

Time Tracs

by Jim Ingram

In 1872, the Detroit and Bay City Railroad was extended from Rochester through Goodison to Orion as it was called in those days, Charles K. Carpenter, a prominent landowner and a director of the railroad, was instrumental in changing the route to bring the railroad through Orion.

Carpenter School is named after this family and their large farms were located in that area of the township. Mr. Carpenter and other Orion farmers wanted the railroad to provide easy, reliable transportation to market their farm produce.

Once Orion had an access to a railroad line, it became a major farm center. Much stock and produce was shipped from here as can be seen from a clipping from an 1887 Orion Review showing the week's produce market.

For the week ending Oct. 20, JC Predmore & Co. shipped 5,700 bushels of potatoes and 1,000 bushes of rutabagas. Fourteen cars were required. In the same period Ira Carpenter shipped 2,200 bushels of rutabagas and CF Beebe shipped 1,000 bushels of rutabagas and 2,000 bushels of potatoes.

The arrival of the railroad in Orion was also the beginning of Lake Orion as a major summer resort. Some prominent citizens who had never considered the lake an asset started to think of the resort possibilities. They began to publicize the beauty of Lake Orion, its nearness to Detroit and its easy access by train.

The route of the railroad from Rochester to Orion closely paralleled Paint Creek and is now Paint Creek Trail. The tracks entered the village near Jacobsen's Garden Center and proceeded north behind businesses on the east side of M-24 to the train station. This was a substantial brick and concrete building on the site of the current Concord Drugs.

Not all citizens welcomed the railroad. One of these was ER Emmons who owned a mill about where Elegant Eras Antiques is now located. He was so intent on keeping the railroad from passing in front of his business that he threatened to fire a cannon from his window at anyone attempting to lay tracks within 100 feet of his building.

A Civil War relic, the cannon had disappeared from its historic location in the village.

Laborers worked cautiously at night laying tracks. They feared Emmons' threats were sincere. However, the real cannon was eventually found and Emmons' idle threats didn't prevent progress.