

## **The Capital City**

### **No. 1**

Lansing, from its importance as the capital city of a vast and prosperous commonwealth, will always command more than ordinary attention and interest as a political and social center; but of its business and manufacturing enterprises, its growth and, and the inducements and facilities offered to capitalists and manufactures, but little, comparatively, is known. The same may be said with regard to its desirability as a residence and the social and educational advantages enjoyed by its citizens.

It is not the intention to enter into a minute account of the city from its first settlement, nor to sketch the biographies of its pioneer settlers. Those are already matters of history; but of its material growth and advancement little has been published save in a loose and cursory way, in the columns of the local press, and with no other aids than these and the treacherous memories of old residents, many of whom are unfamiliar with the facts from lack of observation, it would not be singular if many of our own citizens had no adequate concept of the material progress which has been made in their midst, or of the magnitude and importance reached by its business interests within the quarter century just passed. It is to a presentation of these facts that we have proposed to devote a series of articles, but to do so intelligently it will be necessary to indulge in a brief retrospect as a prelude.

The dimensions of the city are about 2 1/2 miles north and south and two miles east and west. Although the capital was located here in 1847, in the midst of a dense forest, it was not believed that it would remain permanently, as the place was almost inaccessible. This, and the further facts that the surrounding lands were sparsely settled and heavily timbered, while much of the land in the city had been taken up by non-resident speculators, who refused to sell at reasonable prices, combined to make the growth of Lansing very slow. It was not until 1862, or 15 years after the location of the capital that the first railroad entered the city. It was built from Owosso to Lansing to connect with the D.G.H. & M. railroad, and the citizens of the embryo capital contributed about \$40,000 to the project.

The city government was organized in 1859, and its population in 1860 was 3,085, that of the township being 497. The first charter election was held on the first Monday in April, 1859, and resulted in the election of Joseph C. Bailey (dem.) for mayor. The rest of the ticket, which was republican, was as follows: E. Longyear, recorder; F.F. Russell treasure; and J. G. Ramsdell, clerk. There was then but three wards.

From 1861 to 1865 the country was plunged in civil war, and a large portion of the people of central Michigan went to the front. Home industries languished, and although the population of the city had increased in 1864 to 3,573, that of the township had decreased 18 from the census of 1860. Up to this time the city had but one outlet by rail (that above mentioned), but in one season of 1864 the first section of the Jackson, Lansing and Saginaw railroad was built from Jackson, thus connecting with the Michigan Central. The city aided this road to the amount of \$22,400 in bonds, and the county raised \$40,000. Between this period and 1871 the growth of Lansing's business was very light,

and manufactures were comparatively nothing. One of the strongest elements against its growth was the constant fear that the capital would be removed. The population in 1870 was 5,243. Of that number 1,230 were voters. A fourth ward had been formed of territory taken from the first and second, and the population in each was as follows: First, 1,329; 2d, 1,156; 3d, 1,591; 4<sup>th</sup>, 1,165.

In 1869 there were 37 miles of railroad built, connecting Lansing with Ionia, and the peninsular road reached here from Battle Creek in the same year, thus giving the capital city four outlets.



The legislature of 1871 voted a tax for the erection of a permanent capitol building at Lansing, the contract was let, and the work commenced in 1872. The relieving the fears of removal, the city began to shoot ahead with more vigor than ever before. In the summer of 1871 the eastern division of the Detroit, Lansing & Northern railroad reached here and a junction was formed with the Ionia branch. Two years later the Lansing branch of the L.S. & M.S. reached here from Jonesville.

From 1870 to 1873 many public and private improvements were made, and several manufactures were started; but the panic of 1873 nipped them, and three of the heaviest establishments succumbed. Then followed several years of almost total stagnation and it is only within four years that the business has shown decided symptoms of recovery. In 1876 a local company, of which James M. Turner of this city was president built a railroad from Flint to Lansing uniting the Peninsular with the Port Huron road. In 1879 this road passed into the hands of the Grand Trunk railroad company of Canada, and was incorporated with their line, forming a continuous road from Chicago to the Atlantic seaboard.

The first directory of Lansing was arranged and compiled, and published in 1873, by C Exera Brown and printed by W.S. George & Co., state printers and binders. It gave 123 business places (excluding barber shops, real estate and insurance offices), 74 mechanics' shops and factories, 5 banks, 13 attorney's offices, 28 physicians and dentists, 15 saloons exclusive of hotel bars, 9 hotels, 5 restaurants, 7 artists and photographers, 3 printing offices, and one commercial school. Manufactories were represented by the carriage factory of A. Clark & Co., W.W. Hildreth, successor to M.S. baker, iron founder, the

agricultural works of E. Bement & Sons, and machine shop of Cady, Glassbrook & Co., the planing mills of Allen & Wise and Lapham & Longstreet, Henning's stave factory, Hall's brickyard, three flouring mills and a small woolen mill. Gas had also been introduced, and a steam fire engines. At this time the population was under 7,000, and the city had five wards.

The residents of Lansing in 1873, returning here in 1883 would perceive striking changes. Our population to-day is not less than 9,000. Avenues and streets have been graded, graveled and paved. Fine blocks of residences have risen in place of small and unsightly wooden buildings; school-houses have been erected; smoke arises from the chimneys of large factories, while our railroad system stretching its long arms towards every quarter of the compass quickly and cheaply conveys their products to profitable markets. Growth and change are observable on each hand and it is to those changes that have occurred in the business portion of our city that we now propose to allude more in detail, commencing with the main avenues, and noting all of the important business, enterprises that have sprung up within the decade, as well as the growth of those firms on the ground at commencement of the period named.

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