

CHRISTMAS IN A EARLY DAY

RECOLLECTIONS OF TWO WELL KNOWN LANSINGITES

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How Daniel W. Buck and John N. Bush Celebrated Their First Christmas When Lansing was But a Forest

With each returning year old Father Time confers innumerable Christmas presents upon the children of men. People who have lived in this community for only a short time do not realize the benefits that the growth of years have bestowed upon them; but two of the early residents of Lansing have been kind enough to describe for Republican readers their first Christmas in Lansing, which will certainly reveal sufficient reason for rejoicing.

Daniel W. Buck is one of the three men who have lived longest in Lansing. He came to Lansing in the fall of 1848, and when Christmas came around he was employed in a furniture factory at North Lansing.

“My first Christmas in Lansing,” said Mr. Buck, “was not spent in Lansing at all, but in Delhi, where my brothers-in-law, the Norths, lived. I remember the morning well. There was no sleigh that winter and I started from North Lansing to go out to Harrison North’s to dinner. I drove down Washington avenue, it was a road through the woods then, and the stumps were not cut out of the road yet. I got lost in those woods once right where the Baptist church is now and went by way of Dryer’s place over by the location of the School for the Blind in my efforts to get to the Lansing House. “Well, “ said Mr. Buck, resuming the thread of his narrative, “I drove down the avenue and on my way from Franklin street to the corner of Allegan street, I passed just three houses. Two of them were log houses and the other was a slab shanty. The shanty was where Mrs. Peck’s place is, and one of the log houses was at the corner of Washington and Shiawassee street. At the Allegan street corner was a store. A man came up here from Ohio and built that with money he got by robbing a bank. We did not know that then, but we found it when he was arrested and taken back. The Lansing House was on the next corner. It was a log house. I drove past that and along the avenue until I came to Main street. Then I turned east and crossed the old bridge which then went across the river from the foot of Main street. There I struck woods again and strictly speaking that was the end of my Christmas in Lansing, for I spent the day with the North family. There were not more than two of three hundred people here then, and there was no village or city organization. The town was simply part of the township. North Lansing was a good deal more of a place than this end of town,”

One year earlier than Mr. Buck, John N. Bush struck Lansing. The capital was located here in the session of 1846-47, and Mr. Bush came to Lansing in 1847.

“I don’t remember much about what I did on Christmas day 1847,” said Mr. Bush. “I had a job plastering the Seymour house then, it is called the Franklin House now, and I had agreed to finish the work by New Year’s so I think I must have worked. If I thought much about Christmas I presume my thoughts went home, for I was a stranger here then, and I don’t doubt my mind went back to the place where other and happier Christmases had been spent. We were all strangers in Lansing one to another then. We came her[e] with the first influx of settlers at the new capital and were all busy getting established. I don’t remember that there was any public service held. There was no church here, and if there was any service it was any service it was in the first school house built in Lansing. It is still standing near the corner of Franklin and Center streets, I think. Doubtless we all thought of Christmas, but being busy we did not pay much attention to it. A Christmas dinner those days would have consisted of venison, partridge, and possibly chicken. Bear meat was to be had for the shooting, and the Indians used to bring in lots of cranberries from the marshes. Most of the men who stopped work that Christmas day probably went hunting for deer, bear or game birds.”