

OTISCO TOWNSHIP

SEPTEMBER

9663 BUTTON ROAD

NEWSLETTER

BELDING MICHIGAN 48809

2016

From the Office of the
Zoning Administrator - Ordinance Enforcement Officer

- Township residents must request a Zoning Compliance Permit from the Zoning Administrator prior to obtaining a Building Permit. This Zoning Compliance requires a 'Site Plan' showing placement of the intended project within the property lines and must show distance in feet from; Front, Side and Rear lot lines to the intended project. Zoning Compliance is also required for Swimming Pool placement on above ground and in-ground pools. Accessory Buildings 200 square feet or more require Zoning Compliance.
- Swimming Pools are not allowed in the front yard area of any residence.
- A vehicle is deemed 'Inoperable' if: (1) It does not display a valid registration (Plate-Tab) and (2) It cannot be legally operated on a Public Roadway. Inoperable Vehicles must be stored inside a garage or other enclosed structure.

If you have questions or are in doubt on Township Ordinances, please contact the Zoning Administrator.

From the desk of the Clerk. . . .

Please remember that the last date to register so you can vote in the November Election is October 11, 2016.

Please get out and vote on November 8, 2016, voting will take place at the Ashley Baptist Church, 10463 Belding Road, Belding, MI 48809. If you need or want an absentee ballot, contact me at 794-3506.

The recycling company that we were using has gone out of business. The Board will try and find another company to continue the recycling for Otisco Township.

The monthly Board meetings are the second Tuesday of each month. Come and join us to see and hear what is going on in YOUR Township.

Lynda Sower – Otisco Township Clerk

Otisco Township Cemetery Committee is having two fall cleanup days, Tuesday, October 4, in the Smyrna Cemetery, and Thursday, October 6 in the Otisco Cemetery. The public is invited to come and help, either at your own loved ones grave sites or help with as little or as much of the entire cemetery as your time allows. We will be picking up broken branches, removing dead flowers, trimming where needed, and other routine fall maintenance.

Also as a service to you, we will have present Connie and Tom Doty from Gravestones Services, Inc. They offer marker and monument cleaning and repair. They use only AGS-Association of Gravestone Studies & NCPTT - National Center for Preservation Technology & Training approved methods to clean and preserve gravestones. Gravestone Services can also be reached at 616-755-6131.

Laura

Inserts for Newsletter: Otisco Township Cemeteries

The Otisco Township Cemetery Committee has recently toured the cemeteries and found that some grave sites do not meet the posted cemetery regulations; the regulations are as follows:

- Dwarf plantings and urns in line with monuments for mowing ease.
- Plastic flowers prohibited except in urns.
- Placement of foundations or monuments to be cleared with Cemetery Sexton.
- No loose stone, brick, landscaping timbers, or fencing on gravesites.

Please note, that per the Otisco Township Cemetery ordinances that the Cemetery committee can take the following actions; Section VIII - Ground Maintenance

B. No flowers, shrubs, trees or vegetation of any type shall be planted without approval of the Cemetery Sexton or Township Clerk. Any of the foregoing items planted without such approval may be removed by the Township or Sexton.

C. The Board reserves the right to remove or trim any tree, plant, or shrub located within the cemetery in interest of maintaining proper appearance and the use of the cemetery.

E. The Cemetery Sexton or appointee by the Township Board shall have the right and authority to remove and dispose of any and all growth, cut flowers, plants, emblems, displays or containers therefore or any item whatsoever which becomes unsightly, a source of litter, or a maintenance problem.

H. The Townships Board's determination as to any action taken under the authority granted by this section shall be final and conclusive, and any person purchasing a burial space shall be presumed to consent to such action.

For a copy of the full cemetery ordinance you may contact the Township Clerk.

Please be advised that the Otisco Township Cemetery Committee will remove any items, plantings, etc. that do not meet the posted regulations. This action will not take place until sometime in August 2015. Please visit the Smyrna and Otisco Cemetery's prior to August 15 to make sure that the graves of your loved ones meet the regulations.

Respectfully,

Otisco Township Cemetery Committee

The Otisco Township Cemetery Committee is looking into having markers cleaned and/or restored. If you are interested in having your family's markers cleaned and/or restored please complete the certificate below and you will receive a quote for the work.

