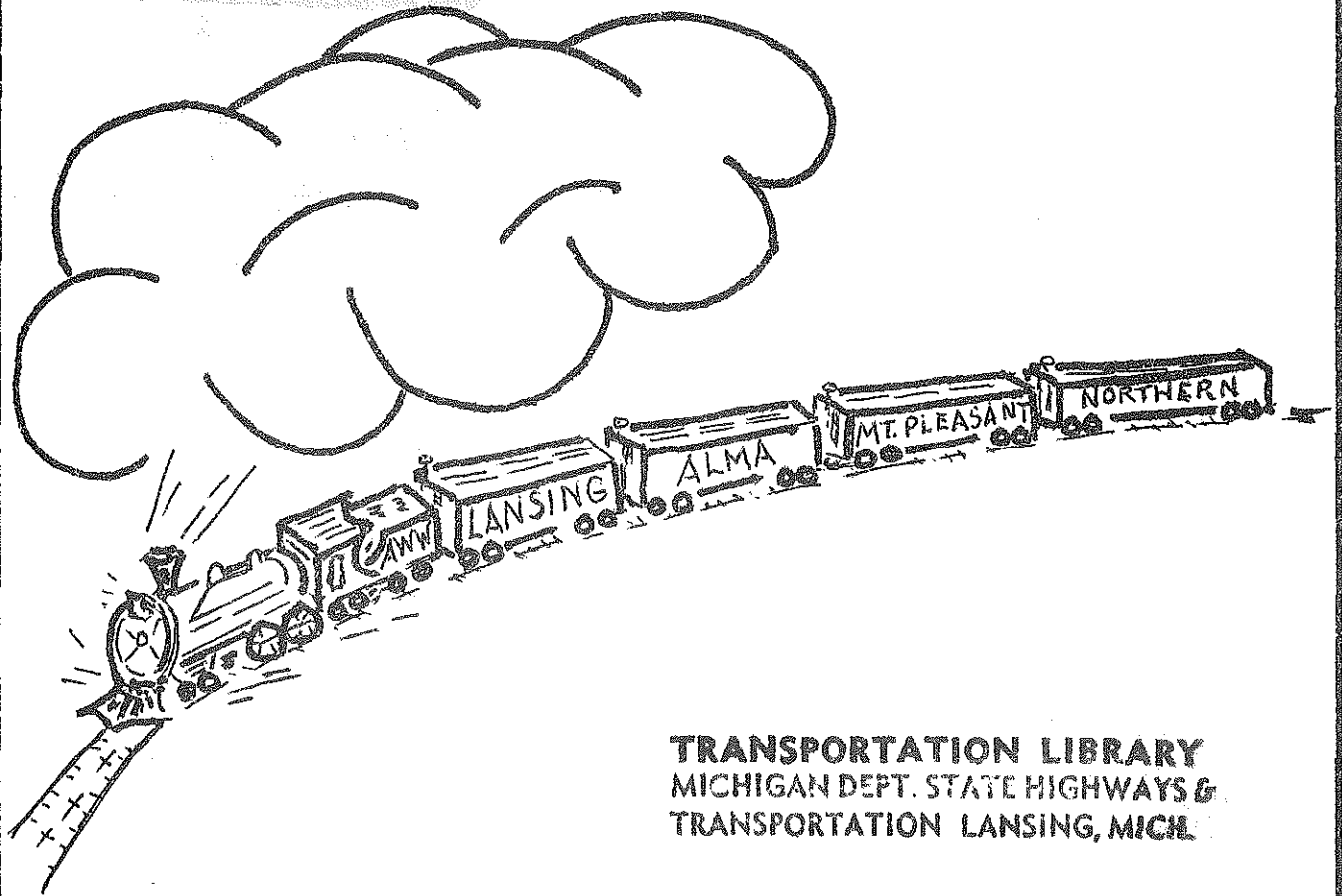


A HISTORY OF THE LANSING, ALMA, MT. PLEASANT and NORTHERN  
RAILROAD



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# The Lamp Road

By

Ford Stevens Ceasar

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**"THE LAMP ROAD"**

**A HISTORY OF THE LANSING, ALMA, MT. PLEASANT & NORTHERN RAILROAD**

**by Ford Stevens Ceasar**

**Author of: Forgotten Communities of Central Michigan**

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## Dedication

This historical treatise is dedicated to those pioneer individuals of Ingham, Clinton, Gratiot and Isabella counties of the 1800's, who had a burning hunger for a railroad which would generally traverse in a north-south direction through the central parts of those counties named. It is especially dedicated to the early villagers of St. Johns and Maple Rapids, in Clinton County, who went all-out for the Lansing-Mt. Pleasant Railroad; whose spirit and enthusiasm to obtain the necessary financial aid as well as the right of way for constructing the railroad was an example and a challenge to the other communities along the proposed route.

It is also dedicated to those businessmen, farmers and residents of those counties heretofore named, that were exploring possibilities of transportation, which would aid and foster better business and economic conditions in the areas tangible to the proposed line.

It is dedicated to those individuals, past and present, who had a love and admiration for the American railroad; to those who frequented the depots and waiting stations to watch the arrival of the trains; to those who enjoyed the acrid smell of coal smoke, the shower of cinders, and the frightening hiss of escaping steam, as a part of the romance of railroading.

This document is especially dedicated to the memory of Lewis Ceasar, who died on August 12, 1972, an uncle to the author. He was born in Gratiot County in 1890, and lived much of his life in Alma, Michigan. He gave the author much first-hand information concerning the persons, while living in Gratiot County, mentioned in this document.

### Acknowledgements

The author acknowledges several persons, who gave help in one way or another to make this document possible. To the Michigan Section of the State of Michigan Library: a special thanks to Richard Hathaway, Director, and Joe Cherwinski, as well as Henry Somers for their help in obtaining micro-film materials. To the Lansing Public Schools, and especially to Leslie Steen, Consultant to the Instructional Media Center, for the use of a film reader. Also, to the Lansing Public Library, reference section staff for their help in making available micro-film readers and films.

Acknowledgements are also directed to the Michigan Treasury Department, Corporation Division, Bureau of Collections, for making available materials relative to the incorporation, for study and observation.

There were many others, who in some small way assisted the author in material or in morale reinforcements during the process of researching and the writing of this document; and the author is appreciative of every offering.

Last, but certainly not least, the author acknowledges the Greater Lansing Historical Society, and to its members who shared the same enthusiasm as the author in revealing and publicizing local history.

## PREFACE

The history of railroading in Central Michigan is both unique and ordinary. It is ordinary in that the early roads moved northward from Detroit, Ann Arbor, Saginaw and Bay City on the east side of the state, as well as from Kalamazoo, Grand Rapids, and Muskegon on the western side. Both routes were seeking the most accessible of the lumber sources, the pineries of great dimensions and of considerable wealth.

The railroads began to branch out, both east and west, between the days of the Civil War and the 1880's. Consequently, the first roads to reach into the counties of Clinton, Ingham, Gratiot and Isabella extended generally in an easterly and westerly direction. The history is unique in that there were no lines moving north from the capitol city of Lansing through those counties already named.

The communities of St. Johns in Clinton County, Ithaca, Alma and St. Louis in Gratiot County, became agricultural as the rich farm lands were opened up and became productive. Parts of Gratiot and most of Isabella had considerable "stands" of white pine, untouched by axe or saw. During the 1880's, considerable activity was manifested in these areas. Robert Steel of St. Johns and Ammi Wright of Saginaw and Alma were principal promoters in the lumbering enterprises of Central Michigan at that time.

A brief look at the railroad developmental history before 1885 in the central part of the State of Michigan is necessary in order to have an understanding of the generation and development of the Lansing, Alma, Mt. Pleasant & Northern Railroad.

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The Amboy, Lansing and Traverse Bay Company was organized in January, 1857. Construction of a road was begun at Owosso and built south and westward to Lansing, which was finally reached in 1862. It had so many curves in it that it was nicknamed the "Ram's Horn" line. With such initials as A.L. and T.B., to those who rode over the route said that it was "awfully long and terribly bumpy." Lansing was about as far as the line ever got. The company sold its rights south of Lansing to another company in 1867, and then that company was bought up by the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern, which then went ahead and completed a route from Hillsdale, Michigan through Albion, and to Lansing in 1873.

Another line, known as the Detroit, Grand Haven and Milwaukee Railway was the first to be built and completed to within the confines of Shiawassee and Clinton counties; and, it was also over the eastern piece of this road (the old Detroit and Pontiac road which was in operation several years) before the trains reached the shallow waters of the Shiawassee River.

The Detroit and Pontiac railroad project was stirred up in Oakland County as early as 1830, and an act incorporating the "Pontiac and Detroit Railway Company" was put through by the territorial legislative council, and was approved by Governor Cass on July 31st. This was the first railway in Michigan to have a charter.

Immediately after the road was completed from Detroit to Pontiac, a project was developed to build a railroad from Pontiac westward through Shiawassee, Clinton and other counties to Lake Michigan at the mouth of the Grand River, to make a connection at that point with steamers for Milwaukee and other Lake Michigan ports.

In 1855, on February 13, an Act by the State Legislature authorized the partnership of the Detroit and Pontiac with the Oakland and Ottawa Railroad Company under the name, "Detroit and Milwaukee Railway Company." The road was completed to St. Johns in Clinton County on January 16, 1857. The line was of great benefit to Clinton County, but it proved to be a bad investment for its original stockholders. It went into bankruptcy in 1860, and it remained thus until October 19, 1878, when it reorganized and became the Detroit, Grand Haven and Milwaukee Railway.

Up until the completion of the interurban electric railway, which operated between St. Johns and Lansing, through DeWitt Village, the latter, had no means of communication whatever, although most favorably located, and St. Johns was entirely without southern connections.

The beautiful little village of Maple Rapids in Essex Township, Clinton County, is to this day devoid of railroads of any kind, steam or electric. This fact, the lack of railway facilities, north and south, has been and is the most unfortunate circumstance to be noted in the progress of Clinton County.

The movement for a southern railroad connection took form as early as 1864, when the Jackson and Lansing Railroad Company was organized. It was originally intended that this line would be built northward from Lansing through Clinton, Gratiot and Isabella counties. The road, however, passed to the Jackson, Lansing and Saginaw Company, and St. Johns' hopes vanished up the "Ram's Horn" route.

Later, the Lansing and St. Johns Railroad Company came to light. The incorporation took place in 1871. Several in Clinton County had a hand in



promoting this company. Sixty thousand dollars was provided for by subscriptions to stock, but the dark days of 1873, in financial circles, killed the enterprise.

The railroad which crosses the southwestern township of Eagle, in Clinton County, and in its course towards the City of Lansing, curves northward across the Watertown boundary line, was once the Ionia and Lansing, which was consolidated with the Detroit and Howell, and Lansing in 1870. The Detroit, Lansing and Northern Railroad Company finally became the owner of the entire route.

Another important feeder was acquired by the Lake Shore about the same time (1869). It extended from Hillsdale, on the main line, northward through a rich agricultural area, centering in Albion and Eaton Rapids, and terminated at the new state capital, Lansing. This line originally was projected as part of the Amboy, Lansing and Traverse Bay Railroad, which had been the recipient of a large land grant in 1857. As has been recounted, the A.L. and T.B. encountered many difficulties. Its land grant and franchises south of Lansing were transferred in 1866 to the Northern and Central Michigan Railroad Company, which constructed a line from Jonesville, on the Lake Shore, to Lansing, a distance of sixty miles in 1872 and 1873.

The president of the Grand Trunk, Sir Henry Tyler, proved to be a worthy foeman of the Vanderbilt interests. It was his initiative that pushed forward successfully, and against great odds, the Grand Trunk's project for a line to Chicago. One line that Tyler eyed as part of his plan had been completed between Lansing and Battle Creek, December, 1869, by the Peninsular Railway Company.

The last of the units that were to constitute the Pere Marquette system developed from the Detroit and Howell Railroad Company, organized in 1864. Detroit businessmen, desiring a rail connection with Lansing, subscribed liberally to the stock of this railroad as the first section of such a line. Another company built the line from Howell to Lansing and the two were consolidated in 1870. A third company, meanwhile, completed a line from Lansing westward to Howard City, some distance north of Grand Rapids on the Grand Rapids and Indiana Railroad. This was consolidated with the company that owned the Detroit-Lansing line in 1871 as the Detroit, Lansing and Lake Michigan Railroad Company. In 1873 branches of this line were built to Ionia and Belding. The panic of 1873 hit this company hard, as it did the others, and in 1876, it too went into bankruptcy, emerging as the Detroit, Lansing and Northern Railroad Company in 1879. Shortly thereafter, prominent stockholders in this company secured control of two railroads that together had built lines extending westward from Saginaw through St. Louis and Alma to Cedar Lake, largely to tap the rich timber resources of that area. In the 1880's numerous branches were constructed: one from Stanton to Big Rapids, but the main addition was a line from Grand Ledge to Grand Rapids, which gave the company a through line from Detroit to Grand Rapids.

In the early 1870's, the project of a railroad to be known as the Toledo, Ann Arbor & Northern was stirred up and discussed. The route was to take in Owosso, thence in a northwesterly direction through Gratiot County, with Big Rapids as its next principal objective point. The entire scheme did not materialize, but a section was built and operated from Toledo as far north as South Lyon in the southwest corner of Oakland County. The extension project lay dormant until 1883, when it was revived and taken up by the Ashleys of

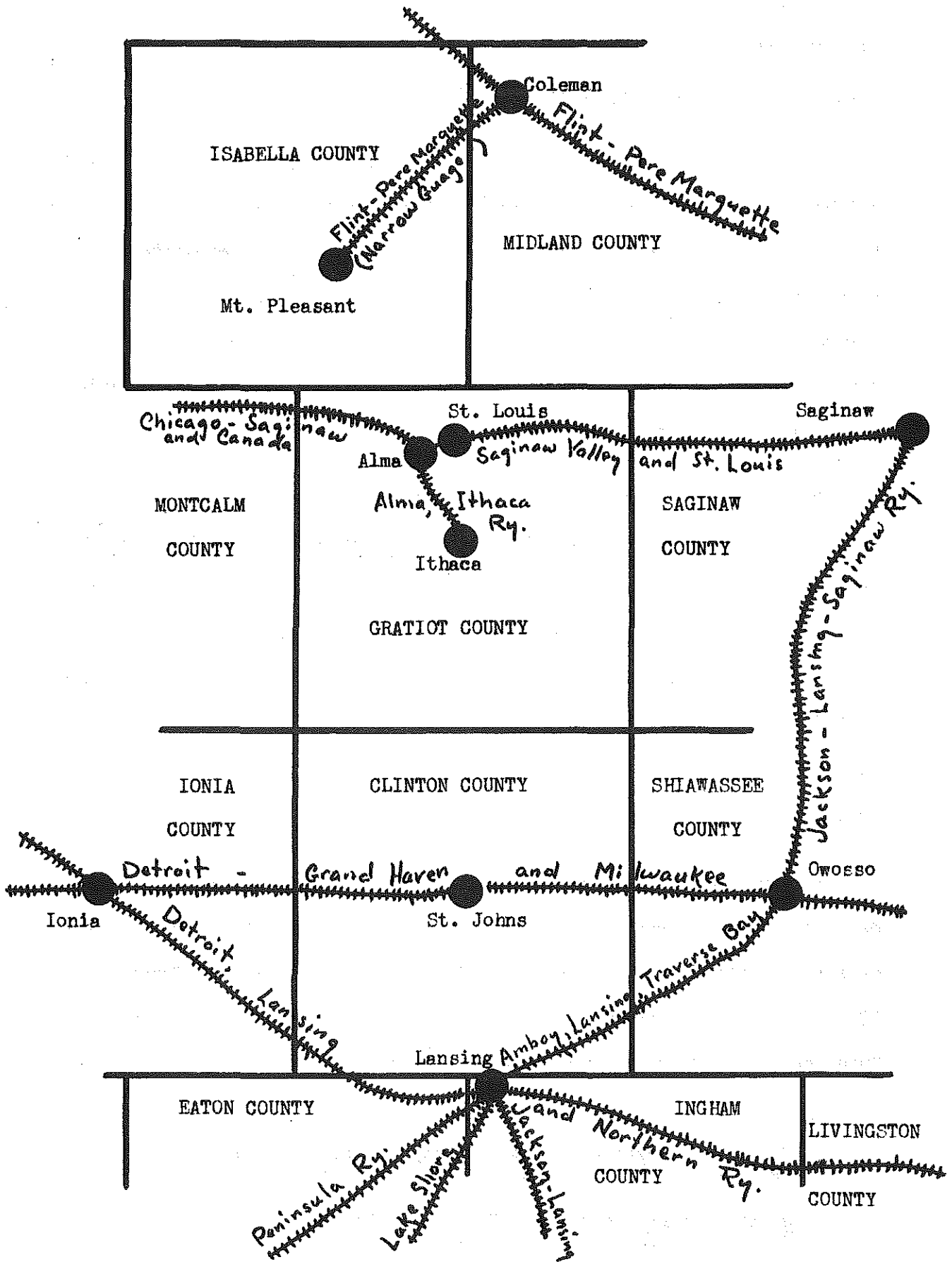
Toledo - ex-governor Ashley of Ohio and his sons. The line was called the Toledo, Ann Arbor & Northern Michigan. It reached the village of Ithaca on June 3, 1884, and on June 27th, rails were laid as far as St. Louis, Michigan, in Gratiot County.

The Saginaw Valley & St. Louis Railroad was constructed from 1870 to 1872, being completed to St. Louis in 1872. This railroad came as a real boon to the people of the county, and only in a smaller degree to people north and west for several miles.

The next section westward from St. Louis, of what has been the Pere Marquette, was built from St. Louis to Edmore in 1875 by Capt. E.L. Craw, of Fruitport, Michigan. The line was part of a great railroad scheme of that energetic, but visionary gentleman, which was to run from Fruitport and Grand Haven across the state to St. Clair, Michigan. It had the name of, The Chicago, Saginaw & Canada Railroad. At Edmore the road connected with the Detroit, Lansing & Northern. In 1876, the C.S. & C went into the hands of a receiver, and was soon thereafter leased by Colonel John A. Elwell, of New York, who came on to the scene immediately and took possession, taking up his residence in St. Louis. He operated the road until 1883; in the meantime extending the road westward as far as Lakeview. In 1883, the line was sold to the Detroit, Lansing & Northern, which road had already acquired the Saginaw Valley & St. Louis section. A few years later, the Detroit, Lansing & Northern became a part of the great Pere Marquette system. It was one of the first class roads of the state and gave Gratiot County unsurpassed railroad facilities to the east and west, and by its connections, to all parts of the country.

St. Louis and Alma were so located relatively, that the question of touching both towns was a different one to solve by the railroad moguls, and the subject was one of great speculation to the two towns, as may well be presumed. St. Louis seemed more favored from the fact that the tracks had actually been laid into the town. Alma people were fearful that the road would proceed from St. Louis directly to Mt. Pleasant, and leave Alma three miles off the line. So while the matter rested and was in doubt, and while the railroad officials and promoters were blowing hot and blowing cold, as the saying goes, with the hope of pleasing both towns and getting the largest possible inducements from each, the people of Alma took active measures to bring things their way. They conceived the scheme of building a railroad from Alma to Mt. Pleasant. Action followed very quickly on the heels of the suggestion, and the Lansing, Alma, Mt. Pleasant Railroad Company was an outgrowth of that scheme.

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Railroad map of Central Michigan showing lines established prior to 1883.

