

## WORKING TOGETHER

### John Henry Fitch Homestead Papers

by Chris Dixon

In July 1995 while conducting deed research at the Antrim County Courthouse, I found a deed entry in liber H page 31 for John H. Fitch dated 1 February 1875. This was for Homestead Certificate No. 1958, Application No. 3335 for a parcel of land described as "the South half of the South West quarter (S1/2 SW1/4) of Section thirty-four (34) in Township twenty-nine North of Range seven West (T.29N. R.7W.), containing 80 acres." [This land was located originally in Helena Township and later in Custer Township.]

I obtained a photocopy of the page and later sent Don Chinnery a copy. He wrote to the National Archives requesting copies of John's Homestead Application papers. After a couple of months, Don received the papers and sent me a copy. The valuable information that these papers provide are described in the following paragraphs.

#### **The Homestead Act.**

In order to help expand the county into the Midwest, Congress passed the Homestead Act of 20 May 1862 which allowed actual settlers the opportunity to secure Homesteads on the public domain for the purpose of settlement and cultivation. Claimants filed an application at the nearest Land Office and paid a registration fee. Immigrant applicants were also given the opportunity to make a declaration of intent to become a citizen of the United States if they lived in the US for at least 3 years.

On 19 October 1868 at the Land Office at Traverse City, MI, John H. Fitch of Antrim County applied for a claim on the land described above under the provisions of the Homestead Act of 1862 and paid a registration fee of \$14. At that same time, he also signed an affidavit that "I do solemnly swear that I have declared my intention to become a citizen of the United States and am the head of a family." This indicates that he had lived in the US for at least three years prior to this time.

On 10 October 1874, John returned to the Land Office at Traverse City to complete his Homestead application. He signed an affidavit attesting that he had made actual settlement upon the land, had cultivated the land and had resided on the land since 10 November 1868. Two of John's acquaintances, Benjamin Armstrong and John Grunman, signed an affidavit that they had known John for ? [unable to read] years and that he was head of a family consisting of a wife [Harriet] and two children [Richard John and William Edward]. They stated that John had settled on the land on 25 October 1868, built a house "of logs, story and a half, board floors, shingle roof, one door and two windows" and had lived in the house since 10 November 1868. He had since plowed, fenced and cultivated about 30 acres of the land and had made the improvements of a "log barn, 27 fruit trees, 50 currant [gooseberry] brush and 500 strawberry plants." John paid a final registration fee of \$4 and received final certificate attesting that he had made payment in full for the land and was entitled to a patent for the tract of land. His application was approved 2 January 1875, patented 1 February 1875 and recorded 12 July 1875.

John later sold this land to Julius C. Ewatt of Rapid River [Kalkaska County] for \$700 on 4 August 1879. On the same day, John took this money and purchased a parcel of land described "as the East half of the South West fractional quarter (E1/2 Swfr1/4 ) of Section thirty in Township twenty-nine North of Range seven West (T.29N. R.7W) containing 80 acres" [also located in Custer Township] from Christopher Swaney. This was the land on which John had established his town of "Fitchville" in 1880. Author's note. This information will be included in the next revision of the John H. Fitch biography in the summer. Anyone having any information on John that they would like to have included {i.e.: photos, maps, articles, etc.}, Thank you. ccd . Our thanks to Chris for the logos included in the masthead of this issue. dgc}

**Don't be just a name hunter.****KEEP YOUR OPTIONS--AND YOUR SEARCH--OPEN**

Limiting your genealogical research to just names is doomed to failure. To successfully find your ancestors requires more than just a name. You need to know his or her approximate age at any given time, the name of his or her spouse, their associates and neighbors, and the names of all of the children and their spouses.

What was your ancestor's occupation? His economic status and educational background? Pay close attention to the exact times of your ancestor's migrations. Can't figure out where he moved from? Check the origins of his neighbors in the new locality.

Learn to focus on families--not just a surname. While you are research-ing, work with as many correlating surnames as possible. Success in locating your ancestor and tracing his migration often depends on the number of surnames you can associate with your family. A big net composed of many names will enable you to catch more fish; otherwise a little fish--in this case, your ancestor--can wiggle through the net.

To estimate an ancestor's age, in addition to census records, use the following records:

Poll tax lists (generally 16 and up for males in Colonial America; 21 and up later).

Military records (Colonial militia age was about 16-60).

Legal records such as deeds and wills. The legal age of 21 was well established by end of Colonial period, but varied in some localities in the early Colonial period.

Periodically review the data you have accumulated. Some of it will be inaccurate. We all make mistakes in our notes. Do you have an ancestor in military service at age 12? Or a woman marrying at 10 or bearing children at age 60? Recheck dates and localities carefully.

Watch especially the date a county was formed. If the dates for your ancestor pre-date the county's, you'll need to search the records in its parent county or counties. Find records pertaining to supposed fathers' and sons' land and property. Did they live in proximity to each other? Check deeds, taxes and inventories. Don't overlook church records either.

Then compare their occupations, social status, religions and ethnic backgrounds. If they don't match, you may have the wrong people.

Always search for proof of parentage in the locality where the parent died or where the children came of age. These localities are usually more valuable than the locality in which the children were born.

