

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

By the time of the organization of Livingston County's governing board in 1836, most of the lower tiers of townships had been formed. It was several more years before all the townships in the north portion were politically organized.

County business was conducted at the school house in Livingston Center (Howell), in private homes, officials' offices and wherever it was warm enough in the cold weather. In 1842 the ballroom of Benjamin Spring's house was rented in which to meet. This was followed with an agreement with the Presbyterian Society of Howell and meetings were held there for several years. County prisoners were taken to Ann Arbor. The question of taxation to build proper facilities was often submitted to the voters who refused all of the Board of Supervisors' requests for a millage to build a courthouse and jail.

In 1843, the Supervisors appealed to the State Legislature for permission to levy a tax for building but were turned down. By the summer of 1845 it was obvious the supervisors had made up their minds to have a court house. On the basis of obviously apparent support at several township meetings (at which the Supervisors presented their case) they decided to go ahead with getting plans prepared. But by fall they decided, discretion being the better part of valor, to scrap the idea again and rented rooms from Enos Taylor.

Finally the Legislature of Michigan came through in 1846, with the O.K. to levy taxes for construction of a court house. In August the Board contracted with Cyrenus hall for \$5600 to get the job done. It was fall of 1847, before the building could be used for its intended purpose.

The local citizenry was invited to plant trees and shrubs for shade and ornamentation. Religious organizations were invited to hold services in the court house until their own churches could be constructed. This included most of them; and not without some occasional complaints of unjust discrimination.

By 1873, even with judicious care there became evident a need for new construction of offices for the County Clerk and Registrar. By early 1874 at a cost of \$3100 "good accommodations" were occupied. It was soon thereafter deemed proper to erect a similar building for the Probate and Treasurer's offices. The present Livingston County Courthouse in Howell, was built in 1889 in the Richardsonian Romanesque style of architecture. By 1976, the residents of Livingston County voted to restore this building. It is still in use today in all its sturdy, colorful steadfastness, a symbol of those brave ones who preceeded us. (To be continued. Condensed and edited from: "History of Livingston County, 1880" & County Clerk, Joe Ellis.)

BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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