## THE LAMP ROAD: -

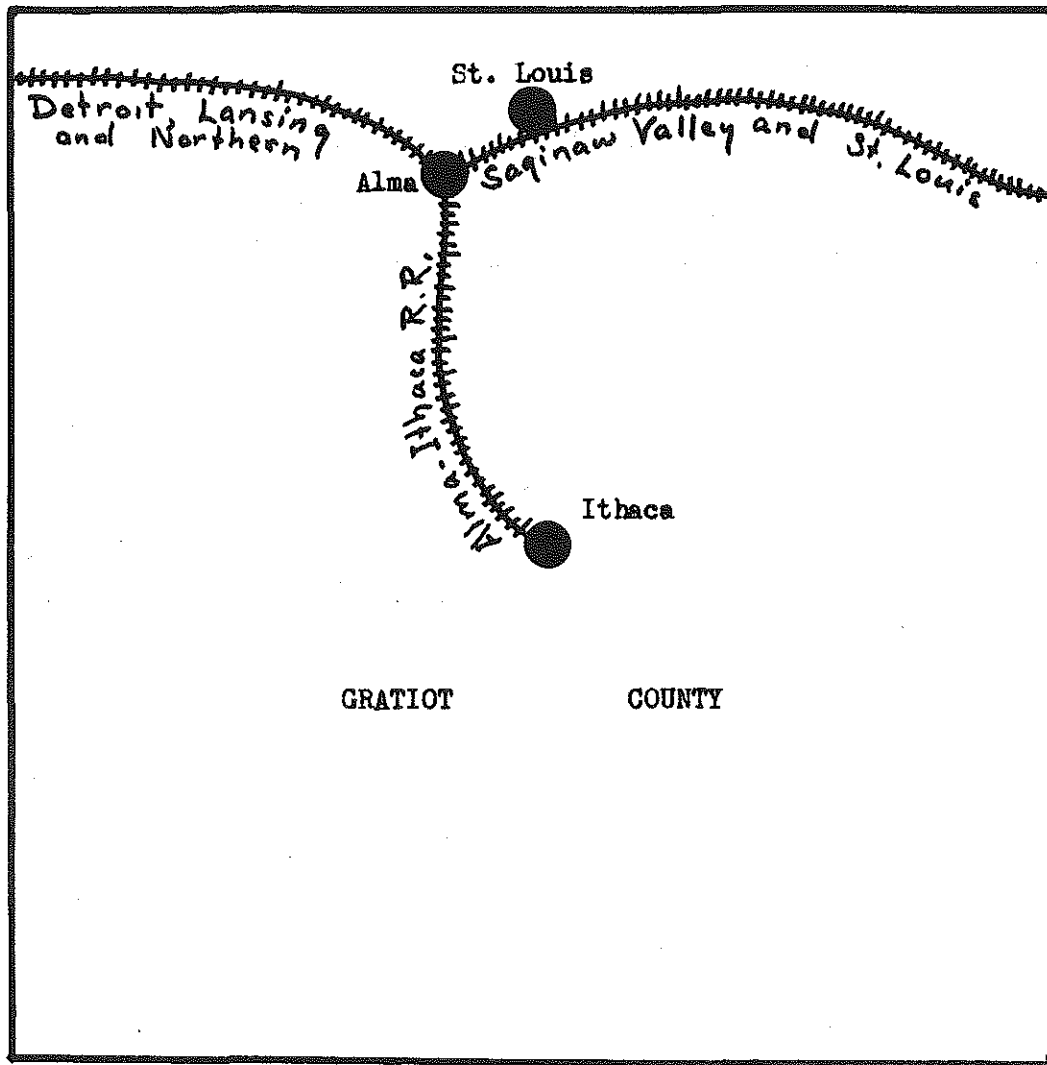
## A History of the Lansing, Alma, Mt. Pleasant &amp; Northern Railroad.

A railroad running north and south through the central part of Michigan had been proposed as early as 1869.<sup>(1)</sup> The opening of rich, new farmlands in Clinton, Gratiot and Isabella counties had created an immediate need for marketing milk, meat and other produce to the young capital city of Lansing. Several railroads were already passing through or had a terminus in that city, so that the shipping of marketable agricultural products and lumber could easily be moved either to the Detroit or the Chicago markets.

The Lansing, St. Johns & Mackinaw Railroad Company was organized on April 26, 1869. That road was the first line proposed to pass through Gratiot County, and was to be built through St. Louis, Ithaca and St. Johns. The necessary financial aid was secured and bonds were ready for negotiation, when the State Supreme Court of Michigan declared the law to be unconstitutional, which allowed aid to be voted in the manner theretofore done. Part of the line was surveyed; yet, the company was obliged to abandon the project.<sup>(2)</sup>

A "stub road," known as the Alma, Ithaca Railroad was organized on March 31, 1882. It was a spur running from the Detroit, Lansing & Northern at Alma to Ithaca. The iron was laid late in the year, and on December 28, 1882, the first freight was pulled over the line. A.W. Wright and William S. Turck were members of the board of directors, which consisted of seven men.

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1. Past and Present of Clinton County, Michigan, Judge S.B. Daboll, The S.J. Clark Publishing Co., Chicago, Ill., 1906, p. 465.
  2. Gratiot County, Michigan, Willard D. Tucker, Press of Seemann and Peters, Saginaw, Michigan, 1913.



The Ithaca-Alma Railroad, a "stub road" connecting the two villages was a spur running from the Detroit, Lansing & Northern. It was built by local capital and enterprise. Nathan Church, of Ithaca, was elected president of the road as it was organized March 31, 1882. The construction of the road was pushed along with noteworthy energy and speed, and iron was laid the following December. The first freight was machinery for a butter tub factory on December 28th. The "stub road" was operated in connection with the Saginaw Valley & St. Louis road.

The "stub road" was run in connection with the Saginaw Valley & St. Louis Railroad, and was built by local capital.<sup>(3)</sup>

On March 29, 1883, a weekly paper of St. Johns quoted a local reporter: "Railroad rumors are again rife. DeWitt comes in for a lion's share. Flying rumors have been current for some time that the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern Railway is going to extend the Lansing division north, work to commence in early summer. DeWitt, so's to speak, will soon be out of the woods."<sup>(4)</sup>

Nothing came of this, however. Late in that year, another rumor indicated that responsible parties had arranged to extend the Alma, Ithaca Railroad from Ithaca south via Maple Rapids to Lansing, and from Alma north to Mt. Pleasant, and that A.W. Wright, millionaire and the "Patron of Alma," would iron the northern portion.<sup>(5)</sup>

At the same time, activity was brewing in another camp. It was reported in the Detroit Free Press <sup>(6)</sup> that Col. John Elwell of St. Louis, Michigan had remarked to a reporter of that paper that St. Louis' people were very enthusiastic over the progress of what was known in that locality as the Ashley enterprise, which referred to the building of the Toledo and Northern Railroad between Owosso and St. Louis.

The reporter raised the question as to what Elwell thought was the ultimate object in view, to which he responded, "Then when everything is in good

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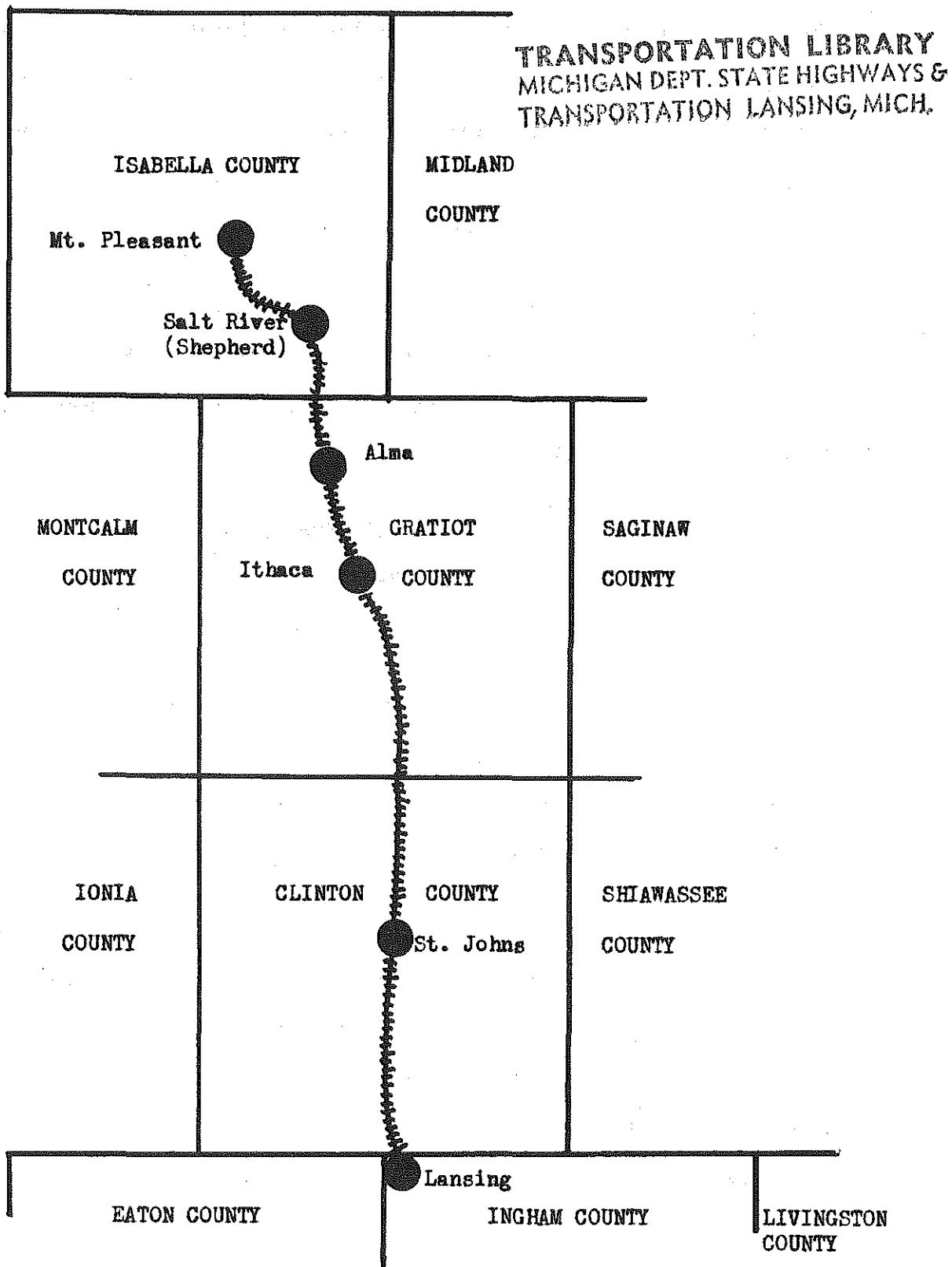
3. Gratiot County, Michigan, Willard D. Tucker, Press of Seemann & Peters, Saginaw, Michigan, 1913, p. 1231.

4. Clinton Republican, Vol. XXVII, No. 46, Thurs., March 29, 1883.

5. Detroit Evening News, Tuesday, December 18, 1883.

6. Detroit Free Press, Thursday, December 20, 1883.





The first proposed route of the Lansing, Alma, Mt. Pleasant & Northern

shape, when the pine land speculators have got transportation facilities, the Grand Trunk railroad company<sup>(7)</sup> will be approached to take the road and operate it as a branch. That's the way it looks to me, and there's nothing against such action. The road will be needed, and it is well to get it that way as in any other fashion."

Elwell was approached as to whether perhaps the Lansing road or the Michigan Central Railroad Company might make a bid, to which he replied, "Possibly, the Central may, but the Detroit, Lansing & Northern Railroad Company have got all they want."

Just before Christmas of 1883, the Free Press indicated that there was talk of extending the Alma, Ithaca Railroad southward via Maple Rapids to Lansing, and that St. Johns' people were anxious to secure the line also.<sup>(8)</sup>

The day after New Year's of 1884, the Isabella Enterprise indicated considerable activity in the Mt. Pleasant area. Some of their people had gone to Alma and Ithaca in the interest of railroading. Mr. A.W. Wright of Alma had been to Salt River (now known as Shepherd) just south of Mt. Pleasant, talking railroad.<sup>(9)</sup>

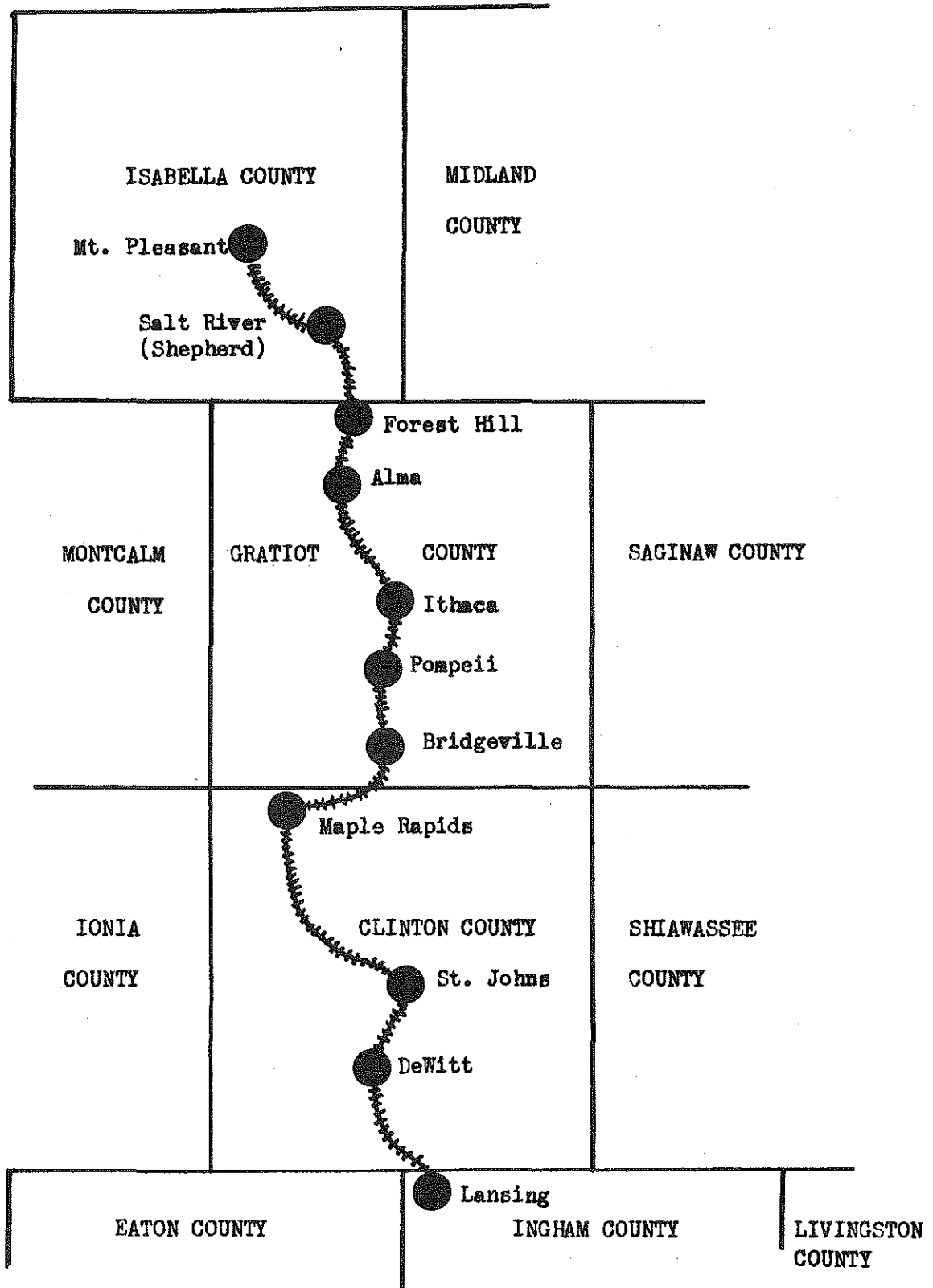
A railroad meeting was held at the Court House in Mt. Pleasant on the previous Saturday, December 29, 1883, at 2 o'clock p.m. A.W. Wright had been around all that morning and had expected to be present at the meeting; however, he was called away to meet with railroad officials. A crowd had assembled at the appointed hour, and William N. Brown acted as chairman. He stated that

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7. Detroit Free Press, Thurs., Dec. 20, 1883. Toledo, Ann Arbor & Grand Trunk.

8. Detroit Free Press, Saturday, December 22, 1883.

9. Isabella Enterprise, Wednesday, January 2, 1884.



One of the earliest plans for the Lansing - Mt. Pleasant road was to include Maple Rapids, some five or six miles to the west of the original proposed line.

the object of the meeting was to discuss the extension of the road from Alma to Mt. Pleasant, also south via Ithaca, Maple Rapids, St. Johns to Lansing. He also reported that Mr. Wright was ready to take hold of the project and build the road from Alma to Mt. Pleasant if the citizens of that place were ready to help him by forming a stock company. The Honorable S.W. Hopkins was appointed as secretary of the meeting; whereupon, he too, spoke to the subject. A Mr. D.H. Nelson was then called upon to express his views. He stated that he thought they had better go slow and not act hastily in the matter. He said that they ought to have the best one, one that would do the most good and give them the best connections. After Mr. Nelson had spoken, a committee was appointed consisting of Wm. N. Brown, A.B. Upton, John Harris, D.H. Nelson, S.W. Hopkins, C.C. Whitney, C. Bennett, Ed. Bellinger, and others to look into the matter and see which would be the best road for the development of Isabella County, and to call a meeting at their option. The committee was to get an expression of the people on the subject and to ascertain, if at all possible, which would be the best road to have; the one, not yet organized, or the Toledo & Ann Arbor Railroad. (10)

Mr. Ashley made a proposition concerning the Toledo & Ann Arbor road from St. Louis to Mt. Pleasant. He agreed to finish the road and have it in running order by October, or earlier, if the people of Mt. Pleasant would agree to pay \$15,000 when the road would be completed.

A.W. Wright stated that he would build a road from Alma, and have it in running order by July, providing Mt. Pleasant could raise \$15,000 and Salt River about \$5,000.

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10. Isabella Enterprise, Wednesday, January 2, 1884.

Mt. Pleasant had been thoroughly stirred up over railroad matters. Several meetings had been held and considerable enthusiasm was being generated. Many felt that Mt. Pleasant would positively have another railroad by fall and probably two.

A meeting in the interest of the Toledo & Ann Arbor line was scheduled for January 7th at the Opera House in Mt. Pleasant. A large delegation from Alma were present to defend their scheme and the meeting grew hot.<sup>(11)</sup> First, one side, then the other, would pick up the argument.

Alma was ready to put \$15,000 into the project. It was reported from Alma<sup>(12)</sup> that a sufficient amount had been subscribed by the Almites, Salt River, and Mt. Pleasant to organize a local company for the construction of a railroad from Lansing to Mt. Pleasant. The proposed road would give a connection with the Detroit, Lansing & Northern system at Alma and eventually with Lansing by way of Ithaca.

The meeting for organizing the railroad company was scheduled for January 8, 1884, at Alma. It was understood that A.W. Wright would accept the presidency and iron the road. However, the organization was delayed until later.

The committee, of which William N. Brown was chairman, had not as yet made any recommendations or decisions as to which way Mt. Pleasant should go. It might accept both roads.

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11. Isabella Enterprise, Wednesday, January 9, 1884.

12. Detroit Evening News, Tuesday, January 8, 1884.

The Toledo, Ann Arbor & Grand Trunk system had its surveyors working over its proposed line, and according to the Isabella Enterprise, the line had been traversed as far north as the farm of George Ferris, just south of Mt. Pleasant.<sup>(13)</sup>

Railroad talk along the proposed road from Alma south suddenly became the subject of the day. The people of Alma definitely favored the Wright project. A St. Johns' paper<sup>(14)</sup> stated that the proposed railroad was assuming tangible proportions, and that monied men were moving earnestly in the matter. Maple Rapids was concerned that the project would prove to be something more than a myth.<sup>(15)</sup> Reference here was undoubtedly reflected on the Lansing, St. Johns & Mackinaw failure.