Finally, if necessary, expand your search to ALL records for ALL the siblings of your ancestor--even after their parents' deaths. The same holds true for their spouses. Then look for mention of the expanded family in land and probate records.

Focus on your ancestor's neighborhood, particularly the township and land tract. This information can be gleaned from non-alphabetized tax lists and county court minutes that mention fellow road workers and jury members, and in deeds. Pay particular attention to deeds involving the sale of land and the "dwelling house."

Neighbors were often mentioned in our ancestors' deeds, grants and bonds, or appear as witnesses on various legal documents.

Friends and associates often belonged to the same church. People of the same ethnic background or same faith often

intermarried. Prior to this century, a man usually did not go more than 25 miles to find a bride. That's why it is so important to canvas the neighborhood.

Still stumped? Then expand the time period of your research in the records, especially land and probate.

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### PLANNED RESEARCH TRAVELS

With this issue we start a new feature, "PLANNED RESEARCH TRAVELS" Announcements of planned research trips to other locations. Thus, making you aware of this information in case these travelers might also be able to help you with your family research. You should contact the individual listed and ask them if they would be able to obtain some specific information for you. Please advise your editor of any of your future travel plans and research so we can include in future listings. dgc

CHRIS DIXON. Chris and Janelle are planning summer travels to the midwest and plans include additional research in Macomb and Mason County of Michigan as well as New Boston, IL.

DONALD CHINNERY. Don and Martha's travels will take them to the northeastern states for a family reunion this coming fall. While there we will research in Livingston, Genesee, and Jefferson Counties of New York looking for information related to Heath family members.

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### **Recent Acquisitions.**

Your recent acquisitions of family history should be recorded here. Let us know what important piece of information you have recently found and or received from someone.

### Received from Judith Stock

1. Copy of photographs of Mary Elizabeth Rose and Louis Lansing.
2. Death certificate Hattie Kandt nee Rose. and for Matilda Rose
3. Federal Census information for Lansing family: 1870, 1880, 1900 And Rose family - 1860 & 1870.
4. Obituary for Matilda Rose.
5. "History of Macomb County" pub Leeson. copy of pages 221,222, 592, 835, 836, 901, 904 and index pages for Rose family.
5. References to announcements in Evert Review for last name "Rose"
6. Copies of deeds relating to Henry Rose.

### Received from Ann Faulkner

1. Skinner's "History Stories of New Baltimore". Several pages from this history.
2. 1870 Federal Census-Chesterfield page 349, Listing of Henry Rose Family.
3. "Knight, Chase and Allied Families", by Robert Whiting Knight. Several pages of descendants of Robert Knight and William Chase. Several pages showing information relating to a descendant Julia Knight who married Percy Heath.
4. "Michigan Place Names", by Walter Romig, L.H.D Wayne University Press. Page 392 with listing for New Baltimore. (MI, Macomb County)
5. Vital Records for Macomb County, MI Photocopies of pages of various records **for births**, deaths and marriages.  
Births for: Oakes Heath; Herbert Gaylord Heath; Hattie Heath; Mary Heath; Lighton Heath; Beulah J. Heath; no name Heath;  
**for deaths:** Edwin Heath; Annie Heath;  
**for marriages:** Percy C Heath and Julia Knight- 20 Sep 1898; Clarence J. Leimmon and Eva Irene Heath-17 Sep 1901; Percy C. Heath and Alvina Dang - 27 Jul 1895;

Thank you Ann for this information.

**HELP WANTED**

Christopher Dixon is planning a revised issue of "**John Henry Fitch, Biography**". He is looking for any information including but not limited to pictures, maps, and articles. Contact Chris at 3034 Albacore Circle, Apt#E-3, Silverdale, WA 98315-9709. phone 360.697.3279

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*The FOUR DRIVE*, a genealogy newsletter brought to you for promoting genealogy of our ancestors and their descendants.

**Working together.**

This issue has been dedicated to working together. Our lead article on John Henry Fitch is a good example of two researchers working together and pooling their information. Keeping others posted of future travels and research is another. One of the goals of this newsletter has been to unite our efforts in further research.

**Your ancestors too!**

This newsletter is not limited to reports of your editor's ancestors. We would very much like to hear from you and have reports of your ancestors for publication. This is especially important when your report provides new information on utilizing different resources during your research efforts. So please help in the continued success of this newsletter by submitting articles and information for inclusion in future issues. Tells us about your ancestors.

**Suggestions**

We are looking to hear from you with your suggestions to help make this a great newsletter.

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**PUBLISHERS STATEMENT**

The F O U R D R I V E, a genealogy newsletter is published on irregular schedule by Donald Chinnery. Please let your family genealogists know about this newsletter.

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**Our Subscription List**

As of this issue we have **17 confirmed** subscribers. Becoming a confirmed subscriber is relatively simple. A letter to the publisher requesting have written requesting continuation of The Four Drive. Several on the list are duplicating their copy for sharing with immediate family.

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Others have received one or two issues but have not responded to confirm their subscription. Why do I request that a written request be received for each subscription? Some wonder if it isn't a subtle and devious idea of mine to receive correspondence. And maybe that isn't such a bad idea. But really, it is to be sure the newsletter is appreciated and utilized. After all it does take time to put it together.

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