

# WELCOME BACK FROM THE ATTIC

## YESTERYEAR AROUND CALEDONIA STATION

No. 2

1975

### WESTERN MICHIGAN CLASS 'B' BASEBALL CHAMPS 1934



Back Row: Lou Kaechele, manager, Mike Willyard p & of, Mike Devine lb, Ken Leatherman 3b, Clarence (Lemmy) Finkbeiner cf, McCann ss, Arnold Parker p, Heinie Martin, umpire and sport's writer.

Middle Row: Alvin (Snick) Snyder c, Lefty Gillian p, Warren (Dobber) Wenger 2b, Buck Bartling lb.

Bottom Row: Vern Willyard p, Paul Kaechele, bat boy, Artie Johnson lf, Larry Anderson rf, Earl Terharr p.

Back in the early 1900's, baseball came to Caledonia. Many of the first players were Caledonia merchants. Sunday afternoon baseball became a favorite pastime for the surrounding area. An early baseball field was located near Kraft and 92nd Street. A young team began to form and one Saturday night stole the grandstand and backstop and moved it to the east end of Caledonia along Cherry Valley Avenue north of Emmons Street on the present Robert Near farm, as shown in the picture on the following page. Later the ball park was moved to the old fairgrounds, on the south side of 100th Street between Kinsey and Duncan Lake Avenues. Still later the high school built a diamond on the south side of East Main Street on the present site of the professional building. When the Caledonia Township School was built in the mid-1930's a ball field was located where the present ag building is located.

In 1929 the Kent County Park Commission built the Caledonia Lakeside Park, which included a new ball diamond, and the Championship Caledonia Independents Team came into being. For two years the team played Sundays at Caledonia and dusk games at other nearby towns. A collection was taken at



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each game to pay for equipment, and left over money was spent between the players at the end of the year.

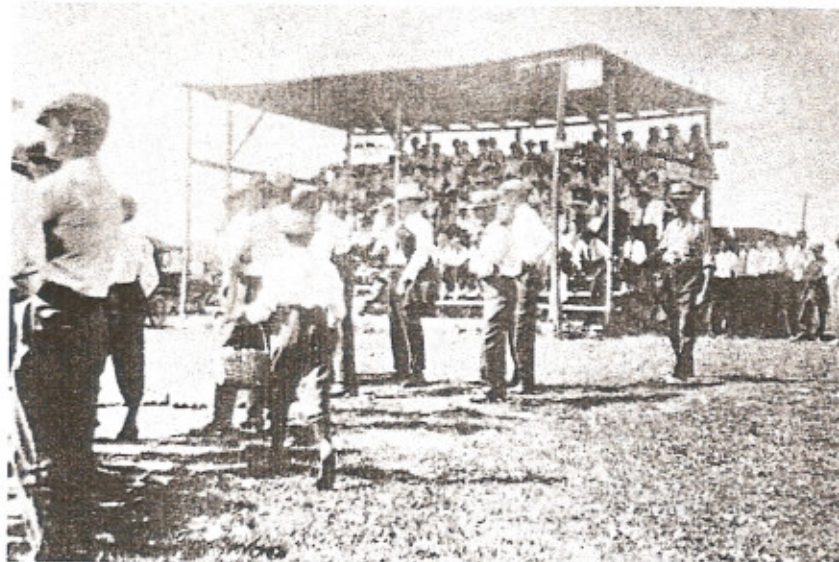
About 1930 Lou Kaechele, manager of the Caledonia Elevator, became the team's manager, and the team branched out to play teams farther away under the lights in Grand Rapids, and once a year they played at the Ionia Reformatory. They played 2 to 3 nights a week away, but always played Sunday afternoon games at Caledonia. The Caledonia Commercial Club sponsored the team but a hat

was still always passed to help pay the traveling expenses and for getting special teams for exhibition games.

