

Introductions

The Year of 1979
To: Marcellus Centennial Committee
From: Father Time

You ask if I have information regarding the history of Marcellus? Oh yes, I now remember that village well!! After contacting some of the "old timers," I find that my memory has been refreshed and I have enormous quantities of information in which you would be interested. Not only hundreds of pictures, but also bits of data and bits of gossip from the past. I can tell you how they made soap, bread, bricks, and cheese. How a man could emerge out of the dense forest with only a few simple tools and maybe a cow, clear a place and then build his home and empire with only these items plus his hands and wit.

Although I do not wish to offend any of those who so willingly and eagerly helped refresh my memory, I cannot begin to include everything which has been given to me. Although I may wander at times, I will try to stick to the history of man, his industries, his businesses, and his homes.

It has just occurred to me that possibly the most important feature of your heritage is the nature of the people themselves! I will give you a short review of my impressions and then try to stick to the other areas mentioned above. Come and join me as we tour Marcellus in days of the past.

Sincerely,
Father Time

Footprints On The Sands Of Time

The Miami Indians and then the Potowatomies inhabited southwestern Michigan in earliest history. In 1680 Robert De LaSalle, the famous French explorer and his aides, first entered the interior of Michigan going from the mouth of the St. Joseph River on Lake Michigan east to the Detroit River. According to his day book on the first days out they forced their way through brambly thickets, their clothes were torn, their faces covered with blood. Game was scarce and they grew faint from hunger. But in two or three days they reached "a happier region" where they shot deer, bear and turkeys and "fared sumptuously."

Local historians are quite unanimous in their belief that at this point LaSalle had reached Marcellus or its environs.

The Cass County History of 1882 says: "The pioneers who penetrated Southwestern Michigan found a land as fertile and as fair to look upon as the heart could wish. In the spring the woods were odorless with the spicy exhalations of bursting buds, and the prairies were jeweled with strange and brilliant flowers "the stars that in earths ferment do shine" while the luxuriant growth of tall waving grass gave evidence of the strength of the virgin soil which it clothes."

In 1836 Josephus Gard purchased from the government much of the land presently comprising the Village limits.

To Charles J. Bradt, a frequent contributor to the Marcellus News (established 1877) we are indebted for his excellent columns entitled "Memories." His life span started shortly before the Village was formed. His father's farm was just a mile or so southwest of the Village and he recalled the thrill he received as a young boy when he saw the first railroad train come across his father's farm in 1871.

The Name "Marcellus"

The Village was formed in 1879 but its name was decided for it June 16, 1843. The Village took its name from the name already given to the township when it organized at the home of Daniel G. Rouse in 1843.

Luke Riggs has furnished a brown and faded newspaper clipping without date, recounting an interview with G. Marcellus Rouse who returned from the state of Washington to remove his

mother's remains to a cemetery. He said that he was born on June 16, 1843 which forced the organizers of the township to adjourn the meeting from his father's house to a nearby cooper shop located where the Patrick School used to be at the south end of the present Burlington Street.

The name "Marcellus" was suggested by Judge Littlejohn of Allegan our representative in the legislature. The name Cambria was first chosen but there was another township of that name.

There is an old theater in Rome among the ruins of antiquity named the "Marcellus Theater." Claudius Marcellus was the husband of Octavia, sister of the Roman Emperor Augustus. Marcellus was a consul. Their son Marcus Marcellus might have followed Augustus as emperor except for his early death. When Octavia died Augustus built a temple in her honor.

On June 16, 1843, not only did the township receive that name but so did G. Marcellus Rouse who was born that day and the niece of neighbor John Manning, also born that day was named Marcella Manning. She married Peter Ryan.

The Nature Of Man And Village

Marcellus 1879 to 1979. In 1879 the Village of Marcellus was experiencing the exhilaration of train travel. Previously tied to the slow laborious pace of the horse and buggy new horizons were opening, a new city, (even one that might some day be as big as Chicago) was experiencing growing pains.

