

FAMILY HISTORY Pioneer Days in Michigan
by Hattie Van Slyke Williams

The Van Slykes came from Holland to Pennsylvania. From there to Genesee County, NY and to Michigan in 1837. Father, William entered land in Richfield, exchanged for 80 A in section 35, Flint Township. Entered by William Standard where he resided and cleared up the farm until his death in May, 1874. Elizabeth Rogers Van Slyke was brought up by a family named Smith, settled in Flint Township in 1837 when practically a wilderness, are listed among the oldest residents of Genesee County, coming from Genesee County, NY bringing their houses and wagons. It was a very important event in their lives in those days, especially across the water on the boat from Buffalo to Detroit, their wagon having to be taken apart. ("The old steamboat, Surprise, was the only one which plied regularly from Buffalo to Detroit. It took three days by boat. Our folks had their provisions with them and took their wagon apart to put on the boat"). They stopped a week in Detroit to visit father's sister, Mrs. Abram Woodruff, whose home is now a portion

FAMILY HISTORY

of Palmer Park. Their house was situated just across the road from the Park as we go to Detroit on the electric line. When they reached Flint they stayed another week with sister Ester Stone. Our uncle, Judge Stone, the first Justice of the Peace elected in the Township, lived in a log cabin where he had a small clearing and farmed a little. In 1834 the inhabitants of Flint were 5. But in 1836 things had improved by having a mail route and Uncle Lyman Stone was Postmaster. Uncle's hat affording all the accommodations needed and in which he carried letters until he should see the person to whom they were addressed. They had just built the first bridge over the Flint River called Pe-wa-ne-go-ink-see where all travelers had to be ferried over in an Indian canoe.

On arriving in Flint Township, they soon had a log shanty and with their barrel of pork, dried apples, etc. which they brought with them, was thought by neighbors to

FAMILY HISTORY

be pretty well off. Pontiac was the nearest grist mill where our father often took a grist on horseback through the deep mud. It costing too much to keep horses, Father traded them for a span of oxen soon after arriving in Flint. The country then swarmed with wolves, bears and panthers. Sometimes a deer was shot and they had venison to eat. They have been seen to browse near the house. The bears would break into the hog pens and bite the hogs back. My brother saw a neighbor's hog which had been bitten by a bear and a chunk was taken out of his back. The Indians were numerous in those days. They would peek in the windows and then walk in. Some of the filling would drop out between the logs and then a snake would crawl in and fall on the floor and once Mother saw one coiled around the water pail. She then would pick up her two children and go across the road to Mrs. Nelson, a neighbor.

FAMILY HISTORY

After some time Father traded his oxen for a span of Indian Ponies. Mother would take one of them and ride to Flint on horseback and carry some butter and trade it for things needed. Once he stumbled and fell down, but he got up again and went on. The roads were either graveled or oiled in those days. They often had to take an axe along to clear the way.

After some time they built a frame house, my birthplace, which had a large flat stone by the door for a step. The Nelson School House at this time stood on the west corner of Father's farm. Father had another house built by J. L. Glover of Flint. He left the old one standing a short distance in back of the new one, where many of the grandchildren have played. The old house and large tree (pear) will long be remembered by the many grandchildren.