In 1934 the Caledonia Independents became Class "B" Champions of Western Michigan. The tournaments were held at the old Ramona Ball Park in East Grand Rapids and at Lowell, Michigan. There were 32 teams involved in the tournaments, which began in August and continued for 8 weeks. According to clippings from the Grand Rapids Herald, "Caledonia had one of the best records of the year of any strictly amateur team in or around Grand Rapids." In the final game, Caledonia beat the Ada Athletics by a score of 1-0. Ken Leatherman hit a double, driving in the only Caledonia run. Arnold Parker, Caledonia's pitcher, faced only 32 men, struck out 8, and allowed only 2 hits. Of this Championship team, Arnold Parker, Earl TerHaar and McCann went on to play minor league baseball and Buck Bartling became a member of the Philadelphia Athletics under the management of Connie Mack.

The ball team continued to play until the early 1940's, when part of the team left to fight in World War II and some of the other team members left the town to work in war plants in surrounding communities. When the war ended, another team was formed under the management of Bernard Stauffer and Clarence Finkbeiner. This team played until 1952 when the team finally disbanded for good.

(Editor's note: This very fine sports story was written by Sallie Niles as it was told to her by her father, Clarence Finkbeiner.)



The following people supplied "WELCOME BACK" with photos, newspaper articles, books, stories, etc. for this issue: Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Leatherman, Mr. and Mrs. James Sherman, Mr. and Mrs. Carl Higley, Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Finkbeiner, Mrs. Allyn Niles, Mrs. Atta Olthouse, Mrs. Rhea Cronin.





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### Editor's Column . . .

The first issue of "WELCOME BACK" has brought our way many comments and much praise. Information and many suggestions have come to the committee from our readers. We thank the Caledonia Community Schools for allowing us to mail nearly 2800 copies free along with "Take Five." Thanks also goes to the following people who loaned us their photos, newspaper articles, book, etc.: Mrs. Rhea Cronin, Mr. Clarence Snay, Mr. and Mrs. James Sherman, and Mrs. Ruth Wemette, also to Mr. Don Overholt for the artwork and design of the newspaper title. . . .

Forrest Long suggested that the missing monument (page 2) could have been placed in the town square when the first cement street was put in. The cement street was limited to the area bounded by the four corners of the square where East Main and Lake Street cross.

Mr. Long described the monument as being about four feet square at the base and tapered upward about 5 or 6 feet high with a flag pole in the center. It was built out of field stone. It was not put up to honor any special person or event. We are still looking for a picture of it. Mr. Long is not sure when it was erected, but it was probably sometime in the late 1920's and it was most likely removed in the late 1930's. . . .

Maynard Dutcher and Olney Adams identified the unknown mystery person (page 8) in the picture of the Caledonia High School classes of 1910. The unknown person is Henry Vollweiler. By accident we omitted some of the names of people who were in the picture, so we are going to give the complete list again. See the corrections following.

The committee staff for the second issue has been Editor, Kenneth R. Gackler; Secretary and Subscription Manager, Sue Strouse; Photo Reproduction, Jay L. Shook; Layout and Printing, Edward and Don Passenger; Research, Mary Crumback and Eve Geerlign.

Our readers' keen eyes have spotted some errors in issue number one. On page 1 John Rosenberg should be Jacob Rosenberg. On page 8 we left out some names of students in the picture, so the complete list is printed below:

Back Row: Ruth Williams, Seward Brock, Henry Vollweiler, Byron Bridegan, Levi Miller.

Fourth Row: Jennie Statsick, Jennie Bell LaFever, Floyd Bowman, Homer Diefenbaker.

Third Row: Wila Dutcher, Hazel Rowland, Alice Stanton, Leroy Christie, Tom Stanton, Charles Konkle, Ed Miller, Byron Ward, Paul Miller, Wayne Shisler, George Statsick, Supt. Clyde Overholt.

Second Row: (Middle) Marguerite Hutchinson, Olney Adams, John Raab, Minor Kinsey.

First Row: Bertha Schreifer, Frieda Klump, Betty Wenger, Alice Konkle, Elvis Amon, Ollie Johnson, Arlene Wilson, Fred Finkbeiner.

