Church.
Wrap-up and Adjournment.

C. Mark Steinacher is a Canadian scholar and minister who has done research in our archives. He will bring us a Canadian slant on our Michigan Methodism and point out how the Michigan and Ontario Methodist cooperated in early years.

Conference members can check Tuesday's lunch on their registration form. If you attend that day only, you may pay for your meal at the door. All interested people are cordially invited to attend.

We are sorry to confirm that our November 1990 issue of the Historical Messenger (Vol. XVIII, No. 5) was never published. It became lost; the editor for the first time had not kept a copy.

FINNISH METHODISTS IN MICHIGAN - PART II.

(Editor's Note. As we learned in the first part of this article, in the March Messenger, our Methodist work among the Finnish people of the Upper Peninsula, was not one of the great success stories of our denomination. Old time Methodism with its aggressive and evangelistic spirit, seemed strangely different to the Finns. The leaders of the Finnish Lutheran Church used hostile tactics and bitterly opposed the Methodist work. Many of the Finns were greatly interested in the Cooperative Movement, and some of these were radicals and quite opposed to the Church. One of the Finnish Methodist ministers turned against our Church and tried to draw the small Finnish Societies away from the Methodist Episcopal Church. Finnish Methodism seemed always to be up against obstacles.

We resume now with the account of our Finnish Churches written by Kaarlo Ruotsalainen in 1928, a year after he came over from Finland.)

III. IRONWOOD

The Finnish M.E. work in Ironwood was begun by a young Finnish preacher, John J. Hillberg, in 1903. He held his first meetings at the Forrester Hall. The gatherings at first were large and the beginning looked promising. The first membership was ten. The following year the congregation was legalized.

Since it was difficult to secure places for meetings, it was decided that they begin plans for a church building. For this purpose, three lots were bought on the corner of Mansfield and Ayer Streets. On one of these lots was the building for the parsonage.

During the four years of Rev. Hillberg's stay in Ironwood, a good foundation was laid for the congregation and the future looked promising. However, during the next four years(1907-11) during Rev. Ramakka's stay, the work seemed to go backward.

In the fall of 1911, Rev. Nurmi took the Ironwood charge. During his time, funds were gathered for the payment of the church building and the lots were paid but the parsonage remained in a very dilapidated condition.

In 1915, Rev. Pitkanen was called to Ironwood. Meetings were held outside Ironwood also, as in Wakefield, Washburn, and North York, where there were some members. During this time the church was erected and the parsonage repaired. The construction of the church was directed by Mr. F. Johnson. The church came to cost about \$6000.00.

In 1919, Rev. P. Talikka succeeded Rev. Pitkanen. At this time, there was a religious movement among the Finnish people in Ironwood, stirred by the Pentecostals which tore up many of the churches. The Methodist Church was also influenced by this movement and many of the members joined the Pentecostals. Thus, the work was weakened and the debt of the church became too great a burden. The parsonage was sold and \$4,000.00 paid off the church debt.

All this was very disappointing to the young pastor and in the summer of 1921, Rev. Talikka went to Finland with the intention of staying there a short while. The church was then without a pastor and the Rev. Tuukkanen of Laurium, took advantage of the opportunity to urge the people to seize the church for themselves. The case was brought before the Circuit Court of Goegeb County and won by the American Methodist Episcopal Church. The remaining members sold the church, with the permission of the Conference, to the Salvation Army for \$6,000.00

This was the sad ending of the Finnish Methodist Episcopal work in Ironwood. We are especially grieved about the matter because the conduct of our own pastors brought it about. Even yet there are some of our members, true Christians, and friends, in Ironwood and the vicinity, who bear witness to the fact that the work done there was not done altogether in vain.

These historic facts are brief and incomplete because trouble makers have intentionally destroyed the records. These facts are gathered from newspaper clippings and interviews with persons who have been connected with the matters mentioned. Much more could be said of the struggles, sufferings, want, tears, and prayers that have

Finnish Methodism

been brought about by failures in the work. There is much, however, that could be said of the heart felt joy and eternal light of Christ that has been experienced by many.

