

Time Tracs

by Jim Ingram

(This is the third in a series on Sibley Hall.)

The Stewart's automobile was a 1916 twin six Packard touring car. It had eizenglass windows and two spare tires.

To keep warm in the winter, they used a footwarmer and buffalo robe. Mary tells of going on a Sunday School picnic with 10 people, mostly children, in the car.

Mr. Stewart would drive the car to Detroit in the summer. It took one hour from Lake Orion.

Oh, if you could only do that 80 years later!

In the winter, he took the train from Lake Orion to Detroit.

Elizabeth and Mary attended Orion schools for their elementary education. They would have attended the school built in 1893 on Lapeer Street at Elizabeth Street. It was the site of the current Ehman Center.

Mary recalls her school years in Orion with much detail. There were two grades in each room with 20-25 students per room. They sat on bench seats with desk space for three.

In first grade, Mary sat between Cass Miller and Robert Thompson. She had Miss Harding for 1st-2nd, Miss Blanche Sims for 3rd-4th and Edna Perry for 5th.

Mary had her 5th grade at the Latter Day Saints Church (at that time located in the building on the northwest corner of North Broadway and Shadbolt Streets) as the school was overcrowded.

The school accommodated all 12 grades with the elementary on the first floor and the high school on the second floor.

There was not a gym or cafeteria. The bathrooms were in the basement. There was a playground with two swings behind the school.

The ballfield was also behind the school. Children played games on the front lawn.

She remembers bringing her own paper and ink to school and taking the ink home during Christmas vacation to prevent it from freezing. The school wasn't heated during vacations.

One school play she remembers was "Ol Black Joe" with Sidney Poland as the star.

Mary's best friend was Betty Cole, daughter of George Cole. They lived in the house on the northeast corner of West Flint and North Shore (then Josie A). Mary continued to visit the Coles after leaving Orion.

Elizabeth's best friend was Donelda Taylor Lessiter who continued to live in Orion all of her life.

Mary mentions that you were promoted to the next grade by taking the examination for that grade. You could take that exam anytime you felt prepared to pass. Consequently, Mary at times completed two grades in one year.

She remarked that Orion turned into a ghost town at the end of summer when the resort closed. Thus many of the students in school lived on farms in Orion Township.

Some walked as many as eight miles per day to and from school.

In October when the potatoes were harvested, many of these students didn't attend school as they were digging potatoes.