THE HISTORY OF KALAMAZOO FROM THE PANIC OF 1837 TO 1842

by

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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**Forward** ................................................................. page 1.

**Chapter I Economic Aspects**

A. Transportation and Communication ................................ 2.

B. Commerce and Industry ............................................. 5.

Footnotes ........................................................................... 27-28.

**Chapter II Social Aspects**

A. The Home ................................................................. 13.

B. The Schools ............................................................. 16.

C. The Church ............................................................... 18.

D. The Indians .............................................................. 19.

Footnotes ........................................................................... 20-21.

**Chapter III Political Aspects**

A. Rise of the Whigs ........................................................ 22.

B. The Whigs in Power .................................................... 23.

C. Return of the Democrats .............................................. 24.

Footnotes ........................................................................... 27-28.

**Conclusion** ................................................................... 29.

**Bibliography** .............................................................. 30-31.
FORWARD

A suitable introduction to the various early aspects of Kalamazoo is, in my estimation, shown deep under the surface of the following poem. This short work does more than symbolize the name of the river, it symbolizes the name of a village which started on its banks and far outstripped the river from which it took its name---Kalamazoo.

"It matters not his rank or name, or whence his baptism came, while thy swift waters lave their banks, shall live thine Indian name."

1. Thomas, J., Thomas's Kalamazoo Directory and Business Advertiser for 1867 and 1868, Kalamazoo, 1867, p.9
A. Transportation and Communication

The Kalamzoo River has its rise in the northwestern part of Hillsdale County, in the state of Michigan, and flows to the west and northwest into Lake Michigan. From its source to the city of Kalamazoo, the river makes three bends to the southward, but from Kalamazoo, the course is generally northwest. The entire length of the river is about 250 miles with the end being at Saugatuck where it enters Lake Michigan. This river is a large and beautiful stream nine rods wide and five feet deep in the middle. The gentle current of this fine river flows at the rate of about four miles per hour. The mouth of the river is 350 feet wide, and from ten to fifteen feet deep. Few people realize that there is a good natural harbor at the mouth.

It has been stated that the mouth of the river, with little expense, could be made into as good a harbor as any on Lake Michigan. It was thought that Congress would grant the necessary appropriations for the improvement of this harbor at Saugatuck. It was also thought that by removing the floodwood, the river might be navigable for steamships for a distance of about fifty miles from its mouth.

The canal era in the United States affected the Kalamazoo River as well as many others, both in Michigan and in other states. In the spring of 1837 a canal was authorized to go from near Mount Clemans on the Clinton River to the mouth of the Kalamazoo River. Later the same year a sum of $205,000 was appropriated for the proposed Kalamazoo and Clinton Canal. The canal was to be constructed from Lake St Clair via the Little Clinton River and then across Michigan to Allegan, where it would join the Kalamazoo River and follow it to the mouth. The distance covered would be 217 miles.
The Legislature of Michigan also did something about improvement on the Kalamazoo River, which it was proposed to improve from Lake Michigan to Kalamazoo, a distance of approximately 75 miles. This was to be done by clearing out the stream from the mouth as far as Allegan, and then, by erecting 21 dams, to produce slack-water navigation from Allegan to Kalamazoo.

A closer look at the canal case was given in a report by James Hurd of a survey in 1838 of the Kalamazoo and Clinton Canal. He showed that there would be six levels of 43, 29, 28, 17, 15, and 2 miles required, with a lockage upon the eastern slope of 3$\frac{1}{4}$9 and 61$\frac{1}{100}$ feet and upon the western slope of 3$\frac{1}{11}$ and 11$\frac{1}{100}$ feet. The estimated cost of the canal was then put at $2,250,000. The expenditures for the canal, and the Kalamazoo River improvements, if completed, would have far exceeded the estimates. In 1845, work on the canal was stopped with about 16 miles of it done at a cost of $375,000. The river improvement idea was also allowed to die out until a later date. The advent of cheap railroad transportation greatly aided in the bursting of these dreams.

About the only major use the Kalamazoo River afforded the village, besides water power, was that given it by Mr. Walbridge in 1842-3. He put a line of scows or flat-boats upon the river to carry flour and grain to Lake Michigan for shipment to market. It required three days to reach the mouth of the river and about seven days for the return trip. This line prospered until the railroads, as in the case of the canals, provided a cheaper, faster, and better means of transportation.