A railroad meeting was held at Mt. Pleasant on January 11, 1884, at which the Honorable H.M. Perrin and David S. French, both of St. Johns, were present. They said that they thought that St. Johns would undertake to raise \$40,000 towards the new line.<sup>(16)</sup> It was later rumored that St. Johns would be willing to pay \$50,000 to get the road, and some doubts were coming to the fore because that was a pile of money.<sup>(17)</sup>

A special dispatch to the Detroit Post and Tribune from Alma, dated January 16, 1884, stated, "Where two or three are gathered together, there you hear railroad talk, at least so in this section. The project now agi-

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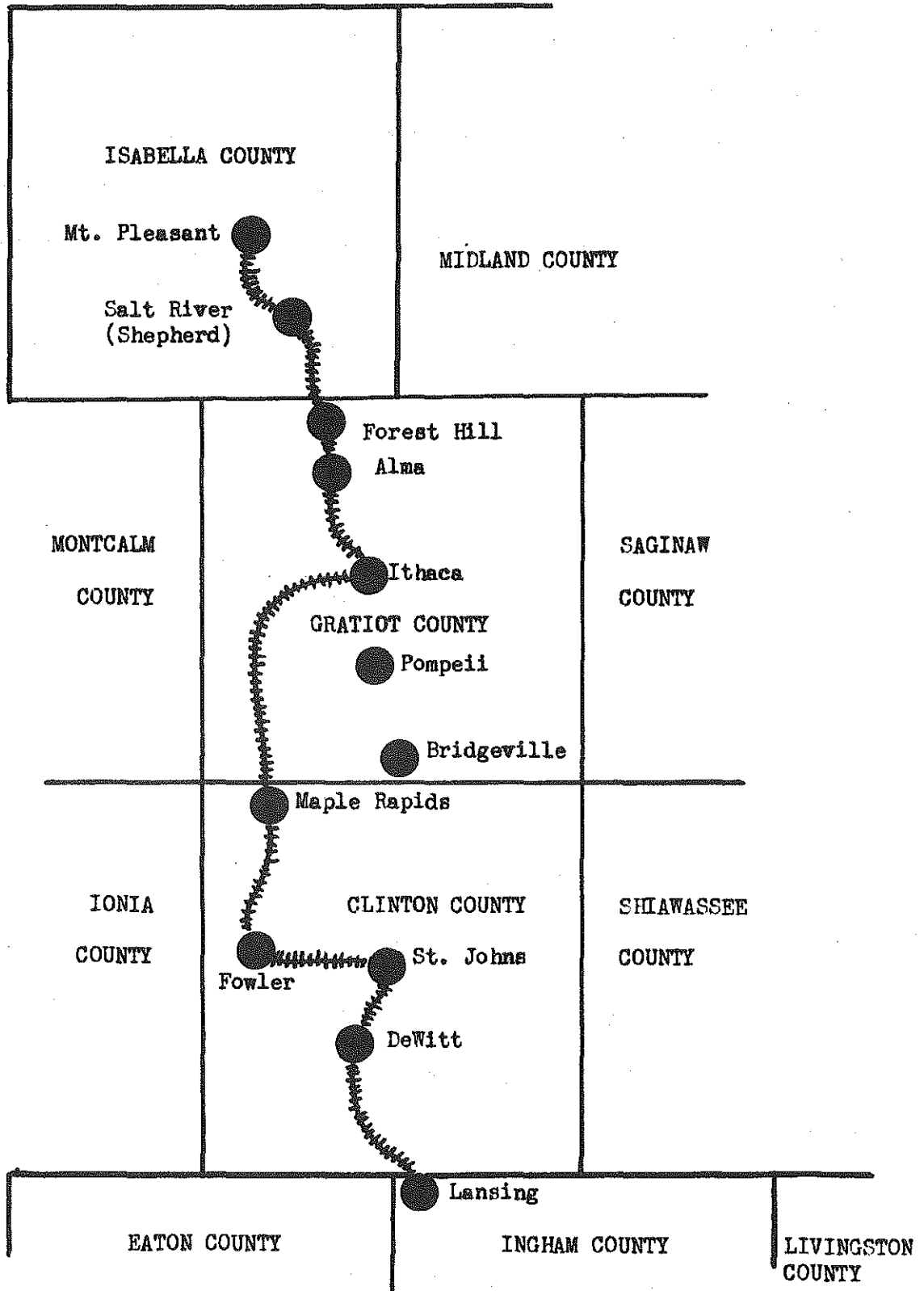
13. Isabella Enterprise, Wednesday, January 16, 1884.

14. Clinton Independent, Thursday, January 17, 1884.

15. Clinton Independent, Thursday, January 24, 1884.

16. Clinton Republican, Vol. XXVIII, No. 36, Thursday, Jan. 17, 1884.

17. Isabella Enterprise, Wednesday, January 23, 1884.



An alternate plan for the proposed Lansing - Mt. Pleasant road takes the line about five or six miles west of Ithaca and then south to Fowler. This plan would ignore the villages of Pompeii and Bridgeville.

tating the community, is a line from Lansing to Mt. Pleasant, in Isabella County, some seventy miles in length, to be known as the Lansing, Alma, Mt. Pleasant & Northern Railroad. Enthusiastic meetings have been held at this place, Salt River and Mt. Pleasant, and the capital stock mostly subscribed. It is proposed to establish the route and have the ties distributed along the line, and as soon in the spring as the ground will permit, to put a large force of men upon the work and push it rapidly to completion between here and Mt. Pleasant, a distance of about eighteen miles. The route southward is not yet determined. The intermediate points are Ithaca, Pompeii, Maple Rapids, St. Johns or Fowler on the Detroit and Grand Haven Railroad, and DeWitt. The final establishment of the route will probably depend upon the amount of aid to be obtained from the places mentioned. The project is considered by practical railroad men as entirely feasible, and with such men as A.W. Wright of Saratoga, New York, the Hon. William S. Turck, Gen. N. Church of Detroit, James Gargett and other prominent men of Ohio and vicinity to push the matter, the result is not doubtful."<sup>(18)</sup>

The residence of A.W. Wright was sometimes given as Saratoga, New York, and again as Alma or Saginaw, Michigan.

The Mt. Pleasant paper, under the Ithaca items, stated that a Mr. Thomas, a competent engineer, had been engaged to survey the new railroad line from Alma to Mt. Pleasant and that he had started his work. It was stated therein that the line would run a few miles west of Salt River and

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18. Detroit Post and Tribune, Thursday, January 17, 1884. Special dispatch from Alma, Michigan, January 16, 1884, titled, "Booming the new line at Mt. Pleasant."



would make Summerton a point.(19)

The Lansing Journal made the following statement, which was quoted in one of the Clinton County weeklies: "We are pleased to learn that the people of the cities and towns in Clinton, Gratiot and Isabella counties, through which the proposed line will run, are awakening to a realization of the immense benefits that will flow from the building of such a road, and we trust that their efforts to make the road a fact will meet with earnest and enthusiastic support on the part of the citizens of Lansing. Such a road will soon become a necessity to this city, and if we ever attain that degree of prosperity and standing as a commercial center, which ought to be the pride and boast of the capital city.(20)

An outstate paper stated that the Lansing Republican challenged its local city readers by asking them what they were going to do about the proposed line. Would they meet the towns along the proposed route with their sympathy and pledges or would they pass by on the other side.(21)

Speaking of the value of the proposed line to Lansing, the Detroit Free Press quoted the Lansing Journal: "A railroad to Mt. Pleasant will furnish a direct outlet to the richest farming country in the State. It cannot fail to do a large and profitable business from the start. We believe that immediate steps should be taken by some of our leading capitalists looking to the organization of a company to construct the road. It will prove a paying investment. Unless something is done in the near future, Lansing may perhaps lose an

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19. Isabella Enterprise, Wednesday, January 23, 1884.

20. Clinton Independent, Thursday, January 31, 1884.

21. Detroit Free Press, Thursday, January 31, 1884.

opportunity to so effectively boom its material interests. There is talk of constructing a railroad from either Battle Creek or Kalamazoo through Ionia, St. Louis and Mt. Pleasant. It is believed by many that this line will be built. If it is, it will effectually block the project of a road from this city. Let our wealthy Lansingites be up and doing in this matter."<sup>(22)</sup>

Considerable activity took place at Mt. Pleasant in late January of 1884. Already pledges amounting to \$12,000 of the \$15,000 had been made for the Toledo, Ann Arbor & Northern Railroad. The friends of the Wright project, the Alma road, were also busy; and, Mt. Pleasant was strongly inclined to think that they could secure that also. Besides that, they were talking of offering inducements to the Flint and Pere Marquette line to widen the guage of the branch from Coleman and extend it. All that would place Mt. Pleasant in a very enviable position with respect to rail-roading.<sup>(23)</sup>

A Lansing paper,<sup>(24)</sup> dated February 9, 1884, under the heading, "An Important Project," stated that the best unoccupied territory for a railroad in Michigan is from Lansing northward through Clinton and Gratiot into Isabella County. During the preceding fourteen years the subject had been discussed, more or less, but nothing definite had been accomplished until a few days ago.

The same daily<sup>(25)</sup> went on to say that on February 8th, Samuel D.

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22. Detroit Free Press, Thursday, January 31, 1884.

23. Detroit Free Press, Friday, February 1, 1884.

24. Lansing Republican, Saturday, February 9, 1884.

25. Ibid.

Bingham of Lansing, who had for many times urged the importance of such a railroad arm, extending from the capitol city northward, had received a letter from James Gargett of Alma, announcing the organization of the Lansing, Alma, Mt. Pleasant & Northern Railroad Company. A sufficient amount of stock had been subscribed, the necessary five per cent paid in, and the articles of incorporation were ready to be filed. The following had been elected by the stockholders to serve as directors of the road: A.W. Wright, Alma; John A. Harris, Mt. Pleasant; Wm. N. Brown, Mt. Pleasant; James Gargett, Alma; I.N. Shepard, Salt River; W.S. Turck, Alma; and, George D. Barton, Alma. The directors chose the following officers: A.W. Wright, President; William N. Brown, Vice-president; W.S. Turck, Treasurer; and, Marcus Pollasky, Secretary.

The road was to run from Lansing to Alma via St. Johns, thence to Mt. Pleasant via Salt River or Sunnerton, finally to Frankfort as soon as the road was finished to Mt. Pleasant. The surveys had been made from Alma to Mt. Pleasant, and work would begin at once. The Detroit Free Press <sup>(26)</sup> stated that the intent was to connect with the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern at Lansing.

It was generally conceded that the company shops would be located at Alma, which would add largely to the business and industries of that village; and, that since the board of directors were all quite wealthy, they would see the project through.

The Corporation Division, Department of Treasury, State of Michigan, Lansing, has records which reveal that the articles of incorporation were

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26. Detroit Free Press, Saturday, February 9, 1884.

recorded and filed with the Secretary of State on February 12, 1884. Although the articles as such are not on file presently with the State of Michigan, other information states that the termini points to be Lansing and Mt. Pleasant; the length of the road to be sixty-eight miles; the gauge to be not less than three and one-half feet; the capital, \$544,000; and the term 999 years from 1884.<sup>(27)</sup>

On February 11th, a meeting of about forty of the leading business men of Lansing met in the common council room with several members of the board of directors of the proposed railroad in regard to giving aid to the project. A.O. Bement was chosen chairman of the meeting and E.F. Cooley, secretary.

James Gargett, A.W. Wright and W.S. Turck of Alma, Gratiot County, and I.N. Shepard of Salt River, who were active in forwarding the project, were present. Mr. Gargett spoke in behalf of the new company. Although solicited by other places, they wanted to connect with Lansing.

Mr. Wright spoke much in the same way; they had no definite proposition to make to Lansing people, but he pointed out that they had come to learn their feeling in regard to the matter, and what they were willing to do in aiding the company.

Strong speeches were made by O.M. Barnes, James M. Turner, S.L. Smith, George P. Sanford, and A.O. Bement, who all agreed on the leading point, that the road would be of great value to Lansing, as the capital city would be the largest city on the line, and would be the outlet for the

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27. Bureau of Collections, Corporation Division, Dept. of Treasury, State of Michigan, Lansing, Michigan, File drawer 26A, L-12-518.

lumber and agricultural products of Gratiot and Isabella counties. They all agreed in their opinions that the sum of \$3,000 per mile and the right of way would be donated by the people along the line.

Mr. Barnes and Mr. Turner had heard that \$4,00 to \$6,000 per mile could be secured in the way of donations or subscriptions to stock. They all agreed that it was a safe business venture.

Mr. Smith, especially, dwelt upon the safety of the business proposal. He had spent much time in studying this same scheme, and had thought of organizing a home company himself. He was satisfied that if five or six men would club together to build the road as a business and not as a speculative venture, and run it on business principles, with no watering of stock and like devices, it would be a success. He had seen nothing in a long time that promised so well, and compared it to a very successful undertaking in the northern peninsula that was quite similar. At least six per cent on the investment could be realized by such a road, built then, as he described; and he thought that if even \$3,000 per mile could be secured as donations, that capitalists would furnish the rest.

O.M. Barnes emphasized the point that the road could be built for about \$10,000 per mile, whereas other roads leading into Lansing had cost \$15,000 to \$30,000 per mile. The price of steel then was extremely low, yet he thought it likely to advance within a year.

Jim Turner forcibly brought out the point that it was best to keep the road, if built, independent of other roads. He knew that the Grand Trunk and Lake Shore companies would be glad to make this new line a branch of their systems, but by being independent, the earnings of the little road

would be larger; for the great lines would compete for the prize of carrying its freight from Lansing to the East.

Colonel Dodge said that he had been over the line with William H. Dodge to find out the sentiment of the people. It was his opinion that \$4,000 per mile, from the north line of Clinton County to Lansing could be raised. He also thought that the road could be built at less expense in Gratiot County than in Clinton and Ingham counties.

Edward Cahill had also studied the matter, and was convinced of its practicability.

Mr. Barnes made a motion to the effect that it was the sense of the meeting that a sufficient sum of money could be raised to build the road, and that the gentlemen present would do their part. The motion was unanimously carried.

It was pledged by vote to pay the expenses of a committee, to be sent out by the president of the company for the purpose of securing subscriptions along the line of the proposed road. James J. Baird, Frank Dodge, and Edward W. Sparrow were appointed to raise money for that purpose.

Messrs. Barnes, Turner, and Smith gave warm testimony to the capacity, energy, and reliability of the three gentlemen from Alma, and especially of Mr. Wright. There was entire harmony in the view of the desirability and practicability of building the road, which would extend through sixty-eight miles of new country, of which Lansing would be the natural guiding star. Coming from men so experienced and so-well known in Michigan, they indicated there ought to be no hesitancy on the part of Lansing's citizens in forwarding the movement. (28)

By request, Frank L. Dodge and George P. Sanford accompanied President A.W. Wright to St. Johns on the following day, Tuesday, February 12. A very enthusiastic meeting was held in the Court House, notwithstanding the unpleasant weather and the lack of a timely notice.

The meeting was called to order by David S. French, and was organized with the Hon. H.M. Perrin as chairman and Otis Fuller as secretary.

James Gargett gave an outline of the work done so far and said that the road would be built. Messrs. Sanford and Dodge pledged that Lansing would do its level best, and Messrs. John Hicks, D.S. French, H.M. Perrin, and S.S. Walker pledged St. Johns for her share.

On motion of David S. French, the meeting voted to raise the sum required (\$30,000 to \$50,000, and perhaps more). Mr. French then offered the following resolutions<sup>(29)</sup> which were carried unanimously:

Resolved: that it is in the sense of this meeting that the people of St. Johns and vicinity recognize the advantages that would accrue to them from the proposed road and will do anything that is reasonable to aid in securing it.

Resolved: that a committee of five be appointed to confer with the officers of the new railroad company, and call a public meeting at any time when the officers are prepared to submit to St. Johns a definite proposition showing what amount of money will be required of them.

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29. Clinton Republican, Vol. XXVIII, No. 40, Thursday, February 14, 1884.

The chair named the following to the committee: John Hicks, S.S. Walker, Charles Fowler, David French, and John H. Corbit.

It was reported<sup>(30)</sup> that the committee of officers of the new road were in Maple Rapids on the 13th of February. A meeting of citizens was called without any previous notice and a committee consisting of R.S. VanScoy, Isaac Hewitt, William H. Owen, George R. Newton, and O.F. Peck was appointed to solicit aid if the road could be built so as to come to or near Maple Rapids.

The people of DeWitt apparently had not become too enthusiastic at the time as was evidenced by a reporter: "A few energetic citizens of this place (DeWitt) propose to do something and we are of the opinion it will be hard work to get only a few interested."<sup>(31)</sup>

A correspondent to the Detroit Post and Tribune was quoted in the Isabella Enterprise: "A surveying party is now on the route and it is expected that the survey will be completed between Alma and Mt. Pleasant by tomorrow. The present survey passes through Summerton and Estee's Corners, two miles west of Salt River. The permanent survey will not vary greatly from this line. This road will be an important link in a north and south road, connecting as it will, with a line twenty miles long, now owned and operated by the A.W. Wright Lumber Company, which is to be, I am informed, incorporated with the main line on its extension northward, thus opening up by a direct route, one of the richest lumber tracts in the state. It is the intention to push the road southward as rapidly as possible, but the rate of speed will depend somewhat upon the amount of aid obtained at the different points,

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30. Detroit Free Press, Saturday, February 16, 1884.

31. Clinton Republican, Vol. XXVIII, No. 40, Thursday, February 14, 1884, Under DeWitt Items.



but I have the assurance that the road will certainly be in operation from some point on the Detroit, Grand Haven and Milwaukee, to Mt. Pleasant before New Year's Day.<sup>(32)</sup>

However, the enthusiasm generated along the proposed line of the Lansing, Alma, Mt. Pleasant & Northern Railroad was not indicative of the financial economy in the rest of the State of Michigan. Railroad men all said the same thing in regard to their business. It was remarkably dull and was not picking up as fast as was expected. The largest share of the work at the general offices consisted in answering requests for special rates, which everybody wanted. A large number of workmen in the various departments of the Lake Shore repair shops in Adrain<sup>(33)</sup> had been laid off, there being about seventy men discharged, many of whom had been in the employ of the company for twenty years.

Railroad news was what the people along the route wished to see and hear. Advantages gained by the new road were foremost and everyone agreed that it would make competition in all lines of business.

The Detroit Evening Post reported that piles were being driven at Alma across the Pine River for the new line as of February 28, 1884.

In one of the Lansing papers<sup>(34)</sup> it was reported that contracts for ties were being made for the new railroad between Alma and Mt. Pleasant. This was a part of the line which was looked for in Lansing at no distant date. Zealous work was being done to put the project on its feet between Lansing and St. Johns.

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32. Isabella Enterprise, Wednesday, February 13, 1884.

33. Detroit Free Press, Saturday, February 9, 1884. Under Adrain items.

34. Lansing Republican, Saturday, March 1, 1884.

The following is a letter which was published in the Lansing Republican, and was signed: (35)

"Some time since there was a citizens' meeting held in the circuit court room of this city, which was attended by many of our earnest and most zealous business men for the purpose of conferring together on the subject of a railroad north from Lansing to Mt. Pleasant, a distance of about seventy miles. Gentlemen from abroad were in attendance and much interest was manifested in the proposed enterprise. Many of our citizens are familiar with the north country. The farming lands and the immense quantity of pine and hardwood timber throughout the northern part of the state, especially in the above named territory, makes this an extraordinary, and indeed, at the present time, the most feasible route of any in the state. It is only necessary to glance over the map of this state in order for any person unacquainted with the proposed route to see and realize the material advantage to Lansing, especially, and the country north generally from this point.

'The advantages to Lansing are many, and the opportunity for establishing various manufacturing industries and lumber yards on a large scale will be second to none in the state. The railroad facilities for shipping are infinitely superior to any of our lumber towns as is shown by the files in the office of the secretary of state. The company is organized, the officers elected, and the necessary stock has been subscribed. These are the preliminary steps. The people north are in earnest and anxious to do their trading in Lansing, which is the metropolis, or will be, with proper effort the market town of the Lansing, Alma, Mt. Pleasant & Northern Railroad. Those

who are and will be most benefited by a direct communication with the country named above, business men of all kinds, capitalists, property owners, mechanics and laborers, are interested. Lansing should act in this matter without delay. It is a golden opportunity which should be accepted. Let each person constitute himself a committee to advance the material welfare and success of our capital city. A meeting should be called by our citizens and active measures taken for the success of what seems to me a great and profitable enterprise to each and everyone who has the best interest of Lansing at heart.

'It is unnecessary to test the good faith of the effort thus far of the corporation above named. With the Honorable A.W. Wright as its presiding officer, success is assured to us if we will best have it, as we should not expect it without life and effort on our part.

Lansing, February 29, 1884.

Citizen."

The above letter indicates a very obvious impatience with the Lansing committee. He may have already made an investment in the project, or perhaps had a business that could prosper with the new road. It could have very well been the editor of the local paper.

The latest rumor afloat in the Mt. Pleasant area<sup>(36)</sup> around the first of March was to the effect the Alma line and the Toledo, Ann Arbor & Northern would consolidate and run the one line to the town of Alma. Another was that the road from Alma south to Lansing would be built as the amount of aid had been pledged by Lansing and St. Johns. The second rumor may have been instituted to get Mt. Pleasant to come forth more liberally with its share.

