

Time Tracs — by Jim Ingram

(Series on the 1960s in Lake Orion)

A new library was built in 1965 just south of the village on the east side of M-24. The new building cost \$101,000 and Mary Basigkow was the librarian.

The Lake Orion Horseshoe Club was organized in 1965 and opened its courts in the village park along Paint Creek.

It was in 1965 that Barbara Benetti started writing her column "That Was the Lake That Was" in The Lake Orion Review. It related the history of Lake Orion's resort days and was a major inspiration for my column 30 years later.

Barbara Wilson Benetti's family owned "Wilson's Point," the cottage at the end of Longpointe on Bellevue Island. The family lived in Flint, but Barbara spent her summers in Lake Orion during the 1920s and 1930s.

She married and later moved her year round. She was a very talented lady, not only as a writer, but as an artist. Her murals, done as a WPA artist, depicting Oxford in the 1930s can be seen at the Northeast Oakland Historical Museum.

The lake had become a year round community by the 1960s and was still making news. The pavilion in Green's Park was deemed a public hazard by the village council and ordered for demolition in 1961. It was built in the early 1900s at the main landing and entrance to the resort.

It was decided in 1964 that Lake Orion Village would operate its own police boat on Lake Orion under the direction of the police department. This was in addition to the lake patrol provided by Oakland County which was very sporadic.

In the 1960s, the Lake Orion Boat Club was



The Lessiter farm on Baldwin Road

hosting the US Wayfarer Fleet No. 2 for the Michigan Invitational Regatta. Entries came from Chicago, Ontario and surrounding states.

This decade saw several Orion landmark buildings either destroyed or severely damaged by fire.

The large Lessiter farmhouse on Baldwin Road burned to the ground in 1965. This impressive house, built in 1885, with six bedrooms, four porches and lots of elaborate gingerbread trim was the family home of Orion Township Supervisor John Lessiter.

The fire began in the icehouse area and spread to the "summer kitchen" and then engulfed the unoccupied house.

The Masonic Temple was severely damaged by fire in 1964 and two businesses below it, Gaylord's Real Estate and Burde's Variety Store, suffered extensive smoke and water damage.

This building on the northwest corner of Broadway and Flint Streets was built in 1880 by John C. and Andrew Belles to house their general store and for roller skating and dances on the second floor.

It was the sturdy brick construction and the two inch poured cement second floor that saved the building. The second floor continues to house the Masonic Temple in Lake Orion.

The Roll-Orion Skating Rink was totally destroyed by fire in 1962. This building had been the Ruggles Rink built in the 1920s on the shore of Buckhorn Lake and used for roller skating and dances.

The fire department was barely able to keep the fire from spreading to the adjacent Dairy Queen and Standard Oil Company.