

**A
MICHIGAN SESQUICENTENNIAL
HISTORY
OF
INGHAM COUNTY**



**PREPARED BY
THE INGHAM COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

INGHAM COUNTY

Ingham County has the unique distinction of being the only county in the United States in which the capitol is not located in its county seat. The Michigan State Capitol is located in Lansing, while the county seat and courthouse are located in Mason.

COVER PHOTO

Taken in 1902, the Holley and Bullen's North Aurelius store on Columbia Road was built in a swale hole and later moved by Eifert Road. Once a meeting place, general store and post office, the store faded out when rural free delivery was introduced. This picture from the collection of "Babs Photo's" was taken from a tin type.

INTRODUCTION

After many months of careful research the material used in this booklet has been verified and accepted as accurate. Heresay and folklore have been included only in cases in which there is a strong tradition of their acceptance as fact.

Much of the early history has been gathered from books written by early settlers about their lives and experiences. Recollections of these pioneers do not always agree. There are differences of opinion regarding the earliest settlements in given areas, but we have tried to procure reliable information.

We, the members of the Ingham County Historical Commission, wish to keep history alive, especially in this sesquicentennial year.

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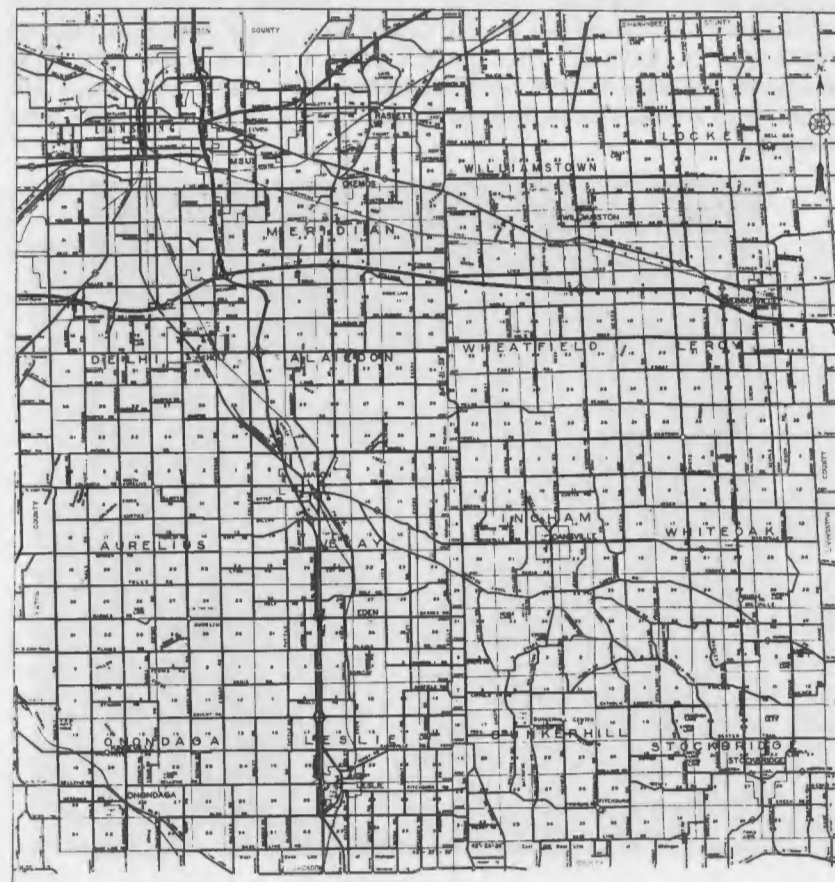
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HISTORY OF INGHAM COUNTY

The County of Ingham was designated and named after Samuel D. Ingham by an act of the Legislative Council of the Territory of Michigan on the 29th of October in 1829. Samuel D. Ingham was Secretary of the Treasury under President Andrew Jackson.

Nine counties in Michigan were set off and named by the Legislative Act of 1829 for the President and his Cabinet. They were known as the "Cabinet Counties." These counties were Barry, Berrien, Branch, Calhoun, Cass, Eaton, Ingham, Jackson and Van Buren. Samuel D. Ingham never saw the county which was named for him.