### Subscriptions

Subscriptions have been coming in at a steady rate. More than 25% of the subscriptions are from people living out of the Caledonia area. We even have out-of-state subscriptions after just one issue. Please let your friends and relatives out of the Caledonia area know about this paper. Why not secure extra copies and mail them to your friends and relatives? Extra copies may be purchased at Caledonia Drug Store, Passenger Printing Service, State Bank of Caledonia (main office and Dutton branch), Leatherman and Heintzelman Snack Bar in Dutton, Janose's General Store at Campau Lake, and the Hastings City Bank branch in Middleville.

Previous issues of "WELCOME BACK" are available at Passenger Printing Service and from the subscription manager.

Mail your subscription to "WELCOME BACK FROM THE ATTIC," P. O. Box 1870, Caledonia, Michigan 49316. Ten issues for \$5.00.



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Mr. Asahel Kent was the first settler in the township, settling on section thirty-five in 1838. Mr. Kent, and after his death Mrs. Kent, kept a public house, which became famous for its good cheer, all over the surrounding country. A gentleman who lived at that time in New York State, tells us that he used to hear people who had been to Grand River tell about "Kent's Tavern," and when one would return, others who had traveled on this route—the "Gull Trail"—would always inquire after the Kents. Mrs. Kent afterwards married Mr. Peter McNaughton, and the place became equally well known to travelers on the Battle Creek and Grand Rapids stage route, as McNaughton's. And while talking of this subject there are some reminiscences of this stage route that Mr. Edward



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Campau relates, that we may as well give now, and which will help contrast the mode of traveling in those days with that of the present. Mr. C. says that in 1839, he, then a boy of 14, made the journey with three or four others from Grand Rapids to Detroit, and that they stopped at "Kent's" over night, and he with others of the men had to sleep out in a sort of shed, as the house was so small it would not accommodate them. At this time this was the only house from Ada to "Leonard's," a distance of seventeen miles. About two years after this he commenced to drive stage on this route, and drove for several years. The road at this time wound round through the woods, and it was no uncommon thing to get "stuck" in the mud or to overset. At one time, a very dark, stormy night, they broke an axletree about six miles south of Ada, and the passengers, five or six in number, had to walk through mud and snow to that place, as it was the nearest settlement. At another time Hon. John Ball, Mrs. Thomas B. Church and others were in the stage; they overset in a mud-hole and the passengers were all landed (?) in the water. It was quite dark, and Mr. Fred. Church, then an infant, was nearly suffocated before they found him. At another time Hon. Wm. A. Richmond and Hon. Harvey P. Yale were his only passengers, the roads were muddy and badly rutted out and the night dark. Mr. Yale fell asleep and the wheel striking into a deep rut pitched him out into the mud. After a hearty laugh he resumed his place and they labored along. There is a great contrast between travel over that route, and over the different railroad routes, with their elegant passenger coaches, now leading from the Valley City.

To go back to the settlement of Caledonia: Mr. James Minsey settled on section thirty-six in 1838 or 1839. Among the earlier settlers were Orsemus Rathbun, Eber Moffitt, Hiram McNeil, Peter McNaughton, Levi Tobey, John Sinclair, O. B. Barber, John Pattison, Henry Jackson, Wm. H. Brown, and Warren S. Hale. Mr. Lyman Gerrald was the first settler on the west side of the river. Mr. Wm. H. Brown erected the saw mill at Alaska, now owned by L. W. Fisher, in 1848, and the flouring mill now owned by J. W. Boynton, in 1853, and is now one of the proprietors of the Caledonia mills, two miles above Alaska, on section twenty-two. Mr. Orsemus Rathbun is the oldest settler now residing in the township.

