

PARIS, MICHIGAN

HST 230

PATRICIA TODD

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PARIS, MICHIGAN

A "ghost town" that lives on.

Paris is located in Green Township. Green Township is numbered 16 north range 10 west, of the Congressional survey and lies in the northwest corner of Mecosta County. Paris is a village on the east half of section 16 and on the west bank of the Muskegon River.

John Parish is the founder of Paris. John Parish, a fisherman and hunter, was the first white settler in the county, building his hut in Green Township in 1853. John Parish bought land in 1853 and founded the village in 1865. The village was first named Parish but was later changed to Paris.

A railroad station was built and on March 16, 1866 a post office named Paris, with John Parish as the first Post Master.

Andrew McFarlane who in partnership with John Parish, built and operated the first sawmill on Paris Creek near where the village of Paris now stand.

Other early settlers are E.M. Stickney and James Write. Mr. Stickney opened the first store in Febuary 1866.

Paris was not incorporated and had a population of about 350. A small church had been built by subscription, in which all denominations met. The pastor who preached every Sunday lived in Hersey.

The following are the names of business men of the village:

J.E. Bisbee	-	Grocery & Drug Store
L.M. Frink	-	Frinks Hotel

W.D. Hopkenson	-	General Store
I.J. Leggett	-	Drug Store
Murphy & Dolan	-	Saloon
J.E. Nichols	-	Restaurant
H.M. Robinson	-	Blacksmith
S.H. Symond	-	Shoe Shop
N.J. Swigler	-	Blacksmith
E.M. Stickney	-	Saw & Grist Mill
W.S. Scranton	-	Saloon

The Medical Profession was represented by Dr. I.J. Leggett.

On May 26, 1879 tragedy hit Paris. At about half past 3 o'clock Monday morning in the rear part of Andrew McFarlan's Store was discovered to be a fire. A strong May wind was blowing from the northeast. In only 2 or 3 minutes elapsed before the entire building was enveloped in flames. McFarlane's Hotel, the "Muskegon House" which stood adjacent to the store on the south side, was on fire. After the alarm was given, the inmates of the hotel had barely time to get out.

The store buildings of E.M. Stickney situated on the opposite side of the street and occupied by Mr. S. Elmwood general merchandise were on fire before half the people of the village had been aroused from their slumbers.

A two story building adjacent on the south owned by Mrs. Annie Hall of Detroit and occupied by Mr. Elwood with a stock of crockery, melted into smoke and ashes. A large two-story building originally designed for a store but occupied by Elliot

Cheney for a hotel, which stood next to the south of the store building occupied by Mr. Elwood, was also in flames about as soon as the others, all of them being directly in the course in which the flames were driven by the wind. The inmates of this last mentioned building escaped with most of their apparel, which was about all that was saved.

The Cheney Hotel was owned by Mrs. Roxy Compton. Another large two story store building situated several rods south of the Cheney Hotel, was the next to take fire. It was occupied as a residence by two families - one of them being that of Mr. Judkins, station agent at Paris - and they had time to remove all or nearly all of their household goods. A good substantial barn, belong to E.M. Stickney and two or three cheap cow stables, complete the list of buildings destroyed. It was fortunate that no lives were lost in the fire.

Mr. McFarlane saved literally nothing from his store. In fact, no one attempted to enter the building, the entire inside being a sheet of flame before the inmates of the surrounding buildings were apprised of the danger that threaten them. And as already remarked a part of the apparel of those in the hotel was about all that was saved form that structure.

Mr. McFarlane estimated his loss on the building and stock at about \$7000 to \$8000 with no insurance.

Mr. Stickney loss on building was about \$2500 with \$1500 insurance. He also lost about \$200 worth of lumber, which was piled near the railroad track, in the rear of McFarlane's Store.

A small warehouse situated at the rear of Stickney's Building, and owned by Fox, Sheild and Company of Grand Rapids was insured for \$300.

Mr. Elwood's loss on merchandise is about \$10,000 with \$400 insurance. Only a few handfulls of good were saved. The post Office was located in Elwood's store, and the letter case and stamp drawer were saved; but the paper mail and the pouch containing the letter mail to come south that morning were swallowed up in the flames.

Slowly, much of the town began to build back, never to the size of the Old Paris, but by 1917 much of the town was reconstructed.

One mile south of the present-day Paris Hatchery is a historic fieldstone building which was the original state hatchery. The hatchery was opened in 1881 and was the state's second fish rearing agency. Salmon and Brown Trout fingerlings from the hatchery were shipped by rail through out the state. The Paris Hatchery moved years later (date unknown) to the present-day facility. The state Department of Natural Resouces closed the Paris Hatchery in 1964.

Now, the Department of Natural Resouces maintains a feild office in part of the hatchery complex, but much of the old hatchery has been turn over to the Mecosta County. The county acquired the property nine years later and it reopened as Paris Park in 1976, featuring the ponds, 68 campsites and 15 wooded acres.

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