



The TELEGRAPH

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Flat Rock's 1927 American LaFrance Fire Pumper Truck

by Lesley Gilliland Harkai

One of the oldest fire equipment makers in the U.S. is the American LaFrance Fire Engine Company founded in 1903 in Elmira, New York. Interestingly enough, this company also built roadster automobiles starting in 1907 until 1914. The company's very first motorized fire truck was manufactured in 1907.

The 1927 American LaFrance Fire Engine Pumper truck is just one of the decades of fire trucks they manufactured. There are a large number of old fire trucks from American LaFrance on display throughout the country. The 1927 pumper is among the most popular series that the company produced. The truck came with a six cylinder engine delivering 130 horsepower. The truck was equipped with a 750 gallons per minute pump, had dual chain drives and weighed in the neighborhood of 12,000 lbs. This 1927 American LaFrance Type 75 Fire Truck would have sold new in that year for about \$6,000. In today's dollars, that would equate to approximately \$90,000

The Village of Flat Rock utilized this truck for about twenty years, after which it went to the scrap yard. Thankfully, it was rescued by a couple and later sold to Frank Sacks, the owner of Firestik Antenna, in 1972 for \$250. Mr. Sacks had hopes of restoring the truck and using it as an advertising prop. After being restored, the truck travelled around the world in service of the Firestik Antenna Company, ending up in Phoenix, Arizona. When Mr. Sacks retired, he called Bill Vack, then Assistant Fire Chief, and asked if the City would like the truck back at no cost! After conferring with Alan Irwin, the

Flat Rock's 1927 American LaFrance Pumper Truck ca. 2010



Fire Chief, it was decided that Vack and Irwin would fly to Phoenix, load the truck into a transport vehicle and bring it home to Flat Rock. It has been used in many parades and honorary rolls since, but now the city needs the space for other rescue gear. They would like the Flat Rock Historical Society to take the truck as part of Flat Rock history.

Unfortunately, at 12,000 lbs. the pumper truck will not be able to be safely stored in the Bobcean Stable. If no place can be found, the truck will be set outside City Hall with a tarp covering it. At the mercy of the weather, and possible vandals, the carefully restored truck will not fare well. Time is running out. We are asking our members to help us brainstorm a solution to save this vital piece of Flat Rock history. Any thoughts can be directed to Bruce Chapin, society president.



*Flat Rock's 1927 American LaFrance Pumper Truck
in front of Flat Rock's Fire Department (across from Dairy Queen) ca. 1935*

FLAT ROCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
PO Box 337
FLAT ROCK, MICHIGAN 48134
734.782.5220



Visit us online:
WWW.FLATROCKHISTORY.ORG
Email:
ARCHIVES@FRDIGITALHISTORY.ORG

FLAT ROCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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OUR MISSION

The Flat Rock Historical Society seeks to preserve and communicate to residents and visitors the history and spirit of those who have lived in and near the City of Flat Rock from the beginning of human habitation, or its vision, to bring our community together for the enjoyment, discovery, and learning our past to create our future.



Hello fellow members:

Well, it has been a very busy and productive few months. I must thank the volunteers who, in spite of the Covid and evacuation limitations, were the driving force in putting on a successful cemetery walk and ghost hunt and continuing with the daily work of the society. The windmill has been repaired and is spinning away pumping air into the pond to keep the water aerated.

The Wagar family donated 47 boxes of family papers including civil war letters, photos, books and other documents involving the history of Flat Rock. It will be months or years before we can fully catalogue and study all the information.

The society has been given the Flat Rock sign that is on Gibraltar road. We plan to highlight all our open houses and other events. This is a great opportunity to increase the visibility of the historical campus and the functions we present. Don't forget the membership party on December 16th. If you wish to attend please RSVP by December 10th (call the society at 734-782-5220). It will be catered but you are encouraged to bring a dessert or appetizer.

Oh, I almost forgot. The city would like to gift the society with the 1927 American-LaFrance fire engine which was used in town back in the day. We cannot take it until we have a safe place to store it. We are working on several ideas but your input is always welcome (bruce@flatrockhistory.org). It is fully restored and is in beautiful shape. Our idea is to use it for parades and promotions to promote the society around the down river area.

Let me close by saying that I feel we have been doing a great job under the circumstances but I would like to put out the call for more of you to volunteer to assist in things we do. If nothing else please come down and visit the campus and see what we do. It would mean a great deal to the people who are here to know that they are appreciated.