As far as water power is concerned the entire river is excellent for power purposes and this power has been of immense value in the development of southwestern Michigan, as well as of Kalamazoo. This fact is held together by the appearance of Allegan, Kalamazoo, Battle Creek, Marshall, and Albion at points on the river where water power is the greatest.
The railroad era was first noted in this area by an advertisement in the Kalamazoo Gazette of February 11, 1837, which announced that starting March 20 subscriptions would be taken to the capital stock of the Kalamazoo and Lake Michigan Railroad Company. The editor of the paper stated that the distance between the two points was but 35 miles on a direct route, and that if a railroad were built on this route it would place Kalamazoo, for most business purposes, on the shore of Lake Michigan, as well as provide excellent transportation for merchandise to markets and to Kalamazoo. Also, the effect of the railroad would be to increase the value of real estate in the Kalamazoo area, as in other areas along the route. The Gazette thought that the increased value of property at the terminal points of the railroad would be sufficient to defray the whole cost of the line. The stocks were divided into shares of $50 each, but despite the hopes of the Gazette, the Kalamazoo area was too new to make possible the building of this line. Foreign capitalists were contacted but they refused to advance the funds with which it would have been possible to construct the railroad.

Other railroad developments were noted in the Gazette of April 1, 1837, where it was reported that the Legislature of the State of Michigan had adopted a joint resolution authorizing the governor to receive proposals from the Detroit and St. Joseph Railroad Company for the purchase of their charter, and the stock of the company. The line was formally purchased several weeks later by the State, and renamed the Central Railroad. The Legislature then appropriated $400,000 to build the railroad, which would pass through Kalamazoo County on its way to St. Joseph. With the completion of the railroad it would be possible to travel the 146 miles from Kalamazoo to Detroit in eight hours at the most.

The State Board of Commissioners of Internal Improvement, in its annual report to the Legislature, stated that the route to be followed
from Battle Creek to Kalamazoo was to follow the Kalamazoo River to the village of Kalamazoo. The Board of Commissioners estimated that the construction of the railroad between Ann Arbor and St. Joseph, 153 miles, would cost $1,391,040.90, an average of $9,026.41 per mile.

The inhabitants of the counties of Kalamazoo and Kent, on February 12, 1838, presented a petition to the Legislature asking for the incorporation of a company to construct a railroad from Kalamazoo to Grand Rapids. The Central Railroad would then be intersected at Kalamazoo by the Allegan and Kalamazoo Railroad. It was said that this railroad was already under construction by August and would be completed in the next year.

Another necessity to transportation and communication was the establishment of the coach and mail routes in this area. In 1840, coach and mail routes were started from Kalamazoo to White Pigeon; Kalamazoo to Grand Rapids; Kalamazoo to Allegan; Kalamazoo to St. Joseph; and expansion and change of contractors for the first route established in 1836 from Kalamazoo to Marshall. Kalamazoo, at this time, was the terminus of five important mail routes. From its post office were distributed the mails for a territory of not less than 10,000 square miles.

As far as roads were concerned little evidence was found of much improvement at this time. The condition of what roads there were, between 1837 and 1842, in this area was one of ruts and rough so-called roads that were actually nothing more than trails through the woods. The only evidence of improvement was an act approved on February 16, 1838, authorizing a State road to be laid out from Niles to Kalamazoo.

B. Commerce and Industry

To begin this development it is important to look at the Kalamazoo Land Office for this period. The sale of government land at the Land Office in 1837 was 313,855.15 acres, the legal minimum price being $1.25
per acre. The vacant public lands in the district in 1838 still subject
to the entry amounted to 449,056.15 acres: 83,001.69 acres were occupied
by Indian reservations; 95,663.6 acres were school lands, while the lands
appropriated to universities amounted to 35,014.84 acres. The first
valuation of Kalamazoo property was in the year 1839, and it was stated
that the village had real estate valued at $223,685 and personal property
valued at $30,184.

By 1840 much of the pioneer era had passed, although there was still
a great deal of pioneering to be done, for, with the passing away of
hard times and the incoming of numerous settlers, the early difficulties
and deprivations nearly ceased, and a course of rapid and prosperous
development ensued in Michigan. The era of speculation in enhanced and
fictitious prices of land offered for sale at exhorbitant prices to
unsuspecting purchasers in the East had a short and not too beneficial
effect on the prosperity of the State and Kalamazoo was, in a measure,
affecte by their operations as well as by the wildcat banking methods
that for a number of years made the State of Michigan an actual stench
in the nostrils of honest financial institutions of the conservative East.

