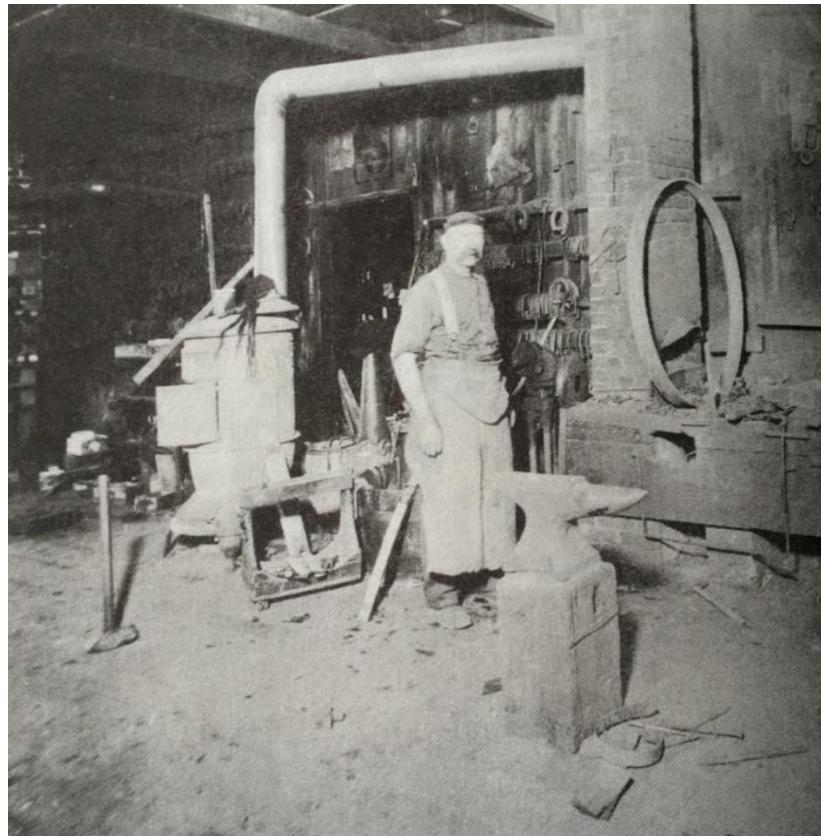


Blacksmiths & Wagon Makers - Montague

By Barbara Bedau Brow
White Lake Area Historical Society



C1900 – Adam Born in his blacksmith shop on Water Street

In 1855 all that was in the village of Montague was Nathan Sargent's house, his blacksmith shop and barn, which were built at the corner of Water and Dowling, where the Ellenwood Weathervane and Ellenwood Park are now located. There is a historical marker indicating the location. Sargent sold the property in 1857 to George W. Franklin who built a house, and then Franklin sold it to Noah H. Ferry in 1859.

Here is a brief history of some of the other blacksmiths and wagon makers in the area.

J. M. Young (1870-1880) – James Moore Young was born in Gallion, Ohio on 28 October 1826, and resided there for 29 years while learning the trade of carpentry and blacksmithing.

He married Elizabeth Fowler on 27 January 1855 in Plymouth, Ohio. Twelve children were born to them: Ganette (1855-1941), Katherine (1858-1943), Ida (1862-1937), Maxwell (1862-1882), Charles (1865-1939), Hattie (1866-1969), Willard (1870-1939), Elizabeth (1873-1902), Frank (1874-1876), Margaret (1877-1931), James (1879-1919) and Alfred (1882-1939).

James enlisted in Company D, Tenth Cavalry, on 16 February 1865, at Newaygo, at the age of 33 years. He mustered out at Memphis, Tennessee on 1 November 1865.

In 1869 the family moved to Montague. James started a wagon and blacksmith shop in 1870 which was located on the corner of Spring and Water streets. He conducted business there for several years before eventually retiring. He died on 5 April 1910. His wife died on 15 June 1915. They are both buried in Oak Grove Cemetery.

Adam Born – (1878-1920) In the early days, Adam Born had one of the best-known blacksmith shops in the area.

Adam was born in Germany on 18 October 1851 and came to the United States with his family when he was only a year old. His family settled in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. At the age of 16 he came to Montague. In December 1875 he married Miss Elva Wentworth of Niles, MI. They had two daughters: Ethel Rose (1879-1938) and Linnie Mae (1882-1932) and a son Harold (1896-1954).

On 1 January 1878, Born bought a building owned by George E. Dowling. It was located near the corner of Water and Dowling where Nathan Sargent's blacksmith shop once stood. He was in business at that location for 42 years. He sold the business in 1920 to Jens Olesen.

Adam Born died on 23 February 1938. His wife died on 21 September of the same year. They are both buried in Oak Grove Cemetery.