IV. RUDYARD, MICHIGAN

In the vicinity of Rudyard, a village near Sault Ste. Marie, there are hundreds of Finnish framers. Our preachers have worked among them by making occasional trips there. Mr. Timmerbacka a businessman, and Mr. and Mrs. Aho have been faithful supporters and assistants in the work for more than a decade. It was through their efforts that the Methodist Chapel was built in a rural district of Rudyard. Our preachers have always been welcomed there and the preaching of the Gospel has brought results even though the congregation has not grown beyond six members because of the isolation of the people.

There would be a promising field in Rudyard as well as in the Finnish district which reaches the Soo, but the time of one preacher is too well taken up to allow travel all over the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. This field, too, is waiting for its faithful worker and the funds for the support of the work."

Rev. Ruotsalainen added to the foregoing manuscript, a short account of attempts to establish a Methodist paper in Finnish, and of a successful venture in publishing a hymnal. "The Reverends G.A. Hiden, Jhalmar Selmi, J.J. Hillberg, and M. Lehtonen published an excellent hymnal "Rauhan Sointuja", consisting of three hymnals with complete music. This hymnal has been widely used in practically all American Finnish churches and is still one of the best Finnish hymnals in this country."

Our writer goes on with a paragraph on the reasons for the failure of our Finnish Methodist Churches to make strong progress. To our disappointment, he accuses the M.E. Home Mission leaders of a lack of interest in Finnish Missions.

"Finnish Methodism in America has not progressed as well as would have (been) sincerely desired. There are many reasons for the failures. It is difficult to give them individually. It is true that some of our preachers have not been able to stand their ground in face of difficulties and have left the ministry. A certain measure of degradation has been brought about by improper conduct of some of our preachers. Our Society of Home Missions has not been sufficiently cooperative toward the Finnish brothers who have come to work here so often under very trying conditions. The coolness with which they have often been treated has destroyed their courage and confidence."

Our historian then turns to end his account with a positive note of faith and confidence. "The number of Finnish people who as children of our churches, have grown in our Sunday Schools and have then scattered to different parts of the country and joined the American M.E. Church, rises into thousands. The work therefore, has not been in vain. May the Lord bless what we have sown!"

It is sad to think that our national Methodist mission leaders did not take an interest or helpful stance in regard to the Finnish work. Our bishop in Michigan from 1924 to 1932 was Thomas Nicholson. Evidently the Upper Peninsula was beyond his ken and interest. But in his defense we have to remember that he had the Methodist work in the whole state of Indiana to superintend, as well as our Conferences in Michigan.

The collapse of our Finnish work after 1920, is documented by the conference minutes. In 1920 there were four Finnish appointments. Appointed to Ishpeming Finnish was Matti Pitkannen; to Ironwood Finnish, Peter Talikka; to Laurium Finnish, A.V. Tuukanen; "Rudyard Finnish -- to be supplied." Ishpeming reported a salary of \$243, 26 members, 56 preparatory members, a Sunday School enrollment of 51, an Epworth League with 16 youth, and a church valued at \$3500. Ironwood had a parsonage worth \$3000 and a church valued at \$9,000. Peter Talikka had received \$434 salary, of which \$240 was rated as the rental value of the parsonage. Ironwood reported 23 preparatory members, 54 members, and a Sunday School with 60.

Finnish Methodism

The Laurium Finnish Church reported 18 baptized, 30 preparatory members, 57 full members, 75 enrolled in Sunday School, and 50 in the Epworth League. The church was valued at \$3500. Rudyard reported \$180 salary, 3 baptisms, 6 preparatory members, 17 members including 5 non-residents. The Sunday School enrollment was 32, the church was valued at \$3,000.

In 1928 Ishpeming Finnish Church reported a salary of \$500, 26 preparatory members, 24 full members, 3 Sunday Schools with an enrollment of 118, and two Epworth Leagues of 11 and 13 members. Ishpeming reported 3 churches valued at \$10,000, but no parsonage. Ishpeming was now the only Finnish Church reporting.

In 1927 Kaarlo Ruotsaleinen came from Finland to give an outstanding ministry to this American mission. In 1940 after he had served Ishpeming 13 years, the church reported a salary of \$424, 77 members, 20 children baptized, 64 preparatory members, and two Sunday Schools.