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36. Isabella Enterprise, Wednesday, March 5, 1884.

At about the same time it was rumored<sup>(37)</sup> that there were two proposed routes southward from Alma. One via Ithaca, Pompeii, Bridgeville and St. Johns. The other from Alma to Maple Rapids direct, and thence to St. Johns, passing Ithaca on the west some three or four miles. No survey had as yet been made south of Alma and all that had been said about the route to be chosen was only talk.

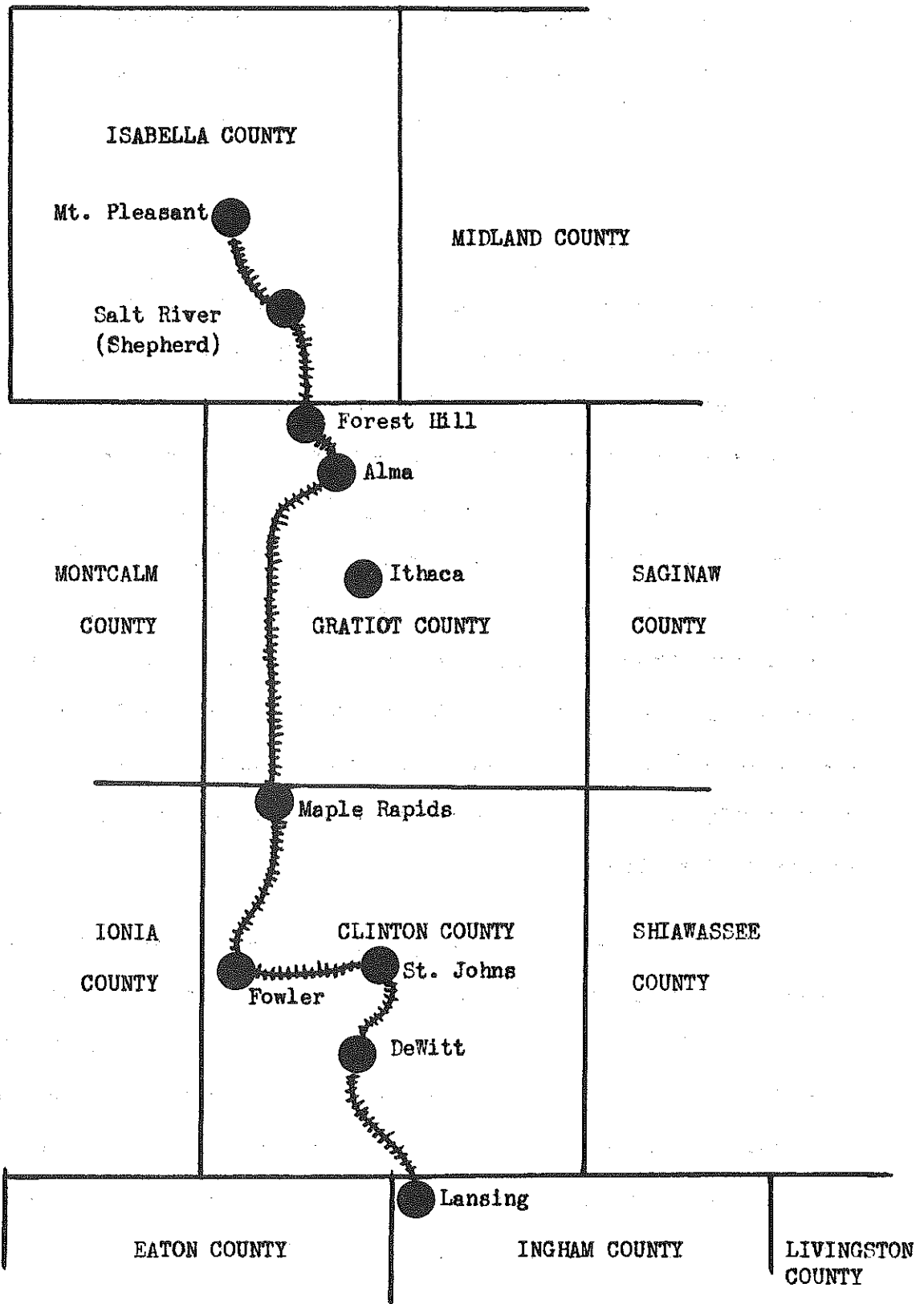
Meetings were held all along the route during the first week of March. On the third of the month, William N. Brown, representing the railroad project, conferred with the St. Johns committee that evening. The company would guarantee that the cars would be running from Lansing to St. Johns by October 20th next, if St. Johns would raise \$60,000. G.P. Sanford addressed an assembly in Clinton Hall, DeWitt, the following Wednesday evening. Messrs. Dodge and O.G. Pennell, a prominent local resident, also spoke in behalf of the road at the Grange Hall in Olive Township, south of St. Johns.

Another meeting was held in the common council rooms at Lansing on the 7th of March. At that meeting,<sup>(38)</sup> there were not as many business men as there should have been, yet it was shown that some of the Lansing men were alive to the importance of this "best of feeders" for Lansing and that a strong effort would be made to have Lansing do as well as other places on the proposed line. Mayor Barnes was chosen chairman of the meeting and George H. Saxton, secretary. Geo. P. Sanford reported progress and he told of the successful meetings held at St. Johns, DeWitt and Olive. Several short talks were listened to from O.M. Barnes, James M. Turner, John Robson, Frederick Thoman,

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37. Isabella Enterprise, Wednesday, March 12, 1884.

38. Lansing Republican, Saturday, March 8, 1884.



An alternate plan for the route of the Lansing - Mt. Pleasant line was to go west of Alma four miles and then south to Maple Rapids and Fowler. Note: Ithaca had been completely by-passed.

J.W. Hinchey, and William VanBuren, after which a committee consisting of A.O. Bement, George P. Sanford, Frank L. Dodge, S.H. Carmer, and O.F. Barnes was appointed to solicit aid or subscriptions to the stock of the proposed road.

A railroad meeting was held in Maple Rapids<sup>(39)</sup> on Thursday afternoon, March 6th, which was attended by a large number of citizens. The band was out in full force and a good feeling prevailed. The meeting was called to order by E.R. Reed. R.S. VanScoy was elected chairman. The Honorable W.S. Turck, of Alma, gave a short account of the organization, and what they proposed and expected would be done. James L. Clark, also of Alma, spoke of the advantages of such a road. Remarks were also made by R.S. VanScoy and Isaac Hewitt. Subscriptions were then received and before evening about \$10,000 had been pledged. Committees were appointed to interview the local citizens and receive subscriptions. The amount at last accounts had reached \$15,000. Everyone seemed to take an interest, and there was no doubt but the township of Essex and vicinity would fulfill the requirements necessary to secure the road through that village.

An Alma correspondent to the Gratiot Journal<sup>(40)</sup> said: "A.W. Wright reached here on Friday night last (March 14, 1884) on his return from a visit with his family at Saratoga, New York, and a business trip to New York City, where he and William N. Brown of Mt. Pleasant negotiated for the funds to build the Lansing, Alma, Mt. Pleasant & Northern Railroad. He was accompanied here by a number of ladies and gentlemen from Saginaw, who visited him at his hotel until Saturday afternoon train time. The railroad company is now making

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39. Clinton Independent, Thursday, March 13, 1884, Under Maple Rapids.

40. Isabella Enterprise, Wednesday, March 19, 1884.

some alterations in their line in the vicinity of Forest Hill and as soon as this is done, which will be in the course of two or three days, they will start the engineer corps south from this place. There seems to be no doubt now, from what is understood, but that the route will go straight from there to Maple Rapids."

Mr. Wright and Wm. N. Brown of Mt. Pleasant were in Lansing along with David C. French and J.H. Corbit of St. Johns almost all day, March 12th. They met with the local railroad committee<sup>(41)</sup> behind closed doors for the purpose of determining the amounts to be assessed against each locality along the proposed road to Mt. Pleasant. It was understood that the matter was satisfactorily arranged, and the visitors departed that evening for home.

An enthusiastic meeting was held on March 15th at St. Johns<sup>(42)</sup> at which President Wright promised to have cars running by November if Clinton County would furnish \$60,000 and the right of way.

Another meeting was held at DeWitt on March 21st at the Clinton Hall under the direction of O.G. Pennell and O.H. Perrin of St. Johns. The local committee was instructed to start the solicitation campaign on the following Monday morning (March 24, 1884).<sup>(43)</sup>

In a newspaper article,<sup>(44)</sup> dated March 19, 1884, it was reported that the piles had been driven for the company's bridge over Pine River at Alma, and the intention was to finish the bridge before the ice would break up. Also, that the project proved that popular, that the company found little

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41. Lansing Republican, Thursday, March 13, 1884.

42. Lansing Republican, Tuesday, March 18, 1884.

43. Lansing Republican, Tuesday, March 25, 1884.

44. Detroit Post and Tribune, Wednesday, March 19, 1884.

difficulty in securing right of way contracts.

The Isabella Enterprise<sup>(45)</sup> printed the following under a St. Louis column: "A good story is told of I.N. Shepard of Salt River, who has all along been very enthusiastic over Alma's proposed railroad to Mt. Pleasant and is a director in the organization. It seems he has bargained for a two hundred fifty acre farm at the point where he expects the station grounds to be located at Salt River (if they are ever located) and has paid one dollar to bind the bargain, while the other fellow has put up two and one-half dollars. Thus Mr. Shepard has one dollar's faith in the building of the road - and apparently no more."

The prospect of a new railroad entering the city of Lansing from the north had the effect of booming real estate sales in that part of the city. Several places had changed hands and other sales were expected. It was a consensus that with another railroad to St. Johns, farms would advance at least five dollars per acre and all other real estate in proportion.

Ithaca, the county seat of Gratiot, became very desperate in its desire to secure the proposed road and some of its community enthusiasts felt that it must be obtained at all hazards.

The Clinton Independent<sup>(46)</sup> did a very comprehensive report of a railroad meeting at St. Johns: "The court room was filled with interested people, Saturday evening, (March 15, 1884), to listen to the report of the committee appointed several weeks ago to get terms from the Lansing, Alma, Mt. Pleasant & Northern Railroad for running their road through St. Johns.

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45. Isabella Enterprise, Wednesday, March 26, 1884.

46. Clinton Independent, Thursday, March 20, 1884, titled, "The Railroad."



The Honorable O.L. Spaulding was chosen chairman and Messrs. Otis Fuller and James D. Estes, secretaries.

'Mr. Spaulding made a ringing speech in favor of the road. He said the time had come for our people (St. Johns) to act, and that they could better afford to give \$100,000 than let the road go west of us. We have a beautiful town, best farming land under the sun, an abundance of raw material, and everything else needed except another railroad. He said the railroad was going to Lansing but would not come here without the necessary aid was subscribed.

'Inspiring remarks were also made by Messrs. Daboll, Walbridge, Fedewa, French, Barker and Walker.

'No attempt was made to raise money, yet quite a number gave voluntary subscriptions.

'The old committee composed of Messrs. D.S. French, John Hicks, S.S. Walker, J.H. Corbit and Charles Fowler, was retained and instructed to at once canvass for aid. They are now actively at work and are meeting with success.

'When they call upon you, give them a cordial reception and a fat subscription.

'The meeting adjourned to next Saturday (March 22, 1884) evening at the court house, when the committee expects to make a good showing.

'The following proposition was adopted by those at the meeting:

'Whereas, a committee appointed at a meeting of the citizens of St. Johns to canvass the suggestion made by and on behalf of this company about bringing our road to St. Johns, have submitted to the president a written

communication on the subject, asking for terms upon which this company's road will be built from Lansing to St. Johns, therefore

'Resolved. First. - That this company will build its road from Lansing to St. Johns upon the following terms and conditions;

'Second. - The citizens of St. Johns and Clinton County shall raise in collectable notes the sum of \$60,000, and the title to the right of way from the southern line of Clinton County, through the corporate limits of the village of St. Johns without cost to the company.

'Third. - The citizens of Lansing to raise the sum of \$35,000 in collectable notes or stock subscribed and the right of way from the south line of Clinton County, into the City of Lansing to be delivered to the company on the construction of its road from Lansing to St. Johns.

'Fourth. - When the sums above mentioned have been raised, ready for delivery, the company will at once begin the work of establishing its line by a competent engineer or engineers, and when such line is established and the right of way secured as above mentioned, the company to commence the work of constructing its road from Lansing to St. Johns and prosecute the work as rapidly as practicable.

'Fifth. - The road to be of a "standard guage," well built and a good road, and the depot in St. Johns to be located within one-half mile of Clinton Avenue, and between Cass Street and the Detroit, Grand Haven & Milwaukee Railroad.

'Sixth. - If the weather shall not be unfavorable for the carrying on of railroad construction, and there shall be no delays, hindrances or interruptions, by injunctions or other legal proceedings, then the road will be

built by the first day of November, 1884, or as soon thereafter as practicable in consequence of bad weather or litigations as mentioned above, provided the above sums are raised in collectible notes on or before the 15th day of April, 1884, and the right of way on or before the first day of May, 1884.

'Seventh. - The notes raised by the citizens of St. Johns and vicinity, as above stated, shall be delivered to the First National Bank of St. Johns, to be delivered up to this company or to any person it may designate when a train of cars is run over its tracks from Lansing to St. Johns.

'Eighth. - The sum of \$60,000 above stated to be raised by "St. Johns and the citizens of Clinton County and those interested in Clinton County" shall not include, nor does it constitute any part of the sum to be raised and donated to this company by the citizens of Maple Rapids, in said Clinton County, in consideration of the constructing of its road to Maple Rapids.

'Ninth. - The executive committee of this board are hereby directed and instructed to proceed immediately to carry this resolution into effect by the construction of the road between Lansing and St. Johns, upon a compliance with its provisions by the people of said places.

State of Michigan

S.S.

County of Gratiot

'I hereby certify that the above is a true copy of the resolution adopted this 14th day of March, A.D., 1884, and that I have carefully compared the same with the original resolution.

Marcus Pollasky

Secretary, L., A., Mt. P., & N.R.R. Company."

A conference of citizens from Maple Rapids with the directors of the road had been held, and Maple Rapids was asked to secure the right of way and raise \$30,000. The aid asked from towns along the line was: Lansing and DeWitt, \$50,000; St. Johns, \$50,000; Maple Rapids, \$30,000; Alma, \$40,000; Mt. Pleasant, \$15,000. The last two named had already raised theirs. Lansing had promised to raise her's, and St. Johns expected to raise her share. (47)

Several new buildings were under construction, or were already built, with credit for such being directed toward the new road.

On Saturday, March 22, an enthusiastic railroad meeting<sup>(48)</sup> was held at the court house in St. Johns, and there was considerable evidence manifested to show that the enthusiasm was increasing. At about seven o'clock that evening about fifty men with spades and shovels marched up Clinton Avenue headed by the Knights Templars band. On each shovel was marked the amount every man had pledged to give the proposed road. Mrs. W.R. Hicks, Jr. had prepared a banner with the design of a locomotive named "A.W. Wright," and her son, Andy, carried it at the head of the procession, and gave \$25. H.H. Hollenbeck came next with \$150, followed by sums as low as \$5. The audience cheered the enterprise manifested by St. Johns' laboring men, and called down blessings upon their heads. This gave new spirit to the project and at the close of the meeting, the sum of \$2,630 was reported as raised, mostly in small subscriptions.

Gen. Spaulding and Hon. P.K. Perrin made stirring speeches. Perrin reported that at a small meeting in Olive Township, \$1,000 was subscribed,

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47. Clinton Republican, Vol. XXVIII? No. 43, March 6, 1884.

48. Clinton Independent, Thurs., Mar. 27, 1884, "Another Railroad Meeting."

and the farmers seemed to be alive to the benefits of the road.

As of March 25, 1884, a correspondent reported<sup>(49)</sup> that the surveying party had been looking over the route between Alma and Maple Rapids and had pronounced it a very good one, and that the engineers then turned their work towards St. Johns.

Another large railroad meeting was held at St. Johns on Saturday, March 29th.<sup>(50)</sup> The court house room was crowded and several could not get in. Gen. Spaulding again presided and made an earnest speech, showing the necessity of having the road. The Honorable P.K. Perrin reported that \$5,000 had been raised in Olive and DeWitt townships, and that \$5,000 more would be raised in those two areas. The sum of \$32,000 had been raised so far in St. Johns, leaving \$28,000 yet to be raised.

H.M. Perrin, who had already pledged \$1,500, made his subscription \$500 more, and A.J. Baldwin gave \$5000. The other amounts were from \$100 down.<sup>(51)</sup> John Hicks had subscribed \$4,000. St. Johns had done nobly. Enough was already "in sight" to make St. Johns' subscriptions \$35,000. Mr. Perrin stated that in 1871 Greenbush, Bingham, Olive and DeWitt townships voted \$120,000 for a road from Lansing to St. Johns, (Lansing, St. Johns & Mackinaw Railroad). He felt that the county people should "open up" and liberally subscribe to the new road.

The committee, who were seeking and getting subscriptions were obtaining rebuffs from some of the more able citizens, but it was reported that

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49. Clinton Republican, Vol. XXVIII, No. 47, Thurs., March 27, 1884.

50. Detroit Post and Tribune, April 1, 1884, "They Want the Road."

51. Clinton Independent, Thursday, April 3, 1884, "That Railroad."

the committee were hard at work and they insisted that they would get the necessary amount. Many poor men are giving in small figures.

A Detroit newspaper, <sup>(52)</sup> dated April 1, 1884, stated that the company had established the grade of the new railroad between Alma and Mt. Pleasant. It quoted the Maple Rapids Dispatch as saying that due to the indifference of the village of Salt River and their refusal to pay \$15,000 bonus to the company, the line had been run nearly two miles west from that place and it inferentially concluded that the village had gone up its own stream.

The same paper <sup>(53)</sup> on April 5th, reported that the Lansing, Alma, Mt. Pleasant & Northern Railroad would break ground at once between Alma and Mt. Pleasant.

It went on to say that a contract for grading six and one-half miles of the new road bed north of Alma was let on Monday, March 31st, reaching a point on State Road, two miles west of the village of Salt River. It was proposed to have the road bed between Alma and Mt. Pleasant ready for the iron by June 1st, and in operation by the first of July. Surveys had been made and the right of way partially obtained south to Maple Rapids.

In an article by a St. Johns paper, dated April 3, 1884, <sup>(54)</sup> were the following statements: "There is no class of people in an agricultural community that receives more benefit from railroads than farmers, and yet when approached to give for the new road they seem to regard it as no benefit to them, but a great benefit to villagers. Now the facts are, that

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52. Detroit Post and Tribune, April 1, 1884.

53. Detroit Post and Tribune, April 5, 1884.

54. Clinton Independent, Thursday, April 3, 1884, "Farmers and the New Railroad."

another railroad to St. Johns will enable our grain buyers to pay at least three cents more per bushel for wheat than they now do. Who gets the benefit of that? The farmer. The same may be said with regard to corn and oats. Our merchants get their goods here cheaper by the competition, and who gets the benefit. Not the merchant, but the consumer. A good market is necessary to make farming a profitable investment. No matter how productive the land may be, without a market, the products of the farm cannot be raised profitably as against those farms that are near a good market. While the merchant and business men will reap a benefit from the new road, it will only be from the increased business he may do, and not from increased profit. These are facts that our farmers will do well to consider, and let them ask how much the road is worth to them and then give accordingly. Now or Never."

The Gratiot Journal<sup>(55)</sup> is quoted as saying on April 3rd: "We are daily asked if we believe the Lansing, Alma, Mt. Pleasant & Northern Railroad will be built. We answer yes, without a doubt. The money has already been provided for, and if anyone thinks there is the least doubt about the matter, they labor under a delusion. The road is a fixed fact and the Journal has not questioned the good faith of the projectors from the first. The entire line is to be placed under contract and we predict that it will be pushed as rapidly as any road was ever built in Michigan. We have the best of reasons for thus expressing ourselves."

It was announced<sup>(56)</sup> that the Knights Templars Band would conduct a concert on Saturday evening, April 5th, at the court house in St. Johns for the benefit of the new railroad. Tickets were available at fifty cents each

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55. Clinton Independent, Thursday, April 3, 1884, "It Will Come."

