

A CONDENSED HISTORY OF

HOPKINS TOWNSHIP

Compiled By Lena B. Martin in 1952

Strictly speaking, the settlers of Allegan County were not pioneers. The majority of them were people of more or less education and accustomed to the usages of civilization.

In the settling of the country there was no interim between savagery and civilization. The pioneer did not build and defend it with their rifles but for many years until the civil officers, courts, schools and churches made their appearances this was necessary in forming settlements, but not here, in Allegan County civil government sprang into being almost at once. The settlers brought civilization with them, and in harmony with the legislative should be governed.

From March 23, 1836, until the spring of 1842 the territory comprised within the limits of Dorr formed part of Otsego township, Watson Township was formed in 1842 and included Watson, Dorr and Hopkins.

Hopkins was established on the 29th of December, 1852 and comprised Township 3 and Range 12, as it does today. After obtaining separate organization, December 29th, 1852, Hopkins held its first town meeting in April, 1853 in the log house on Section 26, school district No. 1. The first township officers were: Jonathan O. Round, supervisor; John Parsons, Clerk; Erastus Congdon, Treasurer; Highway Commissioners, Hiram Loomis and William R. Ingerson; Justices of the Peace, John Truax and Jason Baker; School Inspectors, D.C. Ingerson and M. Van Duzen; Directors of the Poor; Thomas Wilson and T.J. Crampton; Constables, O. Perry and W.R. Ingerson. Luther Marin and Jason Baker were chosen Election Inspectors.

It was not many years after coming of the pioneers that a group of population of three communities were formed which may be described as centers, the first of these was Hopkins, or as it is known as Hopkinsburg to distinguish it from the Railroad Station of the former name and Ohio Corners. Later the community of Hillards was established.

J.O. Round, a native of Vermont, located on the Southwest ¼ of Section 26, and made a small clearing so that the log cabin he built in 1836 was ready for his family when they arrived in 1838. Until the arrival of the next settlers the Rounds family was extremely an isolated one, the nearest neighbor lived not less than five miles away. Mr. Round's clearing was necessarily very roughly done, his first crops grew up here and there among not only stumps, but logs. His corn was husked in the fields besides blazing logs. As he dryly remarked, "I gave no invitations to a husking bee as there were no neighbors to respond."

Their daughter, Sarah A., was the first white child born in 1838 in the new town and their little son aged two and one half years, Oziel Hopkins Round was the first death in the town, in June 1839.

The second pioneer, Erastus Congdon, was the first postmaster, located on Section 26 in 1838. He sold part of his land in 1856 to Dr. E.H. Wait and Robert Baird who with Mr. Congdon,

constructed a steam saw mill which was the central enterprise of this village. Several members were connected with the operation of the mill.

Dr. Waite opened a store in 1861 and William Richmond built a flouring mill. The hamlet continued to grow but the rivalry of the village located on the railroad continued to grow and the decline of the lumber industry worked to the detriment of the village since the Postoffice was discontinued there was only small business activity.

Entertainment consisted largely of logging bees, raisings for buildings, quilting bees, husking bees and dancing. If a young man found a red ear of corn he could kiss the girl of his choice.

A considerable number of the pioneers emigrated from New York and the New England States. Quite a large number of German and Polish families live in the wet part of the township and also in the northern section.

Naming of The Town

The Township of Dorr was set off from Watson and soon as the population was sufficient to justify another division Hopkins was set off from Dorr township. On that occasion nine men of this township dropped a slip of paper into a hat with his choice of name thereon. The name drawn was to be the name of the township and the first name drawn was to be the name of the township. It chanced that Hopkins was on the slip that was taken from the hat and thus the township was named in honor of the little lad whose death was the first within the borders of the township.

Early Settlers

Among the earliest settlers of Hopkins were Esek Baker and sons, Harvey N. and Jason. The father entered 160 acres of land on Section 28 to which he added 40 acres more later on.

Harvey N. Baker, a native of Massachusetts, married Catherine Schufelt of Pennsylvania. They settled on the farm now owned by Milton Knuth. He was an expert hewer of timber and was indentified with building operations at an early date. He assisted in building the first sawmill also in the construction of early bridges and other buildings at Otsego and in this part of the country.

