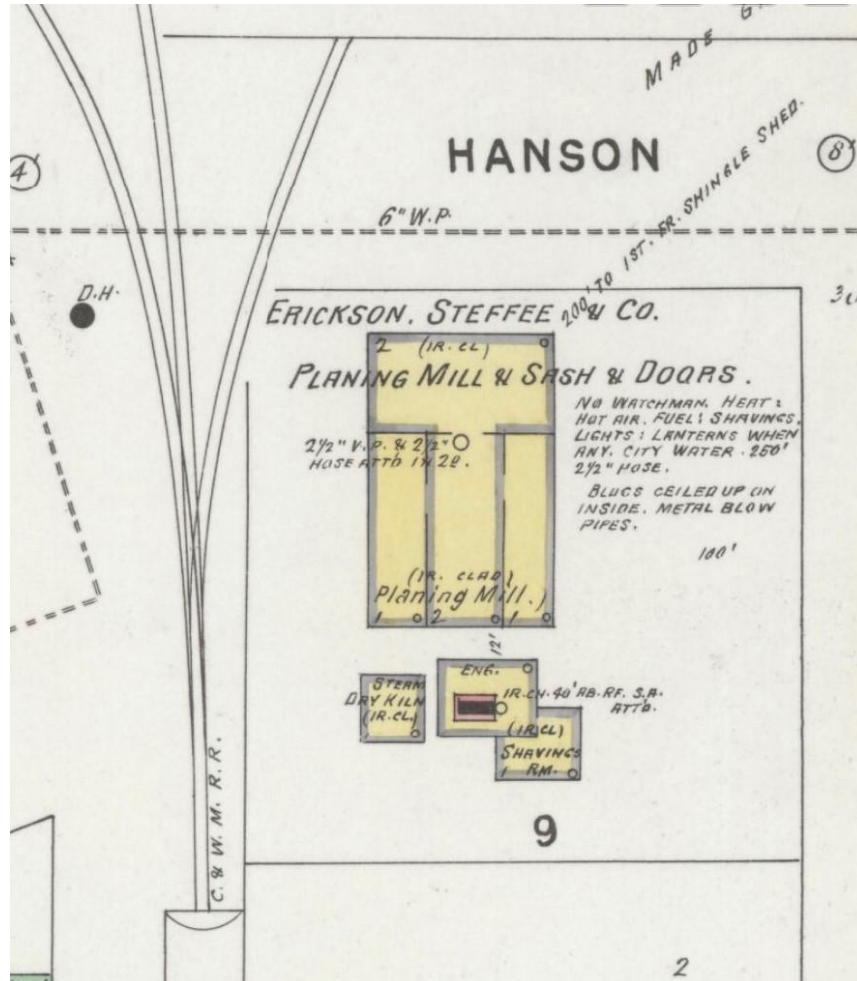


Mills – Erickson-Steffee Mill

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White Lake Area Historical Society



Oct 1896

The Erickson-Steffee & Co. planing mill began operations in August 1891. The company was organized as a partnership with Israel Erickson, Joseph L. Steffee, Peter Erickson and Mark B. Covell each owning equal shares. The mill was located at the head of White Lake on the Whitehall side, on Hanson Street across from the current Chamber of Commerce – where WaterDog Outfitters is now located.

Israel Erickson was born in Sweden on July 22, 1846. He came to this country and to Whitehall in 1870. He married Miss Marie Louisa Nilson in 1880. They had two sons and five daughters. He was employed by the Covell and Ocobock Company from 1873 until the Erickson-Steffee Company was organized in 1891, and where he remained until his death in November 1914. He is buried in Oakhurst Cemetery.

Joseph Lewis Steffee was born in Baltimore, Maryland on March 17, 1858. He came to Michigan in February 1882. He married Rose Belle Steffee of Ohio in November 1882. They had five children: three girls and two boys. Steffee was twice president of Whitehall, twice township treasurer and repeatedly

honored with other minor offices. He died in Whitehall on January 22, 1904, and is buried in Oak Grove Cemetery in Montague.

Peter Erickson was the brother of Israel Erickson and was born in 1857. He came to Whitehall in 1875 and was employed in a number of mills in the area becoming an expert millwright. For a time, he was employed in the Erickson & Steffee mill. About 1902 he went into partnership with a man named Allen and together they formed a company called Erickson & Allen Mfg. Company. They built church furniture of various kinds, but the business didn't prosper and there were a number of changes in the partnership setup. About 1907 Peter went to Chicago and later to Minnesota. While he was in Minnesota he became owner of valuable timber properties and a mill, but was wiped out by a forest fire. He returned to Whitehall a few months before he passed in March 1939. He is buried in Oakhurst Cemetery.

Mark B. Covell was born in Pennsylvania in 1849 and was the last of the family of eight to come to White Lake in October 1870, which included his brothers Andrew J., Lyman T., Charles E., and David W. The first month of his arrival, Mark worked at the Staples & Covell mill and then went into the woods to help at the logging camp during the winter. He did this for several years.

In 1873 Mark purchased an interest in the general supply store owned by R. Bennett & Company. The business continued until Bennett sold out to Covell's brother-in-law Joseph Hinchman and the name was changed to Hinchman & Covell. The store was located near the tunnel and was destroyed by the fire of July 1890. Not dismayed he had a brick block built on the corner of Colby and Mears where the State Bank building was located (now Fetches). This too was destroyed by the fire of September 1890.

Mark Covell was the principal investor in the Erickson-Steffee mill. After about 10 years, the mill partnership was dissolved, and a stock company was formed with each of the four partners holding the stock.

Mark married twice. He married his first wife Mary Myhra in 1875 and she died unexpectedly in 1891. They had no children. He then married his second wife Mary Ann Wilson in 1892 and they had three children: two girls and a boy. He died in 1933 and is buried in Oakhurst Cemetery in Whitehall.

In 1904 the Erickson, Steffee & Co. reorganized and became known as Erickson-Steffee Co. The new stockholders of the company were: Isreal Erickson, Peter Erickson, Joseph Steffee, Mark B. Covell, P. H. Fitzgerald and C. E. Covell. M. B. Covell was president, J. L. Steffee, vice president, P. H. Fitzgerald secretary and treasurer. The business which had consisted in the planing and dressing of lumber, and the manufacturing and sale of doors, sash and blinds was extended to take in contracting and the dealing in wood and coal and building material. An important branch of the work was to be contracting, erecting and repairing building.

In May 1924, after 33 years in business, the Erickson-Steffee real estate, planing mill, and coal and lumber yard were sold to Lyman T. Covell company. At the time of the sale, M. B. Covell, C. E. Covell, Guy S. Covell, Axel Bjorkman, W. A. Whitman, Mrs. J. L. Steffee and Mrs. Israel Erickson were stockholders. W. A. Whitman was the president.

The new owners combined the business with their own but did not plan to operate the planing mill. After the existing run of orders was completed, the mill was closed.