

Today I'd like to tell you a story. Your story, Lenawee.

Lenawee's Legacy©

To the south are green fields and the north? Rolling hills.
Sandy loam's to the east while western waters lend thrills.
Here the cottonwood drifts like soft snow on the breeze
and history carved Ridgeway with glaciers' prestige.

Where we lightly pace, great mastodons once tread,
followed by Indians, poised with spearhead.
In the northeast a great council ring was established
where native leaders talked hopes, concerns, and anguish.

For in the 1820s through swamps and oak openings too
came settlers determined and awed by lands new.
Musgrove Evans and one General Joseph Brown
established Tecumseh, the same beautiful town.

Next came Harvey Bliss, you guessed it – Blissfield,
where Mrs. Giles, the doctor rescued all when they reeled.
Then at just 23, Addison Comstock rode in;
for the emperor Hadrian, this town, he'd begin.

And more came settling: Macon to Medina, Woodstock to Deerfield.
By 1900 ours was one of the nation's best crop yields.
"But what of that?" To yourselves, some of you might say,
"What does it have to do with us here today?"

Well, I tell you there's more that's been planted here folks
than just soybeans, wheat, corn, barley, or oats.
Grown in this county for one hundred plus years
has been Character, Strength, Faith, and Good Cheer.

Take Elizabeth Chandler of Adrian, 22,
The first to write poetry saying slavery was taboo;
While Havilands, Gilberts and Fitch Reed of Onsted
aided the underground railroad as friends.

Come civil war time our county was first and the last to enlist
giving the most men, aid, and supplies -- naught was amiss.
And in times of peace our ingenuity reigned,
Rollin's J.W. Page made bounce-back fencing untrained.

Hudson's Will Carleton became the State Poet
touting our elderly's needs, don't you know it?
And men from the four corners met in Jackson to lobby.
Forming the Republican party to them was no hobby.

And oh we weren't just New Yorkers or folks from out East.
By 1917 Moravian and Mexican migrants increased.
They worked hard on the land and in factories too
and their cultures grew strong adding to this venue.

For WWI and for II we responded as allies
giving aide: personnel, food and supplies.
Morenci sent eggs, Clinton Mill made clothes;
the factories made bombers the enemies would loathe.

Then peace reined again and business transformed.
Refrigeration, chemicals, and tourism swarmed.
Businesses blossomed like Merillat Cabinets, home grown
which today lead foundations to help our hearth stones.

Relay for Life, Soup kitchens, 4-H and more,
our towns are bursting with service galore.
So the people here, oh the people, have hearts very true,
like the Sheldons, Karen Roback, John Yeager as few.
These one day may be legends like those in our minds,
like Mary Miller and Grant Swift whose days here did shine.

So here we are gathered at the state's oldest fair,
Lenawee County stand tall, be proud, be aware.
This is the history now passed on to you;
I must ask the question: So what will you do?

Will you pay it forward as generations have done?
Will you help out your neighbor and unite in the Son?
Will you use your creativity, your talents, your strength
to advance each of our cities, and county at length?

Don't think you're too young and don't think you're too old
to add to the story of the folks I've just told.
What will you add in? What will you be
in the story of Lenawee and its legacy?

Thank you Lenawee for all you have done and what you will yet do.