

PIONEER SKETCHES OF ENSLEY TOWNSHIP, NEWAYGO COUNTY, MICH.

By James Kinney , aged 83 years.

Ensley township has a great variety of soil and was covered at one time with a dense growth of timber of nearly every kind known in Michigan. It also has many fine lakes which in early days were filled with all kinds of fish. It is noted for its high elevation. The ground being rolling, it afforded a great hunting ground for the Indians as well as white men.

A large Indian camp was located on section 5 another on northeast corner of section 9. There was also one on section 36, Croton township just north of section 1, Ensley, near springs known as Indian Springs.

The first white settlers were Benjamin Ensley and wife who came in 1854 and located on northeast corner of section 12 and Joseph Kellar on the east side of section 2. Joseph Kellar did the first plowing ever done in town. Hiram Lutz was another of the early settlers of that year, settling on the northeast corner of section 11.

In the spring of 1855, William S. Hillman settled on the south side of section 5 on the farm now owned by his grandson, Eugene Hillman. Mr. Hillman cut the first road from Ensley's Corners west to his land, arriving at Ensley's place Saturday night with his wife and two small boys from near Greenville. He made a road through the woods to his land, brought lumber from north of Croton with an ox team, and had his shanty ready to move in by Wednesday. It had a sand floor and no

doors nor windows. That fall some land was cleared and sowed to wheat and he and Mr. Ensley the next year harvested the first crop ever raised in the township.

Smith Cook and family and his brother-in-law, Andrew Flynn, came the fall of 1855 and settled near the center of the township. Their homesteads are still farmed by their children. Ann Cook, daughter of Smith and Rose Cook, was the first white child to be born in the township. She is still living at Springfield, Missouri.

In the spring of 1861 Andrew Flynn was married to Esther Clark, who lived only a few months, her death being the first in the township. She was buried near her home and afterward moved to the North Ensley cemetery. Esther Clark was a sister of E. R. Clark of Croton and also of the first wife of William Hillman. She was the first teacher to hold school in the township, it being all in one district. The schoolhouse was built of logs on the southeast corner of section 9. Later a fractional district was organized and a frame schoolhouse built on the southeast corner of section 35.

Andrew Flynn returned to Canada for a year. He then returned to his farm in Ensley where he lived at the old home until his death except for three years he served in the 6th Michigan Cavalry during the Civil War. Mr. and Mrs. Smith Cook lived many years and both died on the same farm they cleared out of the woods.

In the year 1856 Ransom E. French settled on the south side of section 29. Aimbald E. Spaulding settled just across the line and Abram Terwillegar on the west side of section 15.

In the spring Hank Dona moved on the northeast corner of section 36 and in the fall Parker Simpson on the east side of section 24. John Fuller, John V. Grandall, and Horace Briggs located on the east side of sections 35 and 36, also Joseph Osborn and brother John and Ethan Robinson and brothers Rix and Jesse settled on sections 31 and 32. John Kinney brought his family from Baltimore and settled on the southwest corner of section 9 in the spring of 1857 where he built his first log house.

The township of Ensley was organized and the first town meeting held in April 1859 in a small log building, it being the residence of Smith Cook. There were 23 voters present. James Kinney, then a lad of fourteen years, is the only person living who attended that meeting. Levi White was elected supervisor, Hiram Lutz, clerk, and William S. Hillman, treasurer.

Before this time, Ensley was a part of Croton. Levi White, the supervisor, moved to Lowell before his term was out and A. A. Kellogg was elected to fill his place and was the first supervisor from the new township to meet with the Board of Supervisors at Newaygo, the county seat. The year 1856 saw more new settlers arrive than had any previous year.

Until the arrival of the Kellogg brothers, there was not a horse in the whole township and very few of the settlers owned a yoke of oxen. Sometimes two neighbors would own a pair together. Ox power was often used for threshing the grain for there were no steam threshers at that time.

In the early fifties there was a stage line run through the west part of the town called the Grand Rapids and Croton road. There were two settlers on the road between Sparta and Croton, one

being at White Creek where he kept a stopping place for travellers, and the other south of Duke's Creek where the road crosses the creek, a distance of twenty miles. Later the stage was abandoned and one run from Grand Rapids to Newaygo. After that a man named Benjamin Myers carried mail on horseback from Grand Rapids to Croton, making the round trip weekly. (This man was still living at Sparta a short time ago.) At that time there were three families took the Detroit Free Press, a weekly and these with a few letters comprised the mail. At this time the settlers in Ensley had to go to Croton to send or receive mail.

In the year 1868 the Grand Rapids and Indiana Railroad was built to Cedar Springs and the stage line was run from Cedar Springs to Big Rapids. A stage line was also started from Newaygo by way of Croton to connect with the Big Rapids line at Benjamin Ensley's hotel, where they exchanged horses. There was also an express line to Big Rapids by a firm called Cook & Johnson.

There was a wonderful business done at Ensley's Corners. It was said that it was more than at any one hotel in Grand Rapids. Later there was a mail line from Croton to a post office in Ensley. Mail came once a week and the first carrier was Everett E. Kirk, who was later killed by the breaking of a pulley on a hay fork at the Hillman barn.