Over 500 people were living in Marcellus in 1879, only nine years after it was first platted. It was evident from the industries and stores that many of the occupations were connected with forest products (saw mills, cooper shops, school seat factory, lumber yards) and transportation (blacksmith, livery stables, harness shops, buggies, wagons, horses).

Money was not plentiful. Farmers would bring in produce and trade it for food and clothing. Saturday night the stores stayed open until ten o'clock to accommodate the crowds who came to town to shop and visit. Stores were smaller with less overhead. Only a few hamlets were found within 10 miles of Marcellus in the early days and with the slow mode of transportation made it the center for trade and business.

By 1911 the automobile was beginning to replace the horse and buggy. It was a slow but relentless revolution with the government furnishing the highway while the railroads furnished their own tracks. Tractors replaced teams. Garages, filling stations, automobile sales and trailer factories took the place of the blacksmiths and other horse related industries.

Some predictors of gloom claimed that grass would grow on the streets of the small town, young people were fleeing to the cities, but the cities have become overcrowded, transportation is often bumper to bumper, fumes, smoke and smog hang like a pall above them, threatening life itself. Unsolved crime is rampant in the streets and in the dwellings which adds to the disillusionment being experienced by many city dwellers. As the pendulum swings, many now seek to return to small towns and suburban life, where with the advent of the radio, television and superb educational facilities life can be more pleasant, tranquil and rewarding.

An additional leavening influence, enjoyed by Marcellus and helping to check the tide to obscurity has been the many beautiful fresh water lakes around it, where seasonal cottages have been built. These cottages have, to a considerable extent, become permanent residences now.

From earliest time man's door and heart were always open to a neighbor in Marcellus. In times of illness or sorrow all are concerned; in times of happiness the pleasure is shared. Even work is often shared by neighbor with neighbor without thought of pay. It is, indeed, a community of friendship and compassion that has been a powerful influence in preserving and stabilizing the Village. Loyal residents generally show a preference for local merchants to their mutual advantage.



The Early Settlement

In the beginning this was an area of dense forests and swamps. In 1836 the only marks that gave evidence that the foot of civilized man had trod the soil of this unbroken wilderness were a few blazed trees which denoted an indefinite pathway made by the land speculator. The actual settler had avoided it because of its dense forests and heavy timber, its marshes and malaria, and had sought out the more open prairies where there were no trees.

The settler in the area which is now Marcellus faced immense labor in clearing the primeval forests. The timber had to be felled, cut up, logged and burned — a job much easier said than done. The stumps and roots then continued to be an annoyance for many years after the cutting. These obstacles explain why Marcellus was the last settled area in this part of Cass County. It was only the more hearty men who settled here.

In 1868 there were four farm houses in what is now Marcellus and the Main Street running west wound south around a little lake that was west of the Hudson Memorial Building. It is now a marsh. In this year George W. Jones purchased 211 acres of land which is now Marcellus for \$13,000.00. This was at that time considered an extravagant price. Impressed with the belief that it was an ideal site for a settlement due to its geographic location and the possibility that a railroad would be built through the area, he began to plat a village and this was completed and recorded in April, 1870. The Village was incorporated in 1879.

Leander Bridges, George Roach and David Snyder owned land joining that purchased by Jones and they joined him in platting the village. Located in the geographical center of the township, the new town's growth was phenomenal. With the coming of the railroad in 1871, the future of Marcellus seemed assured. Buildings were of a substantial character, the people of an industrious and enterprising nature, and the railroad provided transportation so essential to a settlement in the

1800's. Incidentally, Marcellus and Nicholsville waged quite a contest in attempting to get the railroad. Efforts of G. W. Jones, Leander Bridges, and David Snyder brought it to Marcellus.

By 1879 the new village had over 500 inhabitants with most of them arguing for or against incorporation. A petition signed by 93 residents resulted in incorporation in that year. This petition was accompanied by a census list giving names of the heads of families, many of which are still prominent names in or around Marcellus. The census showed 126 families with 530 members of whom 133 were voters. You are reminded that women could not vote in those days.