Before the land speculation, Kalamazoo had been a rather quiet
little hamlet. But in the wake of the speculation, Kalamazoo experienced
a wild growth of population and commerce. By 1837 Kalamazoo's mercantile
and manufacturing facilities consisted of:

4-Public Houses  
10-Stores  
1-Printing Office  
1-Land Office  
30-40-Carpenters  
4-Masons  
3-Cabinet Makers  
4-Blacksmiths  
1-Painter  
1-Glazier  
4-Tailors  
2-Saddle & Harness Makers
and the population had grown to an estimated 1,000 to 1,200.

But in 1837 the wildcat banking failures began to occur, and trade and business became paralyzed in Kalamazoo, as it did in most of Michigan. Wheat dropped from $1.00-1.50 a bushel in 1836 to 37 and 1/2 cents a bushel in early 1837. Real estate sales stopped and the village growth slowed as fast as it had once accelerated. Business was bad for several years, and bankruptcy and failure were frequent.

During this panic the main successful business and commerce for the village and surrounding area was carried on by D.S. Walbridge, who came to Kalamazoo from Buffalo, New York, in 1841. Walbridge bought wheat from the farmers for cash, and by the use of a fleet of flatboats, which he had built on the Kalamazoo River, transported the wheat to the mouth of the river where it could be transferred to Great Lakes vessels bound for Buffalo. Also in 1842, Walbridge leased a grist mill and began flouring wheat for eastern markets.

Many of the farmers who raised this wheat had been tradesmen or professional men, yet nearly all of them tilled the soil. The richness of the soil near Kalamazoo became known early and helped stimulate settlement. What little early industry did arise was a matter of necessity to the farmers. Grist mills were needed to flour the wheat, wagon factories to repair the wagons often damaged on the bad roads, saw mills to build new homes, chair and cabinet factories to obtain furniture for the homes,
and agricultural equipment factories to make plows. As the panic of 1837 came on and commerce and industrialization declined, the people again turned to the soil for security. "Never before has there been 1/5 part as much land under cultivation in the County of Kalamazoo and vicinity as at the present time. Our farmers have found out the true source from whence all substantial and real wealth must spring. No more visionary bubbles, we believe will ever again tempt them to forsake the plow". This quotation from the Kalamazoo Gazette was followed a month later by another. "It is the Universal Agricultural Bank of Nature in which every man may be a stockholder, and which, although it sometimes falls a trifle short on its dividends, has never yet stopped payment for nearly 6,000 years, nor ever failed of yielding a net profit of 10,000%".

The Kalamazoo Gazette encouraged agriculture during this period and specifically sugar beet farming. It told the farmers of the area they would do well to consider the subject, but apparently their advice was not extensively followed.

The early farmers liberally planted orchards of apple, peach, plum, pear, apricot, cherry, and other fruit trees. In a few years time fine orchards were so plentiful that in the fall fruit could be readily obtained without cost by taking the time and trouble to gather it.

As far as cash crops grown in the area were concerned wheat, oats, and barley were the most important. The cash price paid for these crops seems to have increased considerably by the fall of 1837, considering wheat's fall in price earlier in the same year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crop</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>$1.00 per bushel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oats</td>
<td>$0.37 per bushel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn</td>
<td>$0.62 per bushel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flour</td>
<td>$0.00 per bbl.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt</td>
<td>$0.00 per bbl.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butter</td>
<td>$0.31 lb.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheese</td>
<td>$0.16 lb.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
By the summer of 1838 prices generally seemed to have risen further.

- Wheat - $1.25 per bushel
- Oats - $0.37 per bushel
- Corn - $1.00 per bushel
- Flour - $2.00 per bbl.
- Salt - $9.00 per bbl.
- Butter - $5.31 lb.
- Cheese - $1.14 lb.

Crops were damaged somewhat in 1840 when the wheat fly invaded this part of the county. Some farmers ploughed up their fields and it was estimated that about 2/3 of the crop would be lost.

Of some interest to the reader also is the fact that rails were the primary material for fences in this early era. Rail splitting was a regular employment for a certain class of men in the very early settlements. The rails were mostly made from oak timber, and were about eleven feet long. Also a great many black walnut logs were split up into rails, but it is probable that most of these rail fences were salvaged for their wood many years ago.

One of the most important elements in any early community was the newspaper. In Kalamazoo, with the issue of January 23, 1837, the paper, long in existence, changed its name from The Michigan Statesman to the Kalamazoo Gazette. It was stated that the controlling principles would be the same as before, and pledged support to Martin Van Buren.

