

THE BRIGHTON AREA AND THE SESQUICENTENNIAL OF MICHIGAN (Cont.)

The rectangular shape of Michigan counties (and states from here on west) is due to the requirements set forth in the Land Ordinance of 1785. All lands were to be surveyed, before sale and settlement, into townships six miles square with one township in 16 set aside for maintenance of public schools. Only as surveyors completed their tasks were counties formed. The first county formed was Wayne which covered the southeast area of Michigan Territory. Macomb County was formed in 1818 from Wayne. What we know as Livingston was part of that division. Oakland County was 'taken' from Macomb in 1819 and included our county. When Washtenaw County was "laid out" from Oakland in 1822 it included the area of the southern eight townships of present day Livingston County. Those townships in the northern portion were part of Shiawasee County. Until Green Oak Township was formed in 1837, it included the area of present day Brighton Township. Genoa was at first a part of Hamburg Township.

Formed in 1836, Livingston County was named for Edward Livingston, Secretary of State under President Andy Jackson. Brighton and Green Oak Townships were named after some early settlers' home locations 'back east' or the 'old country'. Hamburg got its name from Hamburg, Germany, and Genoa is named after the birthplace of Christopher Columbus. Other townships in the county have similar yet different reasons for their names. Early names of several population centers in the area were changed after a few years. Brighton City was Ore Creek. (The story goes that one of the few who preferred "Brighton" offered to ride to Detroit to register the name of Ore Creek, but instead registered Brighton. Altho' some objections were raised it apparently was not of great enough importance to make the effort necessary to change. Probably mere survival held a higher priority.)

Lewis Cass, Gov. of Michigan Territory 1813-1831, believed wholeheartedly in government by the people. Guiding Michigan through the stages of becoming a state, Gov. Cass, continued to encourage the establishment of local governments by which people could annually elect officials from among themselves, vote on taxes and pass their own laws. Livingston County had a Clerk (F.J.B. Crane), Supervisors (6), Treasurer and Surveyor (Amos Adams), Register of Deeds (Ely Barnard), Sheriff (Justus J. Bennett), Judge of Probate (Kinsley S. Bingham), Associate Judges (Elisha W. Brockway, Elnathan Noble), Coronors (John W. Peavy & John Drake), constables and other officers. The setup of township and County government has changed little since the days of Governor Cass. The Clerk, Treasurer and Supervisors constituted the governing board. (To be continued. Condensed and edited from: "History of Livingston County, 1880" and "A Scrapbook of Michigan Memorabilia" by Wm. Pless.)

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