In 1948 Kaarlo Ruotsaleinen retired after giving 21 years to the Ishpeming Finnish Church. Kaarlo was born in Kuopio, Finland. He entered the ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Finland and was ordained elder in 1913. The Ishpeming Church rewarded his outstanding record of service with a salary of \$1700 on his claim for \$1650. The church reported 77 members and 47 preparatory members.

The Ruotsalainens made a natural choice to retire in Ishpeming. He died at his Ishpeming home on June 25, 1953. His services were conducted at the Finnish Methodist Church, by the District Superintendent Rev. Charles Wolfe, assisted by Rev. Alexis Poobus of Ewen and Rev. Peter Talikka, a life-long friend and now a member of the Minnesota Conference. In 1954 Mrs. Syma Poobus, wife of Alexis, was the supply preacher here. The membership had declined to 62, and Mrs. Poobus received only \$300 salary, but the W.S.C.S. seemed to be strong.

In 1961 the Conference voted a relief gift of \$675 for Mrs. Ruotsaleinen, doubtless in gratitude, and in recognition of her poverty situation since she received a widow's pension only for the 21 years her husband served in this Conference. In 1957 the Conference appointments made the last reference to the Finnish Churches -- "Ishpeming Finnish -- To be sup(plied)." Some time later this church and the Cleveland Avenue Church merged with the large First Church, to become the new Wesley Methodist Church of Ishpeming.

In 1879 the Detroit Conference considered the rapid increase of lumbering in the northern part of the Lower Peninsula, the clearing of the forests, and the movement of settlers northward to acquire free land for farming. The Conference in a move of statesmanship, decided that a new District should be established and a great effort be made to evangelize, establish, and build churches. The Alpena District was set up, with Andrew J. Richards the Presiding Elder. The appointments numbered 14 the first year, of which preachers had to be found later for 6 circuits. This was truly a missionary district for some years, with much poverty and hard toil, the lot of the ministers and the Presiding Elder.

JAMES E. JACKLIN(1847-1943) -- Our Sixth Cane-Holder!

James E. Jacklin was born on New Year's Day, 1847, in Blissfield. His parents were English emigrants. When James was six years old, the family moved to Detroit. No details of his childhood have come down to us. One of the old Bibles in our conference archives, is one printed by the J.B. Lippincott Co. of Philadelphia in 1861, that was a "New Year's Birthday Present to Master James E. Jacklin by the Miss Wingetts, Detroit, Jan. 1st 1864." The gift was certainly significant, for it was preserved and kept and in Jacklin's old age, was given to the Conference Historical Society.

James E. Jacklin

The youthful James alternated periods of clerking in stores with his studies, and graduated from high school in 1866 at the age of 19. During a great revival led by Rev. Edward Payson Hammond, James was converted and became impressed that he ought to preach the gospel, but he was not ready for that yet. We are told that he was baptized by Bishop E.R. Ames, an experience that meant something to him. He was received into the membership of Central Methodist Church in Detroit. Dr. James M. Buckley, the pastor, was so impressed by this lad that he loaned him money to enable him to enroll in the University of Michigan for one year.

Our conference memoir tells us that Jacklin next worked for a Detroit bank, holding a lucrative position for several years. But Dr. James H. Potts, long-time editor of the Michigan Christian Advocate, at the time that Jacklin was selected to be the assistant editor, published an article of considerable length about James Jacklin. We learn that he was offered this lucrative and congenial bank position but turned it down. The Detroit School Superintendent offered Jacklin the position of instructor of Greek and Latin in the High School. He took this temporary position and was so successful that he was re-engaged, and held this post for over six years. In pursuing this challenging teaching career, he somewhat smothered "his call to the ministry", as Dr. Potts observed.

Then one Sunday in the providence of God, the pastor of Central Methodist Church, Dr. William Xavier Ninde, preached a sermon which stirred profoundly the soul of James Jacklin. He felt that he must settle at once the crucial question, as to whether he should enter the active ministry. An interview with Dr. Ninde led him to a quick decision, and characteristic action. He resigned his position as a teacher, and went to Boston to attend Boston University School of Theology, from which he would graduate three years later in 1876.

