

FOUNDRY

In 1860 a foundry was built by two English brothers Eli and Noah Mann. Stoves and various agricultural implements were made here. Later Eakins and Murray made a threshing machine. In the 70's it was called the Foundry and Agricultural works of Conn and Son. Many plows were made. The last owner was Jim Page.

SOAP & POTASH BUSINESS

Opposite the Baptist Church Atkinson Conn started this business. One shed was used for storing ashes and another for extracting lye and potash. At night, when the fires were lit under the great kettles wherein the lye was evaporated and turned into black ash or pearlash, light shone through so many cracks that the building seemed on fire. Conn had three or four teams travelling the country collecting wood ashes to put in his leaches. A big bar of soap would be traded for a bushel of ashes. Then he built a tin shop where he made anything in brass, copper or tin.

TANNERY

Jonathan Doan built a tannery on his farm north of the Friends' Cemetery. Joel and Joshua Doan were tanners. Deer and cow hides, with the hair removed by the lye of wood ashes, were placed in troughs containing oak bark shavings soaked in water. Then these cured hides were hung up to dry, rubbed with tallow or bears' grease, then curried with a drawing knife and blackened with a mixture of soot and lard. Then the hide was ready for the shoemaker in the village.

GLOVE SHOP

Alvin Jay had a "glove shop" across from Mr. Moedinger's store, west of the hotel, where deer and other skins, prepared at a tannery, were made into gloves and mitts by several workers. Glove making tools which were used in this glove shop have been presented to "Ye Olde Forge and Anvil".

Mr. Jay had a thriving business and employed several helpers. Emerilla Fraser assisted in this shop and among others, George Mann, who was a master in the art of Glove making.

SHOE SHOPS

At one time there were five little shoe shops in Sparta. A shoemaker used to make the rounds of the settlement stopping at houses to take orders. In 1844 the shoemakers, L. Teeple and Elijah Graves, ran business cards in Sparta's newspaper, the "True Teller". Dr. Sanderson of Sparta used to recite this verse about the latter -

"Elijah the Prophet,
The mender of shoes
He makes himself useful
In spreading the news;
If you don't believe his yarns
You needn't look grim,
For he'll tell them to you
Just as they were told to him."

SHOE SHOPS (Cont'd.)

Robert Passmore, a shoemaker living in Doans' Hollow, entered the following items in his account book during brisk and quiet times of business -

"Monday gone and nothing done,
Tuesday forenoon, nothing done.
Wednesday pitched oats for James Doan in forenoon, 50¢. Afternoon put large patch on Mr. Carter's (school-teacher) shoes, 7¢.
Made a pair of long boots for Elijah Doan 1 pound, 5 shillings."

A building at the north-east corner of Moedingers' store was Jimmy Carr's shoe shop.

BARBER SHOP

"Old George Grasshopper's barber shop was in the same building as Jimmy Carr's shoe shop. He was held in awe by the children as he seemed to be the only colored man around. However, he was a very popular barber."

TAILORS

Hiram Smith was the first tailor to have a shop in Sparta. He came with five dollars and a pressing iron, but James Mills became his partner, boarded him, built him a small shop and gave him a start. Thirty years later tailors were busy in four shops and James Climpson had three or four apprentices, and journeymen cutting and sewing for him. Cloth was obtained from mills around the country. A man thought he was well dressed if he wore a fancy vest made out of plush of different colors.

CABINET SHOPS

R. J. Stratton turned "The Old Abbey" into a shop where he made furniture and coffins. Lewis Moedinger Sr. owned a shop across the road until he bought out Mr. Stratton. Ezra Oille was competing with them both and Joseph Baker made some fine pieces of furniture around 1850.

BROOM FACTORIES

In two buildings, one owned by Isaac Smith, and the other by Ed. Morgan, brooms were made. Some of the broom corn was grown near Sparta and some came from the States.

BASKET SHOP

Amasa Chase spent his last years, around 1880, making all kinds of baskets in a little shop north of the United Church parsonage. This shop and his house on the same lot were destroyed by fire.

THE STAGE COACH

The first official carrier of His Majesty's mail was Benjamin Sanderson, brother of the late Dr. R. L. Sanderson, who made his daily trip to St. Thomas via Whites' Station in an open democrat. In winter he wore a tall beaver hat like that worn by Israel Doan and sitting in the driver's box, he carried passengers at the rate of twenty-five cents per single fare.

Silas Moore was the next driver. Then followed Jim Hannon with the first covered stage coach, the passengers no longer being exposed to rain and cold in an open vehicle. Jesse Petit drove the stage coach next and was followed by William Gregory who served faithfully in this position for thirteen years. Mr. Gregory was followed by John Oke, who also held the position for a term of years. Mr. Oke had the misfortune to have lost a hand in earlier life and it was remarkable that he could manage his team so efficiently under this handicap.

