

Dayton Township

by Terry E. Wantz

The township of Dayton, as first organized, extended from the middle of T. 13 N. R. 14 W. to the north line of the county and from the west county line, nine miles east. Afterwards the townships of Beaver, Denver, Troy and the west half of what is now Lilley, Merrill, Lincoln and Sherman Townships, for a total of 216 square miles, 24 miles long by 9 miles wide were taken from this territory. The south line was what is now 24th. St. One half of Dayton Township of today is located in the south-west corner of this area the other half of the township is located in what was the north half of the old township of Fremont, only 36 square miles, 6 miles wide and 6 miles long.

Mr. Jacob Barnhart built the first settler's cabin, and Mrs. Barnhart was the first white woman who came to this settlement. This was in 1855 and before Dayton was a township. The Barnhart brothers and sons, with the help of Sylvanus Reed made a road from Big Prairie to the land they had located in Dayton, bridging the streams and otherwise making it passable for bringing their families into the wilderness.

About the same time Mrs. Margaret Preston moved with her family into the area and settled on land later owned by her son, Shinar Preston. N. D. Macomber, M. D. Bull, David Robertson and John Maynard were among the first to commence the hard task of making a home in the forest.

In the same year, Edward Nelson Jones bottom forty acres of land, but finding he could not pre-empt land, being a minor. He went back to New York State and married Lizzie Glazier, thus acting like the sensible man he was. He returned in 1856 with law and manhood to support his claim, and pre-empted more land. It will be seen by this little incident that a man without is of but little account anywhere, and that a boy can sometimes be a man in the eyes of the law if he only has a wife.

Chauncy Tibbitts located on the land later owned by Mrs. Jane Kingford. Jason Doud settled on land later owned by Ephriam Utley, which is now a centennial farm. Caleb Wilcox and sons made a road to the west side of Dayton Township, bringing the family in the fall of 1856. M. W. Scott and William Martin came in December of same year and built a shanty on the land later owned by George Martin. Mr. M. W. Scott moved onto the land where he resided in March 1857.

John Lewis, Jason Doud, Horace Gooch, Mortimer Olds and Asa Carpenter, settled in section 8 of Dayton. Of these men, Lewis married Miss Abbie Macomber and had a large farm here. Doud moved to Oregon, Gooch was killed in the Civil War, in the charge at Falling Waters, Olds died young and Carpenter moved to Manistee.

The first town meeting was held in the spring of 1857 in a small log house then owned by James Quick, later the property of Maggie Robertson. M. W. Scott was elected Supervisor, M. D. Bull, Clerk, and David Robertson, Treasurer. James Quick honorable citizen and brave soldier, died at Washington, near the close of the war of the rebellion.

In 1856 the settlers were not numerous enough to undertake a Fourth of July celebration, but they gathered at the house of Jacob Barnhard, to witness the marriage of Miss Sarah A. Barnhard and Willard Wilder. This was the first wedding in the settlement. Mr. Wilder afterwards enlisted in a Michigan regiment, and gave his life for his country.

The next year the settlers arranged to hold a celebration on July 4th. near M. D. Bull's, then the center of the settlement, but some of them were doomed a disappointment. Amos Wilcox, a young man chopping on his own land, fail to show up the night before the celebration. He was found killed by the limb of a tree he had cut down. The neighbors brought him home, made him a coffin, and while the friends were waiting and wondering at the celebration, they buried the dead Pioneer on a hill in sight of his father door, for there was no grave-yard to receive the dead yet.

Accidents sometimes cast a gloom over the settlers and some had bad luck. Mr. Horace Jenny had his house burned down and lost his entire stock of household goods, but so far from being discouraged, he went to work and built a better house and Mrs. Jenny went to Newaygo and earned money to replace the thing lost. Good will and friendliness prevailed and if one sometimes ran short of the necessaries of life his friends were glad to help him, for a neighbor at that time, was worth dividing the last johnny-cake with.

At a special meeting of the School Inspectors of the town of Dayton held on the 8th day of May, 1857 for the purpose of examining Phebe. J. Stone a primary School Teacher, found her qualified to teach a primary school and gave her a certificate.

M. D. Bull, Clerk of the Board

On 16th day of May 1857, a special meeting of the School Inspectors of the Township of Dayton was held at the house of M. D. Bull for the purpose of forming a School districts. The area was divided up into District No.1 and District No.2. M. D. Bull was the Clerk of the Board and Jacob Barnhard and Silas L Crofoot were the School Inspectors.