Ingham County is comprised of the sixteen townships as follows: Alaiedon, Aurelius, Bunker Hill, Delhi, Ingham, Lansing, Leroy, Leslie, Locke, Meridian, Onondaga, Stockbridge, Vevay, Wheatfield, White Oak and Williamstown.

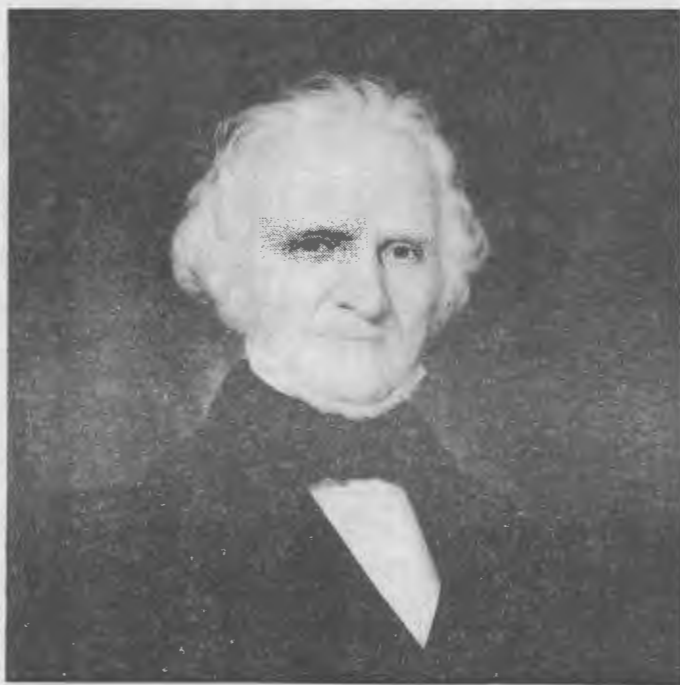


MAP OF INGHAM COUNTY

SAMUEL DELUCENNA INGHAM

Samuel D. Ingham, a manufacturer, congressman and cabinet member, was born on September 16, 1779 at Great Spring near New Hope, Pennsylvania. Schooled at home until age ten, Samuel went away to school until fourteen when the failing health of his grandfather made further attendance impossible. Samuel took an apprenticeship with a paper maker until he was nineteen. After becoming the manager of a mill in New Jersey, he courted and married in 1800 and soon returned to Pennsylvania to build a paper mill on his parents' farm. In 1806 he was elected to the House of Representatives. In 1808 he was appointed by the governor to a Justice of the Peace post. In 1812 he was elected to the Thirteenth Congress and was then re-elected to the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Congress. In 1819 he became the Secretary of the Commonwealth and later elected to the Seventeenth Congress and re-elected each term until 1829.

When Andrew Jackson was elected as President of the United States, he appointed Ingham as Secretary of the Treasury in 1829. Although Ingham was very influential, he did not see "eye to eye" with other cabinet members. On June 20, 1831 he left politics and devoted himself to business interests in coal fields, railroads and inland waterways. He became an invalid in later life and died on June 5, 1860 in Trenton, New Jersey.



SAMUEL D. INGHAM

MICHIGAN'S STATE CAPITOL

Michigan's State Capitol, located in the city of Lansing, was erected during the years 1872 and 1878. The architect was Elijah E. Myers of Springfield, Illinois. The construction company of Osburn and Co. of Rochester, New York and Detroit, Michigan was contracted for the construction of the new building. The cornerstone ceremonies were held in October, 1873 and the dedication of the capitol was held after the inauguration of Governor Croswell on January 1, 1879.

Efforts to restore the capitol have been underway for quite some time. Presently, work on the fourth floor is in progress. A preservation master plan has been supported financially by both the house and the senate, was endorsed by Governor James J. Blanchard to preserve this valuable historical site.

The state capitol of Michigan was placed on the National Register of Historic Places on January 25, 1971.



