

Commerce, Treaties, territory expansion, war, and government expansion have all contributed to the formation of Chippewa County and Bruce Township. Mackinaw (Mackinac) County was created by Governor Cass in 1818, including part of the northern lower peninsula; Chippewa County was created 1827. The new county reached all the way to the Mississippi River to the International border with the border on the East stopping at the St. Marys River. (the present boundary was established in 1875.)

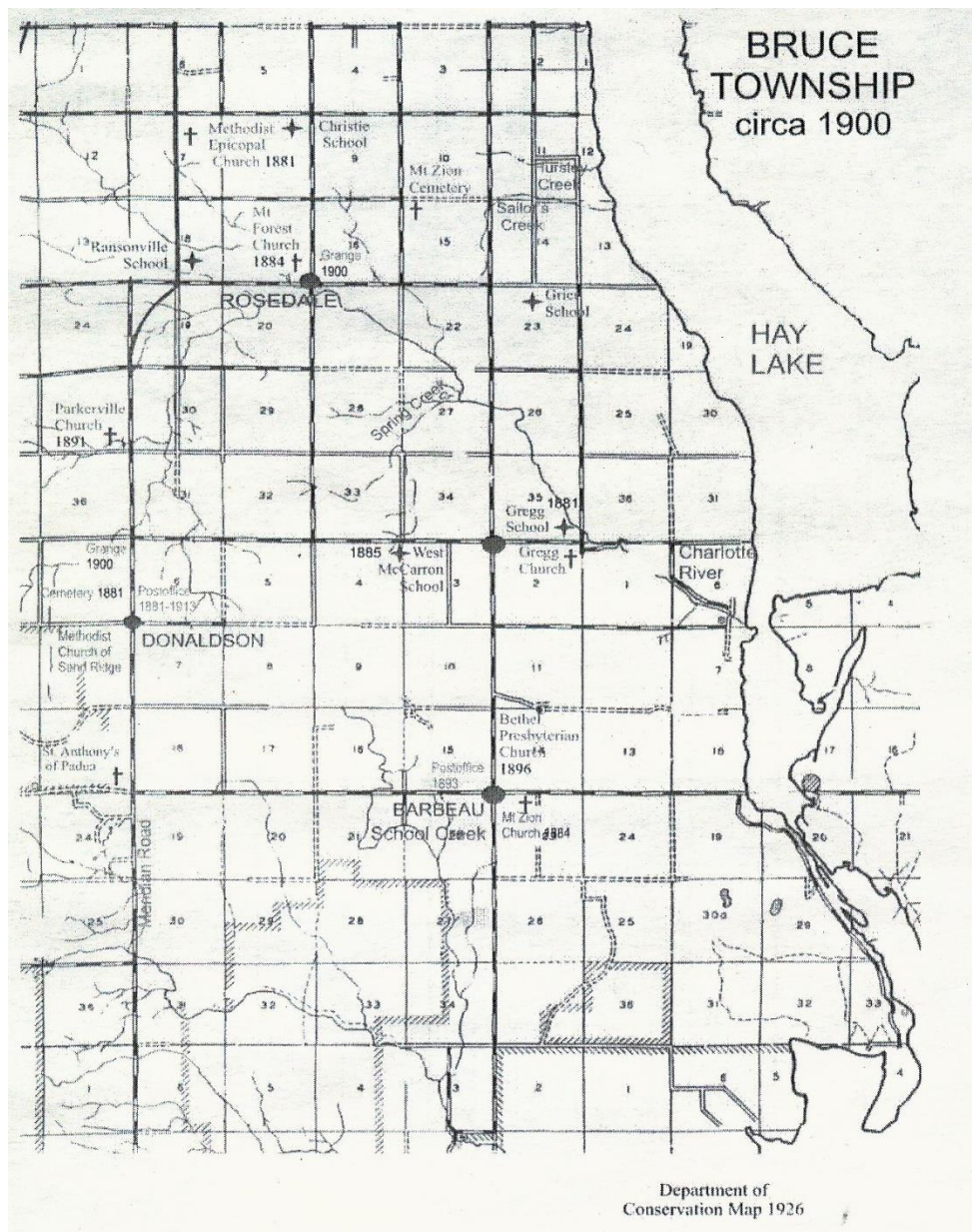
St. Marys Township was established 1847 and it covered most of Chippewa County. The organization of other Townships greatly reduced St. Marys. Warner (Detour) Township became the Township entity in 1850 and Bruce was established in July 2, 1888.