In 1869 the railroad reached Howard City and the mail was brought from there to three different postoffices in Ensley, one at Buchanan's store, one at George Cook's store at Grove, and one at Plumville in the southwest part of the town. About thirty years later we had the rural free delivery.

built, there was no market for timber and the settlers logged and burned millions of feet of number one pine and oak as they had to clear the land to raise something to eat.

At one time, in 1870, there were ten shingle mills and four saw mills in operation in the township. During the winter of 1868 and 1869 Alexander Blake of Grand Rapids cut off ten million feet of logs and hauled them on sleighs to the Muskegon river. The following summer, he trucked in four million feet. It was all delivered to Carmichael's railway. During the winter of 71-72, James and Patrick Kinney put in two million feet at Tamarack Creek, all cut off the east side of section 4. They had to cut through three miles of solid timber to reach the creek.

The first portable saw mill was built on section 28 by Smith & Grall and remained there until the timber around was all cut. The first shingle mill was built in 1869 by Wagner Bros. and later sold to Theodore Frey, who is one of the oldest and first ministers in the county. Wyman, Buzzell & Co. owned a lumber mill in Grand Haven and built camps all over the west side of the township. They drew the logs to Rogue River and floated them down to Grand River and down to Grand Haven.

The first grist mill in the township was built by Frey Brothers on section 20. Kimball & Spaulding built a water power mill on section 32.

The first soldiers to enlist from Ensley in the Civil War were Add Buchanan in the 3d Michigan Infantry and Philip Jordan, Vine Sked, John Sked, and Andrew Flynn in the 6th Michigan Cavalry. In the spring of 1864, Peter Lohr, W. Wrightman, Peter

and Joseph Hull, Joseph Kellar, and W. Hall enlisted in the 7th Michigan Cavalry. All returned except W. Hall.

The first church was the Baptist, built at Ensley Center. Before this, meetings were held in school houses, services being held by such pioneer ministers as ^Wlder Kelly of Croton, Elder Frey of Ensley, and Elder Stillwell of Rockford. In 1880 the St. John's Catholic Church was built on section 11. Later the Methodist Episcopal church was built in the south part of the town and the Free Methodist near Baptist Lake. More school districts were organized until there were nine in the township. In the good old days, the teacher received \$5 a week and boarded round.

In the spring of 1858 Thomas Kinney, ^Sr., with his wife and baby boy one year old came from Baltimore. They came as far as Lowell on the D. & M. railroad and came with horses to Ensley by way of Grand ^Rapids. (The railroad did not reach Grand Rapids until July 4, 1858). They came through by way of Solon Center. There was a new roadcut through the woods to ^Ensley Center. No crossways had been built yet and they had to cross creeks and go around marshes and hills. When only one mile from the county line, one wagon broke down and had to be left in the woods. The other went on until they reached some marshes in sections 33 and 34, Ensley. While crossing they got stuck in the mud and had to unhitch the horses and leave the wagon until nextday when it was drawn out with oxen. Mrs. Kinney walked and carried the boy three miles to Smith Cook's with only the brush and logs out out of the road.

A young man from Croton was going to marry an Ensley school teacher who lived four miles north of Ensley's Corners. They started for Cedar Springs at 8 o'clock in the morning. At four o'clock they reached Pangborn's Corners on the county line and stopped at Mr. Pangborn's to rest the horses. They had the ceremony performed here and went on to Cedar Springs, arriving at nine o'clock at night.

One exciting day in 1864 John Kinney, Jr. shot a deer in the early morning. John came back to get some help to bring in the deer. His little brother, Mike, heard the excitement and rushed out of bed in his night clothes only stopping to put on his father's silk plug hat and followed, the others not knowing he was coming behind. They turned off the road but he was close enough to see the three of them. He turned also but missed them. When they reached home, his mother asked where Mike was. They had not seen him, and his mother, supposing he was with them, we all knew he was lost. That same day his brother Tom was raising a barn and the men were all flocking to the raising. The alarm was given out and they searched the woods for him and in about an hour a man named Sked saw him coming to the road and the first man he met told him about the lost boy. So the boy was found. The barn was raised and the venison was very acceptable to cook for the raising as men came from three counties and four townships to help.

ENSLEY

One of first settlers was Orrin Andrews. He lived in Ben Ensley's house for a time.

Early settlers found a pile of buckhorns and deer hair ten feet high near line between Art Alvorson and Ed Kinney farms on section 5, southeast quarter.

An Indian camp on section 9 northwest of Mr. Bellamy's place.

X (A coffee pot made of clay entirely covered with silver and with name, Philip E. ~~etc~~-----found on Cleve Cook place when digging cellar. Sold to George Waycott of Cedar Springs.

Kittie M. Hillman, 637 Burton St., S. E., Grand Rapids copied James Kinney's sketches.

X This is an error. The pot was not made from clay but is entirely of silver. It is evidently of French manufacture, but the name, outside of "Philip E" is undetectable. The pot was not sold to Mr. Waycott but is now in my possession, having been given to me by Cleve Cook. (H.H.)