Among the incidents connected with the early settlement of the township, showing some of the hardships the pioneers had to endure, we have the following: Mr. Wm. H. Brown, previous to his settlement at Brownsville, but after he located his land, lived at "Scale's Prairie" or Middleville. Having occasion to go there one winter, he started from home in the morning on horseback, intending to return the same day. After making his observations and examining his land about where the village of Alaska now stands, he started for home; night soon came on, and after endeavoring to follow his track for a while he found out that he was lost. He dismounted, and as he had nothing to kindle a fire with, cleared the snow out of a path, with his feet, and some bark from a dry tree, and walked backwards and forwards in it all night. When morning came he mounted his horse and after riding for some time came out at the Green Lake House. His friends had started after him in the morning, expecting to find him frozen to death, and followed his tracks until they found him at Green Lake.

At the mouth of the Coldwater was a great Indian camping ground and burial place. They did not leave here, entirely until within a very few years. One of them, old Soh-na-go, or "Squirrel," has been since seen visiting the burial place and the hunting grounds of his fathers, but the "White man's axe" had been there, and it was no longer a home for him.

Caledonia has nine school houses, all wooden buildings, and two churches, viz: The Baptist Church at Alaska, and a Catholic Church on section twenty-five, both wooden structures. There are two hotels in this township, the Alaska Hotel, at Alaska, Wm. H. Lock, proprietor, and the Oak Grove House, O. B. Barber, proprietor, on section twenty-six. There is a saw mill on section twenty-seven, Jacob Brown, proprietor.

The postoffices are as follows.—Alaska, Warren S. Hale, P. M.; Caledonia, O. B. Barber, P. M.; Caledonia Station, Adam B. Sherck, P. M.

The Grand River Valley Railroad crosses the southwest corner of the township and has a station on section twenty-nine.

### GRAND RAPIDS SAVINGS BANK, 54 Pearl Street, (Opposite Powers' Opera House.) GRAND RAPIDS, MICH.

Capital Paid In - - - - \$50,000.  
Surplus Fund - - - - 50,000.

Stockholders Personally Liable for \$50,000 Additional.

This bank was organized in 1870 and is operated under the General Banking Law, of the State of Michigan, as amended to provide for the organization of Savings Banks in which every precaution has been taken by the Legislature to make such banks safe and reliable places of deposit.

Deposits of ONE DOLLAR and upwards are received and the same courtesy will be extended to the person depositing but ONE DOLLAR as to him who deposits ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS.

While this bank presents unquestionable security it will pay the highest rate of interest that a safe and legitimate business can afford. At present the rate is 3 per cent. per annum for all monies left on deposit 3, 4 and 5 months, and 4 per cent. per annum for monies left 6 to 12 months.

"Remember! Money in the pocket grows less; in the Savings Bank it constantly increases."

J. D. ROBINSON, President.  
MORRIS S. CRUSBY, Vice-Pres.  
F. A. HALL, Cashier.

Directors.  
J. D. ROBINSON, W. D. TALFORD,  
M. S. CRUSBY, E. S. PIERCE,  
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## WITMER BROS.

Dealers in

Farming Implements, Haying  
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A specialty.

Force and Lift pumps for deep or shallow wells.

Wells sunk on short notice.

SCHOOL SUPPLIES { Desks, Blackboards, Erasers,  
Globes, Maps, Etc.

Also

CONTRACTORS  
AND BUILDERS.  
Caledonia, Mich.

## Cash Paid For Wheat.

When in want of

FLOUR, FEED  
AND PRODUCE,  
LIME, HAIR OR  
LAND PLASTER,

Call at the

ELEVATOR.  
Lewis Spaulding.

