# The History of Flynn Township

## Written circa the 1940s by former Flynn Township Supervisor Ben Isles.[1]

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[1] For the most part, this piece retains its original verbiage. However, some editing has taken place to provide context or to correct errors that could alter the readers' understanding of the piece (spelling of names, places, etc.).

By Ben H. Isles, Supervisor (written circa. the 1940s)

In order to get down to the history of Flynn Township, we will first have to have a look at the early history of Sanilac Co.

The first mention of Sanilac County is in the old territorial laws of 1827 before the survey was made. The survey of Town 10 North Range 13 East was completed in 1834. The reported was filed December 2nd, 1834 by Wm. S. Burt, D.S.

The origin of the name is not clear but is said to have been named by a Frenchman who traveled through this part of the country in the 17th century. [(Historians have since come to believe that Sanilac County was named after a Native American chief of the same name.)]

The first settlers in the country were probably in the early 1830's around Worth and Lexington townships. It was then attached to St. Clair County and extended west to Tuscola County and north to the "tip" of the Thumb. The Legislature of 1848 by a Special Act, organized the Sanilac County and fixed the County Seat at the village of Lexington.

The first County election was held in November 1849. The following were the County Officers elected: Clark M. Mills, Judge of Probate; Prosecuting Attorney, John Divine; County Judge, Ruben B. Dimond; County Clerk and Register of Deeds, Benjamin Luce; County Treasurer, James L. Smith, and Silas Bardwell was elected Sheriff. Mr. Dimond received $50.00 salary and Mr. Divine received $45.00 for the year 1850.

The first Board of Supervisors met in October 1850 and consisted of Peter Benedict of Worth Township, Clark M. Mills from Lexington Township and Charles McMillan from Sanilac Township. These three townships included all of Sanilac County and what is now Huron County. The assessed valuation was $169,389.

In the 1852 General Election, the Sanilac County vote for President (Pierce 252), (Scott 109). In 1856 the vote was (Fremont 803), (Buchanan 201) and in 1860 Lincoln received 899 votes and Douglas 396.

Peter Benedict of Worth Township was the first member of the State Legislature from Sanilac County. During the first few years after the organization of the county, the offices were found in several places in the village of Lexington, but in 1857 a County Building was built at Lexington, with the help of a popular subscription, at a total cost of $2,750.00.

At the organization of the county, Lexington township ran from the lake shore to Lapeer county on the west and included the present townships of Lexington, Buel, Elk, and Flynn. In 1855, Buel township was organized and set off from Lexington. It included Buel, Elk, and Flynn and two years later (1857) Elk was set off from Buel and included Elk and Flynn, this brings us up to Flynn township.

Up to this time, some lumbering had been done in the township or at least taken up some land. In the spring of 1855, a man named William Fitch took up form the United States government the North 1/2 of the South East 1/4 of Section 36 and settled on the bank of Elk Creek which was naturally the best place to settle in a new country. Thomas Flynn came the same summer and purchased part of Mr. Fitch's land but returned to Lexington and lived there that winter but came to his farm with his family in 1856 and living near Mr. Fitch.

William McGregor came about the same time but went farther and settled on Section 23. Richard Nichol came soon afterward and took up 160 acres on Section 36 but did not come to live there until later for he was an employee of the United States Government during the Civil war.

At that time Peck was the Post Office and Lexington was the closest place where transportation could be had to the outside world, then only by irregular boat schedule. Too much cannot be said for these and other pioneers who paved the way for settlement of the township.

Mr. Fitch did not stay in Flynn township very long. Mr. Flynn, Mr. McGregor, and Mr. Nichol lived in the township until their death. Mrs. John Duckworth is a daughter of Mr. Flynn. Mrs. John Shephard is a daughter of Mr. McGregor, so both the pioneer families are still represented in the township. Ruth Flynn was said to have been the first white child born in the township. After the Civil War came Purdy Jones, George Clay, Albert Beals, Dan House, Charles Ross, Nelson Howie, John and Tom Eaton, Terrance Callaghan and others.

About this time (1863) a schoolhouse was built but was burned in 1865, but another was built in 1867. A store was opened and a post office about 1870, during this period, with Purdy Jones as postmaster. The settlement was named Omard in honor of Omar D. Conger who was a member of Congress from 1869 to 1881. Taking the name Omar and the initial D to form the name Omard.

