

Harvey Family, Part of Sterling Heights History

My Uncle Burtwill (1889-1950) took the photograph (on this page) of the Harvey Farmhouse on Clinton River Road south of 19 mile in 1904. Burt was attending Utica High School at the time and several of his photographs were taken in and around the school building. My Grandmother Fannie (1864-1942) is next to the flag.

My Grandfather Burt (1856- 1926) met Fannie Leggett while working at a clothing store in Grand Haven, Mich. Their family moved into the farmhouse when my father, Jack Harvey (1895 -1987), was 3 years old. Previously, the family lived in a farmhouse across Utica Road from what is now the Sterling Heights Nature Center. Jack is the young lad in the picture under the large window. The farm was one of a number owned by my Great-grandfather William Henry Harvey (1829-1901) who lived on Cass Street in Utica.



As part of an estate settlement, my Grandfather Burt obtained a life lease of the property, which was to be passed on to Burt and Fannie's five children. William Henry's home, now Willmar Convalescent Home, still stands much as it was when built. William Henry, son of Samuel Harvey, came to Clinton Township in the 1830s from New York. He was involved in various businesses such as lake boats, sawmills, and a hotel before buying farms around the Utica area. My Uncle Ross (1897-1974) is sitting on the porch just below the hammock. Ross served on the battleship Texas in World War I. The two young ladies are Helen (1887-1920) (standing) and Margaret (1892-1976) (sitting on the porch). Grandfather Burt was most likely working somewhere on the farm. Providing for a family of seven was certainly a challenge. Some food came from the farm, but many things had to be purchased.

Farming in 1900 was all done by muscle power. Horses were used for the real heavy work such as plowing and pulling harvesting implements. Men and boys did all the other farm work. Gasoline and steam engines were around at that time but not in general use. Harvesting farm crops was usually done by neighbors helping neighbors. Labor trading was as much social as economic. Wright, Heide, Kidd, Pinow, Faulman, Marotz, Schuldt, DeCook, Vokes, Curtis, Drake and Doebler were the family names of the neighboring farms all on the East Side of the Clinton River. All of the Harvey family seen in the picture, with the exception of my father Jack, moved away from Sterling. Jack inherited 1/5 and with his wife Marjorie (Mayhew) Harvey (1897-1956) purchased the remaining interest in the farm from his four siblings in 1922. My father was primarily a dairy farmer. Typically he had 30 Holstein cows and shipped bulk milk to a dairy in Detroit.

The farm buildings were located in the area where the M-53 freeway now crosses Clinton River Road. All were demolished with the exception of the farm and tenant houses that were moved to Harvey Court. My sister Helen Browning and her husband Bill live on Mayhew, which is part of the Harvey farm. My wife Dottie and I live on Clinton River Road also on land that was part of the farm. The fifth and sixth generation children have scattered mostly to other areas in Michigan.