On June 1, 1839, it was announced that the paper had been sold by H. Gilbert to E.D. Burr, who pledged support to Jeffersonian Democracy. Mr. Gilbert resumed management February 26, 1841. Later Mr. Gilbert traded a half interest in the paper to General Burdick for land valued at $500.

The Gazette became the strong Democratic organ of southwestern Michigan. One of its strongest editors was Samuel Atlee, who frequently contributed articles over the signature of "Major Hed-Pepper." Until the issue of May 13, 1842, there were no cuts in the Gazette except...
small stock illustrations used in advertisements. In that issue, for
the first time in the history of local journalism, there appeared a
wood-cut showing the store of Lucius Clark, a dry goods merchant, and
the Gazette building adjoining.

During this period there was occasionally issued a supplement to
the Gazette called the "Nighthawk," which caused excitement and some
indignation. This sheet irked the citizens and vengeance was threatened.
But the trouble was to identify the offending parties. The secret was
well kept, and years afterwards it was discovered that the author was
Henry Rice, who afterwards had moved to Minnesota, where he became a
United States senator.
FOOTNOTES

Economic Aspects


4. Ibid., January 7, 1842.


11. Ibid., February 3, 1838.

12. Ibid., March 3, 1838.

13. Ibid., August 4, 1838.

14. Thomas, J., op. cit., p. XII.

15. Ibid., p. XIII.


17. Fisher and Little, op. cit., p. 46.

18. Ibid., p. 46.

19. Durant, op. cit., p. 112.

20. Michigan Statesman, April 15, 1837.

21. Ibid., April 21, 1836.
22. Ibid., April 15, 1837.
26. Ibid., July 8, 1837.
27. Ibid., April 15, 1837.
28. Ibid., March 19, 1837.
29. Ibid., October 28, 1837.
30. Ibid., June 9, 1838.
31. Ibid., June 13, 1840.
34. Ibid., p. 211.
35. Ibid.
II. Social Aspects

A. The Home

In the home, the usual meal in Michigan at this time would consist of a platter of boiled potatoes, piled up steaming hot, and placed in the center of the table, bread or "johnnycake," perhaps some meat boiled or fried, and possibly a bowl of flour-gravy. This was made of flour and water, with a little salt and sometimes it was enriched by a little gravy from a piece of fried meat. This was the usual meal, and it was eaten and relished more than the sumptuous meals on many tables today.

The old pioneer bill of fare was simple and wholesome. The old iron crane, tricked off with various sized pot-hooks and links of chain, swung from the jambs at the will of the housewife. She hung on them the kettles containing the meal to be cooked for the family, and pushed it back over the fire, where it hung till the meal was prepared for the table. Pigs, chickens, and spareribs were roasted by suspending them by a wire before the fire. The baking was mostly done in the old brick oven, which was usually built into one side of the chimney, with a door opening into the room. This description, of course, is of the Michigan farmer, in general, around 1837-1842.

The illness and disease acquired by the early settler was also a part of home life, especially for the farmer. The mosquito was a carrier of disease as well as a lively pest. Rare stories are told about them by the early farmers, almost equaling the fish stories in number and size. Mosquitoes infested especially low, wet places, the vicinity of marshes and streams, and the moist forest and newly plowed land.

Fever and ague also were a part of pioneer existence that few of the early settlers escaped. There was no sure method of combating them, as Quinine had not been introduced as yet as a specific aid against the
various types of malarial disease. These attacks came so regularly that it is said the settler made his calculations by them. His calendar was divided into well days and ague days. The housewife regulated her affairs by it; she would do up her work, and sit and wait for the ague, as for a visitor to come.

Another ailment was the "Michigan rash," which was a troublesome enemy of the settlers. As a result of it the people did a great deal of scratching. From descriptions that have been left, it apparently was contagious. Whole families, and whole neighborhoods would have it at the same time. Most people had this disease as they had the ague, until they wore it out. Dietary deficiencies probably had much to do with causing this rash.

For these hard working people there were a few amusements and some social life, and during the festive occasions joy and hilarity were widespread. The conventional patterns of social intercourse were often varied with the horseplay and antics of the practical joker. These, in general, were especially associated with the farm homes of the area. One of the most popular amusements of the time was the quilting-bee. The girls would come in the afternoon, and work on their quilts and blankets, then in the evening the boys came, the quilts were put away and the party would be under way. They usually started by playing the game "Snap and Catch 'em."