Bruce Chapin
President

2021 Calendar

Museum Hours / Society Schedule*

Friday, December 3rd
6:30 - 8:30 pm Tree Lighting

**PLEASE NOTE THAT WE WILL NOT
 BE OPEN ON SATURDAY, DEC 4TH.**

Sunday, December 5th
1 - 4 pm Visit with Mrs. Claus

Membership Meeting Dates

Thursday, February 17th

5 pm Members Fellowship Supper
 6 pm Members Meeting
 7 pm **"Prohibition's Proving Ground"**
 by Joe Boggs, Author



AFTER YOUR VISIT WITH SANTA MEET

Mrs. Claus

**SUNDAY,
 DECEMBER 5TH**
1PM UNTIL 4PM

**FAMILIES WITH
 SMALL CHILDREN
 VISITING THE MUSEUM
 CAN MEET
 MRS. CLAUS & ENJOY
 A SMALL TREAT**

**FREE
 FAMILY
 EVENT!**

**FLAT ROCK
 HISTORICAL MUSEUM CAMPUS**
 (LOCATED IN THE PARK BEHIND THE LIBRARY)
734-782-5220

GRATITUDE

*We would like to thank the following
 (and hope we didn't miss anyone):*

To Bruce Chapin, for fixing our windmill, for scuba diving the pond in search of the windmill air stone, installing the sump pump and replacing the hot water heater.

To Mary Washko for painting the Munger Store bathroom after the new water heater was installed.

To Kevin and Jean Walker for heading up the return of the funerary artifacts to Bobcean Funeral Home.

To the holiday decorating crew: Lila, Mary, Jean, Laura, Bruce & Patty and Dawn & Jack.

To Andrea Gray for loaning us FRHS Yearbooks 2001, 2002, & 2004.

To Tricia Fedon for loaning us FRHS Yearbooks 1979 & 1980.

To Jack & Dawn Bartok for obtaining the greenery for the exterior decorations.

CONTINUATION OF THE HISTORY OF THE VILLAGE OF FLAT ROCK COMPILED BY LOUIS BECKLEY (1951)

Introduction by Lesley Gilliland Harkai

*In our previous issues we had published the first sections of this compilation. We have had such a positive response from our readers that we are going to continue with this serialization of this compilation. Recall *The History of the Village of Flat Rock* was compiled by Louis Beckley, a surveyor employed by Wayne County in 1951. This compiled work included multiple source documents and a series of articles authored by Freeland Garretson. These articles had been published by Garretson in the "Flat Rock News" in 1897 and are mostly recollections by one of the areas oldest residents.*

FRHS has recently scanned the work in its entirety with Optical Character Recognition and have arrived at this digital version of this historical work. Since it has been seventy years since the original compilation, we thought we would share the sections from Freeland Garretson's articles. Please keep in mind that this was written in 1897 and as such, has its historcial context preserved complete with anitquated spelling and grammatical anomalies. There are some transcriber notes set-off by italics in square brackets for clarity and modern context.

FLAT ROCK OF 60 YEARS AGO

VI

Written and Prepared by Freeland Garretson, 1897

In looking over some of the back numbers of our history, we find there are a few prominent names among the old settlers of the neighborhood whom we have skipped, and although we may have alluded to them in some other connection we believe they deserve further mention as citizens in the early days.

The Presbyterians had formed an organization at this place. Among its members were Cornelius Van Horn, David Smith, Peleg T. Clark, Sylvanus A. Whipple, Francis I. Clark, and some members of another Clark family who then lived in the village. Their meetings were held from time to time in the schoolhouse or at the homes of the several members. They finally commenced the building of a fine church in the upper part of the village, across the way from W. L. Walter's residence. F. I. Clark, who died a short time ago, was the last member of this association.

Jonathan Metcalf originally owned and occupied the farm where John H. Peters now lives, half a mile below the village. He came here from the East with his son, Orton Metcalf, who died soon after leaving a widow who is the present wife of John H. Peters. Mr. Metcalf served as Justice of the Peace in this township for a good many years.

Edmund and Benjamin Hall were among the first settlers of this neighborhood and came from Seneca County, New York. This village and township has been their home ever since. Benjamin Hall, Sr., should have the credit of doing more toward the building up of the mills and best buildings of Gibraltar than any other person. He now owns and occupies a farm one mile down the river. Edmund is now a lawyer residing in Detroit.

