

Time Tracs by Jim Ingram

(Fifth in a series on Orion history from 1800 through the 1920s)

The greater part of the Orion Village business district was reduced to ashes by fire in 1874. This proved to be a blessing, for in place of flimsy wood construction many substantial brick buildings were erected and remain today.

Belles brothers built their building in 1881 (northwest corner of Flint and Broadway Streets) housing the general store on the first floor and a large skating rink/dance hall on the second floor.

The same year WE French put up two new buildings just to the west of the Belles Building at 16 and 24 West Flint Street. The building at 24 West Flint Street looks much as it did when built in 1881.

Stephen Seeley built the only three story in the village. It is the present Verwood Apartments on the northwest corner of South Broadway and Front Streets. It was a built as hotel in 1881 and has been known as the Cataract House, the Swift House, Hotel Taylor and Park Hotel.

The Orion Review began publishing in 1881 with John Neal as publisher and Berridge and Berridge started their drug store.

JT Eddington began his jewelry business in 1885 and French & Metcalf opened a meat market in 1884. The two storywood building at 33 and 35 South Broadway was built around 1850 by Isaiah Bradford, the first undertaker in Orion.

JC Predmore moved into a large double store. Wooden sidewalks were laid in the business district and even a few crossroads were constructed.

Dr. J. DeCou and Dr. Charles DeCou opened their Cancer Institute near the northeast corner of West Flint and M-24 in a large frame Victorian home with a widow's-walk on the third floor. It later became the Arlington Hotel.

Orion State Bank was organized in 1896 with Ira Carpenter, Joshua Predmore, Gleason Perry and others comprising its first officers. It was located in the building on the southwest corner of Flint and Broadway Streets.

In 1897, the village began replacing its old wooden



The Predmore house on North Broadway is in this year's Heritage Home tour.

walks with cement sidewalks and by 1899 had laid one and one half miles of cement walks.

The coming of the Detroit and Bay City Railroad in 1872 also set the stage for the beginning of Lake Orion as a major summer resort. ER Emmons developed a park on the shore of the lake in the village (now Green's Park) in 1874.

He purchased a small steamer called the "Little Dick," after his son, Richard. The boat carried people on excursions to the many islands that dot Lake Orion.

In that same year several prominent citizens formed the Orion Park Association. They purchased the "Little Dick" and Island Park (now Park Island) and began

immediate improvements.

A bridge was constructed from the mainland to the island. On the island, they built a 100 foot long reception hall. It was topped with an 80 foot high observation tower which afforded a magnificent view of the lake and the surrounding country.

In a natural amphitheatre, west of the tower, a rostrum was erected with seats for several hundred. A new wharf was built in Emmon's park, being close to both the railroad depot and the Orion House Hotel.

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