In 1868, a petition was presented to the Sanilac County Board of Supervisors to organize a new township within the lines of Town 10 North Range 13 East.
[Flynn] was a part of Elk township. The petition was referred to a committee consisting of Mr. Hilborn of Speaker, Mr. Lawson of Fremont, and Mr. Fox of Elk township.
The committee reported October 16, 1868 as follows, which is copied from the original proceedings: Your committee on organization of new townships beg leave to report that they have had the same under consideration, and that in regard to the new township proposed to be erected out of the territory known as Town 10 North, Range 13 East now attached to Elk township. They do recommend that the Board at this session do not organize the said township for the following reasons:
1st. One of the petitioners being a minor could not in our opinion properly sign such petition.
2nd. Another of the petitioners does not live in said township.
3rd. At least two of the petitioners are not citizens of the United States.
4th. One of the petitioners is not a free holder.
Therefore, there is not the number of signatures required by law. All of which is respectfully submitted and your committee ask to be discharged. Signed: M. Hilborn, Daniel Lawson, and Patrick Fox.

The report was accepted and committee discharged, but when the report came up for adoption, the Board failed to adopt.

It was then moved by J.H. Beckett of Maple Valley that the township described in the petition of Thomas Flynn and others be organized by the name Flynn. Motion was carried. The following resolution was then offered. In the matter of the application of Thomas Flynn, Daniel House, John Eaton and others, for the election and organization of a new township. It appearing to the Board of Supervisors that application has been made and that notice thereof has been signed, posted up and published, that within Town 10 North, Range 13 East be and the same is hereby erected into the Township of Flynn. The first Annual meeting to be held at the house of Thomas Flynn on Tuesday the 4th day of April 1869 at 9 o'clock in the forenoon. And at said meeting Thomas Flynn, Daniel House, and John Eaton, three electors of the said township, shall be the persons whose duty it shall be to preside at such meeting, appoint a clerk, open and keep the polls and exercise the same power as the inspectors of election at any Township Meeting as the law provides.

The resolution was adopted as follows:
Yea: McLachlin, Goodrich, J. Jones, Wideman, Beckett, Hilborn, Lawson, Wixon, Wright, Fenner, Alman ([Should be 11, written as 12])
Nay: Breidenbach, A. Jones, Pollard, McClure, Erskine, Delaney, and Fox (7).
The election was accordingly held at the house of Thomas Flynn in April 1869. Thomas Flynn was elected Supervisor; Purdy Jones, clerk; Daniel House, treasurer. The Justices elected were Wm. McGregor, Purdy Jones, Matthew J. Kolts, and Thomas Flynn and Constables were Albert Beals, Dan House, A.W. Payne, and George Webb.
Thomas Flynn, Thomas Eaton, Matthew Kolts, Purdy Jones, Andrew McLane, Albert Beals, George Clay, Charles Ross, Frank Gallagher, William McGregor, John Eaton, Sam Hunt, Joseph Hill, James Dingman, Robert Flynn, Terrance Calla[g]han, Matthew Burk, Wm. Smafield, Nelson Howie, Daniel House, Wm, Jenny and William Canady were the only names on the 1869 Assessment Roll. The rest of the township was listed as Non-Resident. The 1869 valuation was $44,650.
In 1870, Watson Beach (who later became Circuit Judge) took the first census of the township and found 132 people but about 25 were workers in the lumber woods. The 1870 census list had the following families listed: Nathan Snell, Purdy Jones, Wm. McGregor, Charles Ross, Sam Hunt, Frank Gallagher, Albert Beals, Thomas Flynn, George Clay, George Webb, R.J. Nichol, Frank Davis, Jas. Dingman, John Eaton, Andrew W. Payne, Dan House, Nelson Howie, Chas. Sageman, Martin Voltz, Calvin Rhyndress. That spring the annual election was held in the Omard schoolhouse and Richard Nichol or R.J. as he was usually called was elected Supervisor with Purdy Jones as Clerk. Albert Beals, Treasurer, William McGregor, Justice, Dan House, George Webb and A.W. Payne, constables.

1871 was the year of the first big forest fire. Mr. Nichol was again elected supervisor, Mr. Jones clerk, and Mr. Beals treasurer. In 1872, Matthew J. Kolts was elected supervisor, Mr. Jones again was the clerk and Robert Flynn, oldest son of Thomas Flynn was elected treasurer. At the 1873 election, Mr. Kolts and Mr. Jones were re-elected with John Gorsline, as treasurer. Mr. Flynn for whom the township was named died during the year.

In 1874 Purdy Jones was the supervisor; Albert Beals, clerk; and Mr. Gorsline again treasurer. This year a countywide vote was taken to move the County Seat from Lexington to Sandusky. The proposition lost, Flynn voted 9 for removal to 19 against removal.

