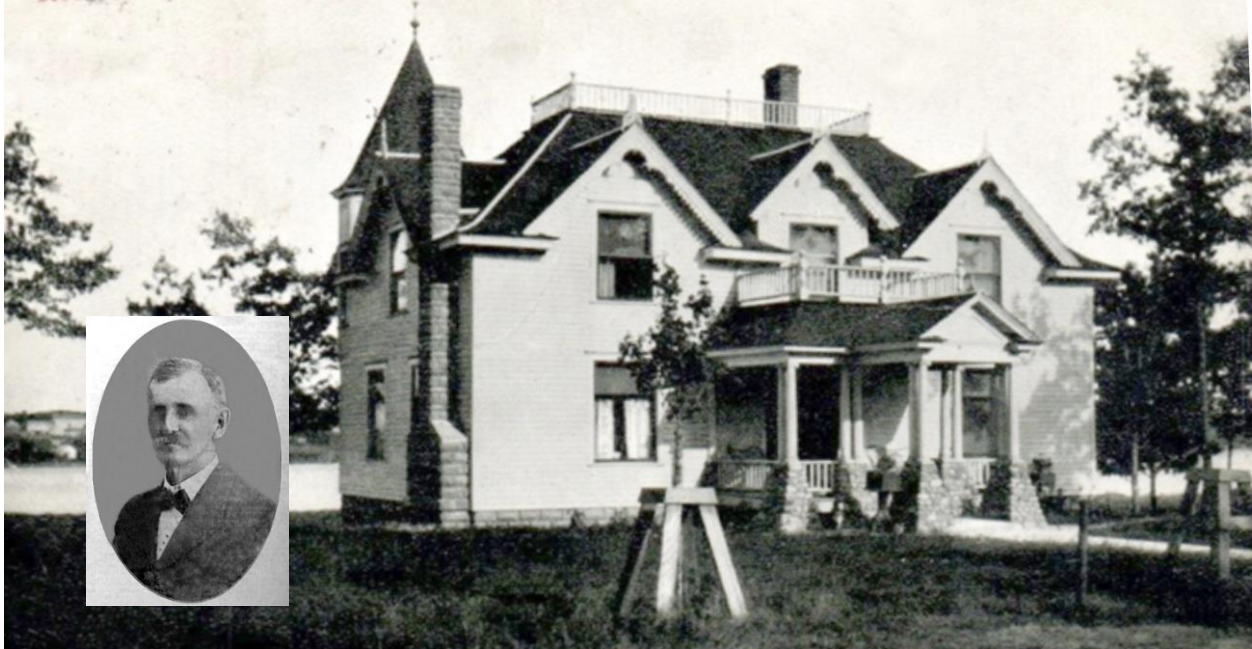


Citizens - W.E. Osmun and the Seven Gables
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C1909 – W. E. Osmun and his house called “Seven Gables”

William E. Osmun was born 18 November 1850, in Ithaca, New York. He was schooled in the East and studied law at Cornell University for two years. After leaving the University he published a weekly newspaper in Dryden, New York. He married Emma Kitty Teeter in New York 1879 and they had a daughter Winifred Jeanette “Winnie” in 1880.

At the encouragement of his grandfather, Osmun came to Michigan in 1880, settled in Shelby and started a newspaper known as the Enterprise, which he published for three years. He disposed of the paper in 1884 and came to Montague two years later. He started another newspaper called the Boomer, which was in competition with the Montague Lumberman.

During that time, Osman also practiced law in the justice courts and was admitted to the bar as a full-fledged lawyer in 1886.

He married Mary Windeknecht of Claybanks 15 August 1886 and together they raised his daughter Winnie.

In 1889, Osmun gave up the Boomer to concentrate on his law practice. The 1890 City Directory showed Osmun as Lawyer, Notary Public and Real Estate agent. He was appointed Postmaster from 1897-1904. He served as President of the Village of Montague from 1901-1903 and again from 1920-1923. He also served as the President of the School Board for three years.

The City Directories for 1897 and 1900 showed him living on Church Street and listed him as a Lawyer. In 1902 he was listed as Postmaster, Lawyer, and Proprietor of the Montague Opera House. Osman was also a member of the 1907-08 convention which rewrote the Michigan Constitution.

In 1901, Osmun bought ten acres of land bordering on White Lake and Coon Creek where he built his house that became known as "Seven Gables".

In November 1901, it was announced that Osman and Charles E. Ohrenberger had purchased 2 lots on Ferry Street with the intent of building a modern Opera House. By April 1902, those plans were changed. They bought the former Montague House hotel instead which was located on the corner of Ferry and Spring streets where the current City Hall, Police and Library are today. Their plan was to convert it to an opera house.

It reportedly cost around \$8,000 to rebuild the brick Opera House. It was 37 feet high by 90 feet long by 48 feet wide. The main floor was 48x60 feet, the stage was 28x48 feet and the drop curtain was 12x20 feet. The seating capacity was 800 with 500 on the main floor and 300 on the balcony. A thousand people could be seated if necessary. The interior woodwork was finished in polished birch, maple and oak. The balcony with its artistic curves and panel work was very pretty and comfortable. The main hall was brilliantly lit by its own acetylene gas plant, and the stage lights were independent of the others. The woodwork in the building was done under the direction of Robert H. Osborne. The masonry work was done by William Thieman. Later the main floor was used as a roller-skating rink when not being used for stage productions. Unfortunately, the Opera House was destroyed by fire on 4 November 1912.

Osmun died at his home on 26 November 1929. His wife Mary died 17 March 1951, in California at the home of her stepdaughter Winnie. They are both buried in Oak Grove Cemetery in Montague.