

## **LANSING BEFORE IT HAD RAILROADS**

C.V. DeLand of Jackson writes an interesting letter in the Citizen regarding his first visit to Lansing in which he says:

"The state capitol was removed in 1847 from Detroit to Lansing. The latter place was at that time a dense forest, the woodman's axe not having struck a single tree in the township. There was no settlement on the south nearer than Mason and Eaton Rapids, or on the north nearer than DeWitt, St. Johns and Owosso. A frame capitol building was erected during the summer and a dozen or so log dwellings built. The new capitol was built by the late Benjamin Porter and A.P. Woods if this city.

He then recites that the state printing had been awarded to Harmon & Hedges of the Detroit Free Press, who started out to get an outfit to the capitol. A part of the freight was sent overland via Howell and Williamston, but the heavy machinery was sent to Jackson on the Michigan Central, to be hauled to this city from there. "There were four four-horse and five single rigs," writes Mr. DeLand, "and they made an imposing caravan. The first day we arrived at Leslie. There was to be a dance there that night and all hands decided to stay and take it in, which was done. Of course there was a fight or two and the departure was delayed the next day until the boys appeared before Judge Leslie of the village and settled the fines. A cold a dreary rain set in and it was late when the train started. The roads were horrid and as it grew dark we made Hopkins' tavern at Eden and camped for the night. It was dark Wednesday night when we got to Mason. Several wagons had broken down, and all the carpenters, repairers and blacksmiths in Mason worked all night making repairs. The next morning found us climbing the 'hogs back.'" It set in for a furious snow storm that made progress slow and toilsome. A heavy wind storm had blown trees and limbs across the road and there was a lot of chopping, moving logs and swearing all along the noted ridge. That night we hauled up at the farm house of an old settler known as

"Turkey" Price<sup>1</sup>, near where Delhi now stands. The boys cleaned out the meal bin and the hem roost and killed a hog for the old gent, and then started off, as they said the half starved.



All day Saturday we toiled through the mud and woods. It was still snowing and as night fell there was no sign of a habitation or a state capitol in sight. It was too dark to move through the dense woods, and so the whole bunch spent the night, and it was one of the long and dreary kind. There was nothing to eat, not a drop of whiskey left, no tobacco, and not a match in the crowd. All night in mud, with wet clothes, we sang and shouted and tore around to keep from freezing. We were about two miles from the old "upper town," but the sleepy denizens of the log houses afforded no succor. As soon as it was light enough to see a 'hole in the woods," we started on, and about noon on Sunday arrived in front of the old capitol site and were in Lansing.

The trees had not been cut out of Washington avenue, only enough for a narrow roadway to the capitol, and there was no office building. The print shop material was dumped out and the printers set to work with a few carpenters to build an office. It was situated about where the Hudson House Dining room now stands, and was afterward moved to Kalamazoo street and used by the Daniels boys as a livery stable until burned up." **LJ 1902**

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<sup>1</sup> The only Price listed in Delhi in 1850 was P.J. Price age 54.