Other games would soon follow, but all of them gave the young people a chance to express or declare themselves to one another. The old people too, as well as the young participated in the parties.

Also house raisings and logging-bees were other reasons for getting together. But the oddest social affair was the husking-bee. It was not done in the manner in which we are used to hearing about it today, for only the men and boys took part and they were the only ones present. The usual procedure was for them to divide themselves into two groups,
and each group take a pile of corn. This usually resulted in a close and spirited contest, with the contestants passing away the time by singing and telling stories.

Aside from church attendance or the occasional political demonstration there were few regular centers of social life for the farmers of Kalamazoo County. The isolation of the farm was not broken down until well towards the close of the century. The farmer was caught in the routine drudgeries of an age that was devoid of nearly every mechanical convenience. What social life lacked in variety was compensated for in intensity.

The village of Kalamazoo, itself, had within its grasp many kinds of recreation. Music in particular was popular, with an amateur group having been formed. Also a society was established in 1838 for the purpose of promoting the art of music. Kalamazoo had a band concert in 1842, and an Amateur Thespian Society was to be considered by the young men of Kalamazoo, and a meeting to consider establishing a theatre in the village, all in 1842, indicated an interest in the arts.

It was also noted that cotillion parties and balls were popular, and that in 1841, a cotillion party was given at the Kalamazoo house, The next year a January Ball was given at the request of the "elder class" of citizens, and another was given a short time later. Of course with these, dancing schools were a natural part of village development. The first dancing school in Kalamazoo was started as early as 1838, by a Mrs. Clark and Miss. Deacon, who had started a Ladies Seminary and along with it a dancing school.

Another institution found here during this period was the Kalamazoo Lyceum, which held regular meetings, and at which questions of importance were debated and discussed. The Lyceum usually started in October of each year. In 1842 the last meeting of the Lyceum was to be held, there-
after it was remodeled and given the name of the Burr Oak Club. Another fact worthy of note was that in 1837 Kalamazoo tried to start a jockey club. A meeting was held for this purpose and to improve the track used for training horses. General Burdick was the elected president. Another group in Kalamazoo tried to start an agricultural society, which did not seem to last longer than the summer of 1837. This was known as the Kalamazoo Agricultural and Horticultural Society.

Another organization was the Maternal Association of Kalamazoo, which was the only women's society at this time. The society held regular meetings throughout the year. The members spent their time in prayer, conversation, and reading extracts which would be of help in training children properly.

Also there were at least two temperance societies during the period of 1837-1842, in Kalamazoo. They were the Arcadia Temperance Society, and the Kalamazoo Total Abstinence Temperance Society. The societies worked together, having meetings together and planning County and State Conventions.

B. The Schools

The schools were an important village institution and when Michigan was admitted as a State into the Union, in 1837, a primary school law was passed. It divided the state into school districts, each district was expected soon to have enough inhabitants to support a teacher. As the districts grew in population they were divided, and new ones created. This process was also used in the villages, and often there were five or six schools in the same locality, but each school belonged to a separate district. These districts elected their own officers, provided for the schoolhouses, hired their own teachers, determined the length of the school term, and conducted all of the business affairs
entirely separately from the other districts within the village. This condition prevailed until the villages were united into single school districts and the union schools were formed.

From 1837 to 1851 the school system in Kalamazoo was in a chaotic state. Due to the increase in population new districts were created, and as a result of the previously mentioned system some districts had good schools, others poor schools, and sometimes a district might have no school at all. Beginning with the creation of the Second district in 1837, the formation of new districts and the building of additional schools can be traced up to 1851, when the consolidation of all the former districts took place. Also in 1837 a District No. 2 was organized out of the eastern half of District No. 1. However, the number of the district was soon changed to District No. 8 in order that there would be no duplication of district numbers within the township.

The college level institution was also in Kalamazoo at this time, for the regents of the University of Michigan, after 1836, had made overtures to the trustees of the Kalamazoo Institute (later Kalamazoo College) for a fusion of interests. The terms of the compromise were essentially of this character: The trustees of the institute might nominate or elect the teachers; the regents would ratify the election, thus making them the officers of the branch, and would moreover, furnish the money necessary to keep the institution alive. This plan of a double-acting engine was carried into effect, probably in 1839, under the principalship of David Allen, who had been head of the institute for some time. The success was gratifying, and an appropriate number of students came for instruction. In 1840, Mr. Allen was succeeded by William Dutton, who gave the school three years of service, and who was a much liked and respected man in the community.
C. The Church

Kalamazoo did not lack its religious institutions either, for the records show that in July of 1837 the Presbyterian Church had a large bell, sent from Boston, and designed for the Presbyterian meeting house in the village. The Gazette thought it would be well to ring it three times a day, at 6 a.m., 12 noon, and 6 p.m., because the mechanics and villagers would generally be benefited by doing so. The Presbyterian Church was the only one built up to April of 1837, and the village, itself, had two ministers.