John Cooke, Sr., came from Seneca County, New York. He was a resident of Monroe for a few years and owned a large tract of land in this and adjoining counties. His family lived in Flat Rock in 1837, and a fine residence was built on his farm, below the village shortly afterwards.

Mr. Cooke died over 25 years ago at a ripe old age leaving three sons and one daughter. Jacob Cooke is present deputy collector and assessor in Detroit, and Thomas and John Cooke reside upon their farms half a mile east the village (the latter has the old homestead). Mrs. Elisabeth Forbes, the daughter, widow of

Dr. D. Forbes, lives in Ann Arbor.

Henry A. Van Riper, Sr., came from New Jersey many years ago, arriving in this vicinity in 1833. He lived on the place now occupied by Alfred Carter and reared a large family of girls and boys (Jerry Van Riper, who lives half a mile southeast of the village, is one of them). Mr. Van Riper died in 1842, killed by the falling of a limb while cutting timber in his woods to build the barn now standing on that farm.

Adrian Van Riper, Sr., came from New Jersey about 1852 or 1855. He was the father of Henry A. Van Riper, Sr., above mentioned, also of John and Adrian, Jr., and one daughter, Mrs. Enoch Chamberlin. He purchased the farm across the river, part of which is now owned by Michael Tures in Berlin. All of the Van Riper family have been dead for many years.

The large family of the old stock of Vreelands, who were all mentioned in the forepart of this history, were all residents of this village in the year 1837, but all have been dead for many years.



*The Tures Farm, colorized landscape, ca. 1910.
Collection of Flat Rock Historical Society.*

VII

The widows survived their husbands in each case and lived to be quite aged people.

Horatio P. Van Cleve came from Ypsilanti, was here when we landed in Michigan or shortly afterwards, and may therefore pass for one of the early settlers of this village. His family consisted of a wife and daughter. They lived in a house which stood on the lot where Mrs. H. W. Lobdell's residence now stands. He was a military graduate of West Point, a very soldierly appearing man; and, like General Grant who was also a West Pointer, was waiting for something to turn up. He brought with him an old team with which he did light teaming and other odd jobs for the neighbors about the village. He was an excellent man and fine old gentleman, with a nice family. They assisted largely in organizing the Presbyterian Association which was then trying to build a church in this place. He remained here for a few years and finally removed to Minnesota, from where he joined the Army and took part in the Civil War, in which he became General. He died shortly after the War. It is not many years ago since his aged widow visited her old home and friends in this village and gave an excellent lecture in the M. E. Church here.

In the early days our village was excellently supplied with physicians. Dr. John L. Near, whose name has been heretofore mentioned in our history, came to Michigan in 1854 from Oneida County, New York, and commenced the practice of medicine. His circuit ride consisted of many miles' travel among the marshes and swamps of this new country, mostly accomplished on horseback. His saddle bag generally contained a good supply of quinine, this being the principal medicine given in cases of chill, fever, and ague. The fact that there were no roads or bridges compelled him at times to ford the creeks and streams to reach his patients, and many a thrilling statement has been told by him of his hairbreadth escapes from drowning when his horse became mired in the swamps during the midnight rides. Many years afterwards the doctor was chosen as Member and Senator in the Michigan House of Representatives, in which capacity he served for several years. He was also chosen Consul to Sarnia and Windsor, in Canada, for a few terms. After a long and useful life spent mostly in this village, he died in the fall of 1895 after a long residence of over 61 years and at the extreme age of 87.

A Dr. Dearborn was practicing medicine here in the year 1837. He lived in part of the old red building which stood on the grounds where the Morey block now stands. He did not remain long in the place. The hardships to be encountered of a practicing physician in this new country in those early days were too many. We don't remember whether he died here or moved away.

Dr. Kimball, an old physician whose home part of the time was at Truago (now Trenton), often came to our village. He was sometimes called to visit some patient in the surrounding neighborhood. Having no regular place of residence, he usually made it his home wherever night overtook him, and he sometimes remained with his patient until he was either better or worse. He was generally willing to take his pay in board for the services rendered to the family. Oftentimes, persons looking for him to attend some sick patient have chased him for days through the country before he could be found. He was a very good physician for those times, but his drinking habits and old age finally rendered him unfit for service. He had no relatives to care for him in his last days, but the late Giles B. Slocum of Trenton took him in charge and provided for his wants until his death, which occurred at Trenton many years ago. Other physicians came into the place from time to time as the country became more settled, but the bad condition of the roads and inconveniences for practicing their profession soon caused them to leave.