The mail reached Sparta about six o'clock each evening and, after being sorted in the Post Office, the Dexter mail bag was delivered each evening by Chas. Petit, harness maker. Mr. Petit lived in the more recently used telephone switchboard building. Older residents recall seeing Mr. Petit start on his nightly trip, his bulky body and mail bag almost filling his small cart which was drawn by a spritely pony.

A story of the stage coach would not be complete without mention of a passenger who rode daily to his business in St. Thomas by way of the Sparta stage. This was the late J. P. Martyn who travelled daily from his country home to his city brokerage business. Two hours was allowed for this trip over the gravelled road, but longer time was required in the spring season when soft spots made travelling difficult. We can well remember Mr. Martyn as Sparta's first commuter.

William Butterwick followed Mr. Oke as stage coach driver for some years. Mr. Butterwick was a fine horseman and his well kept team, harnessed in style, was a subject of comment throughout the district. The stage carried not only mail and passengers, but considerable supplies for the three general stores. People were buying their bread in increasing quantities, also other commodities, which taxed the old stage to its limit. Often large cartons were strapped overhead and upon the roof to carry the load. William Matheson followed Mr. Butterwick as stage driver.

In the spring of 1915 permission was granted by the Dominion Government to carry the mail by motorized vehicle, so the old stage coach was left behind with the spinning wheel and the candle mould of a by-gone era. Trucks in increasing numbers now brought supplies to the local stores, leaving the stage coach free for passengers and mail.

Other drivers since Mr. Matheson have been Chas Wilson, John Leverton, William Garret, Oliver Horton, Roy Harvey and Cecil Berry. At present, in 1948, Mr. Verne Crosby carries the mail in his modern car, over a paved road, with efficiency and comfort, just a hundred years or so from the beginning of our story.

FUNERALS

In the early 1870's Louis Moedinger and Son began an undertaking, hardware, and furniture manufacturing business. They made the caskets used in their undertaking, also some furniture. A bedroom suite, with spool bed and high dresser, must have been a favourite, as this particular style can be found in good condition in several homes of the Sparta district to-day. It appears in various kinds of wood, as the patron usually supplied the lumber. Later, the manufacture of furniture was discontinued, with the exception of the making of coffins. Miss Amelia Moedinger, also a member of the firm, assisted with the lining and finishing.

Sparta at this time was a thriving village, and so, in keeping with the growing demands, a handsomely appointed new hearse was acquired by Moedinger and Son. In earlier days a democrat or sleigh was used to convey the casket to the cemetery.

The new hearse must have appeared impressive, with its fringed and black-tasseled drapes showing through the large plate glass side windows. Conspicuously placed brass lamps must have been purely ornamental since funeral services and burials were held during daylight. Carved flowers and black plumes completed this highly decorative conveyance for the dead, in which Spartans of 1870 could feel justifiable satisfaction. (This hearse, which was made in Buffalo about 1840, is now in the hands of a London collector of antiques and can be seen to-day displayed behind artificial horses, completely harnessed, even to their fly-nets.)

Seated beside the undertaker on his high seat was the driver of the sleek-coated, black team, whose harness and fine grooming would have done justice to a court occasion. Mr. L. W. Moedinger and his assistant, who was for many years the late Joseph Leverton, wore black broadcloth mourning suits, gloves and high silk hats. The fine horses were stabled in a building which stood east of Ye Olde Forge and Anvil and back near the edge of the ravine.

Perhaps, with the changing customs of the past fifty years, none have been more noticeable than those relating to the burying of the dead. It was considered disrespectful not to sit up all night from the time of death until the burial. Neighbours were usually helpful at this time. Good form demanded that even distant relatives appear at the funeral service in total black and a widow seldom added a touch of white sooner than a year. In the third year, mauve was permissible. A light coloured buggy was considered to be in poor taste in the formal funeral procession of close relatives. At the cemetery, the bare earth was uncovered and the caretaker lost no time in attending to his task with the shovel while the bereaved family stood by.

It would seem that with the dawn of a new century came a desire for a greater simplicity in many trends of life. Consequently, the old hearse was laid away with other relics of a by-gone era. In keeping with the times, Mr. Moedinger purchased a second horse-drawn hearse at a cost of \$1,200.00. This was of much simpler design.

With the common use of the motor car about the year 1920, the second hearse, having ended its period of usefulness, was stored away in the old barn beside its more elaborate predecessor to await an auction sale in the years to come.



The Stage Coach



Mr. L. Moedingers' Hearse
Purchased in 1840 in Buffalo



This hearse and artificial horses
as its preserved in London in 1950.



The Sparta Maple.



Sparta Curfew Bell.