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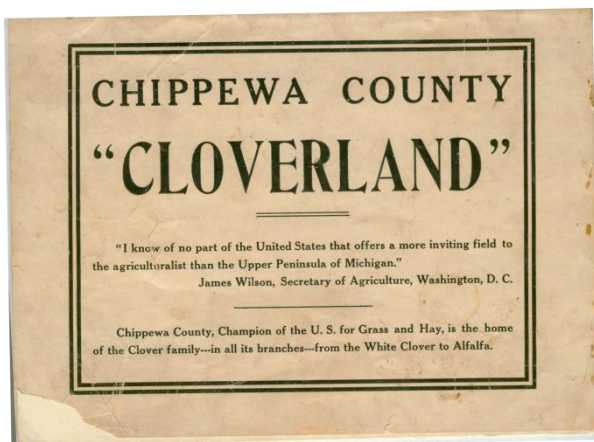
Excellent reads of EUP history, *River of Destiny* by Joseph and Estelle Bayliss and *City of the Rapids* by Bernie Arbic, are recommended. Both can be purchased at a local book store or at the Chippewa County Historical Society website cchsmi.com.

The center of population was located at the base of the Rapids with the interior of the Eastern Upper Peninsula considered Indian

Lands. Land speculation perhaps began in the 1840s as lumber barons recognized the wealth in the forests of the area. The various wood fired boats that plied the River relied on the wood harvested inland. The McKnight Road existed 11½ miles south of the Sault (now M-129) and is reported to have been the main artery for bringing wood products into the Sault. The River was the only means of transportation, the interior only Indian trails. The first settlers came from the waterways to the south and up the St. Marys to land their families and possessions on the banks of the Munuscong (many spellings over the years) or Charlotte Rivers. From there they entered the country to claim homesteads or purchased property. Many people entered through Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario finding the climate very different from their Southern Ontario homeland.

After the Civil War, Congress enacted the Homestead Act making land available for the influx of immigrants. Congress also granted land to the various railroads to sell for income to build new railroads to promote the expansion of the country. By 1890 most of

the land in Bruce Township was occupied with farm families.



Legend says the township received its name from Andrew J. Smith, local political power in Chippewa County. His family had been tenants on the estate of Lord Bruce in the Shetland Islands so he suggested the name Bruce in recognition of the kindness of Lord Bruce to the Smith Family. Mr. Smith is also credited for the curve in the road (today M-129 at Nine Mile). His homestead was $\frac{1}{4}$ mile east of the meridian and he arranged the road to be surveyed right past his place for convenience.

A principal farming community, the township had no established towns.



Rosedale on 9 Mile had in addition to a Post Office, store, church and a blacksmith. Local folklore tells the area was named Rosedale because of the number of wild roses in the area.

McCarron located at the intersection of 12 Mile and Riverside (County Road)



was a Post Office and country stores at different times. The McCarron Family owned property on the corner. Donaldson on the M-129 and 13 Mile corner had a Post Office and store and the Donaldson Methodist Church and the Donaldson Cemetery. The corner was named Donaldson for the minister whose parish included Pickford.

Going East on 15 Mile Road one comes to the Barbeau Post office.

The area was named for Peter Barbeau fur trader; the corner had a store in addition to the Post Office.

A mile further East, still considered Barbeau was the ferry to Neebish Island and the road south hosted many resorts and cabins(Conley's among others)taking advantage of the fishing in the St. Marys River.

This area was very popular for tourists from the Chicago area and Ohio in the 1900-1940 eras.



The Dunbar area was a 1910 gift of land, the farm of Harris T. Dunbar who owned the dredging company working with the Corps of Engineers on the St. Marys River. Mr.



Dunbar gave the property and farm for a school to be developed for the teaching of modern farming practices to the rural community. A three-story building for class rooms was

constructed; the bricks and building material manufactured on site.

About this time Michigan State developed an Agricultural and Forestry school and World War I occurred. By 1920 the school administration admitted defeat and closed the school. In 1925 Michigan State acquired the property and developed its Forestry Experimental Station. Forestry students from MSU interests developed programs to improve forest production. The 5,700 acres are managed by Forest Biomass Innovation Center in Escanaba. The riverside area is a public park supervised by Bruce Township

There were at least 6 churches in the early years with 3 still offering services; Rosedale Community, Donaldson Presbyterian Church and Holy Family Catholic. 13 country schools covered the area until Bruce Township School opened in 1958. Under the Sault Area School System classes up to 8th grade were conducted, a few years later the seventh and 8th grade were sent to the Jr. High and High School in the Sault. Bruce Township School was closed in 2005, students transferred to Soo Township and then into grade schools in the Sault system.

Again, local lore says the first Township Hall was a 2- story building right on the NW corner of 9 Mile and Shunk Road. The ground floor was an open area to hold the horses and buggies and the second floor was available for dancing and meetings. The second Hall was across the road on 9 Mile on the banks of a branch of the Charlotte River. It had a basement and stage dance floor on the main floor. Today it is a private residence. The current Hall is on 12 Mile about 3 miles east of M-129.



Old hall and Rosedale church



The Township Offices are located there with hours of M-W-F 10-4. The large public area and kitchen are available for the use of township residents.



Farming has been the main source of income in the township. Just about every crop has been tested in the clay soils and short summers. Transportation has always been a problem. Milk was a major income for the small farmer. Milk was gathered daily from area farms and taken to local creameries and cheese factories. Then pasteurization laws were initiated and the small farmer could not afford the equipment. In the 1930s the in-great-demand hay crop was taken to Dafter and placed on trains taking it to the race track owners in Kentucky. Hay remains the current product of the farms. There are still some large out dated hay barns in the township even though round covered bales replace the hay gathering events.