The summer of 1837 seem to have been a great season for building, especially of churches. The Baptists building committee was to meet to make plans for a Baptist meeting house. Another church building was for the Episcopal church, and it was started, and completed by July. In late 1838, at the Presbyterian Church, pews were to be rented for a year and the sale was to take place at the church. With a growing population and a desire for religious worship, it was perhaps hard to find a seat on Sunday morning for the latecomers. Another beginning church group was the Methodist Episcopal Society which was organized and had a meeting in 1838 for the purpose of organizing a society for this church. The dedication took place in December of 1842. Indirectly the churches of the village were related to the work of the Kalamazoo Institute and the University Branch. The Branch Building was used by townspeople for Temperance and Lyceum meetings along with other events.

At General Harrison's death, a commemorative sermon was delivered at the Presbyterian Church, in April of 1841. This was on a Sunday and on the following Wednesday the citizens were to meet at the Branch Building to mourn his death. This was just one of the many services which the University Branch Building did for the people of Kalamazoo.
Another find was that at the first anniversary of the Kalamazoo River Baptist Association, June 8-9, 1842, it was stated that the church had enjoyed a refreshing from the Lord, the past winter. It was related they had been favored with the labors of a pastor; observed the monthly concert; and sustained a flourishing Sabbath school and bible class.

Worship in Kalamazoo did not seem to have been much of an issue between the different denominations represented here in this early era. Generally the churches seemed to have served the needs of the people in the village without much friction between the groups.

D. The Indians

The Indians were already disappearing from this area, and most of the few remaining Pottawattomie Indians were located in Calhoun, St. Joseph, Berrien, and Van Buren Counties. Most of them adopted the dress and customs, more or less, of the whites. The larger number of them depended wholly on their own exertions for a livelihood. There was a small reservation, containing about 160 acres of land, occupied by the Pottawattomi's, in the southern part of Calhoun County. A mission, called the "Nottaway Mission," was established at this place in 1840.

In 1840, most of the Indians were removed from this State, to some place beyond the Mississippi. On their way westward, those going from this part of the country encamped at Kalamazoo, and were visited by the curious of the village. They remained a week and were joined by other parties from the north and east. These Indians were mostly of the Pottawattomie and Ottawa Tribes, and with the exception of a few stragglers, the country was nearly cleared of them. The United States Army carried out this plan, and it was well and kindly performed.
Social Aspects

1. Fisher and Little, op. cit., p.43.
2. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p.194-5.
5. Ibid., p.195.
7. Fuller, G., op. cit., p.201.
9. Ibid., September 23, 1842.
10. Ibid., January 27, 1838.
11. Ibid., March 9, 1839.
12. Ibid., January 22, 1841.
13. Ibid., January 14, 1842.
15. Ibid., October 13, 1838.
16. Thomas, J., op. cit., p.27.
18. Ibid., July 8, 1837.
19. Ibid., April 29, 1837.
20. Ibid., June 17, 1837.
21. Ibid., January 23, 1837.
22. Ibid., February 17, 1837.
23. Dyksterhouse, Peter, Development of the Public School System in Kalamazoo from 1830 to 1875, a manuscript in the Kalamazoo College Library.
27. Kalamazoo Gazette, July 29, 1837.
28. Ibid., April 15, 1837.
29. Ibid., February 4, 1837.
30. Ibid., July 29, 1837.
31. Ibid., October 27, 1838.
32. Ibid., April 21, 1838.
33. Ibid., December 2, 1842.
34. Ibid., April 16, 1842.
36. Durant, S., op. cit., p.78.
37. Ibid., p.78-9.
III. Political Aspects

A. Rise of the Whigs

The political aspects of Kalamazoo are rich in factual history. The first data located on this period concerned the 1837 spring township elections which resulted in a Whig victory. This was caused partially by the spreading depression. Except for Democrat Cyren Burdick in the supervisors' race and a Democrat winning one other minor post, the Whigs put in their whole ticket.