* * * *

Grave Marker Location: Smyrna Cemetery _____ Otisco Cemetery _____

Name on Marker: _____

Grave number (if known) _____ or location: _____

Request made by: _____

Address: _____

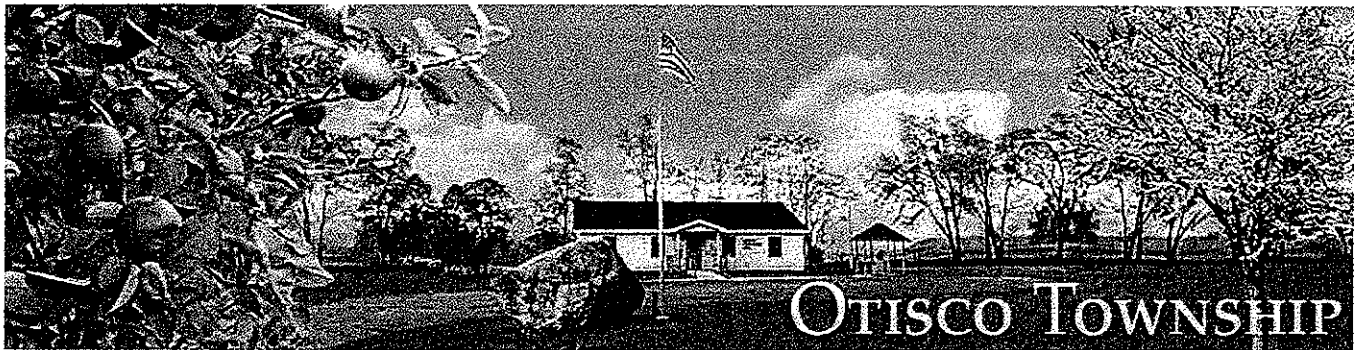
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

PLEASE RETURN THIS CERTIFICATE TO THE TOWNSHIP HALL OR PUT IN DROP BOX IN FRONT OF HALL

ORV's on Our Roads - Did you know:

The following information is taken from *the Handbook of Michigan Off-Road Vehicle Laws*

- It is unlawful to operate an ORV without having a valid license permanently attached and visibly displayed on the vehicle.
- The annual fee for an ORV license is \$16.25.
- All ORV operators and passengers must wear a U.S. Department of Transportation approved, *and* protective eyewear or goggles, *except* when the ORV is equipped with a roof that meets or exceeds standards for a crash helmet *and* operator and passengers are wear improperly adjusted and fastened safety belts.
- And the ORV must be equipped with the following: Breaking System, Throttle System, Spark Arrestor and Muffler, Seating, Lights, the lighted headlight, a lighted taillight, a brake light, brighter than the taillight.
- Operator Age Restrictions:
 - Restrictions on the operation of ORV's by children **under the age of 16**, including a safety education requirement. There are also specific obligations that fall upon the parents or legal guardian of ORV writers under the age of sixteen and upon the owners of ORV's.
 - No one under the age of ten may operate any 4-wheel ATV *except* on private land while performing farm-related work operations.
 - Children 10 and 11 years old may operate a 4-wheel ATV only when **all** of the following conditions are met: The ATV is being graded on my hand owned by the child's parent or guardian *and* operator is under direct visual supervision of an adult *and* the operator possesses a valid ORV safety certificate.
 - Children 12 to 15 years old may operate a 4-wheel ATV only when **both** of the following conditions are met: the operator is under direct visual supervision of an adult, *and* the operator possesses a valid ORV safety certificate.



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History

Otisco's Beginnings

March 6, 1838, all that portion of Ionia County known as towns 7 and 8 north, in range 8 west, was organized as a township, to which was given the name of Otisco (probably from Otisco, N. Y.), and the first meeting was ordered to be held at the house of Robert W. Davis. February 16, 1842, town 7 was set off as Keene.

Although Otisco Township was not properly recognized as a town until 1838, the land had been in-habited by native Indians for hundreds of years. Remnants of native life can still be found throughout the township. Many of our roads were built on Indian trails they had been using long before our arrival here, including Lincoln Lake Road and Flat River Trail. Many of the names we use today originated from the Ottawa, Pottawatomi, and Chippewa area natives. You may recognize Wabasis, Cobmossa, & Mishini-makinak (Mackinac). The name of our beloved Flat River originates from the Native name for the waterway "Kau-bau-gwas-shee" which means "flat like a belt of wampum". The Native name of the Grand River was the "O-wash-ta-nong", or "far away water".

The first "white skinned" invaders were not settlers to the area. It is likely the first Indian on the Flat River to meet a white man had encountered a fur trader. During the late 1700's and late into the 1800's the Grand and Flat River Valleys were known as one of the most productive areas for the annual fur peltry. The French, British, and American fur trading companies were in competition up and down these rivers trading with the Indians for furs, wild rice, maple sugar, canoes and dugouts, canoe bark and gum for repairs, dried berries and nuts, and meat from deer and bear. Both the Indians and white men traveled annually from Mackinac Island throughout the state and back again every year, collecting furs. The natives who lived right here in Otisco Township traveled north to Mackinac every summer. Can you imagine walking this distance?