On the M-129 and 12 Mile corner the half-way house offered a change of horses for the trip to the Sault and back to Pickford. There was a store there. Across the road stood the Orange Hall. Below the hill was a blacksmith and on the opposite side (east side) a sawmill. Quite often sawmills were portable and followed locations of small tracts of timber cutting.

The Grange was another social outlet and opportunity to receive information relating to agricultural news. There were 3 in the area. Later the Extension Service provided homemakers with educational information on maintaining the efficient home. Barn raisings. gatherings at church and Saturday night visits with fiddles and music also provided socializing for people who worked hard all week. A day spent berry picking was a welcomed change of pace.

We have some delightful memory pages that people have written for us in addition to family stories found in personal genealogy books. The following gives an idea of the treasures on our shelves:

Isobel Sibbald's story

Rosedale Store and Post office were located on the southwest corner on Nine Mile and Shunk Roads, directly across from the Grange Hall. The Grange was the center of the area's society, holding meetings, dances and events associated with the church and school. Downstairs was a stable to hold the horses. The church was just north of Grange Hall and the George House residence just west. On the northeast corner was the Peterman house and the Graham house was on the southeast corner. East of the Graham house on the Rosedale side road (nine mile road) was my father's blacksmith shop and house.

My great grandparents David and Margaret Donaldson Lyall bought the Rosedale store in 1896, when they moved from Donaldson where they also operated a store and post office. In 1902 their only child, a daughter died leaving her husband and four very young children. They took the oldest girl, my mother, Margaret, to live with them. At the time she was five years old. In 1910 David Lyall died and Grandma Lyall, along with Margaret, ran the store and post office alone from that time until 1919 when Margaret married my father, J. Chester Long. He had a blacksmith shop and house east of Rosedale corner on the south side of the nine mile road. They sold the store once to Alex Bush but he did not succeed with it and they got it back. During the switch back and forth the post office was dropped and rural delivery started. When they got it back my father sold the black smith shop and house to George Sanderson and bought the approximately 80 acres of farmland on the northwest corner of Nine Mile Road and Shunk Road from John Thompson in 1920-21. They all lived together at the store. It was busy enough there to keep all three grownups working.

The floor plan of the combined store and house took up a quite large, square building with a stairwell that ran east to west and divided it in the exact middle. The south half of the first floor was a combined kitchen and sitting room and also contained a pantry, a storage closet and a large back shed. The north half of the first floor was completely taken up by the store. A wide

After World War II farming supplied less and less of a living wage and migration to the city factories saw the decrease of population in the township. Today much of the cleared land is returning to a natural state, and old barns are falling in. Fences no longer demarcate property lines or restrain cows or horses. Farm income

mostly comes from the yearly hay crop. The homesteads are being divided up and new houses are being established for families commuting to school and work. Radio, TV, telephones, automobiles and computers have eliminated the isolation of 150 years ago. This is a small sampling of the facts and stories found in the collection.

The Bruce Township seventh and eighth grade classes of 1967 were assigned the task of gathering information from family members and neighbors of stories and memories of the early years. That was the beginning of today's quest for Township History. Research starting with, "where were the first schools in the township", to discoveries of the early families and businesses in the area has resulted in an excellent collection of history. Sadly many of the 1980s group that participated in the initial search have passed, leaving the beginnings of a detailed compilation of lore.

Book Contributors

| | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Clifford Allan | Kay (Butler) Lawrence |
| Nathaniel Armstrong | Mary and Joe Lechner |
| Whitford Armstrong | Bob and Elmer Long |
| Leslie Atkins | Chester Long |
| Olive and Leslie Atkins | Ruby Lundy |
| Norman and Florence Avery | Paul Mercherberger |
| Wilmer Beamish | Florence McCaffey |
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| Margaret Brown | Arnold and Elizabeth Mitchell |
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| Nelson La Joie | |
| Eleanor LaVictor | |

Today's researchers gather family histories (donated by area people), newspaper articles and internet searches among the other resources available. The Bruce Historical Society held a one room school reunion of the 13 old schools in the Township in 2015 at the Township Hall. Classmates reunited and reminiscing was enjoyed. Heritage Days 2009 and Heritage Days 2012 were two other times the community came together to share memories. Families working with genealogy have contacted Shirley Patrick and shared

information. Telephone calls and emails have solved lineage questions. Bruce Township Family books are available and any additional information will expand our story.

Mt. Zion, Donaldson and Barbeau Catholic cemetery records are in the process of being saved on a data base and are available for genealogy questions.

Photos, objects and monetary donations are very welcomed. Sharing information is encouraged. Arrange a meeting any time with Shirley to acquaint yourself with Bruce History.

Share Bruce Township History

Contact the clerk at the Township office 906-635-3058.

Shirley Patrick Call or Text (906)-748-0952

Email sapatrack38@yahoo.com



From this 2005

12/8/2020

To this 2021