STATE CAPITOL BUILDING IN LANSING

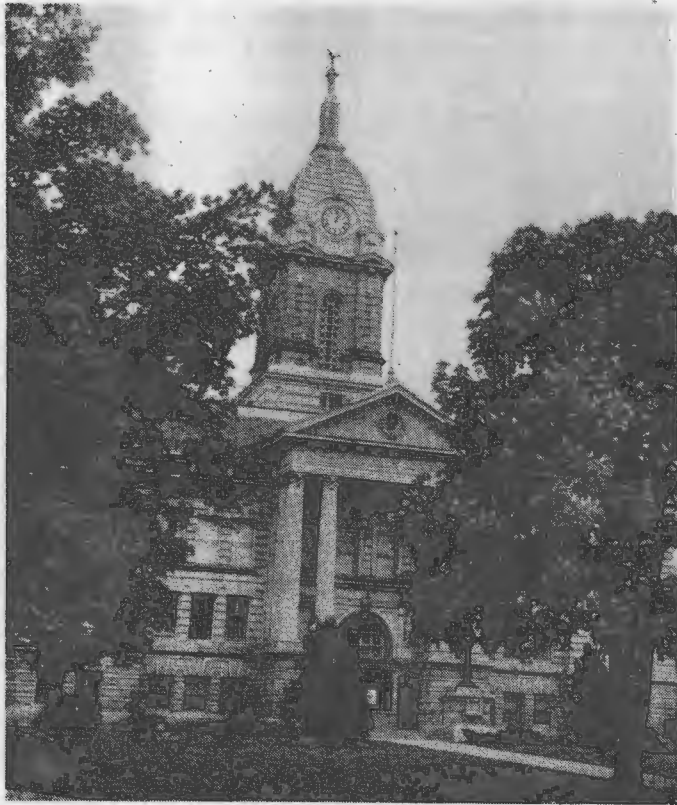
INGHAM COUNTY COURTHOUSE

The Ingham County Courthouse, located in the county seat of Mason, was erected during the years 1902 to 1904. The architect, Edwin Bowd of Lansing, along with the construction company of Rickman and Sons, undertook the great task of building the structure. On May 5, 1903 the cornerstone was lowered into place and on May 9, 1905 the building was dedicated, bringing many dignitaries to the city on a clear and cold day.

The courthouse has been the scene of many trials in the twentieth century. In January of 1905, the first trial in the new courthouse concerned the murder of a White Oak Township farmer.

When the new courthouse opened it had offices for twelve people, including personnel of an insurance company and a janitor. Presently, over fifty people work in the historic structure.

In 1971 the courthouse was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. In 1980 the Board of Commissioners adopted a study to begin restoration of the courthouse. The outside phases are completed and work on the inside has begun.



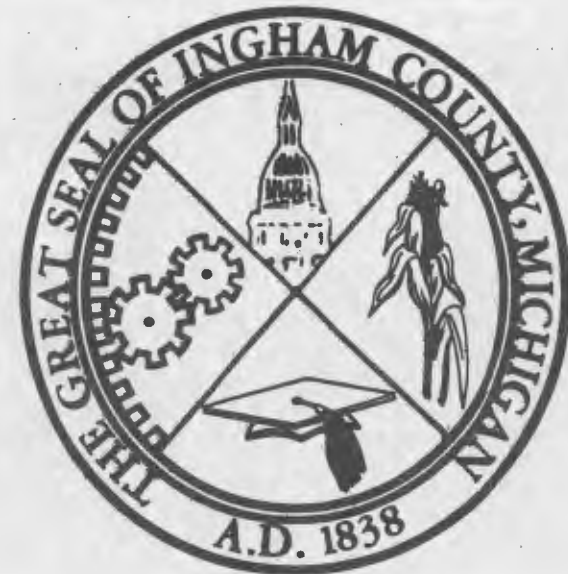
COUNTY COURTHOUSE IN MASON

INGHAM COUNTY SEAL

The Ingham County Board of Commissioners in June of 1970 adopted a seal for the county to use as a stamp of authority on official county documents and papers. Frederick L. Stackable, a Commissioner from the eighteenth district at the time is credited for the design and development of the seal.

This official seal, approved November 10, 1970 at the Board of Commissioners meeting is composed of symbols that represent the government, industry, education and agriculture.

