

## A Little Bit of History

The county of Clare was established here in central Michigan in 1843. The county itself was, in fact, named after County Clare in Ireland, and was composed of great pine forests that covered the area. Josiah Littlefield, one of the founders of the Village of Farwell, was a surveyor who helped plan the route of the Pere Marquette Railroad. That railroad crosses through the southwest corner of Greenwood Township. He described that area the time:

*“Those marvelous pine trees towered 140 feet and more, three to six and even seven feet in diameter, with clear timber to 80 and 90 feet before the first branch. In places, they were so close that sunlight could not penetrate the forest floor.”*

This is what early Czechoslovakian settlers were forced to cope with when they attempted to build their homes. The introduction of the railroad, followed by the laying of ‘corduroy roads’ over sections of muddy terrain, aided in the development and settlement of the area. In 1874, Greenwood Township was formally established. Its first election was held on April 6, 1874 at the home of Richard Budd, with 15 votes cast for the offices of Supervisor, Clerk, Treasurer, Justice-of-the-Peace, School Inspectors (2), Constables (2) a Highway Commissioner, a Road Commissioner and a Path Master.

All the way until 2007, the Township Offices occupied the Grange Hall at 2876 Harding Avenue, south of Temple (Route 61). Hillside Cemetery was established for the Township in 1878, and expanded in 1903.

Five, one-room schoolhouses were built: Caner School on the northwest corner of Old State and Gray in Section 2, Doty School on Route 61 east of Harding in Section 22, Greenwood School on the corner of Route 61 and Old State in Section 23, Miller School at the corner of Harding and Pestel Creek in Section 9 and the Robin School at the corner of Bringold and Clarence in Section 30.

Esther Hileman taught for one year at the Doty School in 1952, at the age of 20. She acknowledged that she was just a kid herself. Two big boys in the school, Frank and George Sprague, took one look at her and thought she’d be a pushover. Esther couldn’t have weighed more than 100 lbs. One day, she invited them outside to play a little bit of softball at recess. Turns out, she could hit the ball further than either of them. Neither of the boys tried anything after that little demonstration. The Doty School still stand today as a private residence.

In 1910, Henry Ford purchased Section 16 in the township, and later added Section 17 plus 240 acres of Section 18...for a total of 1600 acres. The original 640 acres (Section 16) cost Mr. Ford \$14,000. His thinking was to clear the land of stumps, and test is new *Fordson* tractors on the site. Ernie Bruce was hired to manage the property, but Louis Ford (Henry’s son) was eventually put in charge of the testing. Today, this wide expanse of open ground is named *Kitty Kurtis Farms*, and provides a superb breeding area for cattle. The Farm was recognized in 2004 with the first Farmland Nutrient Management certification in Clare County. One can now also enjoy a view of eagles, geese, sand hill cranes, deer and other wildlife on the land at different times of the year.



In 2007, the current Township Hall was built. It serves as a proud meeting place and work environment for the township Board and its guests. As importantly, the facility is available for rental by residents and non-residents to host various social and business functions such as retirement parties, birthday/anniversary celebrations, club meetings and the like. During the summer of 2017, an 80' x 20' pavilion was erected behind the Hall. An adjacent playground setting for youngsters was part of that overall build. It's important to note that the playground equipment was assembled and installed onsite by volunteers of the community. This recreational campus is expected to be used for various outdoor activities: graduation parties, mini concerts, car shows and other kinds of community-focused events.

As of the 2010 census, Greenwood Township serves a resident population of 1059, with more than 438 households. The township is also home to numerous families with vacation and recreational property. Many of the roads today are paved, utility services are available and appropriate Ordinances have been established and updated. An Emergency Siren was installed in 2009, and both a Broadband Initiative and a Neighborhood Watch program are well-established.

The Harrison District Library was established in 2009, and a multi-area millage was passed in November, 2010 to help fund its operation with outreach to the communities it serves. Greenwood Township, Hayes Township and the City of Harrison were the three original entities of the District formed to support that endeavor.

Greenwood Township is professionally served by the Clare County Sheriff's offices and contracts the services of the Harrison City Fire Department for the protection of its citizens. As an ongoing program to provide public services, the township also contracts for weekly, curbside rubbish removal. As a 21<sup>st</sup> century communication and information tool., this website went online in 2012.

Greenwood Township's history of lumber and agriculture reflects the hardiest of souls who entrusted the land to us. Today, we boast an influx of Amish families and a growing retiree community. All the while, our natural surroundings allows for a broad spectrum of fun and relaxing activities, drawing folks to our area seasonally for skiing, golf, hiking, fishing and hunting and 4-wheeling.

## 145 years young.....and still growing!

---

*We would like to acknowledge former Township Supervisor, the late Miles House, for his tremendous contribution in putting together "A Little Bit of History" for all of us to enjoy and share.*

*If you have any further information or details that you would like to see incorporated into this piece, contact: Supervisor Jess McClaughry at 810-488-0056 (cell) or 989-539-6881 (office).*