

Memories of Lakeville

by Helen Spencer Demas - The Livonia Gazette

November 20, 1975



James Henry Spencer and his family. The children, from left to right are: Frances Spencer Whipple, Ann Spencer Little and Helen Spencer Demas. Standing in back is Grace Wickham Spencer and Mr. Spencer

James Henry Spencer, a native of Lakeville, built his hotel the Spencer House, in 1888 down on the dock. He married Grace Wickham in 1897. The couple had four daughters: myself, Helen Spencer Demas, the eldest of the four, Frances Spencer Whipple, Ann Spencer Little and Myrtle Spencer Temperato.

The youngest daughter was born on the first day of January, and my father passed away on December 15, 1906, the same year the McPherson burned.

My father, James Henry Spencer, became captain of the boat after the retirement of Captain Remington. The boat burned in November of that year. Father had pulled it to the back of the hotel for repairs. The repairmen, who were from Rochester, accidentally left live coals in the hold, and the boat caught fire. There was no way to save the boat, and my father was very sad over its loss.

I had ridden on the McPherson many times. Father and Grant Northup and a company owned the boat. Grant Northup was the fireman of the crew that operated the boat. My grandfather, John Clayton Wickham, played a fiddle, and along with Gardner

Bryant and quite a few others, provided musical entertainment. There were moonlight excursions and good times were often enjoyed.

I will get back to the hotel. Father took care of the fishermen in the summer and the ice harvesters in the winter. The harvesting of ice was very interesting to watch. The conveyor was across the tracks from the hotel. Men picked up cakes of ice to be carried to the ice house on the conveyor. Ed Tripp was the big boss and Bert Johnson was time-keeper.

Men came from all over to work during the ice harvest. I remember some of them: Freeman Boone from Livonia Center, Abe Slingerl and Jerry VanCleet. They would come to the hotel to eat their lunch, and have coffee. George Herrington was barn boss and there is one incident in particular that I can recall.

George had a white horse by the name of Old Bill. He would head for a hole in the ice, and the men would have to get him out. The reason Bill did this, was that he used to get a swig of whiskey in him, and the men were always having to watch him.

Down on the dock there was another hotel, the fisherman's home. Bill Forman owned it and when he died, it was rented to Dave Gallipeau, my father's brother-in-law. He had a barber shop in the hotel along with the bar. Dave later moved to Avon where he ran a barber shop.

Upon the death of my father in 1907, the hotel was sold to Ohio Marschke of Rochester. My mother knew very little about operating a hotel, so we moved to the village in a house Fred Marschke purchased. Mother later sold the house to Frank Youst.

Every spring when the ice on the lake broke up, it made such a terrible sound, that we finally moved from the hotel to the village in Frank Aiker's apartment. We would stay there until the lake was normal again.



The Conesus Lake steamer, the "McPherson", which was burned in 1906

My grandfather, Henry Spencer, who owned the place across the bridge, was the instigator of using the water wheel in the outlet to run his machinery. He was a pump builder. My grandfather, along with Jake Carpenter and other men installed the pumps. Mother later sold the place to John Croun.

The first sidewalk in Lakeville was in front of the hotel that burned some time ago, right where the Lakeville Inn now stands. Next to our house in Lakeville, on the east side, was a big building with an evaporator. Fred Tiffany operated the evaporator. He used it to dry apples.

On the west side of our house was Frank Acker's general store. You name it, he had it. He was the nicest man you would ever meet. Frank had his own vineyard and apple orchards. His sugar was in a barrel and his cheese was in a tub, as was the butter. Frank carried yard goods and shoes among other items. It made me think of a frontier store.

I remember when the milk plant was built, Mr. Baird from New York City was boss of the Brown and Bailey plant. The children of Lakeville went to school in what is known now as the Lakeville Firehouse. The teachers then were Linda Durkee, Luella Annis and Lora E. Bishop. We were young and everybody was happy. We were all related so people had to be careful not to step on one another's toes.

My grandmother Spencer's sister, Carrey Mooney, lived in Lakeville park. Her husband was a blacksmith and had his place of business in the park. Next to his building was a carriage building where William Mooney, Aunt Carrey's son, repaired buggies and harnesses. The building where Lakeville post office in now, was George Ayer's meat market next to what was known as the Red Gables. They used to take borders.

What a great improvement Stone Hill Road is. When I lived in the village, so did the elder George Northup. Proceeding up the road was Henry Wright, the Biek girls, Luella and Harrietta, Hannah Stamp, Lindy Bates, Charley West, Henry Pheil, the depot agent, and Laura E. Bishop and her brother Vernan Bishop, who was a doctor. The farm where Lew Barrows lives now, belonged to the Armstrong family.

I must not forget the Kimbark Hotel. It was a big building, owned by George Hoyt, a Civil War Veteran, at the time I lived in Lakeville. That is the place where Nick had his junk yard. The stage coaches used to stop there enroute to Geneseo.

I started out in Lakeville and moved to Livonia in 1912. I have a lot of good memories, and am trying to fill in where others left off. Lakeville is an interesting hamlet. Where the syrup factory is now, was the old LaVette West place, where Charlie Hoyt's family lived. Where Lewis Grocery Store is now was once a store operated by Frank Row and Alice. She was Alice Mooney, a second cousin of mine. Where the Clover Farm store in now, was once a store operated by Gilbert and Hibbard. Lakeville is progressing.

The Livonia Gazette

Helen Spencer Demas

*Use of all photos and/or text in this article have been approved and granted use courtesy of
www.HemlockandCanadiceLakes.com and www.ConesusLakeNY.org.*