

**A GLANCE  
AT  
WATSON  
TOWNSHIP'S  
PAST**

**1842-1992**

**A GLANCE**  
**AT**  
**WATSON TOWNSHIP'S PAST**

compiled by

CATHERINE SIMPSON PARDEE  
and  
ALBERT P. GERMAIN

WATSON TOWNSHIP SESQUICENTENNIAL

FEBRUARY 16, 1842 - FEBRUARY 16, 1992

CELEBRATED ON AUGUST 8, 1992

## ORGANIZATION

The survey of Township 2 in range 12 was made by Lucius Lyon, being completed April 30, 1831. It was first in Allegan Township and then in Otsego, but by the following act, passed February 16, 1842, it became independent: "All that part of the county of Allegan designated as Townships No. 2, 3, and 4 North, in range No. 12 West, is set off into a separate Township and organized by the name of Watson, and the first Township meeting shall be held at the house of Eli Watson." This included the Townships of Hopkins and Dorr, which later became distinct organizations and left the Township of Watson with its present geographical boundaries, Dorr having been set off in 1847, and Hopkins in 1852.

## NATURAL FEATURES (1880 History Book)

The surface of Watson is greatly diversified. A considerable portion of the South and Southwest is level, and possesses an easily cultivated soil. Some swampy land is to be seen, but this is easily susceptible of drainage, and will probably ere long be converted into some of the most valuable land in the Township. The Northern portion of the Township abounds in elevations and declivities, some of which are quite abrupt, and command from their summits extensive views of the surrounding region. On the Eastern side, as well as in the center, many inequalities are to be seen, but the changes of elevation less abrupt and there are few impediments to the most through cultivation.

The soil is abundantly watered by springs and brooks, while numberless lakes, both small and large, are sprinkled over the surface. Chief among these are Schnable Lake, on sections 26 and 35; Big Lake, principally lying on sections 14 and 23; Schiller Lake, which lies on section 12; Hudson Lake on section 14; School Section Lake, covering portions of sections 15 and 16; Pulsifer Lake principally in section 10; and others not of sufficient importance to mention. Many of these sheets of water offer strong attractions to the sportsman, as well as the admirer of picturesque scenery. Numerous streams and brooks emanate from these lakes, and afford abundant irrigation to the land. Schnable Brook, in the South affords quite a good waterpower.

A variety of soil is found in Watson, nearly all the kinds to be seen in other portions of the county exist here. Gravel and clay combined are found on the slopes, while on the level clay-loam is liberally interspersed with sand. On the lowest flats a rich vegetable mould and clay subsoil are present, and in the swamps the usual quantity of muck is found. The soil is generally well adapted to the growth of wheat, there being very little territory in the Township where that grain does not

thrive. Much of the land is devoted to this crop. The last census—that of 1874 gives the number of acres of wheat harvested the previous year as 1685, which produced 24,311 bushels, while 991 acres planted with corn yielded 31,854 bushels. Of other grains the annual product was 18,758 bushel, oats having been sown with great success. Much good grass is cut in the township, and hay of a superior quality is produced. The number of tons cut in 1873 was 2243.

The timber of Watson does not vary greatly in kind or quality from that usually found throughout the county. Beech, maple, whitewood, basswood, sycamore, and oak flourish, and a few oak-openings are still to be seen on the eastern side. Pine is not abundant, but tamarack attains a luxuriant growth on the marshy land. Elm and ash are also to be seen, and so is an occasional hemlock, though the latter does not find a congenial soil in this region.

The climate and soil of Watson are both adapted to fruit culture, and no farm is found without its apple orchard. Many of these produce grafted fruit of a superior quality, and the yield is generally very abundant. The number of apple trees in the township is estimated at over 20,000, most of which are prolific bearers. The slopes and hills are admirably adapted to the culture of peaches, and more attention is being devoted to this fruit than heretofore. Those trees which are of sufficient age have yielded superior crops, while many orchards are but just started, and will require some time before becoming a source of profit.

Two railroads, afford the inhabitants of Watson ample opportunities for the shipment of produce. The Allegan and Southeastern road, which is operated by the Grand Rapids and Indiana Railroad Company, enters the Township on the West line of section 30, and passing nearly due East, leaves it on the East line of section 25. It has two stations in Watson; Kellogg Station, on section 29, and Fisk's Station on section 27. The Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railroad passes through the Southwest corner of the Township, with a station just over the town line from Otsego.

## EARLY SETTLEMENTS (1880 History book)

A number of the pioneers of Watson found a temporary home and employment in Allegan, meanwhile making occasional pilgrimages to the lands they had selected in this Township and preparing the way for a residence there.

The earliest to arrive were Daniel Leggett, and William S. Miner, the latter of whom came from Rochester, N.Y., in 1836, and remained for a while in Allegan. He entered 160 acres on section 17, May 20, 1836, and the same year built a log house upon it, bringing help from Allegan to assist in the raising. This was the first house in the Township, and Mrs. Miner on her arrival was the sole female representative of the Caucasian

race in Watson. Mr. Miner devoted himself at once to the improvement of his land, clearing and sowing wheat, and assisted, as far as he was able, the later settlers in the Township. He was the earliest postmaster in Watson, the office, which was legally known as Proctor, having been located at his house. He died in 1876, on the farm he had cleared up, which is now occupied by his two sons, Charles M. and William Miner. His widow resides with her daughter in Allegan.