He joined the Detroit Conference on trial in the fall of 1875, and he spent only two months of his last seminary year in Boston. He was appointed to a new circuit consisting of Zilwaukee, Carrollton, and Ames chapel in Saginaw City. It was a weak circuit, so weak that there was not a single member at any one of the appointments! The Conference had decided that there ought to be Methodist Churches in these places! Young Jacklin rose to this challenge. He served this circuit two years and counted it "one of the best appointments of his life." At the end of his first year, he reported three Sunday Schools with 190 enrolled, a salary of \$500, but only 7 members.

Jacklin's ministry in Saginaw was greatly aided by his wife. On August 10, 1875 he was married to Emma Belman. Emma had a noble family heritage and she was ever mindful of this. Her mother was a niece of the Rev. James Creighton of Ulster, Ireland, one of John Wesley's favored aids, who assisted Wesley and Coke in ordaining Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey, the first ordained ministers to be sent by Wesley with Thomas Coke to the New World. Emma had joined Central Church, Detroit, in 1862 and soon became a Sunday School teacher. "The dramatic instinct glowed brightly in her nature; this she used with Christian grace and feeling, together with a radiant good nature and a consuming love for little children." She was most successful in Sunday School work, and in the public schools.

In 1877 James Jacklin was moved from the Saginaw area to the delightful village of Northville. He was glad to go, following as he wrote long after, "An appointment to a primitive section of the Saginaw Valley abounding in fever and ague and whiskey but so scantily supplied with morality and piety and organized church life." The Jacklins now had only one church to serve, and their parsonage was the third best on the Detroit District. Long after Jacklin admitted to a feeling of depression on his first Sunday in Northville, and had said to a friend: "I'm afraid I'm going to feel lost and out of place here in this town. I have been living where there are whole towns of godless folks needing the gospel and needing salvation and there was work wherever I looked, but here it looks as if everybody went to church and as if every man and woman knew the Lord. Where can I find any real work to do?" But James did manage to keep busy three happy years, and when he left he realized there were still "saints needing sanctification and sinners needing conversion."

James E. Jacklin

In 1880 the Jacklins went to serve the Monroe Church. Their ministry was summarized thus: 'They had three testing but blessed years with the good church at Monroe, during which time the consuming debt was canceled.' The Monroe people had built a very large brick church, one of the finest in the Conference in 1869-71. It had a fine organ, gas lights, steam heat, and a capacity to seat 600 people. It was dedicated June 10, 1871. The church had cost \$20,000. It was assumed that it was debt free, but after the dedication the people found that there were additional claims totalling \$11,000! The church struggled with this large debt for a decade through the depression of the 1870's. Finally subscriptions were taken up throughout the Conference to help Monroe. The Ladies Aid Society worked very hard to raise money. A triumphal ending for Jacklin's pastorate came on September 20, 1883 when the consuming debt was canceled.

In 1883 Jacklin was given a coveted appointment to Washington Street, Bay City. In the previous spring, new lots for a re-location on Madison Avenue, had been acquired. A printed manual of this church for 1882, shows a church well organized. In three years the membership grew considerably. The modern building was begun in 1886. The cornerstone was laid on September 7 at the close of Jacklin's pastorate, for three years was the limit on pastorates then.

In 1886 Rev. Jacklin was rewarded by an appointment to Court Street Church in Flint. The church was using its second building built in 1861 and seating 500 people, but already there was sentiment for a larger church with a pipe organ. Growing congregations greeted the new and able pastor, and promoted the felt need for a new church. The last social was held in the old church; two immense congregations assembled on the last Sunday. It was torn down and the cornerstone of the new laid on July 20, 1888 by Mrs. Catherine McAlester, a member of the original 1836 class. The church had seating for 750 people, a Sunday School library, double parlors, an infant class room, beautiful windows, space for kitchen, dining room, furnaces, and more. The first organ concert was given in the new church on February 8, 1889; the first social on February 11. The dedication came on February 10. The Epworth League for Methodist youth was organized in Cleveland in May 1889. Immediately Court Street Society became a chapter of the League. The new youth organization moved forward rapidly. In 1891 the young people here attended the first state Convention.

In 1890 J.E. Jacklin was selected by the unanimous vote of the directors of the Methodist Publishing Company to be the Associate Editor of the Michigan Christian Advocate. Dr. Potts in his announcement summarized Jacklin's life and rising career in the Conference, and paid tribute to his balanced and symmetrical ministry. He noted that Jacklin had "to some extent pursued special studies, and has developed by actual practice the journalistic gifts which have now attracted the attention of our company."