The first use of this seal in December 1970 was on the resolution honoring Frederick L. Stackable, the designer of the seal.



THE GREAT SEAL OF INGHAM COUNTY

TOWNSHIP RECOGNITION

On October 29, 1829, the Legislative Council of the Territory of Michigan established legislation which created Ingham. In November of that year the legislature annexed Ingham County to the County of Washtenaw for judicial purposes. In the same act, the counties of Ingham and Jackson, which were attached to Washtenaw County, were combined and became a portion of Dexter Township. Jackson County was laid out in 1829 and it was organized in 1832. Ingham was attached to Jackson County for judicial purposes to carry on legal and lawful matters between 1832 and 1838.

The Act of Organization, approved on April 5, 1838 by the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Michigan, states that "the County of Ingham be and the same is now hereby organized and the inhabitants thereof entitled to all the rights and privileges to which, by law the other county inhabitants are entitled."

The Legislature of Michigan approved and organized the sixteen townships of Ingham County on the following dates:

Stockbridge Township	March 26, 1836
Aurelius Township	March 11, 1837
Ingham Township	March 11, 1837
Leslie Township	December 30, 1837
Onondaga Township	March 6, 1838
Vevay Township	March 6, 1838
Alaiedon Township	March 15, 1838
Bunker Hill Township	March 21, 1839
White Oak Township	March 21, 1839
Williamstown Township	March 22, 1839
Wheatfield Township	March 22, 1839
Leroy Township	March 19, 1840
Delhi Township	February 16, 1842
Lansing Township	February 16, 1842
Meridian Township	February 16, 1842
Locke Township	February 16, 1842

ALAIEDON TOWNSHIP

History states that Alaiedon was named by Henry Schoolcraft. He coined the name which likely means "the hill land for a fair and excellent living." The first township meeting was held in Jefferson City.

Jefferson City, which was located north of Mason a few miles, was named after Thomas Jefferson. It was platted by Governor Stevens T. Mason to be the county and capitol seat. However, the plat was not recorded and later became known as the Isaac Drew farm. There are no visible reminders of saw mill, schoolhouse or log buildings that once comprised the proposed seat of government.

The first settlers in the area were Eli Chandler, James Phillips, Joel Strickland, William Lewis and Edbert Patterson.

The county poor farm was located at the corner of Holt and Okemos Roads in Alaiedon Center from 1844 to 1869. An 1869 fire destroyed the building and took the lives of six people. It was rebuilt in 1878 and sold a year later when the county relocated the poor farm to Meridian Township.



THRESHING SCENE IN ALAIEDON TOWNSHIP

AURELIUS TOWNSHIP

In 1825 John Mullett surveyed the township lines and in 1826 Captain Hervey Parke surveyed section lines. One of the first settlers in the township was Elijah Woodworth, who came from Aurelius Township, Cayuga County, New York State. Historians give him credit for naming the township.

The first permanent settler was Reuben R. Bullen, who came to Michigan in 1836 from Wayne County, New York. The Bullen farm home on Onondaga Road remains in the family to this day.

In 1837 the village of Columbiaville, also known as Columbia, was platted and thirteen families were residing there by 1838. Remnants of an early mill are still visible at the site of this village.

Other pioneer villages were Klink (now obsolete), and Howe's corners, named for Enoch Howe in 1837. In 1859 Howe's corners was renamed Aurelius Center, the name it retains today.

Aurelius Township is on the western edge of the county and is bounded by Onondaga Township on the south, on the west by Eaton County, on the north by Delhi Township, and east by Vevay Township.



OLD PHOTO OF AURELIUS CENTER

BUNKERHILL TOWNSHIP

Adam Bunker, for whom the township was named, was an early settler and built the first house in the area. Today the township has two areas that are unincorporated: Bunkerhill and Fitchburg.

Bunkerhill is also called Bunkerhill Center and is known for its Romanesque style church and buildings. A cemetery was established in 1849 and the mission church in 1863. After becoming a parish church in 1899, a convent and rectory were added in 1905 and a school in 1912. All of these still exist today.