The news of the sad and sudden death of Mrs. Littlefield in Detroit two or three weeks ago reminds us that a few other families not previously mentioned in our history of the early days should be noted. Mr. Josiah Littlefield with his large family of sons and daughters came to Michigan from the State of New York at a very early date, purchased a large tract of land, and opened a settlement on the banks of Swan Creek in the present town of Ash in Monroe County, since known as the Village of Grafton. The old home was known for many years as a stopping place for the new settlers coming into the country to look for lands. Many a family was made welcome until a suitable place was provided in their new forest home, and some of the newcomers were assisted in finding the choicest pieces of land on which to make a settlement.



*Flat Rock Union School burning in 1910.
The Reading Building was built on the same site in 1911.*

continued on page 6

In Memoriam**David P. Grunow***(July 13, 1951 - November 20, 2021)*

We are sad to report the death of another member and long time associate of the Historical Society. Dave Grunow has been the Flat Rock city attorney since 1977 - starting his practice just after the Historical Society was formed. The society often consulted him on issues and he also worked on the legal aspect of forming the Historical Commission several years ago. He helped form the Community Foundation and started the Summer Blast and Riverfest programs that have been such an asset to our small town. Dave was only 70 years old and will be missed by the community.

Patricia Mary Lezotte Quick*(August 15, 1920 - November 18, 2021)*

Patricia Mary Quick passed away peacefully and gracefully November 18, 2021 at the age of 101! Pat was the beloved wife of the late John E. Quick for 73 years and daughter of Eugene and Edith (née Bauley) Lezotte. She was a resident of Rockwood for 96 of her 101 years, only recently moving north for assisted living and to be closer to her Michigan family. Her long career (41 years) with the U.S. Postal Service led her to become the Superintendent of Postal Operations. As a woman who loved to be on the go, she traveled extensively, much of it with John on the rails, and visited all 50 States, every state in Mexico and every province in Canada! A great historian with a marvelous memory, Pat co-founded the Rockwood Area Historical Society where she lovingly devoted countless hours to fund raising and speaking engagements. Pat was the official Historian of the City of Rockwood and her love of nature and the great outdoors continues with the honor of the Patricia Lezotte Quick Park.

*(continued from page 5)*

Some of the Littlefield sons occupied fine farms in that immediate neighborhood for many years. Others of the family were living at this place at the time our history commences. The family consisted of 11 children, nine sons and two daughters.

Daniel was the oldest, he was father to our present postmaster, W.B. Littlefield. One of the daughters was Mrs. Mary Near, wife of Dr. John L. Near of Flat Rock (whose death occurred only a few years ago). Justice then lived on his farm one mile west of Grafton and afterwards moved to Detroit. He was the husband of the Mrs. Littlefield whose sad death took place as above mentioned. Morris died at Belleville a number of years ago. Levi owned a farm at Grafton and ran a general store there up to the time of his death. George is the only one remaining. Francis died on the way to California during the gold excitement of '49 or '50. Solomon died a number of years ago. He was a minister of the M. E. Church, Detroit Conference. John was a physician. He died not long ago. Mrs. Jane Cooke, wife of Thos. D. Cooke, is still living on their farm near Flat Rock. One son and one daughter are the only survivors of this large family.

Daniel Barnes, who was known as Elder Barnes, was a Methodist minister and assistant the principal preachers in this vicinity. Mr. Barnes' residence was on what is now called the Mud Street Road, a few miles west of Trenton, although most of his work lay in this vicinity. He was the father of five sons and five daughters. The Mrs. Littlefield killed by the cars and whose death was mentioned above was his daughter.

At this time the Presbyterian congregation held their meetings mostly in the old log schoolhouse which was located in the lower part of the village. Dr. Duffield and other ministers connected with that church in Detroit were usually called to attend the regular meetings of the membership. After a few years the congregation were mostly transferred or joined the Congregational Church, the membership of which soon after built the present church building now standing on the north side of Huron Street.