Three years after incorporation, this booming community had 2 churches (the Evangelical and Methodist), a two story brick schoolhouse, a Masonic Lodge, an Odd Fellows Lodge, a Grange of the Patrons of Husbandry, and a Lodge of Good Templars. It also had 3 dry goods stores, 3 groceries, 2 drug stores, a hardware, a furniture store, and 3 millinery stores. In addition to these were found 2 blacksmith shops, 2 wagon shops, 2 meat markets, 2 tin shops, 2 hotels, a tailor shop, 2 harness shops, a restaurant, and a printing business. Professional persons included 4 physicians, 2 lawyers, and 2 Justice of the Peace. A weekly newspaper called The Messenger was already flourishing. The young Marcellus also had 2 stove factories, a planing mill, a sash and blind factory, a cooper shop, and a steam saw mill. All of this in so short a time!

Thomas Burney was the first merchant, John Manning kept the first grocery, David Morrison started the first blacksmith shop, and G. Doolittle the first wagon shop. Herman Chapman started the first hardware and Lewis Arnold the first hotel.

When the village was incorporated, David Snyder was elected president, Leander Bridges, Keyton Bly, Warren Matthews, Byron Beebe, Roswell Beebe, and Alexander Taylor were elected trustees.

A Tour Of Marcellus In 1911

(As Described By Father Time)

Let's pick a year and take a walk through Marcellus. 1911 sounds like a good year because at that time the village had been incorporated for 32 years and was a thriving and booming place. In fact, one resident back in 1876 predicted that we might someday exceed Chicago in size.

As we stand here at the corner of Main and Centre Streets in 1911, we can see flourishing business establishments in all directions. We note that the G. W. Jones Exchange Bank is the only one which you will have in the same location in 1979. You will also note that the streets are lined with hitching posts, cobblestone curbs, and the wooden sidewalks several steps above the streets. Here comes a car from the east. Our horses are becoming more accustomed to these horseless carriages as we see more of them every year. Considering how muddy these streets and roads are at this time of year, I'll stick to the old faithful horse and buggy.

These streets, of course will be dry and dusty when this rainy season is over. During that season Ed Kent and his sprinkling wagon will be a common sight on these streets. John Lutes will drive this wagon in later days. Hello Howard! This young fellow is Howard McKenzie. He doesn't know it yet, but he is going to marry Beulah Stanard and become an outstanding farmer in Cass County and will still be seen on these streets in 1979.

Do you recognize that good looking fellow coming out of Waugh Brothers Livery Stable? That's Vaughn Bartlett who in 1979 will own a home on the site of that stable. In 1911 he helped to operate the Owl Lunch Room.

Let's stay out of the mud and walk east on the north side of Main Street. This fine looking corner building housing a drug store was built by Dr. Elrath and was first occupied by a seed store. As you stand here in 1979, you will see Ingersoll's Drug Store. For many years operated by Charles Sr. and now by his capable son. As we take this stroll I'll often refer to 1911 as today and to 1979 as your day. If we see any youngsters who will still be around in 1979, I'll point them out to you.