Daniel Leggett also came from Rodchester in 1836, and entered 120 acres on sections 18 and 20. He erected the second house in the Township, remaining in Allegan until its completion, when he removed his family to their primitive habitation. Mr. Leggett has converted the forest he found on his arrival into a productive farm, upon which he still resides.

Chester A. Miner followed his brother William to the Township in 1837, and located 80 acres on section 18. He at first built and occupied a board shanty 12 feet square, but the next year he erected a log house. Mr. Miner spent his subsequent life upon this farm, where he died in the fall of 1876. It is now occupied by his children. His brother, Joseph Miner, who arrived in the fall of the same year, located himself on section 17 and resided with his mother, survived for several years her removal to the West. Mr. Miner still resides upon this place, and is now as formerly, engaged in farming.

Daniel Bracelin came with his brother James from Washtenaw County in 1835, and remained for a while in Allegan, having been among the earliest arrivals in the Village. They were employed by Alexander L. Ely in clearing lands in that Township, and were induced to make a purchase there, but Daniel, not being satisfied with location, exchanged his land for 80 acres in Watson, on section 20. This he cleared and improved, and became one of the most enterprising citizens of the Township. He was largely instrumental in the erection of a Catholic church in Watson, and contributed liberally to its support. His brother James, who survives him, is still a resident of Allegan.

Eli Watson, a previous resident of Jefferson County, N.Y., entered the East half of the Northwest quarter of section 20 in 1836. He did not remove to the Township until August, 1837. He came with his family to what is now Trowbridge in July of that year, and accepted the hospitality of Mr. Granger, of that Township, for about six weeks, until their own log house was ready for occupation. Their household goods were stored in an empty house owned by Dr. Bigelow, and there they slept at night, living during the day at Mr. Grangers'. As soon as their cabin in Watson was completed, they moved into it. He was a successful farmer and public-spirited citizen, devoting a portion of his time to the interests of the township, but he at length removed, with the tide of emigration, to Nebraska, where his son now resides. Still later Mr. Watson returned to Allegan, the scene of his early efforts, and died there.

Samuel A. Atkins, a former resident of Tompkins County, N.Y., was among the foremost pioneers of 1838, and located upon the East half of the Northeast quarter of section 26. On section 24 was a squatter named

David Updyk, who after a brief residence, disposed of his improvements to a permanent settler. With him Mr. Atkins remained until he had completed a house, to which he speedily brought his family. Mr. Atkins experienced all the hardships of pioneer life, and was on one occasion obliged to carry a bag of corn on his back seven or eight miles to Pine Creek to be ground, and to bring back the grist in the same manner. Perseverance and courage, however, ultimately brought him a competence, which he still lives to enjoy. His son, A.W. Atkins, who came with his father in 1848, now resides upon a tract of 200 acres on sections 23 and 26.

Caleb D. Carmen, another pioneer from Tompkins County, N.Y., located in 1838 upon 40 acres on section 25. He was the father-in-law of Mr. Atkins, and found with him a temporary home until he could build a log house for himself. Mr. Carmen was by trade a shoemaker, and during the early years of his residence numerous demands were made upon his skill. He resided on the place he first occupied until his death, ten years later, at a very advanced age.

Amos D. Dunning, another of the Monroe County pioneers, arrived in 1837, and found a home with William S. Miner, and later purchased 80 acres on section 22. He was selected by his fellow townsmen as their choice for supervisor after the organization of the Township, and filled other local offices acceptably. Mr. Dunning died upon the land on which he first located, and was succeeded in the ownership by his widow and his son, Gilbert A. Dunning.

William Allen, a former resident of Vermont, came to Allegan in 1837, and for a while had charge of the boarding house erected by Alexander L. Ely, for the accommodation of the men employed by him on the various improvements that engaged his energies. Soon after, he purchased land on section 27, upon which he erected a log house. He was for some time employed upon the Justin Ely farm, in the Township of Allegan, but in 1841 became a permanent resident of Watson, and occupied the house he had already built. He improved his land and rendered it among the most desirable farms in the Township. He has since erected a substantial frame house, in which he now resides.

John Hicks, an emigrant from the Dominion of Canada, arrive 1837, and obtained a fraction 80 acres on section 24. A year later he returned for his family, and on his arrival at home hired a conveyance to bring as far as Marshall. His limited means would permit of no further expenditure for traveling purposes, and the family pursued the remainder of their journey on foot. A wheelbarrow was employed during their progress, which served to render the pilgrimage less wearisome to the little ones. Mr. Hicks and his family found the log house he had built very inviting after the fatigues of travel. He resided in the Township during his lifetime, most of which was devoted to labor upon his land. His death occurred 1878, at the advanced age of 84 years.