The year 1875 found Andrew W. Payne supervisor; Frank Davis, clerk; John Smafield, treasurer, and Robert Flynn as Highway Commissioner.

In 1876 Mr. Payne, supervisor; Dan House, clerk; Mr. Smafield treasurer and Nathan Snell, commissioner. In the 1877 election, James McGregor, a son of the pioneer William McGregor, was elected supervisor; Frank Davis, clerk; John Gorsline treasurer and Alex McDonald, commissioner. 1878 found the same officers re-elected.

By this time the idea of moving the County Seat from Lexington to the center of the county was brewing, and that year a popular vote was taken to borrow $20,000.00 to build new county buildings at Sandusky, the proposition carried by a vote of 1956 to 1303, Flynn voted 34 yes to 13 no. In 1879, Mr. McGregor and Mr. Davis were re-elected with Alex McDonald, treasurer and Joel Jones commissioner. Jan. 1, 1880 the County Seat was moved from Lexington to Sandusky. The population of Flynn Township had increased to 526. Mr. McGregor was re-elected with Robert Flynn, clerk; Alex McDonald, treasurer; and Joel Jones, commissioner. In 1881, Mr. McGregor and Mr. Flynn were re-elected with Douglas [(or Dugald?)] McKellar, treasurer, and Purdy Jones, commissioner. Munro Snell, George Kilets, and Frank Gordick were constables. The assessed valuation was $70,675.00. This was the year of the 2nd big forest fire which started September 5, after a long dry spell, the fire was carried along by a very high wind carrying death and destruction with it.

In 1882, James Baldwin was elected supervisor with Robert Flynn, clerk; Mr. McKellar, treasurer, treasurer and David Justin, commissioner. In 1883, James McGregor was the supervisor; Dougald [(Dugald?)] McKellar, clerk; Alex McAlpine, treasurer; and James Baldwin, commissioner.

During 1884, Mr. Baldwin took the census and found 637 people. R.J. Nichol was the supervisor with James Gordon, clerk; Alex McAlpine, treasurer and Ed Dorland, commissioner.

In 1885, Mr. Nichol, Mr. Gordon, and Mr. Dorland were re-elected with Archie McAlpine, treasurer and in 1886 all were re-elected.

The year 1877 found Mr. Nichol supervisor, Purdy Jones, clerk, Morris Rockwell, treasurer and Charles Welch[, commissioner.] In 1888, James Gordon was the supervisor, Purdy Jones, clerk; Mr. Rockwell, treasurer and Mr. Dorland again highway commissioner. Mr. Jones died during the year and his son Daniel J. Jones finished the term as clerk.

In the 1889 election, Mr. Gordon was elected [supervisor]. Robert Attridge, clerk; James Baldwin, treasurer; and Robert Morgan, commissioner, and in 1890 Mr. Nichol was again

supervisor, Mr. Flynn, clerk; Morris Rockwell, treasurer and Ed Dorland, commissioner. N.P. Jones took a census and found 800 people. The assessed valuation was $158,030.00.

In 1891, the west side [of the township] came out in force and elected James. O. Frazier, supervisor; Mr. Rockwell, treasurer; Mr. Dorland, the commissioner with Robert Flynn, the clerk. 1892 found Mr. Rockwell, supervisor; Mr. Flynn, clerk; Hugh Mahaffy, treasurer and Robert Potter, commissioner.

In 1893, Mr. Frazier was the supervisor, Mr. Flynn, clerk; George Brown, treasurer and Mr. Potter, commissioner. In 1894, Mr. Frazier, Mr. Flynn, and Mr. Brown were re-elected with George Large, the commissioner. Population 907. In 1895, Mr. Frazier, Mr. Flynn, and Mr. Large were re-elected with Frank Brown as treasurer. Mr. Flynn moved out of the township and Dougal [(Dugald?)] McKellar was appointed to fill the vacancy.

In 1896, Mr. Frazier was the supervisor, Mr. McKellar, clerk; Mr. Brown, treasurer; Mr. Large, commissioner. In 1897, Mr. Frazier was re-elected; John Murphy was elected clerk for the first time. Peter McKellar, treasurer and Thomas Tuer, commissioner. All were re-elected in 1898. In 1899, Peter McKellar was elected supervisor, Mr. Murphy, clerk; Henry Shrier, treasurer and Alfred Crocker, highway commissioner.

In 1900, Delman Shrier took the census and counted. Mr. McKellar, Mr. Murphy, and Mr. Welch, commissioner. By this time the assessed valuation had increased to $313,570.00. In 1901, Robert Attridge was elected supervisor, Mr. Murphy, clerk; Ben Foster, Sr., treasurer and Dan Welch, commissioner.