The School Inspectors order that Sylvanus Reed notify the taxable inhabitants of School District No.1, that they would hold there first meeting on Saturday the 30th May at 6 o'clock P.M. at the house of M. D. Bull. And that Eliphalet Herrington notify the taxable inhabitants of School District No.2, that they would hold their first meeting at the house of Samuel Howe on Tuesday the 26th day of May at 1 o'clock P.M.

Some of the other early teachers of Dayton Township were Orrin Wiswell, Lydia Jane Upton, Eugenia Macomber, Maryanne Stanley, Louisa A Cummins, Alma Tibbitts,

Jacob Barnhard, Elisabeth H Forbes, Sarah W Forbes, Wm. M. Brown, Almyra L Roger, M. W. Scott, A. E. Upton, Sarah Jane Carpenter, Harriet Maynard, Cab. Tibbitts, Mary Forbes, Eugenia Preston, Augusta Randolph, Helen A. "Stone" Barnes, Lida A. Cummingham, Romanda S. Carpenters, Daniel L. Barnes, David L. Hayes, Miss Mary Probaseo, Ann R. Teople, Lena Oles, Phebe Barnhard, Louisa Martin, Emily Nickerson, Ellen Armstrong, Simon P. Barnhard, Thadeus L. Waters, Mrs. Leavinia Warwic, Mary Ratchiffe, Harriet Smithers, John W. Randolph, Lyman Townsend and Mrs. Lizzie Fortune

On the 4th. day of November 1859 at the School Inspectors meeting they form two more school district, District No.3 and District No.4. At that time Arura Dake and John Barnhard were on the board of the school inspectors. It was order that M. W. Scott notify the taxable inhabitants of School District No. 3 of their first meeting to be held on the 19th. day of November 1859 at Caleb Wilcox's place. It was order that Aaron Stone notify the taxable inhabitants of School District no.4, that their first meeting be held at the house of Thomas McLains.

By 1860 the Board of School inspectors of Dayton Township were; Jacob Barnhard, John M Grovensteen and Melvin Scott. John Barnhard was the Township Clerk. By 1862 William A Hopkins had replaced John Grovensteen as school inspector. In 1863 the School Inspectors were M. W. Scott, A. J. Stone and Ebenezer Dobson. In 1864 J. H. Cogswell and Isaih. F. Fay were the School Inspectors.

On the 11th. May 1866, at a special meeting of the School Inspectors of the Township of Dayton formed another school district called District No.5. They order Ira Knapp to notify the taxable inhabitant of said district the first meeting to be held at the house of Ira Knapp, on Tuesday the 22nd of May 1866. Also on the 11th. May at a special of the Board of School Inspectors of Dayton Township of Newaygo County and Greenwood Township of Oceana County. The new district was called District No.6. The Inspectors at that time were Eldridge Green, George W. Norton and Charles Potter from Greenwood Township and Isiah F. Fry and Ebenezer Dobson from Dayton Township. Notice of the information of the forgoing district and of the time and place of it's first meeting was delivered to Joseph W. Sweet, a taxable inhabitant of said district. The first meeting to be held at the Champlin Store on the 31st. May 1866.

On the 22nd of May 1866, the School Inspectors voted to organized another school district to be known as School District No.7, and the first meeting to be held at the home of Joseph North and that John Mansfield was to notify the taxable inhabitant of said district of the meeting and place.

By the end of the year of 1866, there were seven schools in Dayton Township to teach the children of the many settlers who were coming into the area. As other schools were built in the area they begin to take on name instead of District No. Some of the names of the other schools in Dayton Township were: Dayton Center, Donahue, Doud, Lordon, Packer, Tyndall, Walker and Waters School

Dayton Township had only one post office located in the township. Willcox Post Office was established on May 28, 1898. This post office was located in the Dayton Center Store and had only one postmaster, Miron M. Dake. The office was discontinued on Oct 31, 1903, with the mail going to Fremont. The office was named for Henry Willcox, Assistant Postmaster at Fremont, who assisted in getting it established.

In 1917, A. Griswold and Son had the store and sold general merchandise. He bought veal, poultry, eggs, butter and cream. The telephone number was 245-2L-1S (The line number was 245 and the store was two long rings and 1 one short ring. Other lines for Dayton Center were 248, 255 and 363. North Dayton line number was 350 and the Devil Lake line was 362. Most of these farm line would have from 10 to 20 customers and some time even more, per line. These farm phone lines were owned and maintained by the farmers on the line themselves.