From New York State came N.K. Lonsbury, first to Lenawee, and in 1839 to Watson. He entered at Kalamazoo, that having at the time been the site of the land office- 80 acres on section 17. On this he erected a



log house, to which he later brought his wife. His neighbors were the Miner brothers, Joseph, William, and Chester Miner-Daniel Leggett, and Eli Watson. There were at this time no roads, and Mr. Lonsbury was obliged to open a highway to his farm through the dense forest. He cleared five acres the first year and sowed a portion with wheat, which yielded an abundant harvest, meanwhile laboring in various portion of the county to obtain means where-with to live. He had no horses, an ox-team having aided in his pioneer labors. In 1856 he erected a substantial house, in which he has since resided. Mr. Lonsbury was married, in 1841, to Miss Lucy A. Miner, the earliest marriage in the Township. His brother, Henry Lonsbury, came some years later, and located on 80 acres in the school section. This land was unimproved when he settled upon it, but industry and energy have rendered it a well cultivated farm. At this time a pilgrimage of several miles was necessary to obtain lumber for building purposes. In 1859, William S. Miner erected a saw mill on Schnable Brook, which after that date supplied much of the building material of the township.

Peter Richart, another pioneer of 1838, came from Pennsylvania and located on section 21, where he purchased 80 acres, which as yet was unimproved. He cleared the principal portion, and resided for several years upon it. Later he removed to Otsego, where he engaged in milling, and ultimately chose Pine Creek as a residence.

The arrival of Job Moon occurred at the same date, and a farm on section 29 absorbed his attention for many years. The attractions of the West were, however, superior to the advantages Michigan offered, and he departed for Nebraska. Later he removed to Missouri, where he has since remained.

Among the foremost citizens of Watson is Jesse D. Stone, who came from Rochester, N.Y., in 1836, and located 80 acres on section 23. Though an early purchase of land, he did not become a permanent resident until 1840. Amos D. Dunning welcomed him to his humble quarters while procuring material for the erection of a house. The Township presented a very primitive appearance at this early date. A dense forest covered most of the land, the Miner settlement alone affording an exception to this fact. Wolves and deer were abundant, and Indians roamed the wilderness in pursuit of game, or wandered along the streams which afforded them subsistence. Two acres had already been planted with corn on Mr. Stone's arrival, which yielded the family a supply of food until a greater variety could be obtained. The log house was later supplanted by a comfortable frame residence, in which Mr. Stone, as advancing years overtake him, spends peacefully the remainder of his life.

Lloyd Austin, on his arrival from New York, located first in Allegan. The land on section 27 offered strong attractions, and induced him, in 1842, to purchase 160 acres, which he converted from a wilderness to fruitful fields. He died in 1878, upon this farm, having left a record for excellence of character which made his death universally deplored.

Edward Flannagan, the second arrival among the Irish population of Watson, was a pioneer of 1845. He cleared a portion of the 80 acres he

purchased on section 8, and erected a log house. His death occurred in Allegan in 1877.

William Kent, emigrated from Canada to the wilds of Michigan in 1840, and found a home in Watson in 1848, having selected 15 acres on section 15. He was accompanied by five sons, of whom William, James, and George now reside in the township. This venerable gentleman is now in his 84th year, and in his advanced age enjoys the filial care of his son George, with whom he resides.

Wells Field, a native of Phelps, Ontario County, N.Y., emigrated to the village of Allegan with his wife in July, 1836, and took charge of a store of Joseph Fisk, where he remained for a year, when he assumed the position of "mine host" of the Allegan, and in the fall of 1840 he purchased the West half of the Southwest quarter of section 19, in Watson Township, near his brother-in-law, William Pullen, who settled in Allegan Township a year or two previous. Mr. Field and his family remained at Mr. Pullen's for about a year, and returned to the Village of Allegan, where they resided three years, and again removed to the farm and purchased the east half of the Southwest quarter of section 19. At this time he built a frame house and resided there for three years, when he moved to Allegan and spent three years, and in 1849 again went back to the farm. He now lives in Allegan, still owning the Southwest quarter of section 19.

Nelson Fisk came from New York State in 1850, and chose the Township as his residence, purchasing 80 acres on section 22, upon which he built a log house. He soon after began the cultivation of the land, which he rendered productive, but ultimately removed from, and located upon the same section, adjoining the residence of his son Samuel, who has 60 acres on section 22. The farm improved by Nelson Fisk, is now occupied by Samuel Martin.

J. Pulsifer, a former resident of Ohio, found an attractive home on section 9, upon which he located in 1853, and on which he built a log house. A cooper-shop, which had done duty on previous occasions in affording shelter to pioneers, performed the same kind of office for his family during the interval. He was the earliest pioneer in the immediate neighborhood. A brother, William Pulsifer, followed a year later, and after a temporary residence with him removed to section 10. Still later another brother, Horace, located on the same section. Both are now dead.