1902 found Mr. Attridge, Mr. Murphy and Mr. Foster re-elected with Albert Vandewarker, treasurer. The present Town Hall was built this year.


A post office was opened at Omard in the early days [(1871)] with Purdy Jones as postmaster. He was followed by R.J. Nichol, Wm. McGregor, and Dougald [(Dugald?)]McKellar. Stores were kept by Munro Snell, James Gordon, Henry Shrier, Albert Levitt, Dougald [(Dugald?)] McKellar, James Rose, William McGregor, George Black, John Graybiel, Harry Waterman, Ben Andrus and at present by Murray Blatt.

A post office was opened at Flynn Center in the [1890]s with Mr. Hagel was postmaster. He was followed by George Haines, both men kept stores. There was a post office opened at Red Star about the same time with Mr. Weaver as postmaster who also had a store. Albert Lenk kept a store at Red Star. All the post offices were discontinued when Rural Routes were started from nearby towns.

Schools and Churches

Omard School District No. 1 was the first district organized. A schoolhouse was built at Omard in 1863, it burned down in 1865 and the little Red School was built in 1867 and was used as a

school, church, voting place, lodge room and all other public services. Miss Swayze was the first teacher. A new schoolhouse was built in 1904 and opened Jan. 1, 1905 with M. J. Hawes as the teacher.

Red Star District No. 2 (fractional; frl.). is in the N.W. section of the township, was organized about 1875, with a schoolhouse built on the west side of section 8 with Emma Erwin as the teacher. A new schoolhouse was built in 1889 near the N.E. corner of section 8. Katie V. Hager was the first teacher.

Lane District No. 3 was organized about 1882 with a schoolhouse on section 17. Miss Anna Keena was the first teacher.

South Muck District No. 4 was organized about 1900 with Miss Anna Potter as the teacher. The first building burned and was replaced by a brick building in 1912.

Poplar Point District No. 5 was organized in 1889 out of Omard district with Miss Cora Lutes as the teacher.

Flynn-Elmer District No. 1 (fractional; frl.), was organized about 1912 out of a part of Poplar Point, Red Star, and part of Elmer Township. Miss Verna Evans was the first teacher. A part of Section 1 belongs to Laurel school in Elmer Township, and a part of Section 1 — 12 — 13 belongs to Cheyenne school in Elk township.

In the early days of the township, the schoolhouses were used as places of worship.

A Methodist Society was formed at Omard in the early days. A church building was built in 1896 and is still in use, the building was of brick.

The Presbyterians of North East Flynn joined with those of Western Elk and built a Stone church on the S.E. corner of section 12 in 1891.

The Presbyterians in the North West part of the township built a brick church building in the South West corner of section 4 in 1898. But has since been closed. The same year (1898), a Methodist church was built on the west side of section 8. Later, in about 1913, it was sold to the United Brethren Society and was moved to the South East corner of section 18 and is still used by them.

--- Different version of above:

A new cement block schoolhouse was built in 1904 and school opened Jan. 1, 1905 with M.J. Hawes as the teacher. District No. 2 fractional is in the northwestern part of the township and was organized about 1875 with Miss Emma Erwin as the teacher. A new schoolhouse was built near the northeast corner of section eight in 1889. Katie V. Hager was the first teacher in the new school. It is commonly known as Red Star.

District No. 3, called the Lane school, was organized in 1882 and the schoolhouse built on section 17. Miss Anna Keena was the first teacher. No. 4 is called South Muck and a schoolhouse was built about 1900 with Miss Anna Potter, the teacher. It was burned about 1912 and was replaced with a brick building around the same year. Poplar Point was organized in 1889 out of Omard district with Miss Cora Lutes as the teacher. The building is still in use. District No. 1 fractional is called Flynn-Elmer. It was organized about 1912 out of parts of Poplar Point, Red Star and Elmer Township. Miss Verna Evans was the first teacher. A part of section one belongs Laurel school; a part of sections 1, 12, and 13 belong to Cheyenne school district in Elk Township.

In the early days of the township, the schoolhouses were used as places of worship. A Methodist Society was organized at Omard in the early days with services held at the Omard schoolhouse. A brick church building was built at Omard in 1896 and is still in use. In 1891, a Presbyterian church was built on the southeast corner of section 12. The building is of stone and is still in use. In 1898 a Presbyterian church was built on the southwest corner of section four. The building, which was of brick, has been torn down. The same year a frame Methodist church building was built on the west side of section eight but about 1913 the building was sold to the United Brethren society and moved to the southeast corner of section 18 and is still in use.

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