



(Journal Photo)

Thanks to an Organ Grinder and His Monkey, John Sheldon is Alive and 90 Today

Man, 90, Recalls Runaway Father

Everything Turned Out for the Best

By JOHN G. MILLER

"Gosh, if my father hadn't run off with an Italian music maker and his monkey I would not be here," said John Franklin Sheldon who is 90 today.

Sheldon, who lives with his daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Joel G. Graves, at 5009 S. Jennings Rd., tells the story of his father who was 7 when he ran away.

"My father's family was waiting at Schenectady, N.Y., for a boat to Buffalo when my grandparents discovered my father was missing.

"They had to look for him and the boat sailed without them. When they found him, he was with an old Italian who had a hand organ and a little monkey. He had run away because he liked the music and the monkey.

"Though he caused the family to miss the boat he wasn't punished because the boat they were to have taken caught fire and all on board perished."

That is why Sheldon says "gosh" when he thinks of the episode.

However, the Sheldon family eventually got to Buffalo, where the "runaway" Sheldon grew up and married.

Sheldon was not satisfied with his life in Buffalo so he bought a covered wagon and he and his wife set out on a journey which brought them to the Flint area. It was here that Mrs. Sheldon gave birth to her only child, John Franklin, Jan. 19, 1872.

Unlike his father, Sheldon isn't the runaway type. In fact he isn't the traveling type. He has never left the Flint area, although he once visited Saginaw.

"I was born a farmer and I worked at it with my father every day before he died," he said. "We had 180 acres on the Torrey

Road farm and that kept us both busy."

Sheldon farmed in this area for over 40 years, retiring in 1930.

Sheldon recalls the days when he hitched up his team and carried wood and hay to the Farmer's Market on S. Saginaw Street.

"That was at the turn of the century and I got 25 cents extra for hauling wood to the poor people on what we called poverty hill. I made a deal with the poor commissioner and I had to haul the wood 10 miles for the quarter," he said.

"The transportation system has changed somewhat since my day," he said smiling. "I just love those big fast cars."

Sheldon owns a 1937 model car he bought new. Today it is out of service because of an accident he was involved in last November.

"That was the very first accident I was ever in," he said. "The fellow made a left turn and I ran into him. Got a cracked kneecap out of it, too."

Sheldon's leg was in a cast for four weeks but that didn't stop him from getting around.

"You just can't keep him down," said his daughter, Mrs. Graves.

Sheldon married Elizabeth Ann Baker, a Canadian girl, April 6, 1892, in Flint. She died in 1955. The couple had two children, Mrs. Graves, and a son, Carl, who died.

"I have four grandchildren, eight great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild. But just think, if my father hadn't run off with that old Italian . . . Gosh."