

Time Tracs by Jim Ingram

(Part 1 of Orion's history through the 1920s)

In 1800 the land surface of Orion Township was covered with a growth of timber principally oak. It's estimated there were about 1,700 acres of lakes in the township, varying from three to over 100 acres in size.

What is now Lake Orion was a chain of six lakes with Paint Creek flowing through them.

Present theory suggests the first settlers encountered remnants of the Chippewa and Pottawatomini nations, though tribes probably didn't settle in Orion.

Part of the legendary Saginaw Trail passed through the township. Joslyn and Orion Roads were major branches of that trail. What we refer to as the Paint Creek Trail was an Indian trail and later the route of Orion's first rail connection, the Detroit and Bay City Railroad and the route of the Detroit Urban Railroad (electric RR).

Judah Church and John Wetmore made an entry of land near Baldwin Road, just west of Mill Lake in 1819. Church's name is familiar to 20th century Orion, having been given to such sites as Judah Lake, Judah Road and Mount Judah.

The first actual settlement of people began in 1824-26 near the intersection of Kern/Gunn Roads. It was peopled by the Jesse Decker, Needham Hemingway, Moses Munson and David Shadbolt families. They quickly set about clearing land and erecting crude log cabins.

During the same time, Philip Bigler settled in what is now the Village of Lake Orion.

Jesse Decker settled in Sec. 35 which would be the approximate area of Bald Mountain Golf Course. He was to become the counselor and leader of what was referred to as the "Decker Settlement."



The first store was established there in 1834 by John Hankinson. A blacksmith shop opened in 1832 with Rufus Streator as "smitty" and as early as 1830, Decker had kept a "public-house" or tavern.

The township had become large enough for a post office to be established in 1832 with Decker as postmaster. The route was served by a Mr. Rose who traveled on foot from Royal Oak.

In 1836, Charles and Ezra Carpenter, brothers, located on Sec. 12 which is north of the village. Daniel Carpenter and family settled in the same

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section in 1837.

The years 1834-1837 were the most important to the foundation of Orion Township. Until 1828, Orion had been part of Oakland Township, which comprised the upper three-fifths of Oakland County. That year it was attached to Pontiac Township.

It was organized as a separate township to be called Orion in March 1835. The first township meeting was held April 5, 1835 at the house of Decker and he was elected the first supervisor. At that meeting his salary was set at \$2 per year.