August Schallock (c1880-1900) – August Frederic John Schallock was born in Brussels, Germany on 23 March 1851. He immigrated to this country in 1878 and settled in Montague where he married Miss Minnie Runzel shortly after. They had six children: Rosa (1879-1907), Edith (1881-1887), Minnie (1884-1943), Lillian (1886-1973), Frank (1888-1938), and August (1890-1979). They lived in a house on Sheridan.

He delivered groceries to the Mouth, Maple Grove and other Montague areas for a while. By 1880, Aug owned a blacksmith shop which was located on the corner of Spring and Water streets.

In March 1900, he was kicked in the arm while shoeing a horse. Thinking the injury was not serious, he did not have it immediately checked. Had he sought medical aid immediately and not subjected himself to hard work and the cold, it is possible that his life would have been prolonged. After a two-week illness with blood poisoning, he died on 25 March 1900 at the age of 49. His wife Minnie remained in the area until her death on 3 October 1943.

A. L. Dickinson (1883-1897) – Aldemar L. Dickinson was born in September 1855 in New York. He came to the White Lake area in 1878 and lived in Whitehall. He operated a blacksmith shop which was located on Colby across from the Fire Department.

In October 1881 he married Ida May Wooster in Iowa. They had two daughters: Winnifred (1884-1965) and Grace (1886-1971).

Dickinson became a resident of Montague in 1882 and had a wagon and blacksmith shop on the northwest corner of Water and Spring in 1883.

In 1897 he was listed as Owner Operator of the Montague Roller Mill until 1900. In 1901 he took a job as a boat builder in the Montague Iron Works.

Dickinson sold his Whitehall Blacksmith business in 1915 to Peter J. Jensen and son who operated it in connection with their other shop in Whitehall.

In 1920 the Dickinson family moved to Flint and he worked in an auto factory. Dickinson died in Flint on 26 February 1940. His wife had died there on 25 January 1939. They are buried in Oakwood Cemetery in Muskegon.

William Flinn (1890-1899) – William came to the White Lake area in 1873. After building two shops in Whitehall and being burned out three times, he moved to Montague in 1890 and opened a shop. No specific location of the shop was indicated; however, a map of the area showed a Blacksmith shop on Spring Street, between Ferry and Water. William was in business there until about 1899 when he moved to Mancelona. Flinn died in August 1907.

Elmer Grow (1900-1905) – Elmer leased the former Aug Schallock Blacksmith Shop located on Spring and Water in November 1900. Grow was born in White River Township on 9 October 1861. On 7 July 1891 he married Miss Mary Cook and they had two sons: Forrest (1894-1939) and Elton (1897-1958). Mary passed away in 1899 at the age of 25 years. Grow then married Miss Anna Black on 18 December 1902 in Muskegon and they had two daughters: Marguerite (1904-1973) and Nellie (1907-1972).

In 1905 Elmer and his family left for Wisconsin where he had a job in a blacksmith shop. In 1927 they were listed as living in Ludington where he was still working as a blacksmith. They eventually returned to Montague where he died on 14 June 1930. He is buried in Oak Grove Cemetery. His wife Anna died in a Muskegon hospital on 3 January 1937.

Jens Olesen (1920-1940) – Jens M. Olesen was born in Denmark, on 6 December 1868. He came to the United States in 1889 and settled in Chicago where he operated a blacksmith shop. It was there that he met and married his wife Anna Kirstine Olsen (1868-1941) on 11 November 1893. They had two sons: Ralph and James. In September 1920, the Olesen family came to Montague where he bought the blacksmith shop of Adam Born.

During the twenty years that Olesen was here, he was only absent from his forge for a few days. Despite his age, it was common to see him swinging a heavy sledge with no evident effort as he hammered cherry-red iron into desired designs. He worked to within a few days of his death on 7 February 1940 at the age of 71 years. His wife Anna died on 2 April 1941 and is buried with her husband in Oak Grove Cemetery.

Andrew Bower (1940-1941) – In September 1940, it was announced that Andrew Bower had bought Jens Olesen's Blacksmith shop.

Mr. Bower was born in Indiana on 26 July 1868. He began to learn his trade when he was just 16 years old. He was competent to do anything in the field of general blacksmithing, including horse shoeing, welding, all kinds of metal and woodwork, grinding, sharpening and repairing wheels. Bower had been in the service of Bartley Wagon Shop in Grand Rapids for 46 years before coming to Montague.

A news item from 6 February 1941, indicated that after being closed for several weeks, Bower planned to reopen his blacksmith shop about February 17. The shop had been closed for the past several weeks while Bower recovered from a severe automobile accident.

There was no further mention of Bower or the blacksmith shop until April 1946, when it was determined that the vacant building was to be torn down.

Additional information indicates that at some point, Bower had moved to the Rockford area where he died in February 1956.