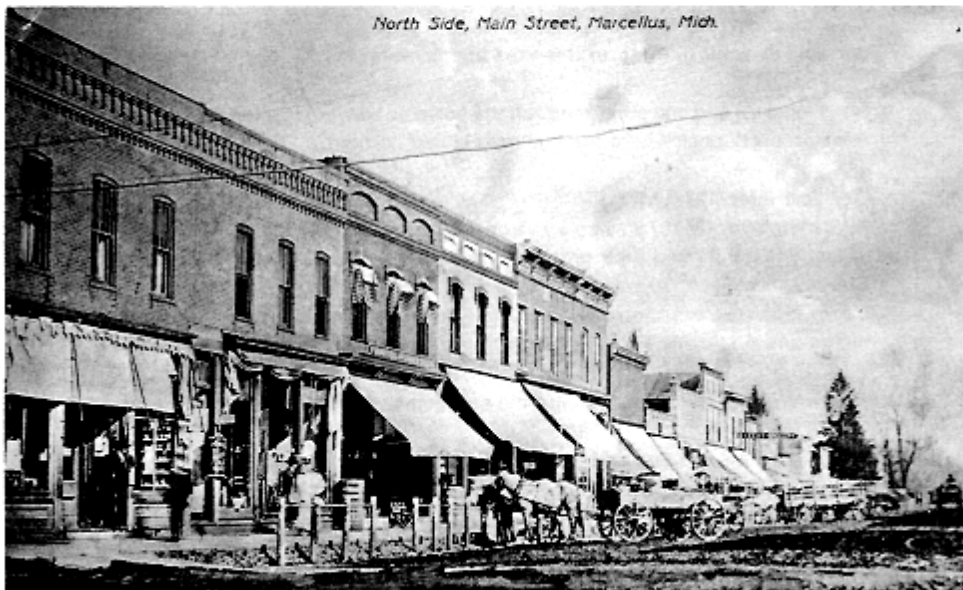
This next store is the Dedrick Hardware which in your day will be the site of the Nip & Tuck Tavern. In 1979 you will have Romig's Furniture Store where you now (1911) see Elmer Walter's furniture store and undertaking establishment one door east of Dedrick's. Incidentally, Oscar Romig is learning these trades here now (in 1911). Have you noticed our modern electric street lights? They were put in back in 1902. Many towns around us are still using gas lights. The village has its own power plant.

It is obvious that Marcellus is really thriving (in 1911) because this third store is another hardware, Patch & Remington. You, too, will enter a hardware here but you will call it Carlton's Hardware long under the management of the same family. As we look at this next store, our times again seem to blend. Instead of seeing this Burlington & Krise Grocery, you will have Terrill's Market, a grocery truly as fine as this one. Do you see those three children in there by the candy jars? They are the Streeter sisters, Berniece, Emma Lou and Gladys. Berniece will marry Don Kuhns; Emma Lou will become Mrs. Wilfred G. Torrence; Gladys will marry Ted Fox. Speaking of your Terrill's Market reminds me that Barney Terrill is our popular nightwatch and his son Elmer Terrill is about to enter the business world.

This next building is a popular one as it houses our post office. By your day, however, this building will be part of Terrill's Super Market. This next drug store operated by Clyde Goodrich will also be gone and the ground on which it now rests will also be a part of Terrill's parking lot in 1979.

Look at those hats!! Aren't they beauties? Lena Newkirk always carries a fine selection. The site of this millinery shop will join those others as a part of your parking lot. Let's move on down the street. Here is A. C. Mack's grocery and meat market. In your day you will have Harry's TV here. East of Mack's we find W. O. George's drug store. Hello there Berle and Cleo!! Those little boys in that buggy are the Fuller youngsters.

Do you smell those rolls? Youells & Hopkins can certainly turn out delicious pastries and they sell the famous "Gilt Edge Cereal" that Mr. and Mrs. George Clemens made. That little girl





in there with her mother is Mary Mikel and you will know her as Mary Rimes. I understand that the ovens in there will stand until the building is dismantled in the 1960's. There are several ovens in the basement of the building at the rear of this one and they will merely be covered up when the building is torn down. They will get their revenge for this treatment, however, because when this front building is torn down they will cave in and take a truck down with them. These next buildings will house several businesses before being dismantled in the 1960's.

And we have now arrived at a business which will live through the ages, the Marcellus News! As this paper plays an important part in the history of Marcellus, I'll give you a special story about it later. The east part of this building is the Township Library but completely devoured by the News in the years ahead.

