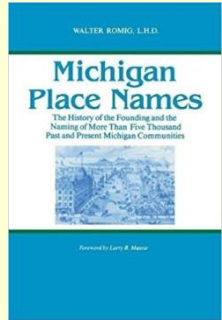


For some reason, I've been intrigued with Dearborn Colony ever since I first heard about it. It's mentioned in Walter Romig's book *Michigan Place Names*. "Otsego County: this settlement was formed by a back to the land movement begun during the Depression (1932), by six families from Dearborn, with aid from that city."



Where in Otsego County was Dearborn Colony located? Was there a town -- is it still there? Who were the six families? Did more families move there later? Why did they choose Otsego County? Let the detective work begin!



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A front page story (shown to left) in the Otsego County Herald Times on October 6, 1932 gave a few more details. The settlement would be located in Charlton Township about three miles north of Johannesburg on Beckett Road. This story says eight families. Other reports will vary and some will claim 100 more families are interested in joining the venture.

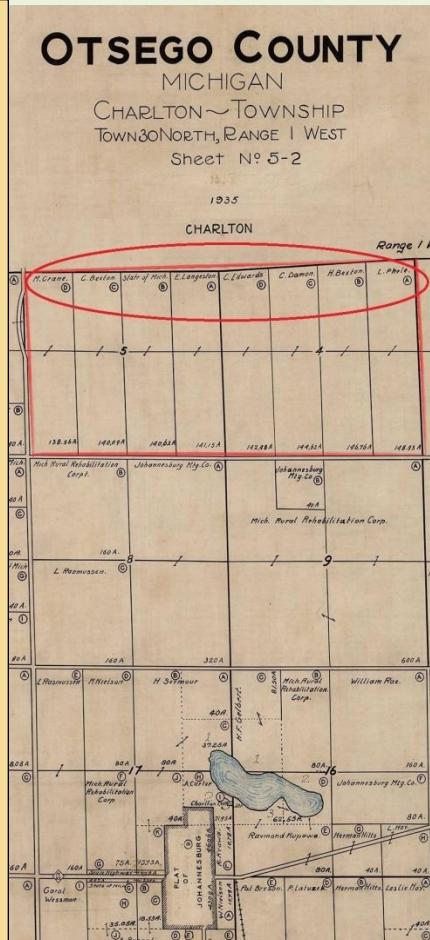
The Detroit Free Press called the community New Dearborn and was touted as the solution to the welfare problem. Land was purchased for 10¢ per acre. The men lived in tents until log cabins could be built for each family. Participants had to have prior farming experience and be willing to make a five year commitment in this homestead experiment.

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The 1935 plat map shown to the right lists the owners of the farms that made up Dearborn Colony. Each parcel was about 140 acres. Census records provided the names of the family members.

- Charles and Lorena Buxton.
Children: Charles Jr., Nancy, Barbara, Doris
- Ernest Langston – no information
- Earl Edwards – no information
- Christopher and Nora Damon
- Harris and Hazel Mae Buxton
Children: Dorothy, Marion, Mildred
- Leon and Lenora Piehl – no information
- Other people from Dearborn associated with this endeavor included Earl Johnson and Charles Weyth. It is unclear if Minnie Mae Crane was part of this program

Other sources of information include the book *Michigan: A Guide to the Wolverine State* and "Welfare Fares Well in Dearborn" in *The Dearborn Historian*, Autumn 1998.



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Matt Nowak, Charlton Township Supervisor and history buff, provided valuable assistance with this History Matters research project. He found the Michigan Rural Inventory for each farm. These 2 page reports described the house, barns, livestock, and field crops. A hand drawn sketch provided the building's dimensions as well as land use in 1938.

A wealth of information was found in a series of newspaper articles from the Dearborn area. Special thanks to Mason Christensen, Archivist at the Dearborn Historical Museum, for sharing those resources with us.



Have you heard of the Dearborn Colony? Do you know any of the families mentioned? Let's see if we can find photos of their homes. Please join in this on-going search and **share** what you discover.