The first Democratic county convention was held on July 11, 1837, in Kalamazoo. Delegates to the convention were F.W. Curtenius, T. Edwards, S.Y. Atlee, A. Buell, and W. Clark, but no Kalamazoo delegate was chosen to the Democratic state convention held on July 20, 1837.

During the same time the Whig county convention in Kalamazoo chose A.T. Prouty, W.H. Welch, A. Cahill, H.B. Huston, A. Cooley, R. Wood, B. March, J. Patrick, G.C. Merill, and F. Owen as delegates. Hosea Huston was chosen as a delegate from Kalamazoo County to the Whig convention (state), held on August 2, 1837. At this convention H.G. Wells of Kalamazoo, was nominated for Whig candidate for congress.

The results of the congressional election of August 22-23, 1837, showed that Wells received a majority of 53 out of a total of 271 in the township, and that Wells took the county by 288, but lost to the Democrat Isaac Crary in the total state vote by 1,131 votes.

Early in October, Cyren Burdick and E.H. Lothrop of Kalamazoo were chosen to be Democratic candidates for the state house of representatives from Kalamazoo County. But Burdick died and his position was filled by Postmaster Willard.
The Democratic senatorial convention met also at this time and Kalamazoo's delegates aided in the nomination of Vincent Bradford of Berrien. The Whig convention nominated A. Cooley and S. Vickery of Kalamazoo for state representatives, and also endorsed the Whig candidate for Governor, C. C. Trowbridge of Detroit, who ran against the incumbent, the democratic "boy wonder," Stephen T. Mason.

In this State election the Whigs carried Kalamazoo easily. All of the Whig victories showed the result of the financial disorder of the nation, and as it has happened so often, the party in office at the time of the panic received full blame for the disorder.

B. The Whigs in power

Kalamazoo's first practicing physician, Dr. Nathan Thomas, was instrumental in forming the Kalamazoo County Abolition Society in 1838. In 1837 Dr. Thomas had, with 422 other voters of the area, sent a petition to congress asking its opposition to the admission of Texas, a slave-holding republic, as one of the United States. This was the first memorial sent from Michigan on this subject. At later periods this group of people sent numerous petitions to congress asking for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia and against the admission of any more slave states to the Union. Future events were to prove that Dr. Thomas had planted the seeds of the Michigan Liberal Party.

In November of 1839, the president of the Michigan Anti-Slavery League paid a visit to Kalamazoo. When he tried to address a meeting of the local abolitionists, a riot ensued, demonstrating the unpopularity of the abolition movement in Kalamazoo at that time.

Another interesting fact was that in 1838, the state legislature passed an incorporation act for the village of Kalamazoo. However, this
act was mechanically defective, in providing no way for the first election. Early in 1839, another incorporation act was passed, but the Kalamazoo people seemed to have little interest about the matter. Since another incorporation act was passed in 1843, the indication seems to be that the second attempt had failed.

Going back to the Kalamazoo elections and conventions we find that the annual township conventions of both major parties for 1838, were held in March. The Democratic ticket was headed by Theo. Sheldon, supervisor 11 candidate, while the Kalamazoo Whigs backed Hosea Huston. In the township election of April 1, the Whigs won a complete victory.

The Democratic county convention of 1838, was held in Kalamazoo on August 25, to choose delegates to the state convention. Support for a powerful state bank was voted at this meeting. Abraham Edwards, one of the Kalamazoo delegates, was elected president of the Democratic state convention of 1838. Again, in the November 1838 elections, it was the Whigs who carried their whole slate in Kalamazoo and elected the greater part of the county officials, as well as two state representatives. 13

14 The 1839 spring township elections were again taken by the Whigs. Also, the fall election to elect a governor and state and county officials was marked by a Whig victory. Governor-elect Woodbridge and the rest of their state candidates carried Kalamazoo, and Whig candidates won all county posts. Again in 1840, the spring township elections resulted in a complete Whig victory. The Whigs won every township office except two. 15

C. Return of the Democrats

May 30, 1840 was the date of a township Democratic caucus in order to elect five members to the county Democratic convention held the following week. At that convention a rough party platform was formed. The members
resolved against a high tariff, against excessive state spending, and against a National bank. The Kalamazoo Democrats voted for the Nomination of Martin Van Buren for president.

The results of the November election showed a Whig landslide in Kalamazoo, following the national trend. In Kalamazoo County, Harrison 21 received 954 votes to 744 for Van Buren. The Whigs won all county offices except five. In the village itself, the Whigs failed to carry several county offices and the offices of senator, state representatives, and 22 congressmen.