Every town needs a photographer and Marcellus' R. D. Bailey follows that trade in this next establishment. At a later date Cree Coach will use this site and next lot. In your day you will see a vacant building here. Elmer Reigle operates that express office and the Annex Theatre in these following buildings. In your day you will have a beautiful village hall in this area. I see the admission price at the theatre is 5¢ and that looks like a good silent movie!! The house on the corner will soon be moved to the back of the lot. Willie Curtis will have a filling station on this corner in 1979. Over there across the street east you see Dr. Thomas' livery stable instead of your library.

Although there's no crosswalk here, let's watch our step and cross Main Street to the south side and look around. That fine looking three story hotel ahead of us on the southwest corner is the pride of the town and known as the City Hotel. In your day you will have a Shell filling station there.

Do you see that cute little girl tagging along after her father? That's Dessa Ayres who you will know as Dessa Bohney. She loves a good horse race. You will race cars; these youngsters race horses. You should see them thunder down the street when school dismisses!

When you stand on this corner looking east in your day, you will see the Farm Bureau's impressive buildings instead of that fine elevator owned by Floyd Burlington and Fletcher's implement and harness business. Do you see Lukes Laundry down south? It's quite an operation. Joe Stroz will have an auto body repair shop there in your day. Beyond Luke's we have a



blacksmith shop and across the alley we have Loren Huber's grocery and meat market instead of your Southside Market. It is on this site that Elmer Terrill plans to go into the grocery business soon.

It is easy to recognize our depot on the east side, but that deserves a story by itself.

If we walked on across the tracks you would see our fine school just beyond those next two houses. The mill and shop just west of the house turns out some mighty fine barrels. Edmund Schoetow is our school superintendent and the boys don't monkey with him because he is tough! He chins himself with one hand and laughs at the boys who can't do it. He jogs to school in the winter without coat or hat.

Looking east down Main Street you see Fred William's Grocery in that cement block building near the corner of Maple and Main and I. M. Smith's Marcellus Lumber Company on the north side. In the rear of the lumber yard we will soon have the Sturdybuilt Body Company where Millard Smith will build racks and bodys for trucks. We also have a hatchery down there. You will have the Bainbridge Enterprises where the Lumber Company and Sturdybuilt used to be. They also occupy the lot where Alice Bridge Joiner lived, later a hatchery. Let's turn and wander west down the South side of Main Street.

This next building west of the hotel where you will have a vacant lot houses the office of Drs. Shillito and Kedney. They have handsomely finished the offices in black walnut. West past

Doc's place is Weaver's bakery on what in your time will be a vacant lot.

If you ask residents in your day who cut their hair in past years, many will say Mr. Decker. This barber shop in front of which you are now standing is destined to serve Marcellus for well over 80 years. It was originally further west and occupied by Thomas Burney and the town's first merchant. This place, too, deserves a special story. If you don't need a shave or haircut, let's look at what's ahead. Incidentally, that little boy wiggling in Decker's barber chair is Harold Gebhard. Harold will farm, serve on the board of education, teach and serve his community in many ways during the years between now and 1979.

Next west we have Archie Woods Bargain Store where you will have a vacant store with a big Pizzeria sign in front. West of Archie's you see a pool and lunch establishment run by Roy and Vaughn Bartlett, followed by a cream buying station and the Owl Lunch Room which Vaughn also helps run. These will be vacant in your day. Now if this isn't coincidence! Here comes Florence Huber who we'll know as Florence Bartlett, Vaughn's wife. Good Morning Miss Florence.

We are now passing Mr. Snyder's Columbian Hotel and I believe you will see the vacant former convalescent home on this land in your day. On your left where you have the insurance office is another barber shop belonging to Henry Terry. Listen to the singing in that saloon! They are slightly out of tune and you can guess why! Looking ahead to your time I see Carroll Rimes' insurance firm of Abbott and Powers here (instead of the saloon). Incidentally, Carroll will be a descendant of William Mikel, a signer of our Petition for Incorporation. Next we have Jake Soloman's Center Store which specializes in clothing and you will have Pep's Tavern on this site.