John Grant, formerly of Lyons, N.Y., erected on section 22 a frame house in 1856, having on his arrival received a welcome from S. V. Borne, who was then a neighbor, but has since removed to Monterey. Mr. Grant afterward changed his location to section 26, where he also erected a frame house, and now resides. He is by trade a carpenter, and numerous residences in the Township bear evidence to his taste and skill.

John McLaughlin, one of the band of Irish pioneers that helped to populate Allegan County, purchased 95 acres in 1856 on section 15, the former owner having been Alfred Stone. A tract of five acres had already been cleared, but no house was built upon it. William Kent's hospitality was extended to him for 7 weeks while being prepared for the erection of

a house, to which his family removed on completion. His improvements the first year embraced five acres, which were gradually increased until the whole farm reached a high degree of cultivation. A convenient frame residence has since taken the place of the log structure. Mr. McLaughlin suffered much from poor health on his arrival, but has since become thoroughly acclimated.

Randall Brooks became a resident of Watson in 1846, having located on section 27, where he still resides. He found temporary shelter at the house of Charles Dunning, who had located 80 acres on section 26, but who subsequently removed to Iowa, where he died.

William A. Reynolds, a former resident of New York State, removed to Gun Plain in 1845, and to the Township of Watson, one year later, having chosen a location upon section 12, where he now owns a farm that has been cultivated to a high state of productiveness.

In 1852, George W. Gorton became a permanent resident of Watson, having arrived on a prospecting tour two years previously. He chose a home upon 80 acres on section 13, upon which he built a substantial residence. He enjoys the reputation of being a successful farmer.

Three years later came James Anderson, from Monroe County, who chose a farm of 139 acres on section 15. A log house had already been built by one Stratton, the former owner, but no improvements were made. Later, Mr. Anderson removed to section 10, where he erected a comfortable habitation, which he now occupies.

From Livingston County came William Wheatley in 1855, who located on section 8, where he found productive land and where he resided until his death, in 1873.

Among other pioneers whose enterprise entitles them to especial mention are Nicholas Kinner, J. A. Caughey, L. Brewer, A.W. Beals, A. Durkee, J. Potter, H. Bartlett, E.C. Osborne, L. Howe, F. Goldspring, W. Wetherill, H.D. Edgerton, Wells Field, Wm. Oaks, Jedidah Morse, and Charles Benson.

The earliest religious services in the township were held in the first log house erected in Watson, that of Wm. S. Miner. They were conducted by Rev. W.C.H. Bliss, of Allegan, whose zeal in the good cause had made him a pioneer in Christian work in other portions of the county. Later services were conducted in the Miner schoolhouse, which, for a succession of years, was the resort on the Sabbath of the church-going population of Watson.

The following list embraces the names of the taxpayers in Watson for the year 1843:

Eli Watson, Joseph Skinner, William S. Miner, N.K. Lonsbury, Chester A. Miner, James Bracelin, Wells Field, Daniel Bracelin, Daniel Leggett, James A. McLaughrey, Jedutham Morse, Jesse D. Stone, Nicholas Skinner, John Hicks, Caleb D. Carman, Smauel A. Atkins, William Allen, Luther Howe, Josiah Potter, Charles F. Dunning, Job Moon, Edward Flannagan, John Parsons, William H. Warner, Timothy Crampton, Erastus Congdon, Jonathan O. Round, Esek Baker, Harvey N. Baker, John J. Sandun.

The earliest road which traversed the Township of Watson entered it on the western boundary line, between sections 18 and 19. From that point its course continued until it reached the center of the section-line between sections 17 and 20, where it diverged to the Southeast, passing in an oblique line through sections 20, 21, 22 and terminating at the Northwest quarter of section 23, near the residence of Jesse D. Stone. This road, by intersecting with a road in the township of Allegan, made the Village of Allegan accessible to the residents of Watson. It is probable that the survey was made by William R. Watson, in 1837.

A road which was recorded April 21, 1838, and was surveyed either by William R. Watson or Aaron Chichester, at a date prior to this, began; "At a post on the section-line seventeen chains thirty links East of the Northwest corner of section 23, in Township one North, of range twelve West, and ran as follows: 1st. 4 degrees 15 minutes West 15 chains. 2nd. 19 degrees West 28 chains 50 links. 3rd. 9 degrees West 38 chains 50 links. 4th. Due North 280 chains. 5th. 45 degrees West 125 chains 25 links. Whole distance, six miles twenty-nine rods, terminating at a post twenty-five rods Northwest of the quarter-post on the West line of section twenty-one, in Township two North, of range twelve West".

The highway commissioners who directed this survey were Aaron Chichester, Eli Watson, and E. H. House.

A road was surveyed by Aaron Chichester in 1839, beginning on section 6, in Otsego, and pursuing first a Northerly, then an Easterly course, and terminating at the quarter post between sections 5 and 6, in Watson. Other roads followed as the Township became more thickly populated, Allegan or Otsego having been the objective point.

## SCHOOLS

The educational interests of the Township first received attention in 1840. Until then no effort towards the establishment of a school within the boundaries of Watson had been. In that year a log school-house was erected on section 20, upon land owned by Daniel Leggett, and Miss Mary Ann Stone was employed in the capacity of teacher. Nine scholars received early instruction and discipline at her hands.