56. Clinton Independent, Thursday, April 10, 1884.

and the plea went out to support the project, the band, and pack the house. However, the band concert did not yield a large financial harvest.<sup>(57)</sup> Only \$36.25 was received, and after paying five dollars for expenses, the rest was voted to the band.

The Gratiot Journal was quoted by an Alma correspondent to the Isabella Enterprise<sup>(58)</sup> as saying, "The railroad company will let jobs for building the road bed from this place (Alma) to Estee's Corners, on the State Road west of Salt River, today, Wednesday, April 9th. The people of Forest Hill found so much value in the land necessary for the road bed that the company concluded it was for the best interest to find land of less value on which to build their road, and have surveyed an air line from this place to Summer-ton, since which the good people of Forest Hill would be glad to give the right of way and have the road; but alas! It is too late. It might be well to say just here, to all to whom it may concern, that the president of this company, A.W. Wright, is a practical business man, a man of small words and very few of them, but of large actions and many of them. If you would do business with this company, let no opportunities skip you. They intend to have the road bed ready for the ties and iron by the first of June next, and from this point to Mt. Pleasant."

The same paper<sup>(59)</sup> reported from Ithaca that the grading contracts from Alma northward were let on Wednesday, April 2nd, and the work was to be completed in ninety days. Four more miles were to be let on Monday, the 14th of the month.

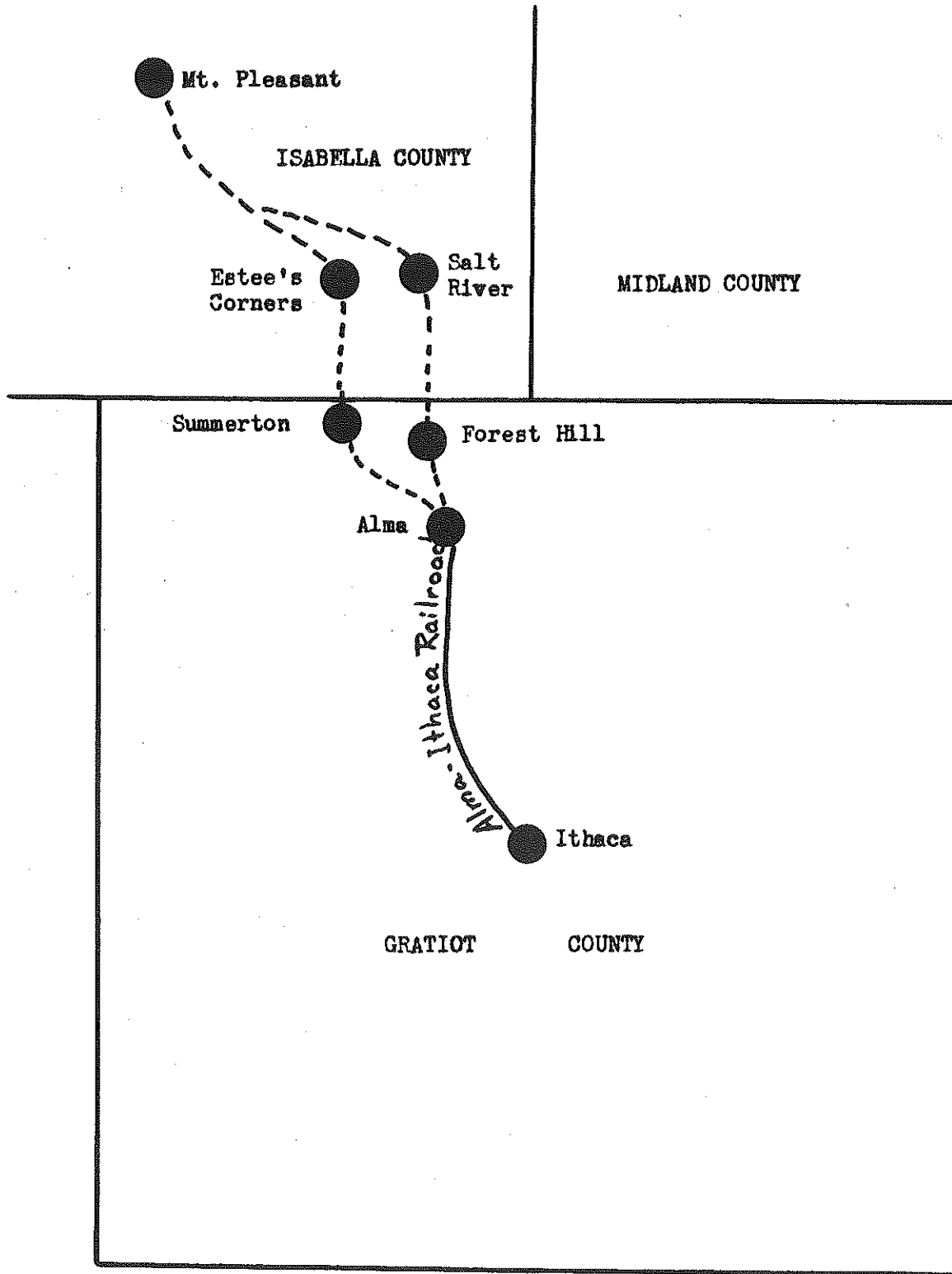
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57. Ibid.

58. Isabella Enterprise, Wednesday, April 9, 1884.

59. Ibid.





Alternate routes of the proposed Lansing, Alma, Mt. Pleasant & Northern Railroad from Alma northward. One suggestion was to go north from Alma to Forest Hill, thence to Salt River (Shepherd), and then to Mt. Pleasant. The other alternative was to include Summerton and Estee's Corners.

An informal meeting of the proposed road was held in Lansing in the Barnes Block on Michigan Avenue, on Wednesday evening, April 9th.<sup>(60)</sup> The names of John Appleyard, Fred Thoman, E.H. Davis and John Robson were added to the soliciting committee and preparations were made to take speedy action in trying to secure the necessary means to build the road.

William N. Brown, one of the directors of the company, was in St. Johns on Tuesday, April 8th, and reported the raising of aid as progressing.<sup>(61)</sup> A rumor to the effect that the road from Owosso (Toledo and Ann Arbor) was going to skip St. Louis and strike Alma made more than just a flutter on the streets, as it was thought that Mr. Wright only wanted connection south and if he could make it at Owosso he would just as soon have it there and hence drop the southern portion of the line. But Mr. Brown informed all that even if the Owosso road did pass through Alma, the road would be built through St. Johns if the necessary bonus was raised.

Monday, April 14th, had been designated as the target date for raising the \$60,000 at St. Johns to insure the railroad from Lansing via St. Johns to Alma and Mt. Pleasant. The court house was packed with an enthusiastic crowd of men and women.<sup>(62)</sup> Robert M. Steel telegraphed \$8,000 from Portland, Oregon, with his compliments to the people of Clinton County and St. Johns. The announcement was received with wild cheers. Before the meeting closed, \$61,000 was pledged, which insured the road. The following telegram was sent: "A.W. Wright, President of the railroad, we have our \$60,000 ready according

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60. Lansing Republican, Thursday, April 10, 1884.

61. Clinton Independent, Thursday, April 10, 1884.

62. Detroit Post and Tribune, Tuesday, April 15, 1884.

to contract. Waiting for the first train with the locomotive named A.W. Wright. (Signed) D.S. French, Charles Fowler, John Corbit, Samuel C. Walker, John Hicks, railroad committee.

St. Johns was wild with excitement and celebrated the victory with several bonfires.

The enthusiasm carried over into the following day as citizens from St. Johns said that having raised the \$60,000, they were now ready to raise aid for the air line from Saginaw to Kalamazoo and that they intended to make it an object, too.<sup>(63)</sup> They also accused Maple Rapids and Lansing of holding back in securing aid for fear St. Johns would not make her target.

Lansing said, "Don't fear for us: we will have our \$35,000 ready just as soon as St. Johns gets her aid ready; but we are afraid you can't raise yours."<sup>(64)</sup>

Now that it had been raised, the St. Johns folks expected George P. Sanford and O.M. Barnes to come to the front with the aid they promised from Lansing.<sup>(65)</sup>

At a meeting held on Monday night (April 14, 1884), at St. Johns,<sup>(66)</sup> Willie Montford, a ten year old boy, contributed a fifty-cent piece to the railroad. The bread thus cast upon the waters at once returned two-fold

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63. Detroit Post and Tribune, Thursday, April 17, 1884, dated April 15, 1884, St. Johns.

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid.

66. Clinton Republican, Vol. XXVIII, No. 49, Thursday, April 17, 1884.

as S.S. Walker promptly presented the boy with a silver dollar for his generous donation.

When the final count had been made, St. Johns had done itself proud, having succeeded in raising \$60,850 for the new road.

The railroad interest at DeWitt was too great for much of anything else. A railroad dance was scheduled at the Clinton House for Thursday evening, April 17th. The charge was one dollar and everyone was urged to turn out. It was also announced that the DeWitt band was to play for a sugar social at the Grand Army Rooms. It was suggested that citizens attend both affairs and still have money left to ride on the cars.<sup>(67)</sup>

The following critical comment appeared under DeWitt News in one of the St. Johns papers:<sup>(68)</sup> "DeWitt has done nobly, and had it not been for a few selfish, egotistical citizens, etc. (?), it would have got to the front with their bonus long ago. About \$7,500 was raised in this locality, and should the \$1,000 claimed by the Lansing committee be transferred to this township, then the amount would reach nearly \$9,000. DeWitt is not behind in the way of energy and enterprise."

A meeting was announced<sup>(69)</sup> to be held at Mt. Pleasant on the evening of April 18, 1884, for the purpose of raising \$3,000 to be devoted to assist in the construction of the Lansing, Alma, Mt. Pleasant & Northern Railroad.

The Clinton Republican reported<sup>(70)</sup> that A.W. Wright and Wm. N. Brown,

67. Ibid, Under DeWitt News.

68. Ibid, Under DeWitt News.

69. Detroit Post and Tribune, Friday, April 18, 1884.

70. Clinton Republican, Vol. XXVIII, No. 50, Thursday, April 24, 1884.

president and vice-president of the railroad company, were in St. Johns on Monday, the 21st. They warmly congratulated the local committee upon the prompt and satisfactory manner in which they had performed their part of the work, and accepted the notes. It was indicated that the surveyors would probably start work at St. Johns the following Monday.

In response to a call from the railroad committee, the citizens of Maple Rapids and vicinity met at Perry's Hall on the evening of April 18th.<sup>(71)</sup> General O.L. Spaulding, Charles Fowler, John Corbit, and Captain David S. French of St. Johns were present, and a rousing speech was delivered by Mr. Spaulding. Men, women and children responded liberally and \$4,780 was subscribed, making a total of \$15,785 having been raised. A letter from Vice-president Brown was read stating that if Maple Rapids got the road, she must raise the required bonus at once or the village would be side-tracked and left four or five miles to the west. The group decided to meet again at the same place on the next Saturday night.

A notice in a Detroit newspaper<sup>(72)</sup> reported that four hundred men were at work on the line between Alma and Mt. Pleasant as of the middle of April.

St. Louis finally secured the Toledo & Ann Arbor Railroad, and this made them genuinely happy. This fact seemed to make the proposed road all the more solid.<sup>(73)</sup>

But if anything was lacking at Lansing, it was enthusiasm and money as the following article, under the title, "The Last Chance," which appeared

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71. Ibid, Under Maple Rapids News.

72. Detroit Post and Tribune, Thursday, April 24, 1884.

73. Clinton Independent, Thursday, April 24, 1884.

in a Lansing paper<sup>(74)</sup> would indicate: "On Tuesday, (April 22, 1884), A.W. Wright of Saginaw and William Brown of Isabella County visited Lansing for the purpose of seeing what progress had been made in securing means for the construction of the proposed railroad. On learning as to the amount raised (\$25,000), and the exact situation of affairs along the line from Lansing to St. Johns, they concluded to abandon the enterprise at once, but finally after consultation with Messrs. Barnes, Turner and others, they decided to wait one week more before a final decision. One thing was certain, if no further effort was made on the part of Lansing, this important railroad project would certainly be abandoned, and the old route from Marshall to Carson City by way of Maple Rapids would be readopted. The right of way in the latter route was all secured and a portion of the road bed graded. Mr. Wright seemed very much surprised to find so little had been done at the Lansing end of the line. A citizens' meeting was scheduled to be held in Buck's Opera House on Friday, the 25th, when a final decision would be reached."

The attendance at the railroad meeting held at the Opera House was not large, but considerable enthusiasm was manifested.<sup>(75)</sup> C.B. Stebbins was appointed chairman of the meeting and addresses were made by Messrs Robson, Bement, Sanford and others. It was decided to continue the work of the committee in soliciting subscriptions. Mr. Stebbins' name was added to the committee, and the meeting adjourned with the plan to meet at the Common Council Room on Tuesday night.

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74. Lansing Republican, Thursday, April 24, 1884.

75. Lansing Republican, Saturday, April 26, 1884.

The Lansing paper<sup>(76)</sup> did its part in announcing the April 29th meeting. It reported that decisive action would be taken and that it would be the last chance for Lansing to secure a most important business outlet.

At the meeting held in the Common Council Room,<sup>(77)</sup> in the interest of the proposed railroad, an able and eloquent address was made by State Insurance Commissioner, Eugene Pringle, of Jackson. Remarks were also made by Arthur Bement, Edward Cahill, Col. Sanford and David French of St. Johns. About \$1,700 was raised during the evening and several gentlemen increased their former subscriptions. The meeting adjourned to assemble again the next evening at North Lansing.

The soliciting committee met at North Lansing,<sup>(78)</sup> but after waiting in vain until half past nine o'clock for an audience to show up, the committee adjourned reluctantly, having made no headway in the project.

On Saturday, April 26th, a railroad carnival atmosphere prevailed at Maple Rapids.<sup>(79)</sup> At three o'clock in the afternoon, a procession marched through the streets, headed by the Billy Begole Post, G.A.R., followed by the steam engine of John Whittacre, drawing four carriages, all of which were nicely decorated with flags and mottoes. The first car denominated the "smoking car," contained about twenty gentlemen enjoying the festive weed (cigars). The second carried forty ladies; the third, the band; and the fourth, a "carload" of children. These were followed by boys with wheelbarrows and a cheering crowd. At eight o'clock in the evening, the opera house was crowded to its utmost capacity. Gen O.L. Spaulding, S.B. Daboll,

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76. Lansing Republican, Tuesday, April 29, 1884.

77. Lansing Republican, Thursday, May 1, 1884.

78. Ibid.

79. Clinton Republican, Thurs., May 1, 1884, Under Maple Rapids News.

H. Walbridge and J.H. Corbit were present and did valuable work. The committee reported \$22,943 raised, which was increased during the evening to \$26,000. The Honorable R.S. Vanscoy then pledged himself to raise the remaining \$4,000 of the bonus and the right of way across his farm. Thus, it established the fact that Maple Rapids was to have the railroad. The committee was commended for the great amount of work done, and the band was given a vote of thanks for the excellent music that had been furnished.

The Ovid Union<sup>(80)</sup> is quoted as saying that St. Johns was right on the beam; she had been successful in raising her share of the bonus for the new railroad, which after reaching Mt. Pleasant, would continue in a northwestern direction for some point on the lake shore (Lake Michigan).

There was serious concern in Mt. Pleasant when it was learned that the survey for the new road had been changed, and instead of going through by Estee's Corners, it would go to Salt River, and there was some question as to whether it would extend farther north than Salt River at that time.<sup>(81)</sup>

Mr. Jim Ashley of the Toledo & Ann Arbor Railroad had written the Salt River people not to depend upon his road going there,<sup>(82)</sup> not at that time, and if they could secure the Lansing, Alma, Mt. Pleasant road to do so.

An article in the Mt. Pleasant paper<sup>(83)</sup> stated that the proposed railroads to that place, which had already been built on paper several times, was now "declared off." The Toledo, Ann Arbor & Northern would stop at St. Louis, while the Lansing and Alma road would stop at Salt River. "The

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80. Clinton Independent, Thursday, May 1, 1884.

81. Isabella Enterprise, Wednesday, May 7, 1884.

82. Ibid.

83. Isabella Enterprise, Wednesday, May 21, 1884.



fact of the business is, you can't tell much about it. The persons here (Mt. Pleasant), who subscribed to the Toledo, Ann Arbor & Northern road have been asked to turn over the amounts subscribed to the Lansing and Alma line. It would be very satisfactory if a meeting was called where the matter could be discussed and action taken as to a direct move which should be made to secure the last mentioned line."

A Lansing paper<sup>(84)</sup> printed the following, under the title, "That Railroad:" "A line running north from Lansing passes through the center of a territory some twenty-five miles wide of unsurpassed fertility and very valuable timber, which would be a tributary to a railroad on said line. It is proposed to build a road from Lansing to Mt. Pleasant, seventy miles, and ultimately to Lake Michigan at Frankfort, whence by water direct across Lake Michigan to the inexhaustible iron mines of Menominee County. Lansing, three times the largest place on the route, would be the natural metropolis for all this central part of the state and would afford inducements for the trade of that region which no other city could offer. That it would largely increase the population and business of Lansing, no man of good sense will doubt. 'But,' says one who can see but one side of a question, 'it will build up DeWitt and St. Johns and take away trade we now get.' Very likely; but where it takes away one dollar, it will send us ten. The little produce of the north now brought to us at great expense, would come to us at slight cost, and the hardwood lumber, now wholly unattainable, would easily be obtained, and our manufactories, and of course our population, would largely be increased. Increase of population means an increased value of real estate, and an increase of business of every kind."

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84. Lansing Republican, Saturday, May 3, 1884.

'By securing \$35,000 in stock or donations in Lansing, this road will be built to Mt. Pleasant - 70 miles - before next year. The directors are ready to put the surveyors into the field the minute the money is pledged; otherwise, the work will not be commenced and not a mile will be built this side of Alma. 'But,' says one, who wants somebody else to poke his chest-nuts out of the ashes, 'the road will be built anyway.' Well, we don't know what miracle will happen, but this we know: all the evidence indicates that it will not be built; and, if not built now, it will not be in the next fifty years. It is already being built from Alma northward, and at Alma it will go easterly to Owosso, and thence south to Ann Arbor and Toledo; thus leaving Lansing barricaded on both sides, and shut out from the custom of all the country north of us as effectually as if we had a Chinese wall along the north line of Ingham County.

'Men of Lansing - men who have any spirit of enterprise in your souls! Shall we let pass this opportunity, when we have but to reach out our hand to grasp the business while this rich section of the country, yet but partially developed, will give us? Will you stand in your own light because the light will shine upon now and then a drone who refuses to contribute his share to the industrial hive?

'The time in which this money was to be raised to secure the road was limited to the first of May. At that time the committee had secured \$22,010, leaving the amount \$13,000 short. Mr. Wright, the president, has been written to, asking for more time, which it is hoped he will grant. If half of the citizens of Lansing will bestir themselves, the other half may settle back in their traces, and ask the farmer to draw the load, and the wheels will move. If men worth their thousands will covet the odium of the world by folding their hands while we of moderate means build up the city, let us

"accept the situation," and when they die give them a monument worthy of their fame. And if we fail to raise the balance of this sum, let us appeal to the women of Lansing, and they will secure it, as other women built the Bunkerhill monument twenty-five years after the men had got it up one hundred feet and abandoned it in despair. If we do not raise this money, Lansing will be a laughing stock to the enterprising cities around us, as they reap the harvest we have not enterprise enough to win. (Signed)

A Disgusted Committee Man"

Another railroad meeting was called for the evening of May 13th to decide the fate of the project. It was reported<sup>(85)</sup> that the committee still hung to its work with commendable zeal and had now reached \$28,600. The attendance at the meeting was so slim that the meeting was not formally called to order but resolved itself into a general conference between the committee and Mr. Brown, who was present.

Real estate talk and the inflationary trend of such again took a prominent place in the papers of the area.

The Lansing Telegram<sup>(86)</sup> is quoted as saying: "A certain man in this town owns a farm of thirty-two acres in the northern part of the city, which he has had platted into city lots with the expectation of the new railroad enhancing its value, yet he could not be persuaded to subscribe a single dollar to secure the road."

One St. Johns paper reported<sup>(87)</sup> that at Maple Rapids at least one-half dozen well-to-do business men from the surrounding townships were

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85. Lansing Republican, Tuesday, May 13, 1884.