The first settler in Fitchburg was Ferris Fitch who arrived in 1848. Selah Fitch joined his brother and was famous for his stone masonry. Selah became one of the largest landowners in Bunkerhill Township. He also built the second Ingham County Courthouse in Mason, an Italianate brick structure that served the county from 1858 to 1902.

The Ferris S. Fitch residence, a two story brick structure, still stands in Fitchburg. It is built in the Italianate style that popularized this part of the country just prior to the civil war.



CATHOLIC CHURCH IN BUNKERHILL CENTER

DELHI TOWNSHIP

Delhi Township was first settled in January, 1837 by Frederick Luther and John Norris. Credit for the naming of the township is given to Roswell Everett. The name Delhi was possibly taken from the village in New York State of the same name.

In 1860, the post office at Delhi Center was renamed Holt, after Joseph Holt, the U.S. Postmaster General, to avoid confusion with the post office at Delhi Mills in Washtenaw County.

A log cabin schoolhouse was built in 1840 on Park Lane, the site of the present middle school.

Early communities in Delhi were Grovenburg, West Delhi, Packard or Packard Station and Five Corners, which was also known as North Holt.

The physical geography of Delhi Township tended to influence the settlers of the time. The Grand River is in the southwest, while the Sycamore Creek runs in the northeast. A hogsback ridge extends in the area. Mud Lake, also called Ghost Lake in the past with its swamps and draining creeks, is in the center.

Holt is one of the older unincorporated villages in Michigan.



OLD DEPOT BUILDING IN HOLT

INGHAM TOWNSHIP

Ingham Township was named after the county of the same name. The first settler in 1836 in the area was Marcus Beers.

The village of Dansville was laid out and platted in 1857 and incorporated in 1867. With stores, hotel, carriage shops and churches, the village was a stop on the stage coach that ran from Dexter and Mason. A major blow to the village growth occurred in 1870, when the Michigan Railroad bypassed Dansville and went to the south. It is said Dansville has stood still ever since in population.

The village of Ingham was planned near the western boundary of Ingham Township. Designated to become the county seat. On March 6, 1840 an act of the Michigan Legislature transferred this status to Mason. The village of Ingham, laid out into lots that were never sold, died a paper city.

The first schoolteacher in the township was a thirteen year old female member of the Skaddan family. One of the township's earliest pioneer families.



OLD PHOTO OF DOWNTOWN DANSVILLE

LANSING TOWNSHIP

Lansing Township is in the extreme northwest corner of Ingham County. The name Lansing was suggested for the township by Joseph E. North Sr. after his homeland Township of Lansing, Tompkins County, in New York.

In 1847, the State Legislature selected Lansing as the state capitol, and on the sixteenth of March of the year Governor William L. Greenly signed the bill. The Michigan constitution of 1850 reaffirmed this bill.

Today, the City of Lansing has expanded to take over most of Lansing Township. The economy is supported by three major factors. The state government provides a stability that is greatly appreciated. Michigan State University brings intellectual and cultural benefits to the area that a community this size would not normally enjoy. Oldsmobile, Fisher Body, Motor Wheel and a number of other companies provide people with the chance to get ahead in life.

The first township meeting was held in April, 1842 at a shanty near the red bridge, at the Plank Road crossing on the Red Cedar River.



MICHIGAN AVENUE LOOKING WEST TOWARD CAPITOL

LEROY TOWNSHIP

The Township of Leroy was first settled in 1837. It was named for a town in Genesee County, New York, the previous home of early township clerk, Owen Dana.

Phelpstown was a village that at one time was called Podunk, and was located on the old Grand River Trail. It later became obsolete.

The community of Webberville was originally called Leroy but was changed to honor Mr. H. P. Webber, the first person to plat out the village of Leroy. The village of Webberville developed in 1871, when the railroad was established across the county.

The Ephraim Meech family were the first settlers of the area, arriving in 1837. The first greetings Mrs. Meech received the morning after her arrival were from two Indians who asked for whiskey.

With the Red Cedar, Doan Creek, Dietz Creek and the Kalamink Creek flowing in the township, many a wolf and bear were constant disturbers of the peace.



