

# What a Difference

## LANSING NOW AS COMPARED TO 1836

### Lewis Merrifield Tells of the City's Early Days— The last Time he Left Here There was Nobody to Leave Behind— Reads Queer Now.

“You may think it funny to see me talking to everyone and asking questions, but I simply can't help it, everything has changed. When I left here the last time I left no one behind me, for there was nobody to leave,” said a fine looking old gentleman to a representative of the State Republican this morning.

This naturally created a curiosity and the white-haired gentleman became in the reporter's eyes the most interesting man in the city. The old man was found in the secretary of state's office, where he had gone to see if he could find the plat he had made of what is now North Lansing in 1836.

“Yes sir; this is the first time I have visited Lansing since that time — I think it was 1836 — and I had not the slightest idea that such a beautiful city would ever be built here.”

The old gentleman referred to is Lewis Merrifield and he reached his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday last October. Mrs. Merrifield, his wife is still living and is 77 years of age. Mr. Merrifield was born in Vermont and came to Michigan when 19 years of age. With his parents he settle Branch county and operated the first sawmill there. He then moved to Tekonsha, Calhoun county, where he now resides, and built the first mill-race there and started the first sawmill.

“Tell you something of my coming to Lansing? Well, in 1836 (I'm not quite positive of the date, but I think that's correct), a Mr. Bushnell of Rochester, N.Y., and Mr. Alcott of Marshall got some land on the Grand River, and they wanted Cyrus Hewitt, father of your Robert Hewitt, then surveyor for Calhoun county, to come along the river and locate the plat of the village. We started— there were five of us, Mr. Bushnell, Mr. Alcott, Mr. Hewitt, myself and another man, I don't remember his name— on horseback from Marshall. We went to Charlotte, where we found one house, and stayed over night. Mr. Bushnell was getting pretty well along in years, and he could go no further, so Alcott returned with him to Marshall. We went to Springbrook where we found two inhabitants. There we had our horses taken back to Jackson and then to Marshall. At Springbrook we made a dug-out canoe from a white wood log, and in this we rode to the mouth of the Cedar river, where we found section 16. We went down the river to where Bushnell and Alcott had their land and located the village. We surveyed it.

“I don't know if I ought to tell you this,” said Mr. Merrifield, laughing heartily at the recollection, “but somebody coming down the river stole all our provisions and we went sixteen hours with nothing to eat. We walked back to Marshall. I might say by the way of comparison that we built a log hut and hung up a blanket for a door, and yet we were safer then than we are now in our brick houses with plenty of locked doors. When passing Olivet, or where Olivet now is, I counted twenty Indian wigwams. The Indians would always leave the whites alone if the whites left them alone.”

Mr. Merrifield is a hearty old man, well preserved and he took great delight in visiting the city. The plat referred to was not at the capitol, as the land then belonged to the United States and the plat was never filed here.

*State Republican 5/4/1895*