Several schoolteachers served several terms as teachers in the old log schoolhouse away back In the long ago. The first that comes to our mind was a man named Newton. He taught here and in the outside settlements of Port Creek and Rumseys, or the present Maple Grove district. He married a sister of Clinton D. Peters and soon after died in this neighborhood. A Mr. Gilbert and Abner Hard taught in the old house for some time. The latter while teaching here was married to Laura E., the eldest daughter of James Vreeland, one of the Vreeland brothers heretofore described. Also an old man named Barnum. He introduced the geography and grammar lessons in the school by singing them to the classes. He was blind in one eye and went by the name of "One Eye One". A Miss Margaret Woodruff and some of the teachers who taught in the Indian Settlement were the only females who ever held that honor in the old log schoolhouse of 60 years ago.

(Look for a continuation of Section VIII in the next issue.)

Flat Rock Yearbooks Wanted

(will scan & return to you)

We are in the process of going through our school yearbook collection to scan for preservation and have discovered that we are missing some years.

Listed below are the years we are missing.

If you have a yearbook or Green & Gold Magazine from these years, we would appreciate if you could lend it to the museum to be scanned.

All yearbooks will be returned back to their owner!
Thank you!

1925	1940	1963	1986	1998	2016
1926	1941	1967	1988	1999	2017
1927	1942	1968	1989	2005	2018
1929	1943	1973	1990	2007	2019
1930	1944	1974	1991	2012	2020
1931	1945	1976	1992	2013	2021
1932	1946	1981	1993	2014	
1933	1947	1985	1994	2015	
1934	1948		1995		
1935	1949		1996		
1939	1962		1997		

Flat Rock Class Composite Photos Wanted

(will scan & return to you)

We are in the process of going through our school class composite collection to scan for preservation and have discovered that we are missing some years.

Listed below are the years for the High School that we are missing.

If you have a Class Composite Photo from these years, we would appreciate if you could lend it to the museum to be scanned. Also, any class photos from Flat Rock Schools would be appreciated to add to the collection.

All Photos will be returned back to their owner!
Thank you!

1900	1912	1928	1969
1901	1913	1929	1970
1902	1914	1947	1971
1903	1915	1950	1972
1904	1917	1952	1974
1905	1920	1953	1975
1906	1921	1954	1976
1907	1922	1955	1977
1908	1925	1958	1978
1909	1927	1968	1979

Flat Rock Historical Society 2021-22 Membership Application

Today's Date _____

☐ New Member ☐ Renewal Membership No. _____

Name

Street Address

City

State

ZIP

@
Email 1 Address

@
Email 2 Address

☐ Landline

☐ Cell

☐ Texting

(____)____-_____
Telephone #

Please tell us a little about your connection to Flat Rock or interests on the line above.

CHOOSE ONE:

☐ \$10 Individual Annual Dues (July-June)

☐ \$15 Family Annual Dues (July-June)

☐ \$5 Student Membership

☐ \$100 Life Membership (per person)

Make checks payable to: "FRHS"
Mail application & check/money order to:

Flat Rock Historical Society
PO Box 337
Flat Rock, MI 48134

For Office Use Only:

☐ Scan

☐ PastPerfect

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Postage
Here

The Last Laugh:

Vintage Cartoons from the Hometown Paper



“Yep! It Looks Like Inflation” *The Huron Valley Sentinel* (Flat Rock), 11 Dec 1936, p. 1.

MUSEUM UPDATES

Our Museum Office is located on the lower level of the Munger Store and (at least at this stage) is open by appointment. We have been given clearance by the city to allow for volunteers to work onsite and we have a number of major exhibit resets that we are working on.

Additionally, we are working on cataloguing items into our new web database system. This is potentially something that could be done from home if anyone has a computer and would like to volunteer their time. Please call the museum for a volunteer application and additional details.

PICTORIAL HISTORY OF FLAT ROCK

The Flat Rock book published by Arcadia Publishing is still available for \$22 from the Museum Gift Shoppe. Books are also available at the Blue Heron Trading Company in downtown Flat Rock or by calling the museum office 734.782.5220.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES

Annual membership dues are due for the 2021-2022 membership year. Our membership year mirrors our fiscal year July 1st - June 30th. Dues can be mailed, brought to the museum office, given to any board member. We are working to restore the online link for membership as well. Thanks to you all!!!