Cook's Corners

Today we find Ionia County National Bank, Burger King, and Midas Muffler, in the location that was once the hot spot of our area. I wonder if the pioneers of Cook's Corners would be able to recognize their prized settlement in this age? In the fall of 1837, Amos Russell, John L. Morse, and Abel Adgate of Oakland Co., MI happened upon a handsome burr-oak plain and were instantly satisfied they have found the challenge they had been looking for. In February of the following year Russell, Morse, and a new companion, R. R. Cook returned once more with their families and all their worldly possessions intending to make the new place their home. Along with them came William Russell, Calvin Gage, and Charles F. Morse, three young men who came along as hired hands. The party traveled as the natives did, brining the Looking Glass River up to the Grand River and making their way as far up the Flat as they could before finishing their trip on the ancient carved Indian trails that criss-crossed our county. All thirteen pioneers were forced to share the 14' square cabin erected hastily the year before by Russell, Morse, and Cook. In the evenings all the furniture was moved outside to make enough room for the settlers to sleep.

The first births in Otisco Twp occurred at this settlement. The first being Eliza, daughter of Amos Russell and the second A. B. Morse, son of John L. Morse. The first death was that of Clarissa Fisk, in June of 1841.

History recites that in the fall of 1846, when the Grand Rapids and Lyons Road was newly built, Cook decided it was a good place for a tavern. He was correct. Before long Cook's Corners was the social gathering place for all of the area. When the stage line between Ionia and Greenville started, Cook's became a stage house. Before long the establishment had grown into an inn, tavern, and dance hall complete with it's well know unique "spring floor".

In 1839 the Otisco post office (in Kiddville) was transferred to Cook's Corners and Rufus R. Cook appointed Postmaster. The mail was picked up in Ionia where the settlers also had their grain ground for flour. So Mr. Cook felt is was "killing two birds with one stone" since he journeyed to Ionia anyhow.

On May 1, 1856, Mr. Cook platted the village of Cook's Corners, and recorded it as occupying the northeast quarter of the section 16. After 18 years of occupying the settlement it was finally official.

The first school was kept about a half mile westward of the "corners" and taught by Julia Ann Ackley. The first church at Cook's Corners was the "First Baptist Church of Otisco" and organized some time previous to 1852 where that same year a house of worship was erected.

Miriam

Known also as "The German Settlement" and "Dutch Town", Miriam has a distinct place in our community. The pioneer founder of this tight knit gathering was John Albert, of Baden Germany. In the fall of 1841, John was passing through the area as a clock-peddler. Noticing it's beauty and possibilities he purchased 640 acres - or all of section 33. Albert along with fellow settlers Peter Kemp and Henry Kroop began work on the settlement immediately. For the first six years the land was occupied only by those three. In 1847, "Big" Henry Kroop (called such to distinguish him from the previous Henry Kroop known as "Little" Henry Kroop), whose arrived and soon after in 1849 Charles Kroop joined them. After these arrivals the settlement grew quickly.

The settlers all belonged to the Roman Catholic faith and acquired priests for worship from Westphalia and Grand Rapids. In 1850 St. Mary's Church was erected solely from donated materials and labor. The foundation stones were hauled from the fields and the timber cut from neighboring woods. Rev. Father Bolte was the first to be engaged as Pastor. In 1872, the original structure was replaced by the building we see standing there today. There was a scandal at one time between Belding's St. Joseph church, Miriam's St. Mary's Church and the appointed priest of the time. I will add this story in time to come.

Today a drive out to Krupp Road will show you the still beautiful church and the aged wooden horse stalls from the days before cars.

Kiddville

The value of water power on what came to be known as Dickinson Creek near it's entrance to Flat River is what drew the first settlers. George W. Dickinson, a New York man, who in the year 1836, in company with Thomas Cornell, built a saw-mill on this site. Dickinson was the working and resident partner at the mill. Along with Dickinson came Patrick Kelly who later purchased land near the mill and also became a permanent settler. Among Dickinson's mill-hands in 1836 and 1837 were Asa Palmer, William G. Bradish, Hiram Baxter, and Thomas Palmer. In July, 1837 Asa Palmer and Rosa McDonald were the first couple to be married in the township by Squire Horton. Soon this small establishment became known as Dickinsonville. The post-office established there in 1838 was named Otisco. In 1845, Dickinson sold his mill to J. M. Kidd, of Ionia, who surveyed the place as a village and re-named it Kiddville. Soon Kidd added a store to his holdings which included a new post office and the village began to grow. During 1856-1857 Mr. Kidd employed from 60 to 70 men in his mill, which was considerable. At one point he owned 2,500 acres of land. Mr. Kidd ran his store and mill until 1862, when he sold to Elam Murray and Samuel H. Baird. But, by 1880, the property was again in Mr. Kidd's control.

