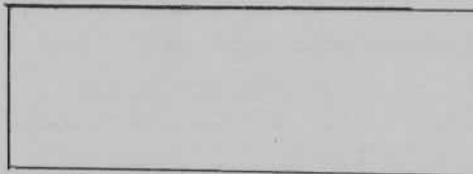


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THE RUSSELLS AND THE GRAND RIVER ROAD

An Indian Trail, the Grand River Road, that so-familiar highway that traverses Livingston County was the route by which most people pioneering to the county came. Among them were brothers Elihu (b. 1795, MA) and William S. Russell (b. 1808, MA) sons of Nathaniel and Jerusha. The father, b. c. 1775, in Maine urged his five sons (John b. c. 1800, ME, Peter b. 1807 N.Y. and Benjamin b. c. 1808 ME) to head west for a more promising future. This family seems to have moved a lot.

The Erie Canal eased the passage of a family and its needs over the Appalachian Mountains. In the ensuing wild scramble for land, even before moving to Michigan, William S. and Jane in May, 1833, purchased 160 acres, the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 3 in Green Oak Township. Older brother Elihu and Martha came with William in 1835 and bought S $\frac{1}{2}$ of the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 2, 80 acres which adjoined William's. There is no indication on early maps of a house for Elihu. It would appear the two families lived together. The homestead may have been built with lumber sawn at nearby Woodruff Mill. Elihu's 80 were landlocked. In 1843 he sold this to William. The brothers may have previously known their neighbors; Beach, Murray, Gage, and Briggs before the move. Neighbors in the east often traveled together for mutual support in the unpopulated wilderness. The other brothers settled in other townships. The Huron River watered both brothers' land and the terrain lent itself to farming. William S. is a charter member of the Livingston County Agricultural Society at the time of its origin in 1853.

The Grand River Trail went through the north portion of William's property. June 3, 1851, he signed a quit claim deed to the Detroit and Howell Plank Road Company for the road's construction. The State Capitol was moved from Detroit to Lansing in 1850. Increased travel by foot, horse, buggy, wagon and stagecoach, brought many to pass by the Russell's. Brother Elihu has a job tending the goll gate just west of the house. He is 55. Besides being a successful farmer, Wm. S. is credited with planting lilacs along the south side of the Grand River Trail; some of which are still growing there just west of Woodruff Creek.

William and Jane had five children, all born in Michigan: Marian b. 1834, Francis G. b. 4-13-37, DeWitt Clinton b. 4-1-37, William H. H. b. 11-24-40, and Helen b. 1845. DeWitt enlisted as a private in Michigan's 5th Inf. Reg., and died of disease in Washington 12-4-61. The D.C. Russell GAR Post commemorates him. He, his parents and a brother, Wm. H.H., are buried in the Old Village Cemetery in Brighton. The writer is unable to locate Elihu and Martha's burial site.

William S.' 1870 will, besides the usual list of items to the heirs, instructs that daughter Marian and brother Elihu are to be allowed to live on the homestead as long as needed. In addition, since she had cared for the family after her mother's death in 1850, each sibling was to pay her \$500. The furniture, etc., is hers also, and "Two of the cows are to remain on the farm." After William's death in 1875, siblings, Marian, William H.H. and Helen sold their interests to Francis in 1875. Marian and Helen both marry men from Illinois and move there. (Compiled by Marieanna Bair from census records, 1880 History of Livingston County; William Pless' writings; Early Land Owners and Settlers in Livingston County compiled by Milton Charboneau. Additions/corrections? 810/229-6402.)