The annual spring township elections of 1841 showed a Democratic gain, although Silas Trowbridge, a Whig, was elected supervisor. The remaining offices were evenly split between Whigs and Democrats.

The first recorded move of any importance by the Kalamazoo Abolitionists took place on August 7, 1841. A meeting was held and it was resolved that immediate emancipation should be enforced. Also it was decided to call a convention in the fall to nominate and support nominations of Abolition candidates on national and state levels. It was decided, also, to call a convention in the fall to nominate state legislators and county officials. Soon after this, the Kalamazoo Democratic convention was held to elect delegates to the state convention, and it was resolved at this convention to elevate men to office who would abolish slavery.

The Whig era of control of the past five years in Kalamazoo was reversed when in the 1841 fall election, the Democrats carried most of the county offices. However, the Whig candidates for governor and state senator were victorious in the village. Also, in the village, the Liberty (Abolition) Party failed to receive more than five votes for any one candidate. In the county, as a whole, all Democratic candidates were elected or carried the county. The Liberty Party ran a poor third.
In the township election of April 4, 1842, the first major Democratic victory in Kalamazoo since 1836 was recorded. The Democrats took every office except four. The post of supervisor, won by the Whigs, was more important than ever before because in 1842 the county commissioners were replaced by the County Board of Supervisors, a body made up of the supervisors from each of the fifteen townships in the county.

For the fall county elections, the Liberty Party made their nominations on August 26, 1842. Then the Kalamazoo Democrats held their township convention on September 24, 1842, to elect delegates to the county convention. The following week both Whigs and Democrats held conventions to choose county candidates, two state representatives (candidates), and two state senatorial candidates. The candidates for state senator were of special interest to Kalamazoo. Lewis Starkey of Kalamazoo was chosen by the Democrats while F.W. Curtenius was chosen to run on the Whig ticket. Stephen Vickery and John Larsh; both of Kalamazoo, were chosen to run on the Liberty slate.

The fall election was a setback for the Democrats. In Kalamazoo township the Whig ticket carried all the offices except one. However, in the total county vote the Democrats elected the treasurer and three other men to office. For state senator the Democrats elected one to office, as did the Whigs. Again the Liberty Party failed to show much strength.
FOOTNOTES

Political Aspects

1. Kalamazoo Gazette, April 8, 1837.
2. Ibid., July 15, 1837.
3. Ibid., July 22, 1837.
4. Ibid., August 12, 1837.
5. Ibid., August 26, 1837.
6. Ibid., September 2, 1837.
7. Ibid., October 7, 1837.
8. Ibid., November 11, 1837.
11. Ibid., March 31, 1838.
12. Ibid., April 7, 1838.
13. Ibid., September 1, 1838.
15. Ibid., November 10, 1838.
16. Ibid., April 6, 1839.
17. Ibid., November 9, 1839.
18. Ibid., April 11, 1840.
19. Ibid., June 6, 1840.
20. Ibid., June 13, 1840.
22. Kalamazoo Gazette, November 13, 1840.
23. Ibid., April 9, 1841.
24. Ibid., August 12, 1841.
25. Ibid., August 27, 1841.
26. Ibid., November 5, 1841.
27. Ibid., April 1, 1842.
28. Ibid., April 8, 1842.
29. Ibid., September 2, 1842.
30. Ibid., October 28, 1842.
31. Ibid., November 11, 1842.
From 1837 to 1840, agriculture made great strides due to two factors, the increase in population and ingenuity of the settlers. The many prairies were ideal for the growing of grains. Specie payment and the Panic of 1837 did not dampen the enthusiasm of the farmers for growing wheat, but naturally their income was somewhat decreased. Thus through these years of growth, the once purely agricultural village had developed into one well divided between agriculture, commerce and manufacturing.

Generally the social aspects of the village seemed to have served the people quite well. On the whole, worship in Kalamazoo did not seem to be much of an issue between the denominations represented here in the early life of the village, and it may be said there was little friction between the groups.

The political history of Kalamazoo is not a story in itself but only a small piece in the political history of the United States. Such a study shows that the events of the nation were not responsible for the happenings in Kalamazoo but rather, the events in the small units were responsible for the direction taken by the nation as a whole. The story of early Kalamazoo is the story of the United States between 1837 and 1842. It was the political movements in the Kalamazoo of this country which forged the political movement of the United States.
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