

Forth Clan Sought

Individuals in Pontiac, Mich. are searching for descendants of Elizabeth Denison Forth, known relatives include surnames of Mumford, Wilson, Tyrrell, Denison and Forth, and are believed to live in North Carolina. If you know anyone with these surnames, please contact Cora G. Bradshaw; c/o Pontiac Library, 60 East Pike; Pontiac, Mi. 48342. Or call (313) 857-7667.

Elizabeth, also known as Lisette, was born prior to 1793 into slavery in present day Macomb County. Slavery was prohibited in Michigan, then Michigan Territory, by the Northwest Ordinance. However, a loophole in the laws enabled it to exist in certain cases. With Elijah B. Rush representing them in the Territorial Supreme Court, the Denisons sued for freedom. Judge Augustus Woodward ruled against them. Woodward in another ruling held that fugitive slaves returning from Canada were free in Michigan Territory.

Elizabeth and her younger brother, Scipio, escaped to Canada on the Underground Railroad. After a few years they returned to Michigan as free citizens. Elizabeth began working for the Solomon Sibley household.

Sibley was a partner of Stephen Mack, founder of Pontiac. In 1825, Sibley arranged for Mack to forward four lots of property to Elizabeth. This was the first property that she purchased and it amounted to 48 1/2 acres. The section of Oak Hill Cemetery east of Paddock is her original property and extends into the Knolls. The present-day boundaries of this property are Grandview on the north; University Drive on the south; Montclair on the east and Paddock on the west. Elizabeth never lived on her land.

Elizabeth married Scipio Forth in 1827. She and her husband leased her brother, Scipio this property for life. The census of 1830 recorded that her brother and family of four were living on the property. Sad to say, three years later, Scipio Denison and his sons became indentured servants to members of the Brush family. After Scipio's departure from the property, it was leased to John Nicholson, who occupied it for three years.

At the time of the July 1830 census, Elizabeth and her husband, Scipio Forth, were living in Detroit. After this, a curtain drops on Scipio Forth's story. He is not mentioned in a will that Elizabeth made in August 1830. This inferred that after three years of marriage, Elizabeth became a widow. A year later, she took employment with the Major John Biddle family of Detroit.

Mrs. Forth became a woman of means. She acquired stock in the steamboat Michigan, which was the largest vessel on the Great Lakes at the time and the first to have cabins on deck. She also had shares in Farmers and Mechanics stocks and also owned property in Detroit.

In 1854, Elizabeth traveled with the Biddle family to Paris. Religion offered solace for Elizabeth. She was confirmed an Episcopalian. While in Paris, it is said she visited Notre Dame and the ancient churches, Saint-Jacques and Saint-Remy. She learned to speak French.

Mrs. Forth died August 7, 1877 in Detroit. She requested William S. Biddle in her will to use the residue of her estate to erect "a fine chapel for the use of the Protestant Episcopal Church" of which she was a communicant.

Her birthplace in Macomb County is listed as a state historic site.

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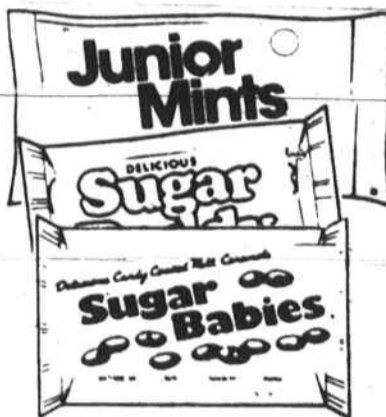
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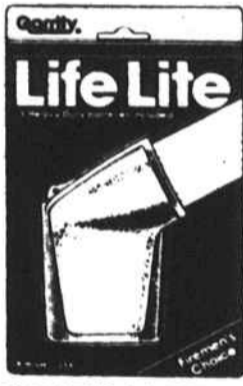


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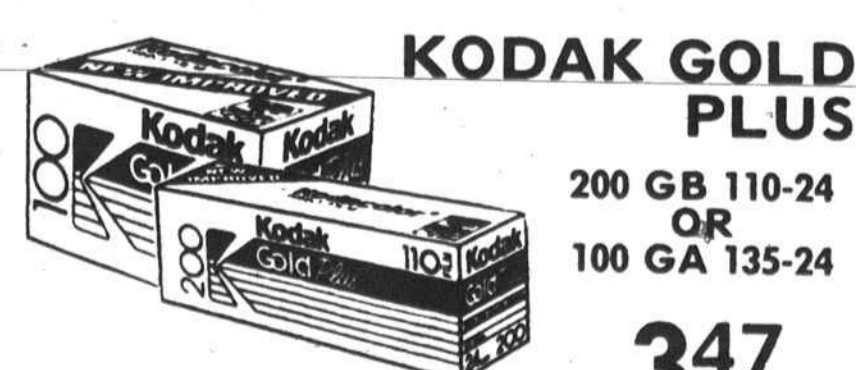
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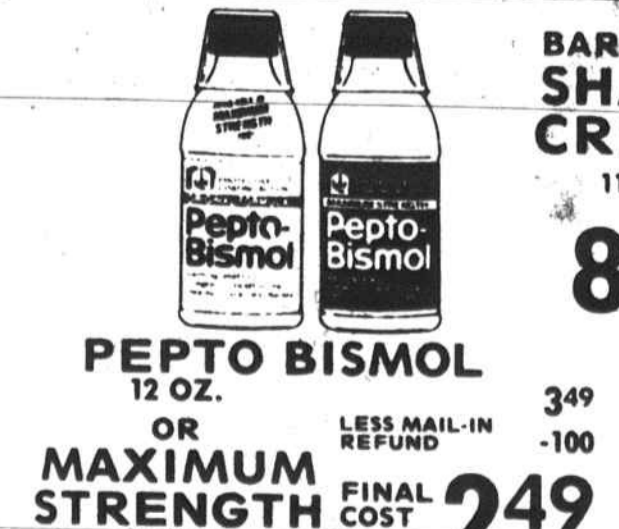
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