GRAND RIVER AVE AND MAIN STREET IN WEBBERVILLE

LESLIE TOWNSHIP

Leslie Township was named by Dr. A.J. Cornell for a family he knew in eastern New York. The village of Leslie known once as Meekersville or Meekerville after a family which came here and settled. One of the family, Dr. Valorous Meeker, was the first doctor to settle in Ingham County. The village was incorporated in 1859, and later was changed to Leslie.

Leslie was first settled in March, 1836 by Elijah Woodworth. He came to the wilderness and built a home along Huntoon Creek at a site that is now on Bellevue Street near the creek bridge.

Teaspoon Corners was the site of a tavern and inn a few miles north of Leslie, and in 1874 it became known as North Leslie. Teaspoon Hill is a high hill just east of Teaspoon Corners and is the highest point in the county with an elevation of 1040 feet.



OLD PHOTO OF EAST BELLEVUE AVE IN LESLIE

LOCKE TOWNSHIP

Locke Township is located in the extreme northeast part of Ingham County. It was surveyed in 1824 and 1826 by Joseph Wampler. The township is believed to be named for the Township of Locke, Cayuga County, New York.

David Phelps, a New York resident settled here in February of 1838. Phelps, without benefit of roads or trails, was guided only by the marked trees of the surveyor in locating his newly acquired property.

In 1840, Phelps and a man named Johnson set out to collect honey and camp out in the woods. After some time they returned with barrels loaded upon a sled pulled by oxen. Their buckskin breeches had shrunk and barely reached to their knees. They were smeared with honey, smoke and soot and the boots they were wearing were held together by bark. This created a sensation and those who saw them were not likely to forget the occasion.

The hamlet of Belle Oak, now Bell Oak was founded in 1842 on land owned by James L. Nichols. The forty acres of land cost seventy five dollars and was paid for with state script.



1888 DRAWING OF ANDREW MOYER FARM

MERIDIAN TOWNSHIP

Meridian Township is named for its eastern boundary, the principal meridian of Michigan. The first settlers in the township were presumably the Marshall brothers, in 1837 or 1838. They erected a log house on the west shore of Pine Lake, which is now Lake Lansing.

The village of Hamilton was laid out and platted by Freeman Bray in 1841, but it was not recorded until 1851. By an act of legislature, the name was changed to Okemos in 1857.

Collegeville was platted in 1887. Its name was later changed to East Lansing. It was located north and next to the Michigan Agricultural College, which opened in May of 1857. The name was later changed to Michigan State University.

Chief (John) Okemos, according to history, camped and hunted in this area as chief of the Ottawas. A cousin of the war scarred Pontiac, and an ally of the Tecumseh tribe, chief Okemos was well remembered by those who first settled this area.



OLD MAIN STREET PHOTO OF OKEMOS

ONONDAGA TOWNSHIP

This township was named after Onondaga County, New York, the home of Orange Phelps who was an early settler in this portion of Ingham County. The first land entry was made by Oliver Booth from Gaines, New York in May, 1834.

The original plat of the village of Onondaga, was laid out in 1870 and named after the township. The village with several buildings previously erected, is located along the banks of the Grand River, and also along the old Plank Road which early settlers used as a major route into this region.

Another unincorporated village that is located in the township is Kinneville. originally platted in 1849 by Steven Van Kinney. It was name Nova Scotia after his place of origin. Van Kinney built a grist mill and saw mill on the banks of the Grand River to provide flour, meal and feed for settlers and their livestock, and to process their timber into lumber for building materials.

This area of the county has retained its strong rural agricultural character throughout history.



OLD PHOTO OF ONONDAGA

STOCKBRIDGE TOWNSHIP

This township was the first township organized in Ingham County. The first land purchased was in June of 1833. David Rogers and his wife are believed to be the earliest settlers in the township as well as in the county.

The name of Elijah Smith is identified with early efforts to build up a village in the township. In May of 1836 he entered a tract of land and named the village of Pekin. The early settlers were not content with the name and it was changed to Stockbridge. The town hall was constructed in 1892 on land that was deeded to the township by the Silas Beebe family in 1885. The township hall is still standing today. It was designated by the Lansing architect, Elijah Myers who is known as a prominent midwest architect of municipal and public buildings.