Nine whole and two fractional districts included eleven substantial frame school buildings within the Township as follows:

District # 1 - Miner School was located on 21st Street near 119th Avenue. It was closed and tuition paid to Hopkins for a time and finally annexed to Hopkins.

District # 2 - Watson Corners (Elm Hill) School was moved back from the road when M-118 (M-222) was



rebuilt in 1952. It annexed to Martin in 1965.

District # 3 - Fractional - Page School was located on 13th Street near the Earl Page (Haldon and Esther Mauchmar) farm. It was moved to North Main Street in Martin after it annexed to Martin.

District # 4 - Osborne School was located at M-222 and 20th Street. It was the last to annex in 1967 going to Martin.

District # 5 - Wicks (Dunwell) School was located at 15th Street and 123rd Avenue. It annexed to Martin.

District # 6 - Anderson (Maloney) School was located West of 16th Street on 120th Avenue. It annexed to Martin in the mid 1930's.

District # 7 - Simpson School was located at 20th Street and 123rd Avenue. It annexed to Hopkins.

District # 8 - Swan School was located at 14th Street and 115th Avenue. It annexed to Martin.

District # 9 - Burnham (Vineland) School was located South of 122nd Avenue on 23rd Street. It annexed to Hopkins.

District # 10 - Fractional - Abronia (Pettit) (Winslow) (Swedish) (Wright) School was located on 22nd Street South of 114th Avenue. It annexed to Allegan in 1963.

District # 11 - Hughes School was located on 16th Street between 112th and 114th Avenues. It closed for a time in the early 1950's but reopened for several years before annexing to Martin in the middle 1960's.

## CEMETERIES

The earliest death in Watson occurred in the family of S.A. Atkins. No ground having been set apart for purposes of interment, the remains of the little one were taken to Martin for burial. In 1843 an acre of ground was purchased of Eli Watson on section 20, neatly fenced, and planted with attractive shade trees, which has since that date been used by the townspeople as a cemetery. The cemetery is known as Miner Cemetery. Some years later an acre was secured on section 24, which was enclosed

and devoted to the same use. This consecrated spot is located on the borders of a picturesque lake and adorned with evergreens and maples, which combine to make it one of the most attractive localities within the limits of the township. This cemetery is known as Hicks Cemetery.

Over the years several additions have been made. The latest of which occurred in 1987 at Miner Cemetery and 1988 at Hicks Cemetery.

## CHURCHES

### SACRED HEART (River and Lake page 181)

John McLaughlins's arrival may have been the catalyst for the county's first Roman Catholic Church. Shortly afterward, at any rate, Father LaBelle, a missionary priest from Kalamazoo, began making visits on a more or less regular basis. The first Mass was celebrated in the home of Daniel Bracelin and subsequently in the homes of others. By 1862 there were enough of that faith to justify building a church, and they did by their efforts and by mortgaging their own farms for the \$500 needed to complete it. By 1888 the original structure had been outgrown and the cornerstone was laid for the present church, a typical Irish chapel long considered "the prettiest country church in Allegan County". It was dedicated the following year. The original wood frame church continued to serve the community as a parish hall until a modern brick hall was added to Sacred Heart Church in 1964. Although most of the descendants of Watson's early Irish settlers have scattered in all directions, their hearts are tied to the little church and its cemetery, much as their parents' and grandparents' hearts were tied to Ireland itself.

Even though it is now a mission of St. Stanislaus Parish in Hilliards, Sacred Heart still prospers with just about every one of its 350 seats filled every Sunday.

Two other Catholic parishes - St. Margaret's in Otsego and Blessed Sacrament in Allegan - grew from the little church in Watson. Catholics in Plainwell and Otsego worshipped at Sacred Heart until 1873. Allegan Catholics continued to attend Mass at Watson until 1907 when they purchased a residence in Allegan.

### IMMANUEL LUTHERAN (1907 History Book)

In 1877 Mr. C. Anderson, a native of Jonkoping, Sweden, crossed the Atlantic and came to Allegan County, where a year and a half later he bought land in section 32 of Watson township, later purchasing in section 31. He was the first Swedish settler here who bought land. Having many friends in Indiana and Illinois, he induced them to come to his timber-covered acres and assist in clearing off the woods. Some of

these bought land and became permanent additions to the little Swedish colony. The process of influence through personal letters, acting like an endless chain, brought many more families to this locality.

By 1878 some eight families had found permanent homes here, and on August 27th of that year these people, bound by close ties to the religion of their native land, formed a church society, the first church of the denomination in the county and the only one at the present time.

On March 3, 1879, Charles Anderson offered to donate to the church a piece of land for a cemetery. The offer was thankfully accepted. The fourteen month old Malvina Christine, daughter of Mr. Charles Anderson and his wife, Hilda, was the first one buried in the cemetery during the summer of the same year. She was run over and killed by a train at the crossing near the residence.

The congregation built a new church in Allegan in the mid 1970's.



