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A BRIEF DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY OF THE TOWNSHIP OF WELDON

By Mary Marshall

The township of Weldon contains 36 full sections of land and has no lakes large or small within its borders. There are two or three trout streams flowing across from east to west) the principal one of which rises in section one, in what is locally known as the big marsh, thence flows in a southwesterly direction across section eleven, part of ten and fifteen, where it is crossed by the Ann Arbor railroad, thence across sections sixteen) seventeen and nineteen, where it falls into the Betsey river at Davis mill and mill pond, which is known all over the county as a famous trout pond. The Betsey river enters the township at a point on section twenty-five, thence flows southerly across said section and part of section thirty-five and flows into Manistee county near the southeast corner of section thirty-five, making a big bend in the township of Springdale and coming back into the township of Weldon on section thirty-one) thence flowing in a general northerly direction through sections thirty-one, thirty, nineteen, eighteen and seven, where it leaves the township and enters the town of Benzonia. The land is principally a sandy loam, with stronger gravelly and clay loam on the higher lands. There is some of the highest land in the county within the borders of the township, especially lands on sections twenty-seven and thirty-four, where are high rolling lands suitable for all kinds of fruit adapted to a northern climate, also on sections twelve and thirteen are high lands of good quality covered with a big growth of hardwoods locally known as the Joe Wright hills, from a settler of that name who located a homestead on section twelve. There is hardly a quarter section in the township but that is capable of raising good crops and supporting a family. Much of it was originally covered with a good growth of pine, hemlock, beech, maple, basswood and elm timber, much of which is still standing. The lands known to recent settlers as pine plains were originally a mixture of pine and hardwoods, but there is none of the hardwoods left and the pine stubs and roots being all that is left, lead to the idea that they were only pine lands.

The first settler to locate in the township of Weldon was Arthur T. Case, who came in 1863. He located the northeast quarter of section four. He was a prominent man in the county, serving as county clerk one or two terms, and afterwards became a member of the State legislature for the counties of Benzie and Leelanau. In 1864 Robert Metts and Abraham Roose, and William Roose came and located. Mr. Metts located on section nine, where he still lives, and owns two hundred and forty acres and is one of our leading farmers at the present time, being also about the last one of the original settlers left. Abraham Roose took a quarter section on section nine, the place now owned by Abraham Hobbs. William Roose located on section ten; Mr. Thomas Taylor also came at about the same time and located the northwest quarter of section ten, where his son and widow still live. William Hyatt located the southeast quarter of section three the same year and made a big clearing. He died in 1890 and none of the family reside on the old homestead at present. Dave De Voe came the next year and located on section two. Isaac Meads came a little later and settled on southeast quarter of ten, where he died in 1890. Mr. and Mrs. Fisk homesteaded the southeast quarter of section four at about the same

time as the last mentioned settler. The township was organized in 1868. I find Shelby Hobart's name as the first township clerk; he located on the northwest quarter of section three about that time. Sometime during the seventies came George Dair and located a water privilege on section nineteen where the saw mill still stands, conducted by his son, Fred Dair. His widow still lives there, also H. G. Waite. Zimri S. Bush located on section twenty-one and the Tennants also, some of whom are still residents of the town. Russell C. Hill, our present supervisor, located on section eighteen, which has been his permanent residence since then. R. Edson, C. Snyder and J. B. Smeltzer came in the springs of 1881 and '82, and have been permanent residents of the township since then. The Frankfort & N. E. Railway, now the Ann Arbor, was built through the township during 1888-9 and the village of Thompsonville surveyed and located in 1890. Later the Chicago & West Michigan was built across the corner of Weldon township. While we would not like to go back to the old stage mail route with mail only three times a week, we still think the railroads have not brought us the prosperity we thought they would. We would have preferred to have had our timber manufactured here instead of being carried out of the county by railroads. The land is not settled as fast as the older residents think it ought to be, and it has depreciated in value since the advent of railroads. Years ago, when the land was assessed higher than at present, taxes were cheerfully paid by non-residents, but at present they are neglecting their taxes and the consequence is we have several tracts falling back to the State and becoming State tax lands which will eventually cause them to become a burden on the few settlers that are left. The lands ought to be made State homestead lands and give poor people a chance once more to locate and get homes; when, if left, they will grow up to a second growth of brush and worthless shrubs and become the home of wild beasts and deer again. Bear and deer have roamed the township for ages, and while they are scarce just at present, they will soon come back when the lumberman's axe and saw leave the woods to their original solitude. Game now is confined to a few woods-partridge and quail and jack rabbits. When I came to the township it was nothing uncommon to see from four to six deer go loping along; we could see them from the house and they came to my garden the first year for my green peas and cabbage. I have always had them in my fields up to the year 1892, since which time I have not seen a track nor found a runway. The last bear shot in this township to my knowledge was killed by Charles Nostrand in 1893, when he killed two of them, and the last deer killed was shot by Jacob Hyatt in 1891 or '92.