86. Clinton Independent, Thursday, May 29, 1884.

87. Clinton Republican, Vol. XXIX, No. 3, Thursday, May 29, 1884.

preparing to move into the village and engage in business just as soon as the railroad became a certainty.

Another article loudly acclaimed that the St. Johns railroad boom had reached as far as New Baltimore in Macomb County.<sup>(88)</sup> W.A. Withe of that place was looking for a blacksmith shop that he could rent.

The Lansing Republican<sup>(89)</sup> spoke of a St. Johnsite who was certain that the road wouldn't be of any benefit to him when the soliciting committee called on him, held at \$2,000 a piece of real estate, which he had offered for \$800 before the railroad talk commenced.

A DeWitt item<sup>(90)</sup> reported that it was astonishing what fabulous prices some of their property owners wanted for lots, just on the strength of a railroad in the near future.

The surveying party, with chief engineer Thomas, was extremely busy southward from Maple Rapids and St. Johns during the last week of May and the first week of June. They were reported at DeWitt<sup>(91)</sup> on May 26th at work at the crossing of the Lookinglass River north of the grist mill. (The mill site can easily be seen as yet just east of the old abandoned interurban crossing.)

On May 28, the Isabella Enterprise quoted the Alma Record as saying<sup>(92)</sup> "Work on the line of the new railroad between Mt. Pleasant and Salt River is being actively pushed and it is probable that the grade will be finished

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88. Clinton Republican, Vol. XXIX, No. 2, Thursday, May 22, 1884.

89. Lansing Republican, Saturday, May 17, 1884.

90. Clinton Republican, Vol. XXIX, No. 1, Thursday, May 15, 1884.

91. Clinton Republican, Vol. XXIX, No. 3, Thursday, May 29, 1884.

92. Isabella Enterprise, Wednesday, May 28, 1884.

to that place (Salt River) within sixty days. Lansing had pledged the full amount asked of her and now business begins in earnest."

That Lansing had achieved her quota or bonus is of considerable question, for there cannot be found any confirmation in any of the local and daily newspapers: the Detroit press and particularly the Lansing papers. She was needing close to \$7,000 at the last published report.<sup>(93)</sup>

In early June of 1884, prominent business prospectives became known. Constantine Gruber of Fowler made it known,<sup>(94)</sup> that he intended to erect a large grain elevator at Maple Rapids just as soon as the iron was laid on the Lansing, Alma & Mt. Pleasant road. It was announced at DeWitt<sup>(95)</sup> that good responsible parties would put an elevator there with a capacity of ten to fifteen thousand bushels just as soon as the new railroad was completed between Lansing and St. Johns.

On June 19th, it was reported<sup>(96)</sup> that Vice-president, William Brown, was in St. Johns. He said he thought that nothing more than the grading would be done before fall, and he emphatically denied that Mr. Wright had any idea of abandoning the enterprise. He stated that the reason for the delay was that ties could be obtained much cheaper in the winter; and, that the financial crash in New York City made it difficult to raise cash on securities.

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93. Lansing Republican, Thursday, May 15, 1884.

94. Clinton Republican, Vol. XXIX, No. 4, Thursday, June 5, 1884.

95. Clinton Republican, Vol. XXIX, No. 5, Thursday, June 12, 1884.

96. Clinton Republican, Vol. XXIX, No. 6, Thursday, June 19, 1884.

The Detroit Post and Tribune is quoted as saying:<sup>(97)</sup> "Everything is dull at present," said an old railroad builder yesterday, "and I think we will have to wait until after the President is elected and then everything will pick up again. I have been looking for a contract on the Lansing, Alma, Mt. Pleasant line and the Toledo, Ann Arbor and Northern, and they told me that work would stop on the line at St. Louis, and it was very doubtful if the other would go at all."

It was announced by both of the papers at St. Johns, the Clinton Republican<sup>(98)</sup> and the Clinton Independent<sup>(99)</sup> that Mrs. A.W. Wright, wife of the president of the railroad company had recently died at Saratoga, New York. It was explained that her sickness of late had prevented him from looking more closely to the affairs of the new line.

The Clinton Independent of Thursday, July 24, 1884, quoted the Detroit Post and Tribune:<sup>(100)</sup> "The report in circulation that the projected Lansing, Alma, Mt. Pleasant road has been abandoned owing to the doubtful nature of the subscription list in aid of the road is untrue. Information of unquestionable reliability is received by the Post and Tribune that the road will be pushed forward in due time and that there is not a railway project in the country that has better financial backing. Manager Wright, who has the project in hand, is wealthy enough to build the road himself; still, there is a sum of \$100,000 subscribed in aid of the road, running at ten percent, and has first class security behind it, and nearly \$90,000 cash

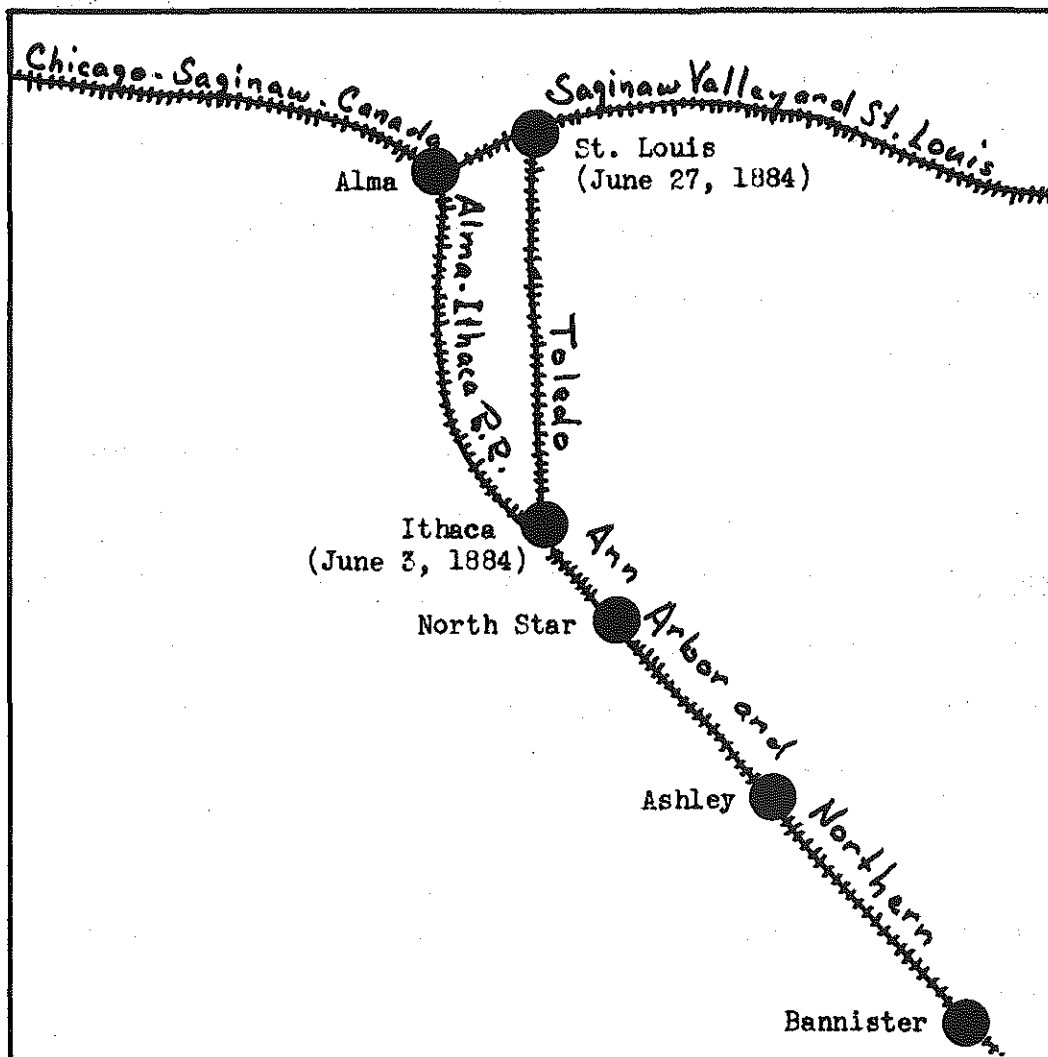
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97. Detroit Post and Tribune, Wednesday, June 18, 1884.

98. Clinton Republican, Vol. XXIX, No. 9, Thursday, July 10, 1884.

99. Clinton Independent, Thursday, July 10, 1884.

100. Clinton Independent, Thursday, July 24, 1884.



Sometime in the early 1870's, a project of a railroad called the Toledo, Ann Arbor & Northwestern was stimulated and talked about considerably. The road was to include Owosso, and then to traverse in a northwesterly direction through Gratiot County, with Big Rapids as one of its principal points. The plan did not materialize in its entirety, but a portion was built and operated from Toledo north as far as South Lyon, in southwestern Oakland County. The extension lay dormant until 1883 when it was revived and taken up by the Ashleys of Toledo: Ex-gov. Ashley of Ohio and his sons.

enough to build the road from Lansing to St. Johns, is in the hands of the projectors. The present inactivity along the line is due to the temporary withdrawal of Mr. Wright, who was called home by serious illness in his family."

On July 31st, a Clinton paper<sup>(101)</sup> revealed that A.W. Wright would make his home at Alma and would help to build up its material interests and look after the new railroad.

Railroad news along the Lansing, Alma & Mt. Pleasant road was noticeably missing during July and August; however, it was reported that the Maple Rapids Dispatch<sup>(102)</sup> said that S.S. Walker of St. Johns had spent a week at Mt. Pleasant, Alma and St. Louis, and that he came home feeling confident that the new railroad would be built from Lansing to Mt. Pleasant before winter would set in.

The Hon. Frank Dodge of Lansing said that he had been informed that work would be commenced on the Lansing & St. Johns railroad the next week.<sup>(103)</sup>

On August 7, 1884, the Clinton Independent reported that regular trains were running over the Toledo and Ann Arbor road from Owosso to St. Louis.

In early September, the same paper<sup>(104)</sup> indicated that they had been asked time after time whether they thought the railroad would be built to

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101. Clinton Independent, Thursday, July 31, 1884.

102. Clinton Republican, Vol. XXIX, No. 14, Thursday, August 14, 1884.

103. Clinton Republican, Vol. XXIX, No. 13, 1884, Thursday, August 7.

104. Clinton Independent, Thursday, September 25, 1884.



Lansing or not, and when. Their response was that from the latest information in their possession was that the road would be graded and ties delivered along the line that winter.

E.R. Reed of the Maple Rapids Dispatch and A.W. Lockwood attended a board of directors meeting of the Lansing, Alma & Mt. Pleasant road on Monday evening, September 15, 1884, at Alma. Dey Vanfleet of St. Johns was also there. Mr. Wright had just returned from the East, where he had been arranging his private matters and he was not fully enough posted on the condition of things along the line to say definitely what would be done at that time. The board adjourned for one week. During that time Mr. Wright and Vice-president Brown would visit Lansing and St. Johns, and then report at the next meeting when a decision would be reached whether they would proceed with the work that fall or not. Reed indicated that he could see no reason to be discouraged about the road being built, although he felt that active work might be postponed that fall. (105)

Both Reed and Lockwood attended the next board meeting, (106) September 22nd. For some reason the members from Mt. Pleasant and Salt River were not present, and the balance of the board would not take any decided action until a full board could be present. Mr. Wright, however, informed the directors and stockholders present that he was ready to proceed just as soon as they were. Negotiations were pending for the floating of the bonds of the road, and it was Reed's opinion that the first railroad project to be revived would be the Lansing and Alma road. Secretary Pollasky had been in Chicago the previous week to receive bids on various materials

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105. Clinton Independent, Thursday, September 13, 1884.

106. Clinton Independent, Thursday, September 25, 1884.

for the road, and he reported to the board very favorable terms. Mr. Wright proposed to back the bonds of the road with his own personal property. Reed indicated that Wright had plenty and that he, Reed, still had faith in the project.

Marcus Pollasky, Secretary of the Lansing, Alma railroad, informed a correspondent of the Clinton Republican<sup>(107)</sup> about the middle of October that the assessments on the stockholders had nearly all been paid; that the prospects were that the balance would be paid soon and that President Wright had expressed his determination to then go ahead and build the road.

Pollasky was quoted in the Clinton Independent<sup>(108)</sup> as saying that the railroad would be built before the notes would outlaw, July 1, 1885.

The magnitude of the Wright enterprises and of the Steel mills was revealed in the following excerpts: the A.W. Wright Lumber Company of Saginaw will get out 15,000,000 feet of logs that winter (1884-1885)<sup>(109)</sup> and R.M. Steel will cut out 3,000,000 feet of logs in his Hamilton, Gratiot County pinery that winter.<sup>(110)</sup>

The statement that was reported December 11, 1884, in a Clinton paper that all the ties necessary for the Lansing, Alma, Mt. Pleasant and Northern Railroad had been purchased and were to be delivered in the

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107. Clinton Republican, Vol. XXIX, No. 24, Thursday, Oct. 23, 1884.

108. Clinton Independent, Thursday, October 30, 1884.

109. Clinton Independent, Thursday, November 20, 1884.

110. Clinton Independent, Thursday, January 1, 1885.

spring<sup>(111)</sup> brought about sharp denials from her sister competitor in St. Johns and Mt. Pleasant.

The Clinton Republican's rebuttal<sup>(112)</sup> was as follows: "The statement that came out last week that all the ties for the railroad had been purchased was without foundation. No ties had yet been purchased for the proposed line between Lansing and St. Johns. A.W. Wright and Wm. N. Brown were in St. Johns the previous week and asked for an extension of the notes beyond July 1, 1885, the time set for the completion of the road. The committee decided that to be impracticable. A manufacturer of rails has offered to furnish rails for twenty percent of their value in cash and take bonds of the road for the balance. It is the opinion of those best posted that some arrangement would yet be perfected to save the road."

A Maple Rapids correspondent reported<sup>(113)</sup> that he had met with W.S. Turck, of Alma, one of the directors of the Lansing, Alma, Mt. Pleasant & Northern line, and that Turck would not commit himself as to whether the road would be built or not; however, negotiations were still pending for purchasing materials.

The Mt. Pleasant paper<sup>(114)</sup> quoted the following from the St. Johns Republican "Anything new about the railroad?" is the question asked of us every day. No move has yet been made toward commencing work on this section of the Lansing, Alma & Mt. Pleasant railroad, and we wouldn't bet a nickel to a dime that the road will be built. The annual meeting of the

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111. Clinton Independent, Thursday, December 11, 1884.

112. Clinton Republican, Vol. XXIX, No. 32, Thurs., Dec. 18, 1884.

113. Clinton Republican, Vol. XXIX, No. 35, Thurs., Jan. 8, 1885.

114. Isabella Enterprise, Friday, January 30, 1885.

stockholders will be at Alma, February 5th, and it is probable that the fiat of life or death to the enterprise will then go forth.

It was reported on January 22, 1885,<sup>(115)</sup> that Messrs. R.M. Steel, John Hicks and David S. French of St. Johns were looking after their interests (lumber) in Gratiot and Isabella counties during the past week, and that they would hold a consultation with the officers of the proposed line as to the prospects for its completion.

The same paper on January 29th, indicated a very pessimistic view by the following statement:<sup>(116)</sup> "We learn from a reliable source that the chances are very slim for the building of the railroad from Lansing to Mt. Pleasant, and that the company is negotiating with the Toledo and Ann Arbor road to run to Alma, thus giving them a southern outlet at Owosso."

At the meeting of the stockholders of the road, held at Alma on February 5th, it was decided to go on with the work on the line at once. The speeches of the heavy stockholders reminded one of a religious revival when all are certain they will "git thar." On the affirmation of President Wright that at least a part of the road would be ironed during the coming spring, all present departed "in faith believing."<sup>(117)</sup>

The following was quoted from the Gratiot County Herald:<sup>(118)</sup> "Those timorous souls who have of late been prophesying that St. Louis is yet likely to be left at the tail end of a stub road, while Alma gets the main line, will doubtless heave a sigh of relief when they learn that James M.

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115. Clinton Independent, Thursday, January 22, 1885.

116. Clinton Independent, Thursday, January 29, 1885.

117. Isabella Enterprise, Friday, February 13, 1885.

118. Clinton Independent, Thursday, February 12, 1885.

Ashley had purchased the salt block and connections. He is not likely to make investments of thousands of dollars in St. Louis and then deliberately run the road around us and leave his own property and manufacturing interests high and dry. Hardly!"

E.R. Reed, of Maple Rapids, attended the annual stockholders' meeting at Alma on February 5th, 1885. <sup>(119)</sup> He reported the following from that meeting: "A.W. Wright informed the company that he had completed his arrangements for the money to build the road and that the link from Alma to Mt. Pleasant would be built immediately. He gave the reporter a written guarantee that if the notes at St. Johns were extended four months, he would complete the road from Lansing to that place by November 1, 1885, and that those of Maple Rapids were extended to another season (?), the company would build from St. Johns to Alma in 1886.

"We are fully convinced that if people of these two places will take into consideration the paralyzed condition of the country for the past nine months, and how impossible it has been to push any enterprise requiring large amounts of money, they will not stand in their own light and refuse a concession which does not cost them anything. It is an utter impossibility now to complete the road to St. Johns or to this place (Maple Rapids) in the life time of the notes. We are confident the company means business and will push the road if these reasonable requests are granted. By this concession, we stand a probable chance of getting the coveted road. By refusing it, we lose all chances for a railroad."

At a railroad meeting held at Maple Rapids on February 10th <sup>(120)</sup> it

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119. Ibid., quoted from the Maple Rapids Dispatch.

120. Clinton Republican, Vol. XXIX, No. 41, Thurs., February 19, 1885.

was resolved to extend the notes and make them payable to any company that would give them the first road to Lansing. Isaac Hewitt, R.M. Swigart, and E.R. Reed were appointed as a committee to confer with the railroad committee at St. Johns as to the most advisable steps to be taken in regard to the matter of extending their notes. The general consensus was that if Mr. Wright wanted the notes extended, why not have a meeting called and settle the question. Maple Rapids' people wanted a proposition and they wanted it from the best authority.

On February 19, 1885, two items appeared in the Clinton Independent that referred to the diversity of the Wright enterprises:<sup>(121)</sup> the A.W. Wright Lumber Company of Saginaw had added seven hundred feet to its dock property, and A.W. Wright was about to build a large pork packing establishment at Alma.

All matters relative to the Lansing, Alma, Mt. Pleasant & Northern Railroad were at a dead standstill for several weeks; however, on April 28, 1885, S.W. Hopkins in a letter<sup>(122)</sup> to the editor of the Isabella Enterprise indicated the following concern: "Suppose further that death, sooner or later does take all men, should cut down Mr. Wright, (his death is recorded as May 5, 1912) and that before we get a southern road. What would be our chance to get one? We would be left. Mt. Pleasant would have only her stub. Towns around her, with two roads, could offer better trading and shipping inducements, and would draw the custom, grow in population and wealth, while we would stand still; while if we got the road, we shall be the better point. Trade will come here. This town will grow and we will double our population in the next five years. (Reasons Why You

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121. Clinton Independent, Thursday, February 19, 1885.

122. Isabella Enterprise, Friday, May 8, 1885.

Should Vote Aid to the Railroad)."

A telegram to the Detroit Evening News<sup>(123)</sup> stated that the engineers of the Toledo, Ann Arbor & Northern Michigan Railroad were running a line through Alma, with the intention of making that the main line and leaving the line to St. Louis as a stub. The question arose whether or not Mr. Wright successfully played the Lansing & St. Johns railroad scheme as a bobtailed flush with which to bluff Mr. Ashley.

F. Denny Larke, of Rogers City, Presque Isle County, was in DeWitt on Saturday, May 16th<sup>(124)</sup> on important business in connection with a certain bill then before the legislature. While in DeWitt, he spoke in high praise of the locality as a grain section and he could not understand why the town was without railroad facilities. The DeWitt correspondent indicated that the town felt the same way. Perhaps the directors of the Lansing, Alma, Mt. Pleasant & Northern road knew along with Col. Ashley and Company.

Maple Rapids was determined it was to have a railroad. A meeting<sup>(125)</sup> of the business men was held in the evening of May 29, 1885, and steps were taken preparatory to organizing a stock company which would give them an outlet to Lansing.

