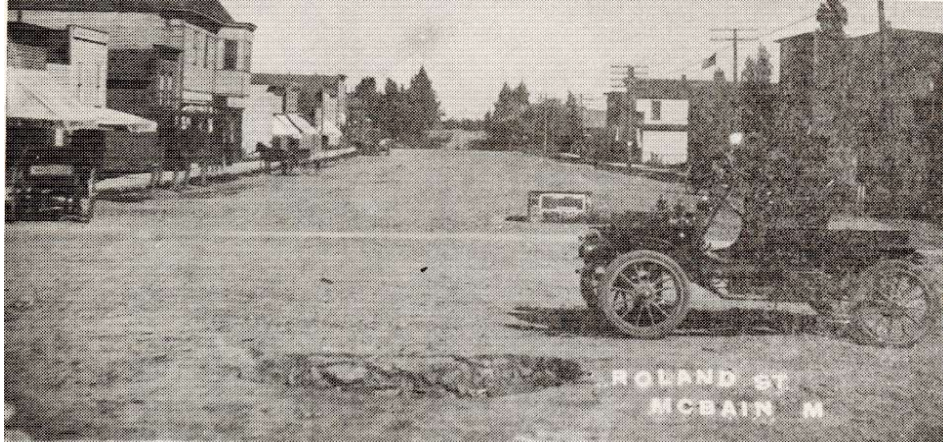


The History of McBain



The history of McBain began with the establishment of Missaukee County in 1871. One of the townships in the new county was Riverside. Included in the township of Riverside was the present township of Richland which was organized as a separate township in 1877.

During the 1870's a group of families of Scotch-Irish and English ancestry arrived in the area from Canada and either bought or homesteaded in Riverside township. These Canadians were lumbermen and had come to take advantage of the pine forests of the area. At about the same time Dutch immigrants began to arrive from the south. These settlers were to be the ones who made farms from the lands that the lumbermen timbered from.

The area later to be called McBain included four quarter sections: SW 1/4 Section 19 and the NW 1/4 Section of 30 of Riverside and the SE 1/4 Section 24 and the NE 1/4 Section 25 of Richland township. Three of these 1/4 sections at one time or other belonged to Gillis McBain and his wife Penelope. But the land changed hands frequently in those early days and other people temporarily held the McBain lands.

In 1887, Penelope McBain, wife of Gillis McBain, platted the part of NW 1/4 of Section 30 that was to be called Owens. In the next few years Lumber mills, lumber yards, stores, and homes would be built. In 1888, the railroad had been completed through Owens and the town was on its way. Daily trainloads of lumber and lumber products were shipped out. The population grew rapidly, and the number of stores and businesses increased.

In 1891, Gillis and Penelope McBain and John and Elizabeth McBain platted the G. & J. McBain Addition to the village of Owens. This addition lies east of the original Owens plat, both of which are south of Maple Street. By now there is a school and several churches located in the village. By now, also, Owens is being called McBain since most of the lands of Owens belonged to the McBain's.

By 1905 McBain had a newspaper, "The Chronicle", several churches: the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Dutch Reformed, a post office, several doctors, a bank, and has become a thriving community.

McBain was then ready to take the step that would make it one of the smallest cities of the nation. By act of the State Legislature, Public ACT #391, the Village of McBain is made the City of McBain on March 8, 1907. (Two other plats were combined to McBain, the Alice Phillips Addition, and the Nord's Addition.)

I'd like to thank the editors of the McBain Centennial, and their published copy of McBain Centennial 1977.

The Lumbering Era

Since Owens, or McBain lay in an area of beautiful hardwoods, pioneers were attracted. In the 1870's before the sawmills were opened, beautiful hardwood trees were cut and burned in order to clear land for homes. Soon log cabins were built as their form of dwelling with shingles for the roof. The spring of 1888 saw the foundation of the Sanders saw mill, which later became Symes Brothers' Mill. At about the same time a saw mill for George Baker was started. Business soon flourished. Men came to the village to work the mills and brought their families. Many of these working men came from Canada. One early venture by a Mr. Jessup, that failed was the manufacturing of clothes pins.

The only way in and out of Owens was by foot, ox, or horseback. The roads were so poor that many preferred to go on foot. The lumbering business brought the necessity of shipping lumber. In 1887 the Ann Arbor Railroad came to Owens. The ravines to the north and south of McBain were graded by ox team and track was built on trestles of huge timbers. The story is told that after the track was in and a small depot was built about a mile north of Owens, a man was sent from the Ann Arbor Railroad Company to letter a name on the gable of the new depot, which had been donated by the residents of Richland and Riverside townships. Being a stranger he asked what name was to print someone said, "The land is owned by McBains so call it McBain."