The township is noted for having more lakes than any other township in Ingham County. They are Lowe, Standish, Lyons, Jones, Carter, Jacobs, Nichols and Finks Lake.



STOCKBRIDGE TOWNSHIP HALL

VEVAY TOWNSHIP

It is said that Vevay Township got its name from Vevay Township, Switzerland County, Indiana. Vevay lies near the geographic center of the county. The first settlement in the township was by members of the Rolfe family in early 1836, where Mason is now, and was called the Rolfe settlement.

In 1840, Mason Center was chosen as the county seat because of its central location in the county. Named after the governor the name was shortened to Mason. It was incorporated as a village on March 26, 1865 and as a city in 1875. Having a saw mill, grist mill, milldam, tavern, general store, hotel, opera house and school house it soon became an important spot for land lookers and travelers in the area.

Eden was established in 1844 and was once called Chaplin's because of its location near the Chaplin homestead. The post office, store, blacksmith shop and shoe shop were on the stage route in 1863 that went from Jackson to Lansing.

Vevay Township's Rev. Augusta Chaplin earned the distinction of being the first woman in the world to achieve a doctor of divinity degree.



OLD TIME CELEBRATION IN DOWNTOWN MASON

WHEATFIELD TOWNSHIP

The first settlers in Wheatfield were the Gorsline family in 1836. The township was named after David Gorsline's home township in New York State. The first township meeting was held in 1841 at the residence of William Tompkins which was known as White Dog Corner, named for the fact that there were three white dogs owned in that vicinity.

Wheatfield Township, along with Leroy and White Oak were at first part of Ingham Township. Many confusing boundary and name changes over the years left Wheatfield with the name of Brutus until 1841 when, acting on a petition request, the Michigan Legislature once more changed the name to Wheatfield.

Wheatfield is bounded by Williamstown Township on the north, Leroy on the East, Alaiedon on the west and Ingham on the south.



WHEATFIELD UNITED METHODIST CHURCH IN 1900

WHITE OAK TOWNSHIP

The first land entry in White Oak Township was by Herman Lonn on January 21, 1835. The first settler to make a home here was Daniel Dutcher in June 1835. Daniel Dutcher's child, Abigail, was the first child born in the township. The Dutcher family during the first year received no visitors, but in the second year received as many as thirty-six pioneers. There were no roads at that time and an Indian trail was the only guide to the area.

The township's first community, Millville, boasted two stores, a cooper shop and post office. Settler James Reeves owned the property first in 1836. The property was then sold to Nelson Osborn, then Elias Clark, and next to Lemuel Woodhouse who owned a part interest in the community.

The Millville United Methodist Church is the only reminder today or evidence of a once thriving farming village.

White Oak Township was named for the most popular tree of the area. The white oak tree is easily identified in the summer by its leaves which have rounded lobes in contrast to the red oak whose leaf has pointed lobes.



OLD MILLVILLE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH PHOTO

WILLIAMSTOWN TOWNSHIP

The township was originally known as Phelpsstown after David Phelps in 1839. The village of Cedar, named for its location on the Red Cedar River, was settled by Hiram and Joseph Putnam in 1834. In 1839 the Williams Brothers bought land from the Putnam family and started the first permanent settlement in the township.

The village plat of Williamstown was laid out in 1845 by the Williams Brothers and the village was named for them. On April 5, 1871 the village was incorporated and in the first election five days later the village elected James M. Williams as the first president. The village soon built a dam, saw mill and grist mill to promote the area. In 1884 the village name was changed from Williamstown to Williamston.

It is probable that the government had much to do with the development of this township, as money was appropriated for a road that was to go from Detroit to Grand Rapids. With the opening of the road the village grew into a business center. The opening of the plank road in 1852 gave the village a new start, and the completion of the railway in 1871 further influenced its growth.



