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Rochester/Avon
Historical Society*

EARLY COUNTY STORE

By A. Bird Glaspie

Every town has some old building which harks back to early days. Such is the cobblestone store on Rochester's Main Street. Built in 1849 by Dr. Rollin C. Sprague, the town's first physician, the building had the appearance of a one familiar to the wild west, 2 story, pitched roof and a covered porch. The portico was removed sometime before 1938 and, at that time was occupied by the Oakland Dairy Company. It does not, however, represent the first mercantile venture, for that honor goes to Seneca Newberry who about 1827 opened the first stock of goods in the settlement.

The second stock of goods for sale was offered beginning Sept. 1, 1830, by Almon Mack, son of Col. Stephen Mack, head of the Pontiac Company. He continued in active trade until 1853. Mack was also an active helper of his father in his extensive manufacturing and mercantile ventures, keeping the books and acting as general manager.

Another Mack son figured in the early history, John M., the town's first landlord. He opened the first hotel in Rochester in 1828, remained two years and removed to Hamtramck.

Dr. Orville Morrison built the first frame house in the village in 1825-26 or 27, practicing there and in other county places until his removal to a farm near Utica where he died.

Every student of Oakland County history knows that the first settlement in this county was made by the Grahams on March 17, 1817. And the first home in Rochester was the log house erected by Alexander Graham during the same month of that year. This was the first permanent dwelling built by a white man in what is now Oakland County, for it was not until late in 1818 that a temporary cabin was built at Pontiac to house the workers who were employed by the Pontiac Company to get out timber for a dam and saw mill.

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