1953-54, WATSON COMMUNITY BIBLE  
CHURCH BEING MOVED

#### **WATSON COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH**

The society of Christians in Watson had its beginning as early as 1854, under the fostering care of Elder Manchester, who first preached to the small flock in the Stone school-house, on section 18. The members increased, and the need of a larger and more permanent place of worship was felt. Under the spur of this need an effort was made to erect a house of worship, which resulted in the present frame edifice on section 23, built in 1856, by subscription.

For a number of years the church building has been owned by the Watson Busy Workers and leased to the church.

In 1953-54 the church was moved from its foundation on the Northeast corner a few hundred feet East to accommodate the rebuilding of M-118 (M-222).

On November 24, 1991, the congregation moved into a modern

building of their own built just West of the corner on the South side of the highway.

After the telephone company ceased operating in 1956, the congregation purchased the old "central" located between the old and new location for use as a parsonage. For many years, the church had been served by ministers from neighboring churches, especially, the Methodist and Baptist churches in Otsego.

Since that time, the church has been served by resident pastors who were either retired or held other jobs.

#### **WATSON CHURCH OF GOD**

For a number of years, a congregation of the Church of God based in Cleveland, Tennessee, held services in the former Oddfellows Hall at Watson Corners. It ceased operation in the late 1970's.

#### **WATSON COUNTRY CHAPEL**

After the Church of God closed several of the families who had worshipped there, built a comfortable chapel on land owned by Cecil Werner, across the road from the Township Hall.

#### **ORGANIZATIONS**

##### **WATSON GRANGE No 154**

The first effort to establish a grange in Watson was made in 1874, which soon resulted in a prosperous organization. A convenient hall for the use of the organization was soon after erected at the present corner of 118th Avenue and Schanz Road.

##### **WATSON LODGE No. 226 I.O.O.F.**

The charter of Watson Lodge of the Independent Order of Oddfellows bears the date of February 19, 1876.

The convocations of the lodge were held on Saturday night of each week, in a spacious and well-appointed hall, which now is used as the Watson Corners Stop-n-Shop.

#### **RAILROADS**

Known by several names, the railroad probably most properly known



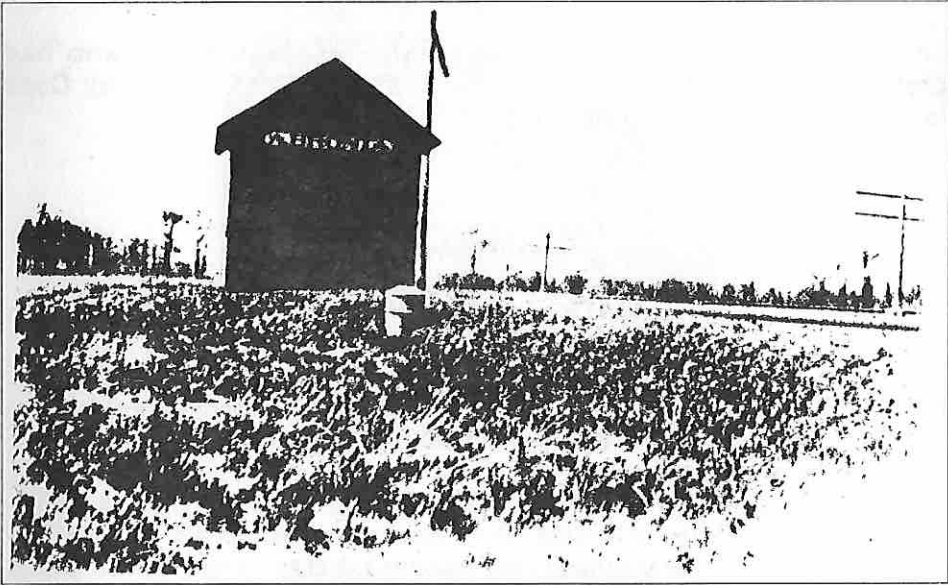
as the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern entered Watson at Abronia at 112th Avenue and 20th Street, making an arc through sections 32 and 30. The LS and MS was leased by the Michigan Central which in turn was leased to the New York Central which merged with the Pennsylvania Railroad to form the PennCentral which abandoned the line in 1976. Rails were removed later and the grade crossings removed.

There is discussion now about using the right of way for a linear park.

Now lets turn to the Allegan and Southeastern Railroad. This road was built by Joseph Fisk, contractor, and was completed in September, 1871. It was a section eleven an a half miles long, running from Allegan to Montieth Junction through Martin Township.

In 1915 we find the third rail being placed in service between Montieth Junciton and Allegan, providing interurban service until 1929, with connections to Kalamazoo, Battle Creek, and Grand Rapids.

This line ran parallel to the state highway about a half a mile South of that road. Stations were located at Kellogg (21st Street) and Fisk (16th Street and 115th Avenue). The Kellogg Station was recently moved to the Allegan County Fairgrounds.