Other pioneers in this area were Thomas Stocking, located south of Mr. Broas' place in the spring of 1839, Joseph Collins came over about that time from Orleans Twp., and settled near the east town-line. Near Mr. Kidd was Lewis Ellis, Abner Wright, Allen Thompson, James Tailman, John Riker, and John Murray. In the southern portion of the town were Asa Spencer, Ambrose Spencer, Munson Seeley, the Hortons, Alvin Moe, Ezra Spencer, G. C. Spencer, William Gardner, James and Judson Buttolph, Alvin Davis, E. R. Berry, W. R. Douglass, E. G. Peterson, J. Moon, and C. S. Cowles. East of the river, Edward Ingalls settled in 1844, and in the same year Amos Willett and Jeremiah Kilborn came to section 23, as well as Augustus Northway and Gilbert Caswell to the area. Charles M. Benton, who married Willett's daughter, came in 1848, and Freeman Kilborn to section 26 in

1846, and Peter Cooper in 1848. James Just, made a permanent settlement on May 15, 1847, having bought his land in 1844. A few years later came Daniel Philbrick and Rev. W. W. Johnson, a Methodist Episcopal preacher. At this time there was but one school house, the Brink school which was taught 1st by Mrs. Elam Moe.

Not long ago, near the banks of the Flat River in the woods of "Lightning's Bend" park, a hiker happened upon a mound. Thinking the mound looked out of place in the flat low lying area, he investigated. To his surprise there lay many discarded broken Indian arrow head pieces and stone chips. After some study and further research it became clear this find was an old Indian arrowhead making "factory" of sorts. Imagine how many years the carvers sat in this spot and chipped away making spears, arrows, and knives.

Smyrna

Does the name Mount Vernon mean anything to you? On September 14, 1853, ten years after Calvin Smith became the first settler on this spot, G.W. Dickinson platted the village as "Mount Vernon". We have no idea why he chose that name, but it still crowds the memories of many of our local families. Dickinson, the same pioneer who originally settled Kiddville, thought the area where Seeley Creek enters the Flat River was an excellent spot for a grist mill. Soon after N. G. Chase followed and built a frame home (using Kidd's lumber) where he also ran a store. Mr. Chase's store was the first trading-mart of Otisco Twp., not including of course the native fur trade. Kidd's mill was finished in 1849 and ran successfully until a violent flood swept the building away. Luckily, at that time the mill was empty as it's then owners William and Joseph Wood had recently built a new mill nearby. In 1864, this mill was destroyed by fire to be replaced by yet another fine building with two sets of mill stones, built by Dorr & Osgood and later run by W. R. Tebbell. Near 1855, Duane and John Joslyn built a dam across Flat River here and erected a saw-mill where Stern's Mill once stood in the 1880's. In time many settlers with various occupations could be found at this village. Marvin Babcock opened a merchantile, George W. Witt the first blacksmith shop, Alonzo Vaughn set up as a shoemaker, Noah Rich built a tavern, and two young men, Ecker and Ford came with a set of tinnners' tools and opened a small tin shop. These two young men were successful and with wealth came change. Mr. Ecker converted his shop to dry goods and eventually moved to Greenville, and Mr. Ford took on the medical profession.

Before Mr. Dickinson applied to plat his territory as Mount Vernon, Dr. Wilbur Fisher, the pioneer physician here decided the village needed a post office. Because Cook's Corners already had a post office and the settlement was too close to it, Dr. Fisher was forced to locate his post office in the next section, far enough away from Cook's Corners to allow his own post office. In 1848, Dr. Fisher was successful and choose to name his new post office Smyrna. Again, we have no idea why but surmise, he wished a name original enough to be distinct and not confused with any other. This is how Smyrna and Mount Vernon became the two names of our one village.

E-Mail List

If you are interested in local history or genealogy you may wish to join our email list.

We enjoy a membership of more than 150. This list serves as a communication link between area residents, past residents spread throughout the United States, and folks who had ancestors in Belding and surrounding areas.

Articles of interest, census lists, building histories, family inquiries, and upcoming events are frequently posted. We often reminisce about the past this area has enjoyed.

If you would like to become a member simply send an email message to: **MI-IONIA-BELDING-L-request@rootsweb.com** with the word "subscribe" in the subject box. You will receive more information upon your membership.

Interesting Facts

- Although most residents of the area consider White's Covered Bridge built in 1867, to be located in Smyrna, it is actually located in Keene Twp.
- Did you know the Maccabee Hall in Smyrna was built in 1902? The hall was established as a Historic Monument in 1976. The Smyrna Social Club holds a pancake breakfast each 3rd Saturday of the month.
- St. Mary's Catholic Church in Miriam was originally built in May of 1871. The men of the parish built the