His family consisted of 14 children, namely; Jackson, Alonzo, Milo, Edwin, Philander, and Eugene, all settlers in the township; Mary, Minerva, Melissa, Emily. When Emily was six years old she strayed into the forest and was not found for three days and two nights. She was finally found on the edge of Bear Swamp less than a mile from where the village of Hopkins now is. A large tree had fallen down and the child had crawled up among the branches. When hungry she ate berries which must have been huckleberries which were the only kind that was ripe at that time of the year. She said she slept by the side of a log, and when asked if she was cold, she replied, "Oh, no, there was a big black dog came and slept by the side of me."

Jason Baker built a log house and a barn in a little clearing in 1838. His house was hemmed in on all sides by a dense forest. He had a few cows and as was the custom at the time, the cows were turned into the woods to forage for themselves. A cow bell was fastened to the neck of one of the cows, this greatly aided in finding them when they were

ready to be driven home at milking time. Mr. and Mrs. Baker had several children, namely: Myron and Almond, farmers of Hopkins; George, who was a practicing physician here several years and then became a minister of the gospel and preached in several places the remainder of his life. Mrs. Almeda Simkins, Aurelia, Mrs. A.P. Varney, Martha, Mrs. Carrol, Clara, Mrs. Elmer Wolfinger, an early druggist in the village.

The first wedding in the township was that of Huldah Baker, daughter of Esek Baker, and John Lardner. Mr. Lardner arrived in 1842 and bought 120 acres of land on Sections 35 and another 40 in the adjoining township of Watson. They lived here several years than removed to Kalamazoo.

Albert Lane, another Ohio pioneer, came in 1854 and purchased 80 acres on Section 22, 120 acres on Section 27 and another 80 on Section 29. A log house had been built on Section 27 and 10 acres chopped which enabled Mr. Lane to clear 40 acres the first year. Mr. Lane sold a part of this land then removed to the farm on Section 22 where he and Mrs. Lane (nee Delia Andrews) and their son, Charles and wife (nee Flora Kidder) lived until their deaths.

Nelson Corbett and family made their weary and tedious way to Hopkins in the fall of 1846 and bought 120 acres of land on Section 35. Mr. J. O. Round gave the family shelter in his log house until quarters could be built on his own land. Mr. Corbett worked at clearing his place, but did not long survive. He died in the fall of 1850, and his estate with his heritage of hard labor went to his son George. He continued the improvement of the farm, bought more land, built commodious farm buildings. In 1859 he married Martha Baldwin of New York.

S.W. Ingerson, a native of Vermont, emigrated to Hopkins in 1850 and bought land near J. O. Round. His brother D.C. Ingerson, came in 1854 and Sherman I. Smith of Ohio arrived here in 1857 and secured his land for which he paid \$5 per acre. He had made a little clearing by chopping down trees in the forest. In 1859 he built a small board house and cleared the land to raise a small crop the first year. He engaged in chopping for others and exchanged work to get use of a team. After two or three years he was enabled to purchase a yoke of steers and afterward carried on the farm work more readily. His entire place was covered with a dense growth of natural forest trees. He sold some of his timber disposing of fine white wood for \$4 per thousand delivered at the mill. Much of the fine beech and maple were burned. He built his residence in 1886, he had lived in the pioneer house 30 years. This was a family of singers and musicians.

Martin Smith and two brothers, A>B> and Norman located here in 1856 and settled near the farm of their brother, Sherman I. Smith.

Herman F. White, James E. Parmelee, Josiah Parmelee and Albert Lane from Ohio emigrated here in 1854. They purchased four 80 acre tracts of land in one body, thinking they would thus be company for each other in what was then a wild region.

After purchasing their land the three Parmelees and Lane returned to Ohio, but following their return to Hopkins, Herman White was married in this county to Miss Jane Buskirk, daughter of a pioneer. He chose a residence on section 22 where he purchased 80 acres of unimproved land. As Mr. White had no team he could improve his land but slowly, his first planting was done with out any plowing whatever. Mr. White chopped the timber from a few acres of land and built a log shanty with a shake roof in the clearing.

The shanty contained one room and was lighted with two windows. In true pioneer style the couple began their domestic life collecting their outfit. They bought a wastub piled into it their scanty supply of furniture for the table, each taking a handle walked homeward a number of miles to their humble abode.

Mr. White took a most active and helpful interest in all that pertained to general progress and improvement.