ABRONIA (River and Lake)

The little town of Abronia, along Schnable Brook on the boundary between Watson and Otsego Townships provides the best, and saddest, example of the life and death of one of these communities. It was born as a station on the Kalamazoo, Allegan and Grand Rapids Railroad, in 1886. The first blow came in 1896 when Congress decided that folks who lived in the country were as entitled to home mail delivery as those in the cities, R.F.D. - rural free delivery - was born and

GRAND RAPIDS TO KALAMAZOO

	LOC	LOC	LIM	LOC	Flyer	LOC	LIM	LOC	Flyer	LOC	LIM	LOC	Flyer	LOC	LIM	LOC	Flyer	LOC	LIM	
	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	
GRAND RAPIDS...Lv.	15	10	5	50	7	30	8	30	9	30	10	30	11	30	12	30	1	30	2	30
Fisher.....	5	30	6	14	8	55				10	55			12	55			2	55	
Corinth.....	5	39	6	25	9	07				11	07			1	07			3	07	
Moline.....	5	43	6	30	7	55	9	12		11	12	11	55	1	12			3	12	
Wayland.....	5	52	6	39	8	01	9	23		11	22	12	01	1	23			3	22	
Bradley.....	5	57	6	46	8	05	9	30		11	29	12	05	1	30			3	28	
Shelbyville.....	6	02	6	52	8	08	9	36		11	35	12	08	1	36			3	35	
Martin.....	6	09	6	59	8	13	9	45		11	42	12	13	1	45			3	42	
Monteith Jct... KALAMAZOO	6	12	7	02	8	18	9	48	10	12	11	45	12	18	1	48	2	12	3	45
Plainwell..... FLYER	6	23	7	13	8	26	10	00		11	56	12	26	2	00			3	56	
Argenta.....	6	28	7	18		10	05			12	02			2	05			4	02	
Cooper.....	6	36	7	27		10	13			12	12			2	13			4	12	
KALAMAZOO...Ar. FLYER	6	55	7	50	8	50	10	35	10	40	12	35	12	50	2	35	2	40	4	35
	4	35	4	50	6	35	6	40	8	35	8	50	11	02						

To Battle Creek  
1 05

Chair Car on all limited trains. Kalamazoo Flyer  
leaves Grand Rapids at 9:30 a. m., 1:30 p. m.,  
5:30 p. m.

Daily except Sunday — other trains daily. F Stops on signal. Light Figures A. M. — Dark Figures P. M.

GRAND RAPIDS TO BATTLE CREEK																						
	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.												
GRAND RAPIDS .....Lv.	15	10	7	30	9	30	11	30	1	30	3	30	5	30	10	00						
Monteith Junction.....	6	13	8	18	10	12	12	18	2	12	4	18	6	12	8	18	10	50				
Hooper.....	6	21	8	25	10	21	12	25	2	21	4	25	6	21	8	25	10	58				
Nealey.....	6	23	8	27	10	23	12	27	2	23	4	27	6	23	8	27	11	01				
Doster.....	6	30	8	33	10	30	12	33	2	30	4	33	6	30	8	33	11	08				
Richland Junction.....	6	41	8	44	10	41	12	44	2	41	4	44	6	42	8	43	11	20				
Richland.....	6	48	8	50	10	48	12	50	2	48	4	50	6	49	8	49	11	28				
Yorkville.....	6	54	8	56	10	54	12	56	2	54	4	56	6	55	8	55	11	32				
Gull Lake Junction.....	5	57	7	06	9	07	11	07	1	07	3	07	5	07	7	07	10	04	11	45		
BATTLE CREEK.....	6	28	7	35	9	40	11	40	1	40	3	40	5	40	7	40	9	38	12	10		
Via M. U. T.																						
Marshall.....	8	05	9	58	11	58	1	58	3	58	5	58	8	43								
Jackson.....	9	00	11	00	1	00	3	00	5	00	7	00	8	51								
Via D. J. & C. Ry.																						
Ann Arbor.....	10	10	12	10	2	10	4	10	6	10	8	10										
Detroit.....	11	55	1	55	3	55	5	55	7	55	9	55										
	A.M.	A.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	

F Stops on signal only.

† Trains daily except Sunday — all other trains daily.

Chair Car on all trains. Seats 25c each.

Passengers for Marshall, Albion, Jackson and Detroit, change cars at Gull Lake Jet.

F Stops on signal only.

† Trains daily except Sunday - all other trains daily.

Chair Car on all trains. Seats 25c each.

Passengers for Marshall, Albion, Jackson and Detroit, change cars at Gull Lake Jct.

Michigan Railway Company Time Tables Grand Rapids to Kalamazoo.

the people living around Abronia and thousands of other country hamlets no longer had to hitch up and go in to see if their new copy of the Sears, Roebuck & Co. catalog had come in yet. Abronia started to die a little when that happened, but it still had a store, a chair factory, and a hall where dances were held and you could still board a train to visit in Allegan or Otsego or Plainwell or absolutely wherever else you wanted to go. And then Abronia died a little more when passenger service was discontinued around the time of the time the interurbans were so popular and people in the neighborhood could hitch up and catch an "electric car" at Kellogg which, after all, was only a mile and a half or so away. No one remembers who struck the last blow - the railroad freight manager who closed down the Abronia station completely or Henry Ford over there in Detroit, who was building his Model T's so fast and so cheap that almost anybody could buy one. Regardless, the two things combined to bring about the complete demise of Abronia. The store closed down, the depot disappeared and the little cluster of houses around them seemed to huddle closer together. The final indignity came in the country's bicentennial year when the Penn Central sent its last train through from Otsego to Dorr.