For 23 years the Jacklins lived in Detroit. The editorials of both Potts and Jacklin were highly regarded, and Jacklin became a respected leader in Michigan Methodism. Then in 1913, Jacklin became the executive secretary of the Old Peoples Home in Chelsea, as it was then called. He gave strong leadership to the Home and efficient administration. The writing of his memoir stated, "His name will ever be linked to our Old People's Home at Chelsea. This institution is his monument, through his diligence and patience, writing unnumbered postcards and letters to people everywhere, he set forth the importance and mission of this institution."

In their career of ministerial service to the Church, Emma Jacklin worked devotedly with her husband, bringing the noble graces of consecrated personality. She gave lavishly of her time, strength and labors to the Church. For many years Mrs. Jacklin was a banner worker in the Womens Missionary Societies, serving with enthusiasm whether in or out of office. Hers was a remarkable record as the president of the Conference Home Missionary Society. Her friend, Sidney D. Eva, a flowery speaker and writer, wrote, "Emma Belman Jacklin lived cheerfully, which is the same as saying, 'It's a sunny day.'"

In 1925 at the age of 72 1/2 James Jacklin retired and they moved back to Detroit. His wife's health was failing. On August 10, 1926 on their 51st wedding anniversary, Emma passed away. Her husband and their daughter Flora with "united affection and tender care enlightened the many weeks of pain and cheered her

James E. Jacklin

through the valley." The funeral service was conducted by Dr. Howard Field, with Dr. Eugene W. Moore giving the address. Burial was in Elmwood Cemetery.

On the last day of the 1941 Annual Conference, "J. Adolph Halmhuber, President of the Historical Society, on behalf of the Conference, presented the Conference Cane, in absentia, to James E. Jacklin, the oldest member of the Conference both in age and in years of service." Jacklin was 94 years old and presumably unable to attend. Jacklin was the first Cane-holder who was a seminary graduate. Truly his was a long and illustrious career in our Conference. He entered into the heavenly glory on October 27, 1943, after nearly 97 years of earthly life. His funeral was held in the Cass Avenue Church, conducted by Dr. Sidney Eva, with Dr. Marshall Reed preaching the sermon. Other ministers taking part were William Perkins, Howard Field, B.L. Holmes, and Paul Nicholas. The Conference was saddened to realize that this rock-hewn, versatile leader, walked no more among us!

AN EARLY METHODIST PREACHER IN ONAWAY -- GRANT PERKINS

(This excerpt is from a book received in the archives this spring, Forgotten is The Name, The Fascinating Story of the Extraordinary Adventures, Life, and Ministry of Rev. Ulysses S. Grant Perkins. In the September Messenger, we will publish longer excerpts from this fascinating book, and give more details about it. Grant's grandson, Ben Perkins, has given his permission, and has promised us extra copies which will be available to interested people at a modest price.)

"A friend who had become the District Superintendent ... in Detroit, asked Grant to join him there. Grant sensed that the inevitable move was coming anyhow and accepted. In those days the Methodists moved their preachers around as though they were IBM assistant managers. The system of the itinerant preacher who preached and moved on, a relic of pioneer days, took a long time to die in the Methodist tradition. So they left Latonia(Kentucky) in the late summer of 1909. Victorine expecting her first baby ... went home to Louisville. Grant went north to Detroit, where the Bishop appointed him to the church at Onaway, Michigan, high up in the north part of the southern peninsula.

Even though Michigan had been admitted as a state in 1837, most of its northern interior was uninhabited and unpenetrated as late as 1900. The building of the first road through the thick forests from Rogers City on Lake Huron into the interior was as herculean a job in the 1880s as had been the building of the National Road in Onaway in 1901. One did not have to go west to get the feeling of the pioneer life, and it looked good to Grant. He had a little of the American rolling stone wanderer in his soul anyhow.