The above advertising  
appeared in the  
CALEDONIA NEWS,  
February 11, 1887



## Andy Stewart Drove Stage When Fifteen

### Considered The Youngest Driver In The Country

When we read of the surrender of Lee to Grant at Appomattox, and the assassination of Lincoln, or try to imagine France as a monarchy with Louis Napoleon on its throne, or think of Queen Victoria of England in the prime of life, we are apt to say "That was ages ago," and dismiss it from our minds. Yet we have in our midst an 87-year-old citizen who remembers these things perfectly and other events of the 60's as well. His name is Leander Stewart, and he was born in Bowne township, near Alto, August 26, 1850. He attended the Stone school and received the same education as the average farm boy of that day and age. He was well acquainted with



Leander Stewart

the Indians, and unlike some of our pioneers, he speaks very kindly of the red brethren. Mr. Stewart says that the Indians received a raw deal from the white man; they were chased and hounded from pillar to post, and if they were treacherous savages, it was largely the fault of the Caucasian race. Once when Andy was just a little lad, some Indians who were traveling through the country on foot stopped at the Stewart home for water. His mother who was a kind and generous

woman, gave them a lunch. One of the redskins patted her on the back and said "nice white squaw." Now the words "nice" and "white" were all right, but our hero resented very much the term squaw when applied to his mother.

Even as a very young boy Leander loved horses, and showed more than ordinary skill in handling and judging horseflesh. It was this gift and ability that led to his big chance when he was only a boy 15 years of age. At that time a stage coach driver, on the G. R.-Battle Creek line was discharged for cruelty, and Andy was offered the job by Edward Campau. He told Mr. Campau he would be delighted to take it but was too young, as he was 6 years under the required age. Mr. Campau said he would take care of that, and very soon Andy Stewart found himself a regular stage coach driver, with four horses to manage.

He made the trip every day, starting in Grand Rapids and going through Whitneyville and Yankee Springs to Battle Creek. Stations for changing horses were Whitneyville, McNaughton House, which was located where J. C. Proctor's farm home now stands, and Yankee Springs. All Andy had to do was drive up to the tavern door and inform the hostler whether he wanted a fresh pair of "leaders" or "wheelers." The leaders of course were the front team and the wheelers those nearest the coach. While this was going on, the passengers were inside partaking of liquid cheer. Mr. Stewart says there was plenty of whisky in those days, of a very pure quality. The taverns were also close together. Yet there was little drunkenness. Conviviality was for the passengers alone however, a driver with four spirited horses to manage had to have a perfectly clear head.

A coach driver was permitted to use a whip, but it was one of the inflexible rules that is he ever drew blood on a horse, he could consider himself automatically dismissed. Although Andy carried the U. S. Mail twice a week and money and other valuables, he was never held up, and neither did he ever lose anything entrusted to his care. The strange part of it is, the worst scare he ever had was caused by a young girl, named Sophia. A party of young people were riding with him, when this Sophia, who was a young hellion and the life of the party, grabbed the lines and whip, and almost caused a run away. To make things more complicated there was a sharp curve at the foot of a steep hill, and it was all Andy could do

to conquer both girl and horses. Sophia, who liked to crack the whip over men as well as horses, married a blacksmith, who could use a hammer as well as she could a whip. They lived happily ever after.

One morning Leander noticed a fine pair of ponies in the stable and asked why they were never used. Louis, the stable manager, said they were no good for a coach, but Andy was confident, that with patience and careful training, they would make a splendid pair of leaders. He started to win their confidence and affection with sugar, and spent all the time he could with them. Finally the day came when Andy felt the horses were ready for action, and insisted on trying them. Louis called him a bullheaded kid and gave a reluctant consent. In a short time this little pair of brown ponies became one of the finest teams on the route.

These days, when Andy was the youngest stage coach driver in the West, if not the entire Union, were the happiest of his life, but like most all good things had to end some time.

As civilization and progress swept the states, the old coach had to go, and it must have been with a heavy heart that Andy made his last trip, and surrendered the lines for the last time. As a reward, Mr. Campau gave him the brown ponies, saying he deserved them, as he was the one that trained them. He sold the team to Dr. Shumway of Lowell for \$200, harness and all. That was considered a topnotch price in those days. After the close of the stage route, Andy worked for a company that brought spar timber from Canada to the United States. These were long poles, and were cut from cedar and elm trees. They resembled the long, huge poles carried on trailers by power companies. In those days they were drawn by oxen and were fastened by chains to ordinary sleighs. It was very dangerous work getting these logs out of the Canadian woods and bringing them across the straits near St. Ignace. A ship building company used them for the main sail of their boats.

