

Lansing Pioneers

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In 1857 Matthew Marvin of Jackson, who owned the old Lansing House on the present site of Lantz' Palace laundry, became dissatisfied with the tenant who occupied the hostelry, and came to Lansing in person to take charge of the property. This was Mr. And Mrs. Marvin's first residence in the city, which a few years later, they made their permanent home. The Lansing house was, at that time, the only hotel property of value between the Benton at Upper Town and the Seymour at Lower Town. It had the advantage of location over the other two for securing what is still a factor in hotel success in Lansing — the patronage of the legislators and the floating population brought to the capital by their presence. The business men so felt the importance of a centrally located hotel, that they wrote Mr. Marvin that unless he placed a competent landlord in charge of his property, a syndicate of citizens would build a tavern across the street from his, where the Downey was built a few years later. So Mr. Marvin was his own tenant and landlord during the legislative sessions, when he returned to Jackson. He soon made a trip to Ohio, and secured for a landlord Martin Hudson, afterward proprietor of et Hudson House and long identified with hotel matters in this city.

The first winter spent by Mr. And Mrs. Marvin in the capital city was marked by a number of social events. Sleigh-riding to neighboring towns, parties driving out the plank road as far as Williamston. The Benton House, now the Lansing on the corner of Washington ave and main st, was the center of social life, for the landlord was a jolly Boniface and had an attractive young daughter.

Lansing clung to Washington ave, and that part of the city west of Capitol ave was a commons, upon which single cottages were gradually springing up. What is now almost the center of the desirable residence district, was at that time quite out of town. It was soon perceived that the old capitol, opposite the Hudson House, would not long accommodate the growing business of a booming state. The block where the present capitol stands was proposed for the site of the new state house, and the objection was

raised by many that it was too far from the business center of the city and would never be a convenient location.

The firm of the Simons Dry Goods Co., was at that time represented by a wagon stocked with notions, which Mr. Simmons drove about the county. The best stores were located in Upper and Lower Towns, and an exhaustive shopping expedition involved a long drive, or a voyage upon one of the two little steamers which plied the raging Grand.