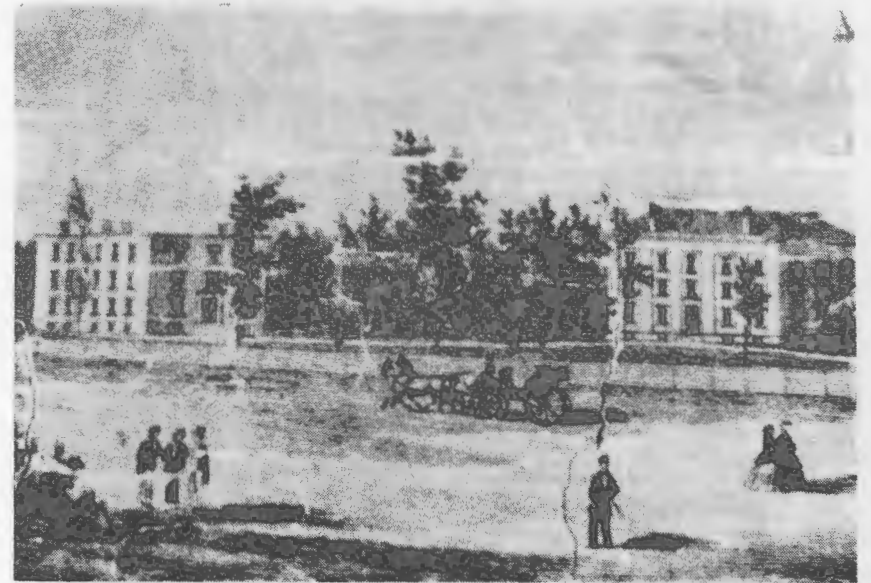
1910 PHOTO OF WILLIAMSTON

MICHIGAN STATE AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE

In 1850 a constitution of the state was adopted which says, "the legislature shall as soon as feasible, provide for the establishment of a agricultural school," friends of the project secured the passage of a bill for its organization in 1855.

Governor Kingsley S. Bingham gave an address at the opening ceremony in May 1857. The college at the time was in the woods. Brush and stumps still were not cleared away from the three brick buildings where officers, students and the public had gathered for this gala event. The first president of the college was Joseph R. Williams.

In 1955, the Michigan Agricultural College was renamed Michigan State University. Training and instruction at this institution of higher learning has been well known for the last 132 years. Michigan State University is the nation's oldest land grant college. Many of the early buildings were designed by Lansing architect Edwin A. Bowd.



MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY IN DAYS OF OLD

CHIEF OKEMOS

The most noted Indian who lived in this region after the settlement by the whites was Okemos, a celebrated chief who was both a Chippewa and an Ottawa. History states that in 1839 his permanent village was where Okemos now stands. Another one of his villages was at shim-nicon, near Portland. Chief Okemos was born between 1736 and 1775, as no one knows the exact date and Okemos did not know it himself. When he died on December 5, 1858, the old chief's age was between 83 and 122.

Chief Okemos was best known for his "on the war path" tales of Michigan and Northern Ohio. In the year 1814 the fighting life of Okemos was finally over when he presented himself before Col. Godfroy in command at Detroit, saying "man too much for Indian, now I make peace now and fight no more, me plenty fight enough."

In the latter part of Chief Okemos' life he had settled with his tribe into the peaceful life of hunting, fishing and trading with the white man. Between 1800 and 1850, more than five hundred thousand settlers made the journey into Michigan and changed the lives and ways of the Indians. Chief Okemos died in a wigwam and was buried along the river he loved.



CHIEF OKEMOS

INGHAM COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

The Ingham County Historical Commission, created by ordinance and resolution number 74-202, studies and advises the Board of Commissioners in all matters pertaining to history and acts as liaison on any historical matters between the board and other organizations and persons. It develops, promotes and participates in historical projects, programs, activities and services. The commission is authorized to accept, hold, control, administer and expend property and money for historical purposes in the name of the county.

Members of the Ingham County Historical Commission in this Sesqui-centennial year are:

Ford S. Ceasar, Lansing (chairperson)
Thomas G. Clinton, Mason (sec/treas)
Bette Downs, East Lansing
Mary Edgar, East Lansing
Harold H. Emmons III, Lansing (Vice-Chair)
Russell B. Henry, Leslie
Tim Howery, Leslie
Inge M. Kyler, Holt
Margaret O'Rourke, East Lansing

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Lansing Public Library—

Reference Section Personnel

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C/O The Ingham County Historical Commission

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Mason, Michigan 48854

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