Josiah Parmelee settled on the 80 acres adjoining Mr. White's farm on the north, the farm where Harry Tuttle now lives. Hard work in the hot days overcame his yoke of oxen and also Mr. Parmelee and as a result Mr. Parmelee passed away followed by the death of his wife and baby shortly afterwards.

Ohio Corners

Nine settlers and their families came from Ohio Corners and some of their parents were from Connecticut. The land was covered with timber and had to be cleared before farming could be carried on. These people came because relatives had come before them, and, of course, they desired to get land cheap from the government. Ohio Corners was so named because four families from Ohio settled on the four corners, namely: James E. Parmelee, Joel Button, and Alonzo Button and John P. Linsley.

One of the Linsleys, John W., settled a mile west on another four corners. Here a chesse factory was built by A.E. Chapman and purchased and operated by M. Hicks. This Mr. Linsley, John W. or Billy, as he was called lost his arms and was blinded in one eye and deaf in one ear, in loading a cannon at a Fourth of July celebration in 1876. This happened just east of and across the highway from Ohio Corners cemetery, now Maplewood.

James E. Parmelee emigrated with his parents to Clay County, Ind., from Ohio when he was three years old. After a brief residence in Indiana his father died and the mother determined to return to her friends in Ohio.

The first Bairds to come to Hopkins from Ohio were Robert A. Baird and Dr. F. H. Wait whose wife was Hannah Baird, and Olive Baird who married Newell Upson, a native of Connecticut. The Upsons settled on the farm just south of the hamlet of Hopkinsburg now owned by Archi Olson where he lived several years when they moved to the N.W. $\frac{1}{4}$ section 16. There were four children in this family: Belle, who married Herbert Thompson, Nelson, married Lucy Hurd, he worked on the railroad until he was retired.

Clara A. and Fred at home. Mrs. Upson was a bedfast invalid the last 20 years of her life.

Robert A. Baird married Eliza Messenger and to them two daughters were born, Ella, Mrs. Chester Overhiser, and Lucy.

Later John and Philander came. John was married to Mary Atwater and settled upon 80 acres of land on section 15 in 1850. Mr. Baird's family consisted of three children, namely: Robert, who married Lizzie Fossey of Canada, one son, Mont, was born to them, he married Adah Hodge. Almond married Lydia Beeman. Bertha married Dudley Hendrixson, to them were born two children, Minni, wife of Ezra Knuth and Brewster, who married Louise Boyer.

Philander came to Hopkins in 1862 and settled on section 15 now known as the Kendall Baird farm. He married Miss Aurelia Tooker and they had two children, Kendall, who married Estella Baldwin; later he was married to Alonza Rumery. Lotta died when she was 16 years of age.

James remained with the family until he was 21; when he became ambitious for a more independent life. He was an expert carpenter and joiner and for four years worked at his trade. He came to Hopkins in 1854 where he purchased 80 acres of land adjoining his brother Josiah's on the north on section 22. Mr. Parmelee bought more land and had a 35-acre maple grove of 900 trees from which he made sugar and syrup. He married Catherine White and to them were born two sons, Gilbert, who married Etta Wait and Otis A., who married Miss Ida Atwater.

Lyman Atwater of Summit County, Ohio, arrived in Hopkins Township in 1856; he bought 50 acres of Alonza Button on section 124, on which he afterwards erected his buildings making payments as the opportunity offered from his annual earnings. In 1863 he married Olive Round, daughter of J.O. Round, about this time he added 40 more acres on the same section, to his farm. Mr. and Mrs. Atwater had three children, Olin J., Ida D., wife of Otis Parmelee, and Fred R.

William S. Kenfield, a native of Massachusetts, followed the trend of emigration to the west in 1854. During a temporary residence in Wayland, Michigan, he married Sarah A. Round, the first white child born in Hopkins township, in 1858. It was at this early date little else than a wilderness, but industry and a spirit of progress which has been evinced.

In the spring of 1850, James and Caroline McBride with a family of nine children left Oil City, Pennsylvania for Springport, Jackson County, Michigan, driving a yoke of oxen, one of which was a cow. It provided milk for the family's use on the trip. As there was a heavy load there was no room for the family to ride, so they walked all the way. The mother carried the youngest child, Charles. Some time after their arrival, Mrs. McBride's toe nails, all came off due to the long walk and improper fitting shoes. The following December, Willie, the tenth child, was born. Three of these children were by a former marriage of Mr. McBride. In May, 1857, the eleventh child was born. That year they

moved to Hopkins and made their home on a tract of land that John and Wesley had located for them on section 16.

