

Citizens – William D. Springer

By Barbara Bedau Brow
White Lake Area Historical Society



William D. Springer (1854-1933)

William David Springer was born in Ohio on 23 August 1854, the eldest of George and Elizabeth (ne Downing) Springer's eleven children. In 1865 he moved with his parents and several siblings to Hillsdale County, then to Shelby for a year and a half before moving to Montague where his father rented a farm.

William kept busy on the farm in the summer months and worked in the woods during the winters. He also attended the country school during the winter.

He took a liking for horses and started teaming, working several winters hauling logs and wood to the village of Hillsdale. One winter he hauled in 350 cords of 4-foot wood nine and

one half miles for use on the railroads as engines which burned wood were used in those days.

In the fall of 1878, he heard the “call of the wild” and wanted to get out into the world for himself. William hired out to a man who needed a driver to take a load of household goods from Hillsdale to Shelby. The trip began on 30 October and after encountering some very muddy roads and numerous minor difficulties, reached Shelby on 7 November.

After the trip, he took a job at Hawley’s mill in the Shelby area until spring. He then came to Whitehall and worked a season in the Covell, Ocobock and Hinchman shingle mill and then for a season for Nufer & Carleton.

William married Anna J. Kenfield in Whitehall in December 1880. They had four children: Myrtle E. (1882-1979); George P. (1883-1975); Anna J. (1888-1936); and Clinton A. (1890-1975).

In 1880 he started to clerk for John O. Banks who ran a grocery store. The express office was also in the store so for three years he worked for Mr. Banks. He was in charge of the express business and also carried the mail to and from the depot. The Banks store was sold in 1883, and he was hired by H. A. Spink who ran a grocery store and stayed with him for three years.

When Albert Mears constructed a row of one story brick buildings on Colby Street and moved his stock up from his store near the lake, William Springer started working for him.

While working in the Mears store, Mr. Springer began to dabble in real estate. He purchased a 40-acre piece of land in Shelby village for the taxes and \$100 a year. Within a few months he was able to realize as much for the sale of 20 acres as the whole cost him, so he paid up his contract and had 20 acres left.

In 1892 and 1893 when prices went down on everything he purchased as much land as he could and waited for the return to normal and netted a handsome profit.

For three years from 1889 to 1892 he traveled for the nursery house of Nelson Bogue of Batavia, New York but gave it up to go into business in Whitehall.

He went into the implement business with F. D. Glazier as a partner. Mr. Glazier furnished the storeroom and did the bookkeeping, and Mr. Springer did the canvassing and selling. The partnership continued for eight years. In 1900 Mr. Springer purchased the interest of Mr. Glazier and started in business alone.

Later he would open a feed and grocery store which he operated until failing health forced him to dispose of that business and retire from active work. He was always an energetic businessman, respected by all who knew him.

William's wife Anna had died in April 1899. In November 1905 he married Mrs. Ada M. (ne Goffen) Emery. William died at his home on 9 February 1933. His second wife Ada died in 1949. They are all buried in Oakhurst Cemetery.