

## MEMORIES OF MILFORD IN THE FIFTIES

John K. Reed, who in December last, reached his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday anniversary, has spent all except the first decade of his long life in Milford and vicinity. His recollections of Milford probably go further back than those of any other person living and that some of these might be recorded a Times representative paid Mr. Reed a call and elicited the following with the aid of Miss Ruth Rowe as stenotypist.

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I was 8 years old in December, 1851 and we came here in the November before that. My family lived in Penn Yan, New York state and I came here with my grandmother. We took a boat from Detroit to Buffalo [?]. Then from Detroit as far as Birmingham on the train—the old Grand Trunk. At that time the train ran from Detroit only as far as Birmingham. It was run on wooden rails, and wood was burned in the engine. From Birmingham we took the stage to Pontiac and from there the four-horse stage which ran west from Pontiac to Owosso.

“There wasn’t anything much at Pontiac at that time, except some log houses. I remember the old River House by the river, a little old wooden building and the barn was right back by the side of the river. Pontiac then seemed about as big as Clyde does now.

“Our folks lived at that time in Rose Corners, just north of Hickory Ridge, at the old Chase Hotel, a building part log and part frame. Uncle John Kinsman then kept this hotel at Rose Corners. It was nothing to see 25 or 30 teams out there at noon. People coming from all around, drawing lumber, would stop there for dinner. It was on what was called a “thoroughfare” road down Hickory Ridge road and straight on. We lived at the hotel until spring and then moved down to the farm southeast of Milford. Sol Kinsman, Uncle John’s brother, remained at the hotel. The old “plank” road had not then been built. The old road turned where Dart’s orchard is now and ran by our house.

“Milford village had a few scattered buildings on the north side of the river, but most of the people lived on the south side. I remember that Bill Houchens and Joe Smith had a meat market. I have seen beef skins piled three feet high and next to them a pile of codfish. You wouldn’t get a person to buy codfish or beef that way nowadays. David Allison had the only brick store and I think that the same brick is there yet. Allison was a harness maker and Joe Pick worked for him. A man named Bennett owned the hotel on the east side of the street, one that burned down before the one there now (St. James) was built. On the south side there was Deacon Ladd’s store and there was a store in the building afterwards used for a xxxxxxxxxxx. At one time Henry Weaver had a store there and when he had the postoffice the north side folks didn’t like it. The old stone blacksmith shop was built by a man named Hayner who lived in a log house on the corner where the filling station is now. Henderson Crawford’s private school was also on the south side and the Mead and Arms store.

“When we moved to the farm there were two houses on it—one for each of the Kinsman brothers who owned the place. The first Fourth of July celebration in Milford was held on that farm before we came to it. I remember seeing the date “1833” on the great burr oak tree where the celebration was held. The tree finally died and I cut it down. There is a stone heap now where that tree used to stand.

“I remember when that old log house (still standing east of our place) was built. They had a five-gallon jug of whiskey; after the frame was up and the logs were up, the men would all have a drink and then they’d name the new log house and throw the jug over the house—but the jug was always empty then. That house was named John Greene’s Palace.

“I have seen wild deer and turkeys and many other kinds of game on our place. I have seen flocks of a hundred wild turkeys going across the lot up there, time and time again.. There weren’t any game laws then.

“When we first came to the country xxxxxxxx xxxxxxxx xxxxxxxx xxxxxxxx xxxxxxxx the river so they could get marsh grass for the stock. About 1860 was the first year I ever saw any hay. We never had tame hay, nothing but marsh hay and straw to feed our stock on. That is the reason those early settlers settled around the lakes, rivers and creeks. Then when the dam was built the river would overflow and

this kept the grass back and was a nuisance. The man who owned the dam wouldn't tear it down, although the mill wasn't in operation any longer. So the farmers all came to town one day and tore that dam down. (This was a dam on the river at the former Harry Hastings place.)

“About the parties—there were more small dances around at the different houses than there were large dances. In the winter a sleigh load would drive to someone's house and have a dance. Uncle John Kinsman furnished the music sometimes, but there were different ones that played. Regular parties were at the hotels.

“Years ago General Cass had a training ground over on a flat between Pontiac and Commerce. Here soldiers were trained for the Michigan Home Guards and Governor Cass was there. I have heard Uncle John tell me about it time and time again. When we would go by the place he would say, “There's my old training ground out there.” I've heard people tell too about a Mormon settlement that was northeast of Milford, and there was some excitement about it once.”