Hopkinsburg

The original owners of the land embraced in the present Hopkinsburg were Erastus Congdon and Elder Buck.

Dr. E. H. Wait purchased a tract of Mr. Congdon and in connection with Robert A. Baird erected a steam sawmill which was soon after controlled by the latter gentleman.

Dr. Wait erected a store and placed in it a stock of goods. He purchased great quantities of maple sugar, dealing extensively in that commodity. In 1861 he sold the store to William Richmond who built and operated a flouring mill at this time.

Dr. William K. Darling arrived in 1872 from Otsego and for five years after his arrival in Hopkins he followed his profession, but ill health compelled a change. He built a store and placed in it a stock of drugs and groceries.

Ira Hill conducted a hardware business and Thomas Hicks a blacksmith shop. Dr. U. R. Fox and Dr. Lafayette Stuck were practicing physicians.

Hopkins Station

The hamlet known as Hopkins Station is built on section 19 and was principally known as a station on the Kalamazoo division of the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railroad. The site was originally owned by John Hoffmaster who purchased the land in 1854, and afterwards sold it to his nephews, John and Philip Hoffmaster. The railroad company established a station there in 1871 and appointed Royal Taylor first agent. In 1872 Henry Guyott built the first frame house. In 1874 Taylor built a house and store, the latter was filled with goods before it was supplied with windows and doors. Burnip and Iliff had previously built a cabin, which temporarily used for the sale of small stock and groceries. In 1874, S. A. Buck bought 10 acres of the Hoffmaster plat. In the fall of 1873 Mr. Buck built a wagon and a blacksmith shop and engaged in the business, meanwhile erected buildings and generally advanced the interests of the place.

The hamlet became of considerable importance. Its leading places of business were: a hotel, sawmill, broom handle factory, three general stores owned respectively by John Braganten, J. H. Ludington and Furber & Kidder, a harness shop, a tin shop kept by Andrew Bee who enjoyed considerable fame as one of the heroes of the capture of Jefferson Davis. Two blacksmith shops, a wagon shop, two millinery stores and a market. The physicians of the place were Dr. Ludington and Dr. N.E. Leighton.

Schools

Eleven school districts were formed but only nine conducted schools. A meeting was held at the house of Erastus Congdon, Tuesday, October 1, 1844 and a contract for the construction of the first school building in Hopkins let to Jason Baker, for which he received the sum of \$26.50.

The earliest school was opened the 16th day of December. Miss Josephine Walt was the first teacher. This building was erected in Dist. No. 1 and was known as the Round Schoolhouse. The township was divided into ten whole school districts and one fractional.

The people of Dist. No. 6 Hilliards put a pipe organ in their schoolhouse in 1856 and they undertook to introduce into the school some other studies in addition to the common English. They also had permanent debating clubs, there were literary socials organized, also singing schools, led by William Miles and Mr. Manwarren.

The Ohio Corners district had a number of shade trees of several years growth, shading the yards and the school building.

About 1900 three rural schools consolidated with Hopkins High School.

Mr. and Mrs. William Kemano and three children, William Jr., Minnie and August, emigrated from Hanover, Germany in 1849 and settled in Oshtemo where they lived several years, migrating to Hopkins in 1858 and located on Section 8. Mr. Kemano built a log cabin in the wilderness and carried the shingles for the roof on his back from Allegan.

Leander Hime of Hessen, Germany, was married to their daughter Minnie in 1858 and they located on an 80 acre adjoining her father's farm. He was a carpenter and built his home. To them four children were born. In due time Mr. Hime joined the army leaving his wife and babies as fathers have to do. He was injured in the battle of Lookout Mountain and received his discharge. He and Mrs. Hime drove to Kalamazoo this particular day, August 15, 1865 and on their way home Mr. Hime was taken seriously ill with blood poison and they were compelled to enter a hotel in Cooper where he died very suddenly. While making preparation to return to her home a neighbor found her and told her that one of her babies had just died. Some years later she married Jacob Martin, a native of Baden, Germany. They continued to live on this farm their lifetime. To them were born six children, namely: Mary, who died while a child; Mille, married George Jaus; Augustat, married Frank Perry; Minnie married John Brinkert, and William J. (Correction: Minnie married Fred Hoerner and Izzie Married John Brinkert).

