

93, He Keeps Alert To Even



Lawrence Man Feted

By FERN SMALL

LAWRENCE — Sitting in a rocker he made from iron purchased for a nickel when his old school burned down, and from black walnut grown on his farm, Charles Edward Denton keeps abreast of the world through the media of newspapers, radio and television.

He was born Feb. 1, 1869, and he has been celebrating his 93rd birthday all week. A pre-birthday dinner was held last Saturday, and another group of friends and relatives are expected today. Callers and birthday greetings have been arriving every day.

While his greatest pleasure is keeping up with the latest news on TV, radio and in his daily paper, his sharp memory can take him back to before he was six years old. His history is the history of Lawrence, and in 1947 he wrote a history of the Prospect Lake community where he has spent his life.

His great-grandfather, Ashel Dowd, fought in the Revolutionary war and his father fought in the Civil war with the company that captured Jefferson Davis.

PARENTS CAME WEST

His parents came to Lawrence from New York state through the Straights of Mackinac to St. Joseph and then by flat boat to Lawrence on the Paw Paw river.

According to him, Lawrence started north of the river where the Bangor road is now. Hannibal Marshall then had a store there, but he had a new one built by Mr. Denton's father, a mason, on the present four corners of Lawrence. It is still standing and is now DeHaven's store. With his partner, Jerry Wilcox, his father built most of the red brick houses and buildings in and around Lawrence. He also built the Denton farm home from red brick. He traded cord wood at 75 cents a cord for bricks at \$6 a thousand.

As a young man, Mr. Denton went to Soo City and worked as a telegrapher for the Chicago and Northwestern railroad. Upon the death of his father, his mother asked him to remain at home and run the farm. He bought a team with his savings and farmed until he was 30.

Last year, for the first time, he did not harvest a potato crop started from three Sir Walter Raleigh seed potatoes given to him by his father-in-law when he got married in 1894. His wife, the former Marion Blaisdell, died in 1951 after 57 years of marriage.

When he was first married, five neighbors farmed with oxen.

from their farm sold at 5 cents a gallon.

He recalls when there were three terms of school each year with the spring and fall terms taught by a woman, and the winter term, when the big boys were free to attend, was taught by a man.

The Methodist church had an "outer charge" at the Prospect Lake school in the 70's. Services were held there after the services in town. Classes were often interrupted for funeral services. Around 1900 when the roads were improved, the school service was discontinued.

He chuckles when he remembers the old oaken bucket and the moss covered well. At noontime, there was a bucket of water for the boys and one for the girls so they could wash. But very little of the water in the boys' pail was ever used for the purpose intended.

BOARDED IN TOWN

After the school was started in town, the high school students would board in town all week, working for their keep. They could get home only on weekends because of the bad roads and lack of transportation.

The first railroad in Lawrence ran between here and Paw Paw with a turntable at each end to turn it around. It was a big day too, he remembers, when they gravelled the muddy roads at the four corners for the first time.

As he looks back over the

many changes since the ox team gave way to horses, horses to tractors; hand scythes and grain cradles to mowers, reapers, binders and combines, he says all of these changes were made by man, but, there are some things that never change.

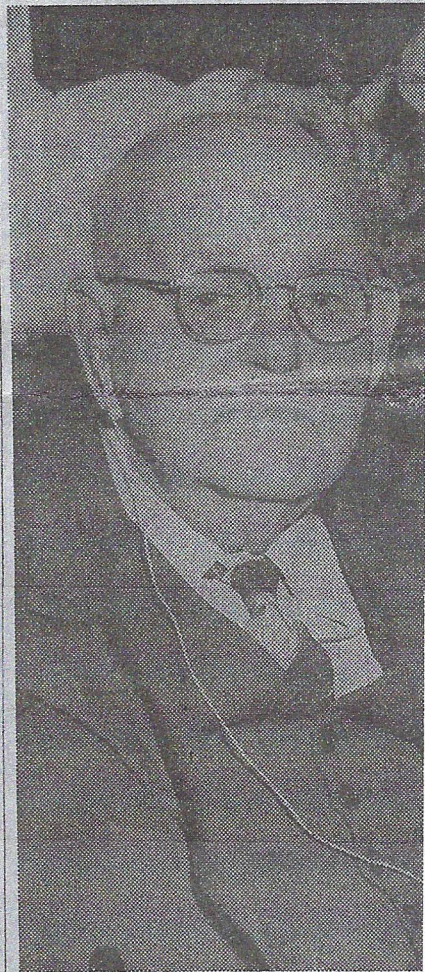
"Human nature, the laws of the universe, summer, winter, seed time and harvest time are all the same since the dawn of creation. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever," is his comforting comment in these troubled times.

DEEPLY RELIGIOUS

A devoutly religious man, he attended the Methodist church without fail until four years ago when his hearing made it impossible to enjoy the sermon. Now, he listens to two services each Sunday on his radio.

He served on the church board for many years, and he was also one of the organizers of the Lawrence Mutual Telephone Co. Nowadays, he writes letters and sharpens scissors when he isn't busy listening to the news.

He has four daughters; Mrs. Lewellen Williams of Flint; Misses Beatrice and Shirley Denton of Benton Harbor who teach at the Community College and Lincoln school, respectively, and Miss Blanche Denton, also a teacher for many years, who now tutors at home and lives with her father. He also has four grandchildren and 10 great grandchildren.



NONAGENARIAN: Charles Edward Denton, 93, sitting in his favorite "nickle" rocker. In dozens of birthday cards he receives, he likes to compare modern times with the nine decades. (McKee photo)

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