Grant and Victorine met later in Detroit. They went on board the lake steamer Alpena for the journey north. The September day was crisp and sunny as the huge paddle wheels pushed the ship into the waters of Lake St. Clair. The red leather bellows of his Brownie camera were extended for snaps of both of them on the wind swept deck; he in a snappy cap and white vest, very unclerical, and she, slender and smiling, beneath a wide hat with a long shawl for warmth against the lake winds. They were having fun. Victorine, who had never been very far from home, was enjoying the adventure. As night came on Lake Huron, there was nothing to see except the black waters and the lights of passing ships. They walked a little on deck, but the dark water made Victorine uneasy.

By midnight all was quiet on board The Alpena. The paddles sucking at the water and the walking beam of the engines going up and down were the only things moving. As they approached the lights of Alpena harbor about 2:00 A.M. a few sleepy crewmen appeared. On land they went up the long board walk to a little hotel, but only to be up at 4:00 A.M. for the fifty-mile train ride to Onaway.

The land they saw bore little relation to the scenes they had imagined. A few scraggly farms were cut by homesteaders from the forests on the flat and swampy plains. Then where logging had been completed, the

Onaway in 1909-10

sea of raw stumps. It was untidy and exploited land. They arrived exhausted but expectant, only to be told that there was no parsonage to go to because of trouble in the church. Instead, they went to a hotel over one of town's saloons.

Grant tells the story. "We found there was trouble in the church. A congregational minister was filling the pulpit. He was very brilliant and had the town coming but he had a drinking problem. He made a hard pull to hold the church, but among the Methodists the Conference rules. He had affected the sale of the parsonage and had leased it for a year. He held out for about a month and then went on a long spree."

Grant felt that the Lord must look down on some of his congregations with disbelief. He wrote: "A banker, treasurer of the church, was wrapped up in the ousted pastor with a note for which the bank's directors were holding him responsible." He was the ousted pastor's principle supporter, insisting to the Bishop that he was the best judge of the local situation. Again, Grant invoked the congregational vote, which he won 146 to 16. After that there was no trouble.

Because he could hunt and fish again as he had in the mountains, Grant enjoyed Onaway. The town stood in the middle of large stands of virgin pines and hardwoods. Its main street had warped wooden sidewalks and coverings of mud when wet and dust when dry. The coming of the Detroit and Mackinac Railroad in 1901 had brought an explosion of lumber related industries and population. In 1910 it had grown from a village of less than 300 to a lusty 2700. Today it is much quieter at 1400.

Lumber camps ringing the town fueled seven lumber mills, making a variety of products. Economic life was based on lumber as a wasting asset, headlong and careless of the future. Lumbering was done in camps where hundreds of men lived and worked, felling and working the trees out of the forest on wagons of huge wheels, pulled by mules and oxen.

Feeding the lumberjacks was a substantial business. Maybelle Roberts at ninety, remembers waiting on table in those days for two hundred rough and hungry men, but always under the watchful eye of her Baptist church-going father who ran the camp. One did not have to go west to feel the pulse of a frontier town then.

Class distinctions were unknown because yesterday's lumberjack could today be cutting his own timber. But social life was divided along sharp lines. The lumberjacks supported the seven saloons in the little town, but the church young people organized their own parties and dances, as Grace Prestiger remembers.

But Grace's father firmly ruled out her traveling with a musical quartet of four men. So early in September, 1909, she married a young banker. A Methodist later, Grace had said that she only joined the Methodist Church (then an enemy of ... card playing and dancing) when her dancing days were over. But she did remember that the minister who conducted her wedding was little tipsy. For that reason he was not invited to the wedding supper, but he came anyhow. He was the same man who tried to hold onto the church when Grant and Victorine arrived later the same month.

The Masons of Onaway finally made up a purse to send the unfortunate minister to Kansas, the first state of the Union to adopt Prohibition. It was a generous, though probably a useless gesture. Alcoholism was then seen only as a moral, and not as a medical, problem. There was little understanding of the alcoholic as a sick man, obsessed, living up tight, wanting and hating liquor at the same time, ashamed that he was seen drunk again, vowing that he will never take another drink, but knowing that he will.

After the troubled minister had left, the church became more normal. Perhaps my birth on Thanksgiving day 1909, in two cramped rooms where Grant and Victorine had been forced to live at first, had a reconciling influence. Who could long remain angry when the new pastor, his pretty wife, and new baby, were made to live in that way?"
