

MADE IN MILFORD

By Mrs. Will Johnson

“Many of the younger people of the village and many of the people who have come to Milford in recent years look upon it as a farming community rather than as a town which has had various manufacturing interests. These interests, however, form an important item in its history as pertaining to the prosperity and development of the village.

As early as 1840 we find a woolen xxxxxxxx xxxxxxxx by Jacob Peters on the Huron river near the site of the old Peters mill. He cleaned, carded and dyed the wool, turning out an excellent quality of flannel. Farmers used to bring a brown fleece to him to have the wool carded into rolls. These rolls were then spun into yarn by the women in the home and then knitted into socks, mittens and stockings.

Near the mill was an old tannery operated by Robert Pearson and later by Mr. Peters. Farmers brought to them the hides to be tanned and the leather was taken to cobblers to be made up into shoes for the family.

In 1850 W.B. Hibbard and George Davis erected a woolen factory on the stream running from the race to the upper pond. They commenced operations the following year. In the spring of '77 Mr. Davis, then sole proprietor, began the manufacture of Kentucky jeans. The mill's capacity was 250 yards of cloth per day. The number of hands employed 12 and the capital invested was \$10,000.

Another important enterprise was John Sherwood's brick yard established in 1846 on his farm just west of the village. He operated this yard until 1876 and then rented it for some time to Mr. Oliff. During the xxxx season he employed from six to twelve men at six and seven dollars per week. He furnished brick for the first brick school house here at a cost of \$4.50 per thousand delivered. The brick for nearly all the early brick houses and buildings in Milford were procured from this yard. Mr. Oliff later ran a brick yard in South Milford.

Sometime about 1857 John Wood and Edwin Tenny started a cabinet shop in a building near Summit street. Herbert Tenny took Mr. Wood's place and worked with his father until his death when William Grieg came into the firm as a partner. They made furniture, caskets, sash, doors and blinds. Their factory burned in 1869 and they built a three story building on the flat iron and carried on their business there.

In 1865 Joseph Vowles established a cultivator works. In 1876 Ambrose Orvis became his partner. They made 600 cultivators a year, employed six men and had an invested capital of \$15,000.

Way back in 1842 the rake factory south and west of Milford on the river was built and operated by Mr. Hudson. Here they made the long-handled wooden rakes used in the hay and harvest fields before the time of the horse rake.

P.F. and D.W. Wells established a manufacturing business in 1848 and had a small shop near the Pettibone grist mills. In 1865 they moved to South Milford where they had a foundry and shop. They made the Curtis and Dodge plows in large numbers, casting all the parts in their foundry. The Wells family carried on the farm implement business in various localities in Milford for many years.

Jewitt Brothers & Tower were the proprietors of a foundry and machine shop started in 1865. They also manufactured agricultural implements and hollow iron ware.

Milford until recent years always had grist mills, the Pettibone mills just below the upper mill pond and Peter's grist mill in South Milford on the river. These mills made flour of fine quality and from 100 to 120 barrels per day. In early years the flour from these mills was sent to market by teams, the men taking three days for the round trip to Detroit and bringing supplies of all kinds back to the stores here.

A pump factory belonging to Alva Phillips was located near where the Legion hall now stands. Here an endless quantity of pumps of various kinds was made.

Milford has also had quite a large business in the manufacture of farm wagons, carriages, etc.

P.C. Slaughter's shop turned out buggies and light wagons in quantity. A.S. Wakeley carried on a wagon making business in South Milford for many years.

Nearly all of these factories and mills depended on the excellent water power available. Tenny & Grieg installed the first steam engine for power to run their machinery. Later years have seen various factories started here which have run with varying degrees of success. South Milford has had a cheese factory, an apple evaporator, copper [sic] shop, valve factory, etc. It now has the electric welding shops whose work is well and favorably known.

The factory west of the upper pond was used for manufacturing office furniture, bookcases, bathtubs and was known as the Auto Dash factory until it burned a few years ago. That our village has been a place of considerable importance as a manufacturing point does not admit of a doubt.