The Clinton Independent reported<sup>(126)</sup> on June 11, that I.N. Shepard and A.W. Wright had purchased \$15,000 worth of machinery for their new roller process mill at Salt River. Also, that Mt. Pleasant and Union Town-

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123. Clinton Republican, Vol. XXX, No. 2, Thurs., May 21, 1885.

124. Ibid, Under DeWitt News.

125. Clinton Republican, Vol. XXX, No. 4, Thurs., June 4, 1885.

126. Clinton Independent, Thursday, June 11, 1885.

ships, Isabella County, had voted \$15,000 apiece "for public improvements" - that is in aid of the Toledo, Ann Arbor & Northern Michigan Railroad.

The talk at Mt. Pleasant around the middle of September<sup>(127)</sup> was to the effect that after all the blow and bluster, they were not going to have the railroad from Alma to Mt. Pleasant that year. The bonds called for the arrival of trains at that place (Mt. Pleasant) on January 1st, and as work had not been commenced on the north side of Salt River, the chances were very slim for the road to reach Mt. Pleasant at that time. It was talked around that the parties there who had been interested and active had invested means at Salt River and were willing that the road should terminate there for that time to give that place a boom. The St. Louis Democrat remarked, in speaking about it that there "is a large-sized 'contraband' in the fence."

A correspondent from Alma to the Gratiot Journal said:<sup>(128)</sup> "The Lansing, Alma & Mt. Pleasant Railroad Company resumed the work of laying iron on the road on September 22nd. The straps, for which they had been long waiting, had arrived. The design then was to push the work. They had an engine on the road, and the company had iron enough to lay to Salt River. It was understood that contracts had been made for enough to complete the road to Mt. Pleasant.

It was reported out of Isabella County<sup>(129)</sup> that the Lansing Republican had used the same writing as published on September 18th about the probability of the railroad not going there that fall, and placed the same under the heading of "Calamities." The railroad talk of the latter

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127. Isabella Enterprise, Friday, September 18, 1885.

128. Isabella Enterprise, Friday, September 25, 1885.

129. Ibid.



part of September was that there was to be a railroad and that the right of way was all secured. "It takes a mighty big heap of talk to build a railroad anyway."

A Salt River reporter indicated that they expected the railroad during the week of October 5, 1885. <sup>(130)</sup> It was reported that I.N. Shepard was hauling lumber from Dushville, preparatory to shipping it over the new railroad.

As of the 6th of October, it was reported that the iron rail was laid to within two miles of Salt River. <sup>(131)</sup>

Late in the month of October, it was rumored <sup>(132)</sup> that the Flint & Marquette Railroad Company had obtained control of the Saginaw Valley and St. Louis, and still another report stated that the Lansing, Alma & Mt. Pleasant Railroad would be operated by the Saginaw Valley & St. Louis Railroad.

An election was held on Friday, October 30, 1885, to determine the extension of time for the railroad bonds to July 1, 1886. <sup>(133)</sup> There were 306 votes cast in favor of it and 181 against extension, thus the Mt. Pleasant citizens felt that they might expect the railroad by that time. It was anticipated that the grading between Mt. Pleasant and Salt River would be finished that winter, if the weather would permit.

Inasmuch as the Alma and Mt. Pleasant railroad was nicknamed the "LAMP Road," it cannot be assumed that it cast any light on an already

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130. Isabella Enterprise, Friday, October 2, 1885.

131. Isabella Enterprise, Friday, October 9, 1885.

132. Isabella Enterprise, Friday, October 23, 1885.

133. Ibid.

gloomy picture.

Messrs. Ashley and Turck were in Mt. Pleasant on November 18th<sup>(134)</sup> looking after the interests of the railroads. It was expected that the grading would commence immediately.

The Clinton Republican reported<sup>(135)</sup> that Salt River was making an effort to raise a bonus of \$50,000 to induce the Toledo & Ann Arbor road to locate their shops in that village. It was also known that the village was seeking incorporation.

On November 26, 1885, the same weekly<sup>(136)</sup> gave notice that Major Anderson, the well-known railroad solicitor, was operating between Elsie and Greenville on a proposed road to run between those points, taking in the flouring town of Maple Rapids and Also Carson City. It was reported that it would be operated in the interest of the Toledo, Ann Arbor & Northern Michigan Railroad.

Rumors were about everywhere as people discussed the railroad situation and it was evident by the following article: "on December 4th," it was reported,<sup>(137)</sup> "the Lansing, Alma & Mt. Pleasant Railroad had been leased to the Toledo, Ann Arbor & Northern Michigan Railroad for ninety-nine years."

Also, a St. Louis correspondent to the Saginaw Evening News said:<sup>(138)</sup> "It seems to be pretty well established that the Toledo line has obtained

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134. Isabella Enterprise, Friday, November 20, 1885.

135. Clinton Republican, Vol. XXX, No. 28, Thursday, Nov. 19, 1885.

136. Clinton Republican, Vol. XXX, No. 29, Thursday, Nov. 26, 1885.

137. Isabella Enterprise, Friday, December 4, 1885.

138. Ibid

control of the Lansing and Mt. Pleasant road. Just where the connection with the latter road will be made is not determined, in fact the officers of the road are very reticent, quite non-committal. A rumor that has gained considerable credence is, that there will be a compromise between the Detroit, Lansing & Northern and the Toledo, Ann Arbor & Northern Michigan Railroad by which the former will withdraw from Ithaca, and the latter from St. Louis. At present, both tracks strike both towns. The connecting link has to be made and the determination of the officials is anxiously looked for."

The Detroit Evening News was quoted by a St. Johns' weekly<sup>(139)</sup> early in December that A.W. Wright, the real owner of the Lansing, Alma, and Mt. Pleasant railway, having failed in his negotiations to lease the road, intended to operate it himself in the course of a week or ten days and planned to extend the road south toward Lansing at once.

An Alma correspondent to the Detroit Evening News was quoted<sup>(140)</sup> as thinking there was no longer any doubt that the Toledo, Ann Arbor & Northern had gobbled up the Lansing, Alma & Mt. Pleasant road.

The following appeared in the Isabella Enterprise, dated December 11th, 1885.<sup>(141)</sup>

"Mr. Editor, - Please give space in your valuable paper to the following remonstrance, which was passed at a recent meeting of the literature club of Shepard City, No.1., Longfellow, Sandy and Nomis being present:

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139. Clinton Republican, Vol. XXX, No. 31, Thurs., Dec. 10, 1885.

140. Ibid.

141. Isabella Enterprise, Friday, December 11, 1885.

'We, the undersigned, members of the literary club of Shepard City, No.1., solemnly protest to the name of Shepard City, which name is given to a little hamlet, which certain Wright, Wrong & Company have built at the outskirts of the old and far-famed watering place, and the home of super-named politicians, the village of Salt River, in the land of Coe. Nothing but jealousy caused them to do so. Had it not been for the celebrity which our city has attained, they would never have dreamed of giving that name to their place; and had it not been for the industry of the inhabitants of Shepard City, No. 1., they would never had the chance of building that insignificant little place, over which they make such a fuss. Let's draw a parallel between the two and see.

'No. 1. They boast of a railroad! So do we. Our railroad has done more business in its day than yours ever did. Of course, the cars on our road were drawn by horses; and yours, you claim by steam, as propelling power; but that remains to be seen. All the difference between the two roads is the same, which you would appropriated had there been a possible clause. Our road is called the "Tramroad," and yours the "Lamp Road."

(Later)

No. 6. Did we not furnish all the ties for your railroad? Oh! what ingratitude!"

The Mt. Pleasant paper dated December 11, 1885, had several articles pertinent to the railway.

One, <sup>(142)</sup> under the title, Gratiot County News," stated that the Lansing, Alma & Mt. Pleasant Railroad were extending their line southward from

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142. Isabella Enterprise, Friday, December 11, 1885.

Alma to the river, where they had started their bridge toward Lansing.

In an article written by George M. Frary of St. Louis, Michigan, under the title of "Unbounded Resources of Isabella County,"<sup>(143)</sup> dated December 11, 1885, he said, "The principal and most needed commodity for the inhabitants of Isabella County is a railroad leading from here (Mt. Pleasant) southeast to the commercial centers. It matters not what company builds the road, only so we get the same as quickly as possible."

Under the heading, "Salt River Jottings,"<sup>(144)</sup> it was reported that Mr. I.N. Shepard took a hearty laugh when the article of the two Shepard Cities in last week's issue appeared. I.N. can appreciate a joke as well as anybody. (signed) Longfellow.

Also, it was reported<sup>(145)</sup> that until the Lansing, Alma & Mt. Pleasant railroad reached Salt River, that village could boast of but a hundred full-grown souls; but, then it had a population of four hundred, and had changed its name to Shepherd.

On December 17, 1885, the Ithaca Journal<sup>(146)</sup> is quoted as saying, "An item is now floating through our state exchanges to the effect that A.W. Wright will operate the Lansing, Alma & Mt. Pleasant railroad himself, having failed to lease the line to the Ashley interest. The Journal has the best authority for contradicting this statement, and also to add the arrangements for the Toledo, Ann Arbor & Northern Michigan to operate the "Lamp Road" are fully fixed."

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143. Ibid.

144. Ibid.

145. Isabella Enterprise, Friday, December 11, 1885.

146. Isabella Enterprise, Friday, December 18, 1885, Under Gratiot News.

Good news reached the railroad enthusiasts and others of the Central Michigan area, when it was announced in the Mt. Pleasant weekly<sup>(147)</sup> that A.W. Wright, president of the A.W. Wright Lumber Company and of the Lansing, Alma & Mt. Pleasant road was married to Miss Anna Case of Exeter, Ontario, on December 21st.

It was made known the following week<sup>(148)</sup> that work on the railroad bed between Mt. Pleasant and Salt River (Shepherd) was progressing. A gang of twenty men were at work near Salt River for a man who has a contract for one mile. Stumping and grading were in progress.

On January 22, 1886, it was reported<sup>(149)</sup> that George L. Little, surveyor, was running a line between Mt. Pleasant and Salt River for the Lansing, Alma & Mt. Pleasant Railroad.

Incidentally, the following item appeared under "Gratiot County News" on the same date:<sup>(150)</sup> "The Michigan Normal School and Business College now located at Fenton, Michigan, will probably be removed to Alma. A.W. Wright gives \$20,000 towards the project if the Almites will assign him about \$10,000 worth of the stock they hold in the Lansing, Alma, M. Pleasant & Northern Railroad. The citizens are willing to do this, and Alma thus secures the educational institution."

Both of the St. Johns' weeklies published an announcement on February 4th, 1886, stating that those who gave their notes to build the Lansing,

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147. Isabella Enterprise, Friday, December 25, 1885.

148. Isabella Enterprise, Friday, January 1, 1886.

149. Isabella Enterprise, Friday, January 22, 1886.

150. Ibid.

Alma line could pick them up at Fowler and Ball's hardware store in St. Johns after the first of March. (151)

At the annual meeting of the stockholders of the Lansing, Alma, Mt. Pleasant & Northern Railroad Company (152) held at Wright's Opera House, in the village of Alma, on February 11, 1886, the old board of directors were re-elected, and the following were again named officers for the ensuing year: Ammi W. Wright, president and general manager, Alma; William N. Brown, vice-president, Mt. Pleasant; William S. Turck, treasurer, Alma; and Marcus Pollasky, secretary, attorney and auditor, Alma. It was voted to push the work on the northern extension as fast as the weather would permit.

The following from Marcus Pollasky, of Alma and the secretary of the road, is in response to a letter suggesting that the written contract, so far as St. Johns was concerned, had been complied with: (153)

"This is the first time we ever heard it asserted that the terms of the written contract or agreement were ever complied with. On the contrary, we always supposed that the city of Lansing never did only a small part towards complying with the terms of the agreement, and as Lansing never did, and claimed they could not comply, we understood that the St. Johns' committee, because of Lansing's failure, did not deem it advisable to prosecute their work to completion by getting the right of way and depot grounds. The Lansing' and St. Johns' committee met, divided

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151. Clinton Republican, Vol. XXX, No. 30, Thurs., Feb. 4, 1886.

152. Isabella Enterprise, Friday, February 12, 1886.

153. Clinton Republican, Vol. XXX, No. 33, Thurs., Feb. 25, 1886, under the title, "Lansing Responsible for its Failure."

their territory and made their arrangements to carry on their work, and when the St. Johns' committee had done most efficiently and effectively a good portion of their work, they discovered that the Lansing committee had done but little towards complying with the written agreement, and the St. Johns' gentlemen, with the same energy and public spirit which they carried into their own work, turned their attention towards assisting Lansing, as did also some members of the company to see if the terms of the agreement could not be complied with, and not until it became certain that Lansing would not comply, was any thought of giving up the work entertained.

'That the matter may be distinctly understood, and all parties placed right before your readers, will you do us the favor to insert the written agreement, copy of which is herewith enclosed. (The proposition and resolutions appeared heretofore under the comprehensive report made by the Clinton Independent, dated March 20, 1884, titled, "The Railroad.") It will be seen at a glance that its terms never were complied with. Had Lansing entered into the enterprise with the same spirit as did the people of St. Johns, the road would have been built, and trains running between Lansing and Mt. Pleasant today, as everyone who is at all conversant with the facts knows.

Very Truly,

Marcus Pollasky,

Sec'y. L. A. Mt. P. & N. R. R. Co."

(It might be proper to add that Hon. George P. Sanford and Hon. Frank Dodge were paid \$641 by the railroad company for their services, while the St. Johns' committee worked for nothing and boarded themselves.

Ed. - Otis Fuller).



(According to Secretary Pollasky, the original copy of the heretofore mentioned proposition and resolutions of said company with St. Johns was received and filed at 7 p.m., March 13, 1884.

Railroad news along the proposed line of the Lansing, Alma road was at a low ebb during March and most of April of 1886. Lansing and Clinton had nothing in their columns that had anything to do with the road.

On April 23, the Gratiot Journal was quoted<sup>(154)</sup> in the Mt. Pleasant paper that a large force of men were at work grading the bed for the railroad and had reached the Wallace Preston farm. Also, that A.W. Wright was having a line running from the Lansing, Alma & Mt. Pleasant Railroad to connect with the Toledo, Ann Arbor & Northern Michigan at St. Louis. The old bed of the Chicago, Saginaw and Canada Railroad between St. Louis and Alma was to be used for the extension of the Toledo, Ann Arbor & Northern Michigan, northward from St. Louis via Alma. It was understood that satisfactory arrangements had finally been perfected between Ammi Wright and the Ashley interest for the use of what is known as the "Lamp Road," which was ironed from Alma to Shepherd. The fact that the abandoned bed of the C. S. & C. road between St. Louis and Alma had been secured was evidence that such a scheme had actually been entered into.

Another article on the same date<sup>(155)</sup> revealed that when the Chicago, Saginaw & Canada Railroad went into the hands of the Detroit, Lansing & Northern, it was united with the Saginaw Valley at Alma, and one of the tracks between Alma and St. Louis was taken up. The Toledo, Ann Arbor & Northern Michigan had purchased the abandoned bed, and would thus tap and

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154. Isabella Enterprise, Friday, April 23, 1886.

155. Ibid.

swallow up the L.A.M.P. R.R., which was completed between Alma and Shepherd, graded to Mt. Pleasant and surveyed to Ewart.

On April 30, 1886, the St. Louis Leader was quoted as saying<sup>(156)</sup> "J.C. Carland, the popular train master (superintendent) of the Northern division of the Toledo, Ann Arbor & Northern Michigan Railroad informs us that the arrangements are now completed and that the Lansing, Alma, & Mt. Pleasant Railroad is now in full possession of the former road, and that he is in full charge of the latter, as superintendent of construction, in addition to the duties of his former position. Instead of any possible loss to St. Louis, as has all along been predicted by certain over-cautious croakers, our village gains by the arrangement, as the headquarters of the Lansing, Alma, & Mt. Pleasant road has been moved to St. Louis and Mr. Carland will push the extension of the road from Alma to this village (St. Louis) as well as from Salt River to Mt. Pleasant as fast as men and money can do it, and by July 1st will have trains running from here to Mt. Pleasant in connection with the trains on the Toledo, Ann Arbor & Northern Michigan, with St. Louis as headquarters of both roads."

On May 14, it was reported<sup>(157)</sup> that the railroad was graded to within the Mt. Pleasant village limits. The steel for the rails was expected soon.

Also, under "Railroads to be Built This Year,"<sup>(158)</sup> it was stated that the Wright road, known as the "Lamp line" (from its initials) would open twenty miles that season; being already partially constructed.

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156. Isabella Enterprise, Friday, April 30, 1886.

157. Isabella Enterprise, Friday, May 14, 1886.

158. Ibid.

The Alma Record was quoted<sup>(159)</sup> as saying that the job of fencing the Lansing, Alma & Mt. Pleasant Railroad between Alma and Mt. Pleasant had been let to G.E. Kress.

The Toledo, Ann Arbor & Northern Railroad had planned to build a passenger and freight depot at Shepherd twenty-two feet by twenty-four feet. This was deemed too small, so Messrs. Wright and Shepard offered to pay the difference and it was reported<sup>(160)</sup> that a commodious brick structure would be erected.

On June 18th, it was announced<sup>(161)</sup> that one mile of track was laid in one day between St. Louis and Alma.

Another item<sup>(162)</sup> stated that the laborers were within three miles of Mt. Pleasant laying the iron for the Toledo, Ann Arbor & Northern Michigan Railroad.

The same issue of the county paper reported<sup>(163)</sup> that track laying on the railroad between Mt. Pleasant and Salt River had commenced on Saturday, June 12th, and that the road would be completed in a short time.

An excursion was being planned as soon as the railroad was completed, which was scheduled for about July 1st, so that Almatites might be the first to ride into Mt. Pleasant.<sup>(164)</sup>

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159. Ibid.

160. Ibid.

161. Isabella Enterprise, Friday, June 18, 1886.

162. Ibid.

163. Ibid.

164. Ibid.

the steel for connecting the Toledo, Ann Arbor & Northern line with the Lansing, Alma line was brought as far as St. Louis over the former road. The ties were collected at Alma, but there was so much bad blood between the Toledo, Ann Arbor road and the Detroit, Lansing & Northern, that the latter would neither allow the iron to be shipped to Alma, nor the ties to St. Louis. The ties were therefore transferred by team. (165)

A litigation suit was brought about at Ithaca, since a few days previous, an injunction was served on the Toledo, Ann Arbor & Northern Michigan Railroad by the Detroit, Lansing & Northern to prevent them from crossing the old bridge across the Pine River between St. Louis and Alma. The injunction was dissolved in favor of Mr. Ashley's road. (166)

On June 25, 1886, the Isabella Enterprise reported the following from the Fifth Annual Report, for the year, 1885, of the Toledo, Ann Arbor & Northern Michigan Railroad, J.M. Ashley, President:

"The road from Alma to Mt. Pleasant was originally organized by Ammi W. Wright of Alma, for the purpose of building from Lansing via St. Johns direct to Alma and Mt. Pleasant and northward from this place (Mt. Pleasant) as he might decide.

'During 1885, some eleven miles were built between Alma and Mt. Pleasant, and put in running order by Mr. Wright's company. This road, projected and built by Mr. Wright, more than half the distance from Alma to Mt. Pleasant, on the direct route of the Toledo, Ann Arbor & Northern Michigan company's proposed extension to Cadillac, made it necessary for the latter company to secure it if they would avoid building a parallel road from near

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165. Ibid.

166. Ibid.

Alma to Mt. Pleasant, and perhaps beyond.

'The situation demanded a halt and it was called. Observation and experience had taught farmers and business-men alike, that parallel railroads are not desirable, even in the country through which they pass. Capitalists had learned that to invest in such roads means loss in any event, and often ruin, and no prudent man would invest in the securities of any new parallel road.

'To build such a road in Isabella County would be disastrous. This fact was fully recognized by the officials of both companies.

'Finally, after full and free conference, a satisfactory arrangement was made by which the Toledo, Ann Arbor & Northern Michigan Company obtained the entire control of that road and as now completed from Alma to Mt. Pleasant makes it part of their main line."