Other early settlers in this section of the township were: John Opperman, Jacop Reissing, Gilbert Stone, John, Fred, and Godfrey Ellinger, Charles Tiefenthal, John Smalla, Martin Hoerner, and Henry Muriahn.

Origin of Bear Swamp

Bear Swamp was caused by a huge beaver dam built south of Rabbit river which held back water draining from Ingerson and Baker Lake.

When traveling the road through this swamp the driver would stop his team as he approached the Swamp and listen to learn if anyone was coming as there were only two

or three places on that old corduroy road wide enough for teams to pass. Now some of the best farms in Hopkins are located where the Swamp was. It has taken years of time and lots of hard work to bring about these changes.

Newspapers in Hopkins

The first newspaper published in the town was the Hopkins Herald by a Mr. Pulhemus. In 1905 the Hopkins times with Glen Currey as publisher which was enjoyed by the public for several years. There was several years that Hopkins had no paper when Rev. D. A. Holman published the Hopkins Booster for several years. Since the Booster there has been no paper published in the town, but people are kept well informed by our correspondents to the County Weeklies.

A New Modern School System

The first school building has been replaced by a fine modern High School which has had several much needed additions. We are indeed proud of our school system. There are, at the present time, seven buses used to transport the students to and from their home in the country.

Creamery Explosion and Fires

June 3, 1918 (correction June 12, 1919), there was an explosion of the boiler of the Hopkins Creamery. The building was completely wiped out with the exception of its smokestack. Three young men lost their lives. This tragedy was followed by the fire of 1920 which burned one department store, two groceries, the bank, telephone office and blacksmith shop. Since then, there have been two groceries, a frozen food locker, the new State Bank building to replace those destroyed. A few years after this fire (1923), the Hopkins Hotel and the harness shop was burned to the ground. These have never been restored.

Old Flour Mill and Saw Mills

There were two sawmills in Hopkins, one steam mill at Hopkins Station with a circular saw and planer, a water mill on Rabbit river two miles west of Hilliards. This was a fine new mill built in 1875, size 25x50 feet, and cutting 6,000 feet per day. There was a flouring mill with two run of stone on Section one, on Rabbit river.

As time progressed, since the fire of 1920, we have two up-to-date grocery stores, one general store, one hardware, a radio and TV shop, large stockyards where weekly auction is held every Monday, which is a big asset to the village; a creamery, restaurant, bowling alley, two barber shops, a fine lumber yard, grain elevator, two beauty shops, one Funeral Home, a hammermill factory, one of the best produce companies in the county and an osteopathic physician.

The first Congregational society with a membership of 13 organized August 4, 1857 near Hopkinsburg, the first meeting was held at the Red Schoolhouse District No. 1. This little band continued to worship in the Red Schoolhouse varying the routine by occasional services in the school building of Dist. No. 2 until 1860 when an effort was made to erect a church edifice. The undertaking was successfully accomplished and \$700

cheerfully raised for the growing wants and was erected in 1871. Several years ago it was dismantled, the pews were sold to a church in Bronson, the lumber was sold to the Wayland Congregational church to be used in the erection of a parsonage.

Present Organizations

We also have the following organizations: The Ladies' Union and the Dorcas Society of the Congregational Church; the W.S.C.S. and Youth's Fellowship of the Methodist Church; Ladies; Aid of the Lutheran Church; The Ladies Literary Club; The Lions Club; the V.F.W. and the Auxiliary; Boy Scouts; Hospital Guild, Masonic Lodge, and O.E.S.

Three Cemeteries

There are three pleasant cemeteries in the township. The Pioneer, one mile east of Hopkinsburg; Maplewood at Ohio Corners and Lakeview, 1 ½ miles north of Hopkins, across from Ellinger lake.

In Conclusion

The compilers of this short history are very thankful for any and all help so cheerfully given. We know that there have been many omissions and much condensing of stories due to lack of time and space in order to meet the printing deadline.

We hope that you will overlook these shortcomings and enjoy reading this short sketch of the early history of Hopkins Township.