Everyone in the area has enjoyed the ice cream served by Will Arnold in this next store with the artificial palm trees and wire back chairs. He runs a highly respected place and has pool tables behind the door in back. Let's peek inside, there should be some youngsters in there.

See that boy whirling the stool? That's Cleo Fuller and the boy to his left is his brother Berle. The little girl daintily eating ice cream at the table to your far left is Beulah Potter who later will marry Lyle Carrier. Ah, there's a fine lass chatting with Mr. Arnold. That's Jennie Spittler who will marry Oscar Romig and be the mother of Mary Jones, the wife of your attorney and banker. The lad with the big cone is Arthur Whitenight. This fine place will be long gone in your day and the vacant room you will find here will be known as the old Ross Theatre building.

Let's move on west. Where you have a dentist's office you will note that we have C. C. Long's Grocery with his son Lee upstairs selling insurance. The residents say that if Charlie Long doesn't have it, you can't find it! And now we come to the First State Saving Bank. Walter Jones has his law offices upstairs. You will have Rimes Lunch at this spot and the old vault will still be there. Moving on, we see Sime Brody's Restaurant and then Russell's roofing business. Mr. Russell's son has a cleaning and pressing shop in there too. You will have a parking lot here.

The land on which these next buildings rest will be the site of Hepp's in your day. Although rearranged and remodeled by Luke Riggs into one, these buildings will still be here. It is obvious that this first one houses a jewelry store; there is a harness shop in the back of this building. Past the jewelry store we have the Marcellus Supply Company. Those next two buildings house G. W. Kroll's general store known as Kroll's Emporium, "the bargain center" of the area.

Hello Anna! Anna Zowe who will marry J. N. Kirby will be as delightful a person in 1979 as she is today! Let's turn south on Centre Street. Don't stumble on the warped sidewalk slat. This first building is the Gas Company and it is obvious that this next building on your left is a house. In this third building we have Jacob Sherman's Jewelry and Watch repair shop. Jake brags that he has the best clock and watch oil in the world and he makes it by crushing the meats from black walnuts. He also makes brushes from horse tails treated with a patented solution for applying strong chemicals. In your day you will have Bob's Barber Shop in this building. Did you know that this structure was the first home of the G. W. Jones Exchange Bank and moved here from where the bank now stands? Both that house and this building once sat on the lot where you have the Fiesta Market.

That mill south of us just before you cross the tracks is owned by Edward H. Conklin and makes very fine flour from wheat raised by nearby farmers. Ed Mellen is the miller. The large metal tank will stand until your day and is used for storing wheat. That beautiful mural on it you see today was painted to commemorate the bank's 100th birthday. Let's cross the street and wander back.

Otis Huff has his law office in that little white building on the west side of Centre Street. Although it will be vacant in your day, Grace Hartshorn will have a beauty shop there for several years. Here we are at the Centennial Block. As we turn west on Main Street — Whoops, pardon me Hazel. I wasn't watching where I was going. That little girl is Hazel Remington who you will know as Hazel Harvey. We started west on Main, so let's continue our tour.





You will note that all the stores in the Centennial Block are occupied by S. Stern & Company. They handle groceries, corsets, calico, washboards, clothing, dry goods, shoes, and many other items. Notice that young fellow with the piece of barber pole candy? That's Fred Young. When kids go into the store, Albert Moses, who is a partner there, gives them a piece of barber pole candy. The kids love it but many mothers fret because it becomes sticky and gets all over their clothes. In the back along the alley Ed Seward has a shoe shop. As S. Sterns & Company has played an important part in the history of Marcellus, I will give you more details later.

Are your eyes tired? We could drop into this next business establishment as they sell glasses. You undoubtedly recognize the following building as the G. W. Jones Exchange Bank. If something looks odd its because the building is only one half as large as you will know it. The building with the optical business will be torn down next year and Mr. Jones will double the size of his bank. The new part will be almost a duplicate of what you see now.

