

Elmira

The village of Elmira was first platted in 1883, although the first settlers arrived over 100 years ago. William S. Hartwell was the proprietor of one plat, while Thomas S. Jordan and his wife Sarah were the owners of the other. Neither of these families still have descendants living in Elmira. Many families, however, among the early settlers of Elmira, do have descendants living in Elmira or in Northern Michigan.

Elmira was originally named Windsor and then renamed Elmira. We cannot tell you how these names originated. Some remembrances are lost in the mists of the passing years.

Many of the early settlers were lumbermen or worked in lumber camps. The roads leading out of Elmira were very narrow through dense virgin forests with only turnouts for passing. Wintertime traveling was very difficult. Elmirans depended very much on the daily Grand Rapids & Indiana (later Pennsylvania Railroad and now Penn-Central) trains. The railroad first came through Elmira 102 years ago. Around 1910 as many as 100 trains passed through Elmira in 24 hours. Many of the steam engines refueled at the coal dock and took on water from Pump House Pond. There was a roundhouse for repairing railroad cars and locomotives. There were many sidings where cars could be loaded and unloaded. There was a spur running south up into Mt. Jack along the county line, and at one time in the early twenties some Elmira boys, now men in their sixties, remember walking on top of

freight cars for over a mile on this railroad spur.

Around 1892 Elmira had four sawmills, two hotels, five stores, a Presbyterian church, postoffice, school and a town hall. It also had four saloons. Population was about 400. The sawmills were owned and operated by Jerry Mahoney, Sam Schuyler (whose son Ronald lives in Elmira with his wife Lelah), Albert Losey and M. Phiffer. These mills sawed lumber, made barrel staves and material for cheese boxes. The hotel proprietors were Mr. Meadow and Royce and Robert Craven. James Combs had a general store, and Tom Jordan a grocery. L.V. Beebe owned a hardware store and Mr. Fordmas a drug store. Frank Gregg was the postmaster, and a Mr. A. Brooks was in charge of the school.

Rev. and Mrs. Harry McNish came to the United States from Canada in 1873, and after he held pulpits in Excelsior and Acme, came to Elmira and was a minister of the United Brethren Church. The McNishes later moved from Elmira, but after they retired they returned to live with their granddaughter, Olive Martin, the Elmira postmistress. In July, 1942, they celebrated their 63rd wedding anniversary and lived for several years thereafter. Olive Martin is retired and still lives in Elmira.

Some of the families living in Elmira by 1892 included: John Monross, and Dr. H. Monross, George Moorehouse, Mr. and Mrs. Culwell Martin, Joe Thumm, J. Huddleston, Jerry Mahoney, Mr. and Mrs.



Sawmill owned by Sam Schuyler. Picture taken in 1898.