By 1892 the Dewey Stave Company moved a plant from Ohio to McBain and began the manufacturing of staves, using elm lumber only. This provided employment for a large crew of men. McBain also boasted a shingle mill and a number of charcoal kilns, the ashes of which were gathered for the manufacturing of potash. Cromwell Lumber Company began the manufacturing of bicycle rims and chair materials. D. Sprecksel had a lumber mill where he made maple flooring. This was a long drive in shed on the east side of the railroad. Later this building burned and was replaced with the cement block

building and used by the Isabella Bean Co. Here dry beans were sorted. In the 1940's this building was used for weighing and shipping out green string beans. Mr. Sprecksel also had a shingle mill one mile south and a half mile east of Meyering Road where the Gardner place is today in 1977.

To help McBain grow, Travis Du Vall and his team built roads. This picture here was taken before Du Vall and his team built a road west of McBain.



History of the McBain Bank

The banking industry started in McBain in 1910 with the formation of a private bank by W.A. Wyman and O.O. Dunham, known as the Bank of McBain. Soon thereafter, W.A. Wyman desiring to sell his interest to John Ferwerda of Falmouth, Mich. resulted in the forming of a state chartered bank.

The McBain State Bank was organized and chartered in 1912. O.O. Dunham served as President and Jos. Schepers, Cashier. Some of the first board of directors were Harm Schepers, James English, C.D. Stocker, Jay H. Taylor, Henry Hamming, Leonard Kleinhesselink and O.O. Dunham. The first Bank building was located on West side of Roland St. (Main St.) approximately in the middle of the block. Later in the same area June's Barber Shop opened there along with the Michigan Bell Telephone building. The old bank vault was still on the bank of June's Barber Shop. In February of 1913 Helen (Jackson) Hughston started working at the bank while still a senior in high school and continued with the bank until 1964, except for a short leave of absence.

Around 1930 a new building was built at the Southwest corner of Roland St. to better serve the community. Built of red brick it was the image of growth and stability, but during the 1930's when the country was experiencing the great depression, banks also had their financial problems. The bank continued to lose or decrease in deposits until it was forced to close its doors in the middle 30's, joining the "bank holidays".

In 1937 or 1938 the bank reopened under a receivership appointed by the State Banking Department. Charles W. Scheihing was in charge.

It was in September of 1939 that the McBain State Bank was acquired and became a branch of the Lake City State Bank. Total deposits in the branch were \$116,000. Stuart D. McGregor of Pigeon, Mich. was employed as branch manager with a starting salary of \$125.00 monthly. Mr. McGregor stayed with the bank until he retired as Vice-President on Dec. 31, 1970 at which time a hole was cut in the vault door with torches. During Mr. McGregor's managership branch deposits grew to 3.5 million.

The branch bank continued to serve the needs of the area and on Jan. 1, 1964 it was changed from a state chartered branch to a national chartered status so that the bank as a whole could better accomplish its goal to expand.

The Old McBain School



The first school in the area, established in 1880, was a one room school in what was known as the village of Owens.

In 1888 a two story school was built in the present location on the north end of Roland Street. Due to a large enrollment an addition was added in 1895. In 1902 a separate primary school was built. In 1927 talk or reorganization with area schools was discussed. more land was purchased in 1927 for playground and athletic purposes. Over-crowding and the use of other buildings for school rooms was inconvenient and serious building needs were discussed.

Then fire destroyed the old building on January 5, 1929. The neighborhood churches and the Odd Fellows Hall were used for classrooms. By fall of 1929 the new school was completed. There were seven classrooms, a gym, and a study hall.

District reorganization was investigated in 1944. In 1945 reorganization of the surrounding school districts, Galt, Forward, Vogel Center, Hillside, Lucas, Blodgett, Summerville, Cavanagh, Aids, Pleasant Valley, Dirmeyer, and Pleasant Point took place.

Brunink and Bosscher schools joined McBain in 1958. The name of the school was changed to the McBain Rural Agricultural School on July 2, 1945. The shop and Ag Building was built in 1946. At this time the Cavanagh and Galt schools were moved into position behind the existing school and used for classrooms.

In 1950 a building program resulted in eight new classrooms, and the elementary grades were moved into that portion. The enrollment continued to increase and the need for a high school rooms and two elementary classrooms were built. A facility for storing and servicing the buses was built in 1966