The building of the Ann Arbor Railroad by the Ashleys, who had little money of their own, is one of the sagas of railroad history in Michigan. Every kind of scheme, legal and illegal, was used to push forward the tracks.<sup>(167)</sup> As the Ashleys prospered and the road was extended to the north, the light of the "Lamp line" flickered and went out altogether. Thus, Maple Rapids and DeWitt of Clinton County, and especially Maple Rapids, which had gone all out for a railroad, had nothing to show for their tremendous efforts and spirit.

On May 7, 1886, as recorded in Lansing, the Corporation Division of the Department of Treasury, Bureau of Collections, the Toledo, Ann Arbor & Northern Michigan Railroad absorbed the Lansing, Alma, Mt. Pleasant & Northern.

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167. All Aboard!, Dunbar, Willis F., Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1969, p. 164.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

of the

LANSING, ALMA, Mt. PLEASANT &amp; NORTHERN RAILROAD\*

\* Credits for the biographies of the individual members of the Board of Directors for the Lansing, Alma, Mt. Pleasant & Northern Railroad belong to:

Portrait and Biographical Album, Isabella County, Michigan, Chapman Brothers, Chicago, Illinois, 1884.

Gratiot County, Michigan, Willard D. Tucker, Press of Seemann & Peters, Saginaw, Michigan, 1913.

Biographical Memoirs of Gratiot County, Michigan, J.H. Beers & Company, Chicago, Illinois, 1906.

## AMMI WILLARD WRIGHT

A.W. Wright served as a member to the board of directors and was president and general manager of the Lansing, Alma, Mt. Pleasant & Northern Railroad.

Mr. Wright, one of the pioneer residents and business men of Alma, Gratiot County, Michigan, was the citizen to whom Alma was indebted for the greater number of its attractions, material and otherwise. Beyond what he had accomplished by personal effort and expenditure toward the expansion and beautifying town, and toward the enhancement of its growth as an educational center in that part of the State, he had done much by his influence, which is considerable, for his business operations have made him known in more than one section of the United States. Though he had always been a man of unusual activity, at the age of eighty-three he was still physically and mentally alert, a fact undoubtedly due to his simple tastes and personal habits. Having risen to his position from the humblest beginnings, he was a self-made man, yet he possessed none of the boastful consciousness that often characterizes those of that class. All his enterprises, whether those be considered which are calculated to advance his own interests, or those which have brought blessing and benefit to others, were on the most liberal scale. Yet he remained the plain, unassuming man he had always been, nothing in his bearing indicated pride of wealth or achievement.

He was a native of Grafton, Windham County, Vermont, born July 5, 1822. Ammi Wright obtained his education in the common schools of his native state, and engaged in farming some years before migrating to the West. In 1851 he made his way to Saginaw, where he engaged in the lumber business, which was just entering its era of prosperity in Michigan. He entered into partnership with Miller & Paine, under the firm name of Miller, Paine & Wright, after

which he formed an association with J.H. Pearson, of Chicago, under the firm name of A.W. Wright & Co. On January 1, 1883, the firm became the A.W. Wright Lumber Company, capitalized at \$1,500,000. Meanwhile, Mr. Wright had entered into many other business connections, among which may be mentioned his interests in the firms of Wright and Davis, who owned and operated a lumber mill on the Mackinaw division of the Michigan Central Railroad; Wright and Ketchum, who owned a railroad utilized for the purpose of getting out logs for themselves and others; Wells, Stone & Co., dealers in lumbermen's supplies; and the Saginaw Manufacturing Company, whose various avenues of business were almost unlimited in extent, and which was an incorporated company with a paid-up capital of \$150,000, Mr. Wright being its chief officer. He was also president of the First National Bank of Saginaw. He was one of the leading men of the Saginaw valley, both in the matter of wealth and influence.

The quiet atmosphere of the small town strongly attracted him as his business trips took him to Alma, and in 1886 he built a handsome residence near the center of Alma, which he occupied until his death. Having acquired a fixed interest in the town, he immediately gave evidence of it in his efforts to improve and beautify his adopted home. The Wright Block, one of the finest buildings of its kind to be erected, was followed by the "Wright House,". In 1887 he erected the beautiful Alma Springs Sanitarium, having accommodations for three hundred people, and was interested in building the Alma Roller Mills and the plant of the Electric Light and Power Co. Through his influence (he being the president of the company) one of the largest beet sugar factories in Michigan was established at Alma in 1899, as well as cold storage plant of the Central Michigan Produce Company. He converted a ten-acre tract of land adjoining the sanitarium into a delightful park. Mr. Wright was a member of the lumber firm of George D. Barton & Co., at Alma, and was president of the First State Bank in that city.



Mr. Wright's public spirit carried him beyond material interests and improvements and into the educational and religious life of the community and though he did not pose as a philanthropist, he may properly be ranked among benefactors of that nature. It was through his generosity that the Presbyterian Synod of Michigan was able to establish Alma College, he himself donating the site and main building besides contributing liberally to its endowment. He gave faithful service as a trustee and showed continued interest in the welfare of the institution, the erection of a number of the handsome buildings that surrounded the campus being largely the result of his benevolence. His charities and benefactions were also liberally extended to other worthy causes and institutions, religious and otherwise.

A.W. Wright had a remarkably outstanding career, crowned with equally remarkable success. Though he became a multi-millionaire, he was in humble circumstances when he ventured West, and his first work at lumbering yielded him only a scant living. His rise, however, was steady as well as rapid, and brought blessing and benefit to many beside himself.

On March 6, 1848, Mr. Wright was married, in Rockingham, Vermont, to Miss Harriet Barton, a native of that state. Mrs. Wright passed away on June 30, 1884; and on December 21, 1885, he married Miss Anna Case, of Exeter, Canada. Five children were born to that first union.

Mr. Wright was a member of the Episcopal Church, and in politics he was a Republican.

He died at his residence in Alma, Sunday, May 5, 1912, at the age of 90 years and 10 months. The remains were taken to Grafton, Vermont.

## WILLIAM N. BROWN

William N. Brown, attorney, banker, and lumberman, and a resident of Mt. Pleasant, was born in the city of New York, June 24, 1849. His parents, James and Sarah (Wales) Brown, belonged to the race known and comprehended distinctively as Scotch-Irish. The father was connected with the lumbering interests in the metropolis of the Empire State, and about the year, 1852, removed his family and interests to Zilwaukee, Saginaw County, Michigan. Two years later they went to a farm in Richland Township.

The son attended the high school in the city of Saginaw, where he was a pupil one year, during which he mastered every branch of study taught in the school and passes a most creditable examination before he had attained the age of twelve years.

He enlisted, October 16, 1861, in Saginaw City in Company B., Michigan Volunteer Infantry under Captain Charles H. Richmond. He was under fire through most of the prominent engagements in which his regiment was involved.

On his return to Saginaw, he entered the employ of the Hon. D.H. Jerome as bookkeeper, which he filled with such marked ability and integrity as to secure the entire respect and confidence of the distinguished gentleman in whose interests he acted. He refused a liberal offer for further services in a position of advancement in order to attend the University of Michigan. He was graduated with honors and soon after entered the office of the Attorney General of Michigan, the Hon. Dwight May, at Kalamazoo.

On the termination of his connection with the office of the Attorney General, Mr. Brown returned to Saginaw and began his career as an attorney. In 1872, he established his legal practice at Mt. Pleasant, and in 1873 he

associated himself with John C. Leaton, under the style of Brown & Leaton, one of the most prominent legal relations in the central part of Michigan, and well-known for its connection with important local litigation.

In 1878, the only daughter of General Dwight May became the wife of Mr. William Brown, and they celebrated their marriage by an extended continental tour.

The home of Mr. and Mrs. Brown was that of a gentleman of cultured taste and unaffected intelligence. Art and literature contributed to its adornment and value, and the mementoes of the foreign travel of Mr. Brown and his accomplished wife were everywhere visible.

The relations of Mr. William Brown to Isabella County are such as to render him prominent in his generation. His benefactions to the community of which he was a member are numberless, and in the majority of them he is simply wise and provident.

On January 1, 1883, the bank of Brown, Harris & Company was organized, and the institution has since operated in the financial avenues common to similar establishments with satisfactory results.

The law library of William Brown was the most extensive in North-Central Michigan.

Mr. Brown served as a member of the board of directors and as vice-president of the Lansing, Alma, Mt. Pleasant & Northern Railroad Company.

## MARCUS POLLASKY

Marcus Pollasky, the son of Michael Pollasky and the former Miss Celia Wix, natives of Hungary, was born September 6, 1861, at Detroit, Michigan, In 1863 he was brought by his parents to Alma, and there attended the district schools until he was ten years of age, when he was sent to Detroit to attend the English and German schools of that city for three years. He returned to Alma and worked as his father's assistant for a time, and in 1876 entered the high school at Ann Arbor, where he remained for two years. He attended the University for one year, and then settled in Detroit to accept a position as traveling salesman for J.H. Burnham & Company, with whom he continued two and one-half years. He then returned to the University, entering the law department, from which after a two year's course he was graduated in 1883 with the degree of Bachelor of Laws. At the end of his first year he was admitted to the Bar of Michigan, at Ithaca; during his vacation he was accorded the same privilege by the Supreme Court of the State, and was afterward admitted to practice in the United States Court at Detroit. Politically, Mr. Pollasky was a Republican and held the office of village attorney at Alma for which he was elected in April, 1883.

On January 16, 1884, Marcus Pollasky was married at Adrian, Michigan, to Miss Nellie A. Waldby, the only daughter of Ebenezer I. and Emmeline (Backus) Waldby, her father being one of the pioneer bankers of Michigan. Mr. Pollasky was very popular in Alma, and was highly esteemed for many of those characteristics which his honored father possessed.

Marcus Pollasky served as secretary, attorney and auditor for the Lansing, Alma, Mt. Pleasant & Northern Railroad.

## WILLIAM S. TURCK

The Honorable William S. Turck, the vice-president of the First State Bank of Alma, Michigan, formerly conducted by the firm of W.S. Turck & Co., was one of the foremost citizens not only of that place, but of the State. He was a pioneer of Gratiot County, had a record for splendid service and bravery in the Civil War, and had won general recognition for his ability in the field of industry and finance. He had also the honor of being a Mason of the longest continuous standing in the county, joining the order in 1861.

William S. Turck was born in Port Hope, Canada, August 7, 1859, the son of Zachariah and Rebecca (Decker) Turck. His father, a tanner and currier, was a native of the State of New York, as was his mother, who was born in Schoharie County. The boy's education was only elementary, but at the age of sixteen he was apprenticed as a tanner to his brother, Henry, who operated an establishment in Clark Township, Durham County, Canada. After four years of that employment he removed to Shelby, Orleans County, New York, where he remained until 1860, when he obtained employment as foreman of the gristmill at Indian Mills, Isabella County, Michigan, which was owned by the United States government. In the fall of 1861, he rented a saw and gristmill standing upon the present site of Alma, the incipient settlement then consisting of three log houses in the midst of a dense forest. He thus continued until the fall of 1862, when his patriotic spirit forced him from the channels of industry into the military field.

Mr. Turck was mustered into the Union service as second lieutenant of Company D, Twenty-sixth Regiment, Michigan Volunteer Infantry, Captain Lafayette Church, and was fortunate in being thus attached to one of the most famous bodies of skirmishers in the Federal armies.

He participated in twenty-eight engagements, and at the battle of Spottsylvania was wounded in the head, which necessitated a short retirement. Upon the occasion of Lee's surrender at Appomattox Court House, Captain Turck was in charge of the brigade skirmishers.

W.S. Turck returned to Alma and engaged in lumbering. From 1866 to 1872 he held the position of county treasurer, but his army experience had so impaired his health, that he found it necessary to buy a farm and engage in outdoor occupations. He passed the succeeding eight years in its improvement, then returning to Alma, where in association with A.W. Wright and others, he founded the banking house of W.S. Turck & Co. He was one of the stockholders and held the positions of cashier and manager. In 1883 the bank was reorganized, and upon the formation of the establishment of Steel, Turck & Co., at Ithaca, he became a stockholder therein. In 1901 the bank at Alma was merged into the institution known as the First State Bank of Alma. In 1881 Wm. Turck built a flouring mill at Alma, the business being conducted under the name of the Alma Milling Company. He sold his interest in the enterprise in 1885.

William S. Turck was always a Republican, his career as a State leader and a member of the House of Representatives commencing with his nomination to that position in the fall of 1876. He was re-elected in 1878 and was appointed chairman of the Railroad Committee and a member of the board of managers of the State school at Coldwater.

On September 15, 1864, Mr. Turck married Miss Louisa R. Ely, a native of New York State, and the daughter of Gen. Ralph and Mary E. Ely. General Ely was acknowledged to be the founder of Alma. They had four children of which two died at an early age.

William S. Turck was a member of the board of directors and the treasurer of the Lansing, Alma, Mt. Pleasant & Northern Railroad.

## JAMES GARGETT

The name of James Gargett was prominent in Gratiot County during the 1860's and 70's. He was one of Alma's most active business men. He was born in Canada, July 15, 1825, son of Robert and Elizabeth (Perkins) Gargett. The family moved to Summit County, Ohio, in 1844. In 1871 the parents were both murdered in cold blood, "and their tragic fate and the condign punishment of the assassin are matters of record in the archives of Summit County. The murderer, John Hunter, was apprehended, tried and convicted, and was executed in October, 1871, at Akron, Ohio."

Mr. Gargett secured a common school education and for a while engaged in teaching. He was married May 24, 1849, in Lyons, Wayne County, New York, to Louisa Gee, daughter of Joseph and Elenor (Seaton) Gee. She was born in Lyons, May 24, 1831. Two children came to the union of Mr. and Mrs. Gargett, Minnie L., and George. The latter died in infancy, a victim of accidental scalding. The former became the wife of William B. Humbert.

On January 1, 1859, James Gargett arrived at Alma, and on the same day he purchased Mr. Ralph Ely's stock of goods. The next morning, before breakfast, Mr. Gargett opened his store and commenced business, which he continued until 1869, when the store burned. He had the first boot and shoe store in Alma, and Mrs. Gargett opened the first millinery store. In the year 1867 James Gargett built a flouring mill on the banks of the river. The dam was built at the same time. In the year 1869 Mr. Gargett erected a woolen mill. These two mills had a flourishing business until 1880, when both were burned. Mr. Gargett met with many losses by fire. During the year he constructed an elegant dwelling at a cost of \$18,000, and this was destroyed by fire, June 6, 1876. The grist mill was rebuilt, but this was burned in 1884.

A select school for young ladies was conducted in Alma, along about 1860, taught by Misses Jennie and Frances Barnard of Ionia County. It was held in a house which stood where later stood the fine Gargett residence, afterwards destroyed by fire.

Alma was the last of the three big towns of the county to become incorporated as a village. A petition of resident electors was presented on the first day of the board of supervisors' session, January, 1872, showing that the territory which it was proposed to incorporate had a population of 425 people. Mr. James Gargett's name headed the list of petitioners.

In 1875, Mr. Gargett served as president of the village of Alma. He was again elected to the same office in 1877. On April 9, 1883, Mr. Gargett was appointed assessor, which position he filled for two years.

Relative to the destructive fires mentioned heretofore, the loss to the residence was estimated at \$12,000, which was covered by insurance. The Alma flouring mill and the woolen mill which burned November 23, 1880, had no insurance and the loss was about \$16,000. The mills were owned by Mrs. Louisa Gargett and operated by James Gargett, William B. Humbert and Isaac Gee. (Appears to have been a family operated enterprise). The woolen mill and knitting factory which burned on May 29, 1884, was about half covered by insurance, with a loss reported at \$22,000.

In an early day the Adventist Church at Alma was a strong organization. It was founded in the early 1860s, and had among others for its charter members, such prominent citizens as the James Gargett family.

Mr. Gargett served on the board of directors for the Lansing, Alma, Mt. Pleasant & Northern Railroad.



## GEORGE D. BARTON

George D. Barton, lumberman, was a resident of Alma, Michigan. He was born in Rockingham, Vermont, January 10, 1836. His parents, Jeremiah and Sarah (Wetherby) Barton, were also natives of the Green Mountain State, where they married, lived and died.

Young Mr. Barton, after obtaining an elementary education at the common schools, pursued a course of study at the academy at Saxton's River in his native state and subsequently attended the Green Mountain Liberal Institute at Woodstock, Vermont. After the completion of his education, he engaged as a farm assistant with his father until he was 26 years old. In 1862 he went to Chester, Vermont, where he was interested in agriculture for eight years. At the expiration of that period, he engaged in trade there, which he pursued eight years. In 1879 he disposed of all his interests in his native state and, in March, of that year, he went to Michigan and settled in Alma.

He engaged in mercantile affairs with Ammi W. Wright under the firm name of George D. Barton & Company. After operating in this relation three years, he sold his interests to Mr. Wright. His next business venture was in lumbering with Ammi Wright and John O. Lumsdon, the concern operating as George D. Barton & Company., which constituted his longstanding business connection. The daily products of their mill averaged 35,000 feet of hardwood or 50,000 feet of pine lumber.

Mr. Barton was first married in Chester, Vermont, November 4, 1861, to Lucy A., daughter of Henry and Lucy (Lee) Morris. The father was a native of Vermont, the mother of Massachusetts. The daughter was born October 31, 1841 at Chester. Mr. Barton was again married January 12, 1881, to Elmira C., daughter of Charles and Sylvia (Peck) Esty. One child, Fanny, was born to Mr. and Mrs. Barton, August 2, 1882. Mr. Barton was on the board for the railroad.

## I. N. SHEPARD

Isaac N. Shepard, farmer and lumberman of Salt River (Shepherd) was the son of Robert and Ann (Leach) Shepard, natives of England, who emigrated from that place to this country about 1834, settling first in New England, and in Coe Township in January 1856, where they remained until their deaths. Their children numbered eight, five of whom grew to be adults.

The fifth son, the subject of this sketch, was born in Vermont, on December 31, 1840; when 13 years old, he came with his parents to Hillsdale County, Michigan, and a year and a half afterwards, that is in January, 1856, they moved to Isabella County, where he established his home permanently. He remained at home till 22 years of age, contributing to the support of his parents. About 1861 he bought 80 acres of land in Coe Township. Since then had bought and sold many tracts of land, and at the present time he owns about 2,000 acres of land, having about 250 acres under cultivation. In the summer of 1873 he built the residence which he never left again; it was one of the finest in the county. He also owned and operated a lumber, lath and shingle mill in Chippewa Township, which had a daily capacity of 30,000 feet of lumber, 40,000 shingles and 20,000 lath.

Mr. Shepard was married in Jackson County, Michigan, January 3, 1864, to Catherine, daughter of John and Rachel (Sloat) Neely, who were natives of New York State. Mrs. Shepard, who is also the sister of Mrs. James Campbell, was born in Jackson County, July 8, 1838, and became the mother of five children.

Mr. I.N. Shepard was very much interested in the Lansing, Alma, Mt. Pleasant & Northern Railroad, being a director in the company and a member of the executive committee.

## JOHN A. HARRIS

John A. Harris, cashier in the banking house of Brown, Harris & Company at Mt. Pleasant, was born September 23, 1842, in London, England. He was the son of William and Sarah (Heath) Harris, and his father came to America in 1852 with his family, consisting of his wife and five children. He settled in Montcalm County, where he bought 40 acres of land, and there resided until the spring of 1854, when he died. His family made that their home until 1866, when they purchased a farm somewhat to the north, in the same township. William E., the eldest child, and Henry G., fourth in order of birth, were both millers at Mt. Pleasant. Sarah A., third child became Mrs. Warner Churchill. Charlotte M., the wife of Lorenzo Kent, was the youngest of the family. Their husbands were both millers at the same place.

John A., was the second child of his parents and remained with them until 1872, when he came to Mt. Pleasant, and in company with his elder brother, built the Mt. Pleasant flouring mill. They did merchant and custom work, and their mill had a manufacturing capacity of 100 barrels of flour daily. The banking house of Brown, Harris & Company was organized and commenced operations on January 12, 1883. In March of the same year, Mr. Harris withdrew from active supervision of his milling interests to assume the position of cashier.

Mr. Harris owned his residence in Mt. Pleasant and held a half-interest in 30 acres of land attached to the mill. His marriage to Catherine Holunden occurred May 31, 1872, at Greenville, Montcalm County.

John A. Harris was a member of the board of directors of the Lansing, Alma & Mt. Pleasant Railroad.