Mr. Stewart says he would like to have the old times return long enough for the young people of this age to see what really good times the young folks of his youth had. Spelling bees, husking bees, sleigh and hay rides, lyceums and picnics were the diversions of his young friends. Parents didn't worry in the good old days when the young folks were out for a lark. About 58 years ago, Leander Stewart married Minerva Draper, daughter of a blacksmith, on Christmas day. The ceremony was performed by Justice White of Middleville and that night the magistrate's home and office burned to the ground, and Justice White barely escaped with his life;



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in fact he was an invalid for several weeks due to the severe burns he received.

Mr. and Mrs. Leander Stewart lived on a farm in McCords, where they raised their four children, 2 sons and 2 daughters, Verna, Winifred and Ward and Robert. The oldest daughter, Mrs. Verna Linton, passed away about 8 years ago.

One change that time has brought about is the appearance of women at auction sales. Years ago, with the exception of a few foreigners and squaws, the fair sex remained aloof from sales. Now, whether it be the bull pen or machinery shed, the ladies are very evident.

Two years ago, Minerva, Andy's faithful helpmeet died, since then he has lived with his daughter, Mrs. Vern Loring. Now, as he approaches his 88th milestone, his health and strength are remarkable. His ruddy complexion and firm handclasp would be a credit to a man in his sixty. He possess a very unusual record: Never had a doctor, never been sick, never broke a bone or had an operation. Only twice in his life in a dentist chair. When the So. Kent correspondent asked him his opinion of the modern woman smoking and drinking compared with the dames of the good old days, he was non-committal, canny old Scot that he is. He knew when to keep quiet.

Through his father's side of the family he can trace his lineage to two of the strongest and most prominent clans in Scotland, the Stewards and the Campbells. Besides his four children, he has 12 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren. Although he enjoys taking mental journeys in the valley of memories, he is by no means an idle dreamer, there are certain chores about his daughter's home he considers his own exclusively, and in the summer during the harvest can throw bundles up on the load as well as some of his younger neighbors. When his son-in-law attended a crow dinner last week, no doubt he thought of the turkey feasts they used to have at old McNaughton house and had a quiet chuckle all to himself.

Good luck, and many more years of happiness, to Andy Stewart, the youngest stage coach driver of the West.

The preceding article reprinted from  
SOUTH KENT NEWS,  
February 18, 1938

## CALEDONIA SHOEING

And  
REPAIRING SHOP.

New work made to order.

All work Guaranteed to be First  
Class. Shoeing a specialty.

Shop on Center street.

**W. H. SEIBERT.**

## CALEDONIA UNDERTAKER.



I would say to the inhabitants of Caledonia and vicinity, that I am prepared to furnish on short notice, anything in the line of Undertaking goods, such as Coffins, Caskets and Robes at unusual low prices.

Personal attention given at funerals with Hearse if desired.

**W. I. WOOD,**  
Caledonia, Mich.



BIRDS' EYE VIEW OF CALEDONIA ABOUT 1908



## HANNA LAKE SCHOOL — GAINES TOWNSHIP — ABOUT 1910



Right Section — Front Row: Frank Fisher, Phil Brower; Second Row: Margaret Brower, Sadie Fisher; Third Row: Arle Kreidler; Back Row: Leon Farnham, Earl Dennis;  
Left Section — Front Row: Frank Geib; Back Row: Audrey Farnham, Edna Fisher; Fern Rawlings, teacher.



## CALEDONIA HIGH SCHOOL — 10th GRADE — 1918-1919



Left to right: Orpha Bechtel, Ethel Emmons, El' Louise Betzler, Minetta Bechtel, Velma Donovan, Grace Troost, Jennie DeVrou, Joseph Peet, Burdette White, Lyle Adams, Kenneth Gehl.