

## Blendon Township

Blendon Township is located in the middle of Ottawa County. In fact, the geographical center of the county is on its west boundary. On November 5, 1836, John Ball, who was a timber cruiser, announced through a newspaper that he had located "2,500 acres of good pine almost in a body on a part of which there was also some good white oak." John Ball laid claim to 41 eighty-acre parcels for logging purposes.

Blendon Township was surveyed in 1833 and was organized in 1854. A township hall was built in 1889 at the intersection of 72nd Avenue and Tyler Street. This hall served the township until 1975, when a new hall was built with offices and a meeting room. The old building was auctioned off and moved east of the township. It now serves as a storage barn at 7000 Tyler Street.

Blendon had swampy areas where huckleberries were plentiful and higher places where blackberries and wintergreen berries thrived. Judging from stone knives and arrowheads that have been discovered, the Ottawa and Potawatomi Indians used the area to hunt.

The Ottawas formerly lived along the lakes and woods of the northern lower Michigan. They were active in fur trading with the French. The Ottawas who moved to this area continued to be traders. The name Ottawa was synonymous with trader. Older residents remember seeing their parents purchase high quality baskets and flower stands from Indian house-to-house peddlers in the early 1900s. Some of these products are still in use.

The Potawatomi were southern Michigan people but were of the same Algonquin language group. They were noted for making furnishings of vegetable fiber and pottery.

The Old Stage Road from Grand Rapids to Holland passed through the southeast corner of Blendon. It was laid out in the late 1840s entirely at the expense of Grand Rapids merchants for the benefit of the newly established Dutch settlement in the Holland-Zeeland area.

A rest area called The Halfway House was built near 48th Avenue on Barry Street. The stage coach passengers and other travelers could receive refreshments; shelters were also provided for horses. With the coming of a railroad in the 1870s, it became obsolete. Halfway House continued to be occupied by the De Regt family, who operated this place for many years. Following their deaths, it remained vacant and is now demolished.

An 1864 map indicates that most of the township was owned by Blendon Lumber Company. Two early sawmills were the Ohio Mill, located at 5800 Port Sheldon Road, and the Bugsville Mill, on Baldwin Street near 64th Avenue. Each mill had a narrow gauge railroad running approximately seven miles northeast to docks on the Grand River. The railroad serving Ohio Mill was called Ohio Landing; the other was called Blendon Landing.

Blendon Landing was located near the site of what is now Grand Valley State College.

Pieces of strap metal rails are still being plowed up on Baldwin Street. Oak trees growing here were tall enough to be used for ships' masts, and they were floated to Chicago. As a second growth of timber became marketable, two sawmills were built, one and two miles east of Borculo respectively.

Before Rural Free Mail Delivery was established in 1900, the township was served by three local post offices. The first was established in 1860 at 5458 Bauer Road and was called Blendon. It was located in a separate building razed years ago. A second, which contained a lending library, was located in the residence of the Robert Johnson family, 6304 56th Avenue; it was called South Blendon. A third was established in 1876 in the residence of Kasper La Huis, 7034 Blair Street, and for some unknown reason was named Heath. This modernized dwelling is now occupied by the Thomas Vredevelde family.

As lumber was harvested, the land was used for agriculture. As a market for milk, the Phoenix Cheese Company of Zeeland established a branch at 6887 72nd Avenue. The manager's house is still in use. A butter-producing creamery in Borculo and a milk-receiving station in North Blendon on Tayler Street no longer exist.

For many years, seven general stores were located within township boundaries. A store owned by C.L. Storre at Port Sheldon Road and 56th Avenue was established before 1864. Formerly a church, a second store in South Blendon at Port Sheldon Road and 48th Avenue was moved across the road in 1890. This was owned by John Van Farowe. This store and attached dwelling burned in 1929. Another store was built and is now an Arts and Crafts establishment.

The VanderMolen store on Tayler Street has been replaced by a one-family dwelling. The Vollink store in Borculo is now owned by the Borculo Christian Reformed Church and is used for church activities. The present Borculo General Store is located at 6210 96th Avenue.

**CENTENNIAL FARMS.** Records show that some farms have been in the same family over 100 years and have become centennial farms. There are five of them. The present owners and locations are: Larry Atwood, 5267 Baldwin Street; Rhine Lubbers, 5301 Barry Street; Bernard Schafer, 9481 48th Avenue; Chester Top, 4868 64th Avenue; and Larry Vander Schuur, 7304 Bingham Street.

**CEMETERIES.** Blendon Township has two cemeteries. One is owned by the Township at 5000 Tyler Street. Mr. Woodruff, an early settler in the Bauer area, was the first recorded burial in 1862. The other cemetery is owned by the Christian Reformed Church of Borculo at 6200 96th Avenue.

**CHURCHES.** Nine active churches serve the area's needs: Bauer Wesleyan, 4844 Bauer Road, organized in the 1860s; St. John Lutheran, 48th Avenue at Fillmore Street, vacant (a new church was built across the street in Georgetown Township), organized 1882; Beaverdam Christian Reformed, Barry Street at 64th Avenue, organized 1882; Borculo Christian Reformed, 6464 96th Avenue, organized 1883; South Blendon Reformed, Port Sheldon Road at 48th Avenue, organized 1883; Bauer Seventh Day Adventist, 4881 Bauer Road, organized 1885; Bauer Christian Reformed, 4921 Bauer Road, organized 1902; North Blendon Reformed, 7224 Taylor Street, organized 1903; North Blendon

Christian Reformed, 7284 Taylor Street, organized 1910.

SCHOOLS. Blendon Township's first school is located at 9441 56th Avenue. It was organized in 1854 and was rebuilt into a storage facility. Blendon No. 2, located at 5755 Port Sheldon Road and Corsin School No. 3, located at 6984 72nd Avenue, are now used for storage. Sherborne School No. 4, located at New Holland Street and 64th Avenue, is now a two-family dwelling.

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