If you peep through the window you will see a charming young lady and a little boy over there by the teller's cage. That is Mr. Jones' daughter, Donna and her little brother, Carroll. Donna graduated from high school this year and you will know her as Mrs. Schurtz. Both will be well known bankers in your day and still in this building. This business certainly deserves more than a passing glance as we make our tour. Let's hold that discussion, however, until after we finish our walk through the village. Frank Brown's printing shop is above the Centennial Building and the telephone office is above the bank. This next structure is also owned by Carroll S. Jones and his sister, Vera Smith. Do you remember Archie Woods Bargain Store on down east? He will be moving his store into this building soon. The Fiesta Market will be here in your day.

We have now arrived at the heart of the village, the village hall. This fine brick building has the office and council room

upstairs. We store our fire apparatus here in the front of the first floor and have our jail in the back. There are only two cells and the bars are made of wood. Our fire department has two hose carts and a hook and ladder wagon. We pull the wagon by hand or drag it with horses. Roy Clemens is our fire chief and he will be followed by the young fellow we have already met, Vaughn Bartlett. Vaughn claims he put a few fellows in the cells back there, but never locked the door. They were just drunk and didn't know the difference. This building will be torn down in the 1970's to make a parking lot for the bank.

Here beside the village hall we have Swift and Seigle's livery stable where many rural high school students stable their horses while attending school. Later years will find Hazen Abbott and Arthur Wright's Marcellus Fur Company here. For you, this will be a part of the parking lot. A garage is a rarity in 1911, but you can see that Marcellus has one in this next building. Beyond the garage is Mr. Bent's house (later the library) Then Eli Motter's blacksmith shop that is just east of our new Baptist Church. All of these buildings except the church will be gone in your day.

In 1979 the Baptist Church will be a Methodist Church. The Methodists now have their church on the corner of Dibble and Jones. We have two other churches, the E. U. B. on the corner of North and Maple and the Evangelical on the corner of Dibble and Maple.

Let's go back north across Main Street on that cross walk up there and then come back down west to continue our tour. That street looks too muddy to cross without the walk. Those cross walks are the result of a lot of hard work. Our good citizens have sponsored several mush and milk dinners and other affairs to raise money to build them. Watch it Harvey, that mud's almost over your shoes! That young fellow is Harvey Eisey who will be a leading local farmer for many many years. He can cope with the mud, but I like to kid him because he is good natured. Harvey

will marry lovely Christine Cowham who will teach school for 41 years.

Look at those fine houses down west. The residence of Mrs. G. W. Jones down there on the corner of Jones and Main is one of the finest and most modern in the country! It is heated by a Bullard Furnace and lighted by gas. The stone house next east belongs to the Carroll S. Jones family and deserves a special story. If, however, we start looking at homes we will never finish our tour of businesses. We are now standing in front of Fred King's undertaking parlor. This will be a much more lively place in your day as Clara Clark will have her Cozy Cupboard restaurant here. Next east, you see Dan Palmer's hardware.

Beyond Dan's place we find C. H. Hudson's dry goods store. Mr. Hudson is the gentleman who will leave money to the township to build your Hudson Memorial Building. In your day Jones' Law Offices and the drive-in bank will occupy the space between our undertaking parlor and the corner. That second building east of Mr. Hudson's store is known as Ward & Sykes

clothing store here. Clyde Palmer and Tommy Holmes will open a furniture store on this site in the near future. Next east is the Odd Fellow building. It is the first building west of the Arnold House.

Well, we are back to the corner where we started and are now standing in front of the Arnold House hotel. If you look north down Centre Street you will see Billy Waugh's blacksmith shop and his brother Orrin's woodworking shop on the east side. We have already mentioned the Waugh Brothers Livery Stable there on the west.

Let's sit down on this bench and rest our weary feet. I'll try to recall some more of the youngsters who are seen here today and will also be here in your day. Although there will be others around who attended school in other areas, I'll try to limit my recollections to those who attended high school here in Marcellus as they are thus an active part of the village's history. I'll also tell you more about our thriving village. There is much to tell and this will take several stories.

