

Townships

A hundred years ago, before 1875, sparsely populated Otsego County was attached to Antrim County. On January 14, 1875, a bill was introduced in the state legislature to detach certain territory from the present township of Otsego Lake in the then unorganized county of Otsego, and to organize the same into a separate township to be known as the Township of Elmira.

Otsego Lake Township was detached from Antrim County March 12, 1875, and organized into Otsego County in the 18th judicial district. It now consisted of four townships; Otsego Lake, Charlton, Livingston, and Elmira. The first meeting of the board of supervisors was held May 1, 1875 in Charles Brink Boarding House at Otsego Lake Village. Present were: Elmira Township, Charles Davis; Otsego Lake Township, Reuben Murray; Livingston Township, George H. Smith; Charlton Township, Thomas Woodin.

Not all petitions presented were successful. One such petition asked that, "Township 32 North of Range 1, 2 and 3 West, now forming part of the Township of Livingston, be set off and organized into a separate township to be known as Elmwood. The first meeting to be held at the house of Robert Menger the first Monday of April 1876. Frank Randolph, Madison Wade, and G.S. Van Wert electors to preside at the meeting and appoint a clerk. The petition was granted.

There was also a petition for the organization of Town 32 North Range 1, 2 and 3 into a new township of Bagley. That was not granted either. Bagley did become a township six years later, however.

Another petition was presented by 12 freeholders of the township of Hayes asking that Town 30 North Range 4 West, being part of the Township of Hayes, be detached from said township and erected into a new township to be called the Township of Garfield. This petition was also denied.

Hayes and Corwith Townships were organized by a special act of the legislature in 1877. Judson Hooker was the first supervisor of Hayes Township. In Corwith the first supervisor was O.F. French, Thomas Woodin was treasurer and W.E. Gillett clerk. After two years as supervisor, Mr. French was made chairman of the Board of Supervisors. According to the VANDERBILT REVIEW, a weekly newspaper printed in Vanderbilt 1884 and 1885, the first settler in Corwith Township was Rober Menzies who built a small home south and west of Vanderbilt in 1873.

Dover became the seventh township of Otsego County in 1879. William Barnes was Supervisor; Frank Wright, Clerk; David Brown, Treasurer.

Bagley became the eighth township in 1882. Early

records were destroyed in a fire.

In late 1888, from the Otsego County Board of Supervisors minutes it was "resolved that Town 29 North of Range 2 West, also Town 30 North of Range 2 West, all in the Township of Charlton, Otsego County, be detached from said Township of Charlton and that the same be and is hereby organized into a new Township of Chester. The first annual township meeting to be held at Stevens Lumber Company Site, April 1889. The first Inspectors for the election of the new Township of Chester to be: Allen Dickason, James Gates, and John Covert. The duty of the three above men to preside at the first meeting." With the organization of Chester, Otsego County townships reached nine, the number it has today.

A Sawyer Township, once part of Dover Township, existed for a while. It was named after Samuel Sawyer, the first settler of that area. As a township, their first caucus was held March 10, 1923. Officers elected on April 2, 1923 were: Charles Bloom - Supervisor; Ira Webber - Clerk; Samuel Sawyer - Treasurer; David Haskill - Highway Commissioner; Melvin Milton - Justice of the Peace (1 year); Edward Pomeraning - Justice of the Peace (2 years); Lewis Huff - Board of Review; Ada Webber - Board of Review; Duran Decker - constable.

A special meeting of the Townships of Sawyer and Dover was held on May 31, 1923 for the purpose of settling up with the Township of Dover. The latest recorded meeting of Sawyer Township was held March 30, 1934.

On April 16, 1934, Charlton Township met with Sawyer Township and agreed to take over Sawyer Township and School District No. 1 of Sawyer Territory.

So Otsego County was back to nine townships again.

Homestead patents for land acquired by early settlers of Otsego County's nine townships were signed by eight different Presidents of the United States. These were Presidents Grant, Hayes, Garfield, Arthur, Cleveland, Harrison, and McKinley. The patents were registered from land offices in five cities: Reed City, Detroit, Marquette, Grayling and Traverse City.