Within a year the track had been torn out for salvage, the ties were dug up for folks to use "landscaping" their yards and Abronia had disappeared without a trace, the only reminder of its existence being an odd jog in the road around the intersection of 20th Street and 112th Avenue.



**KELLOGG, MICHIGAN IN THE EARLY DAYS.**

## **KELLOGG**

Kellogg, located on 21st Street between M-222 and 114th Avenue (Hooker Road) also was a railroad town. Its location on the Michigan Railroad Co. line between Allegan and Monticello Junction made it convenient for the people of that area to travel to Allegan or even Kalamazoo or Grand Rapids.

Also adding to Kellogg's growth was its closeness to the Swedish settlement around Immanuel Lutheran Church. For a time the church operated a community center in the original store building. Also at Kellogg was a creamery, the remnants of which can still be seen and the later store which closed in 1955.

## **WATSON CORNERS STORE**

The Watson Corners Store was a familiar landmark for many years standing at the Southeast corner of M-222 and 16th Street. In 1951 it was moved back and put at an angle to accommodate the rebuilt highway. The store closed in 1971.

In 1984 the Watson Corners Stop-n-Shop opened in the former Oddfellows building and is operating at this time.

## **STATE HIGHWAY**

**M-118**

**(M-222)**

In 1953, vast improvements were made to the highway East of the Osborne school (20th Street). A causeway was built across the narrow part Wetheral Lake replacing what is now called Wetheral Lake Road.

At Watson Corners the store, church, and school all were moved to make way for the widened and straightened road. Hills were leveled and ravines filled in.

In 1957, the Western part of the road was completed.

In early 1989, M-118 was changed to M-222 to alleviate confusion with M-118 and 118th Avenue which is one mile North.

## **SPORTS**

Over the generations, several baseball teams have been organized in Watson. This editor is aware of at least two in the Abronia - Kellogg area.



The 1908 Kellogg Center baseball team won the trophy at the Allegan County Fair by defeating other county teams. This photo, reproduced from the Allegan County Historical Museum, indicates the loose structure of baseball, at least as it was played in the area after the turn of the century. Two players have Miner Lake uniforms on. Some semi-pro teams from this era were pick-up teams, chosen days or hours before games.

—News & Gazette photo

## 1908 KELLOGG BASEBALL TEAM

## A GLIMPSE

1868 - 1st train on the LS & MS.

1871 - Track from Allegan to Montith Junction through Kellogg and Fisk Station is completed.

1905 - Watson Telephone line was connected with bell exchange allowing free telephone service between Watson and Otsego.

1908 - The Saw Mill at Kellogg went out of business.

1915 - Interurban service started in Watson, it discontinued in 1928.

1917 - Passenger rail service reduced to 4 trains daily on the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern through Abronia.

1918 - The Creamery at Kellogg went out of business.

1920 - The Catholic Church was rebuilt.

1922 - A new grocery store was built in Kellogg.

1928 - Idle-Wild was platted at Big Lake.

1929 - Michigan Railroad Co. through Kellogg and Fisk Station is abandoned. For the last several years it had operated as a third rail electric interurban.

Late 1920's - Some passenger service was provided through Abronia with a single car locally known as the Gas Goose.

1930 - Tractors began to replace horses.

1936 - Grain Combines began to appear in Watson.

1937 - Last passenger train through Abronia.

1938 - The Watson Corner Road was rebuilt and black-topped.

1945 - Pleasant View was platted at Big Lake.

1945 - 1955 several test oil wells were drilled.

1955 - The grocery store at Kellogg went out of business.

1951 - 1957 M-118 was rebuilt and paved.

1955 - The Watson Township Hall was built.

1956 - January 18, Watson Telephone Company went out of business.

1957 - The road across Pickeral Pond was rebuilt.

1959 - School Section Lake was platted.

1960 - Only 4 School Districts were left in the Township, No. 2, No. 4, No. 10f1, and No. 11.

1967 - All the School Districts in Watson were annexed.

1976 - Last train on the LS and MS.



**Facts and pictures for this booklet were gleaned from the following books, booklets, and collections.**

1. History of Allegan and Barry Counties, Michigan 1880.
2. A Twentieth Century History of Allegan County, Michigan 1907.
3. As It Was In Otsego, by Archie Nevins and Dorothy Dalrymple, 1975.
4. Railroads Come and Go In Allegan County, by James J. Green, 1976.
5. Harry Waldron.
6. Jewell Germain.
7. Vurlah Stone Gwilliams.
8. Florence Blair Simpson.
9. River and Lake by Joe Armstrong and John Pahl, 1985.