

JOYFIELD TOWNSHIP
PREPARED BY WM. A. JOY

Joyfield township is one of the southern tier of townships in Benzie county, and is bounded on the north by Benzonia township, on the east by Weldon, on the south by Pleasanton (Manistee county), and on the west by the township of Blaine; in size it is four miles wide, east and west, and five miles long, north and south, and contains twenty sections of land, and is a part of town twenty-five north, range fifteen west, of the original government survey. It is well watered by numerous spring brooks, the soil mostly a rich, sandy loam, is high and rolling and well adapted to farming and fruit raising; it contains some of the largest and finest farms and orchards in the county.

The first homestead entry was made July 11, 1863, by Rev. A. Joy; on the same day homesteads were entered by a Mr. Hall and Wm. A. Joy. Mr. Joy, Sr., and Mr. Hall commenced at once to put up log cabins with the intentions of making their homesteads permanent homes. Mr. Hall got only the body of his cabin up and then went back to Ohio and never returned. I acquired my right to take up a homestead from having served in the army, and also being a minor. I did not build a house till two years later, when the authorities at Washington said that I must "live on and cultivate" my land in order to get a title to it. We put up an eight by ten pole shanty, which we covered with bark for a temporary stopping place till we could get our house in condition to live in. We found that our roof was rather a leaky affair, as during the first hard rainstorm we had to pile our things up in the corner and sit on them till the rain was over; we made slow progress with our house, as there was no lumber to be had for love or money; we succeeded in getting just enough lumber for one door and casing for one window, which we put in the front side of the house for the sake of looks, and for the back door split out elm shakes; for our floors we split basswood and hemlock puncheons. Mrs. Joy arrived with our household goods the latter part of September, she being the first woman to make her home in what was then an unbroken wilderness. We lived about a year with our nearest neighbor, four miles away; ours being the only house for a long distance, it was a general stopping place for travelers, and as many as eighteen persons found lodging there in one night. The old log house is standing yet, and many were the happy and pleasant hours spent in it.

Homesteads were taken up later in the season by Mr. Noah Fuller, Win. Davis, Gordon T. Johnson and P. W. Brooks, but they did not move on their places till the next year. In the fall of 1864 Wm. McBain, Joseph Davis and Frank Johnson took up homesteads, and commenced to make improvements; during the year 1865, Norman Steele, David Matteson, Solomon Powers, Bushrod and John Perry, Hiram McKay, Joel Finch, Lyman Madison, and Joseph W. Rhodes entered a quarter section of land each, and put up log cabins and started to hew out farms in the woods. In the year 1866, homesteads were located by A. P. Jaquays, Hiram N. Stanley, Mathew Gordon, Silas Gordon, Ira Gordon, Mr. John Frost, Thomas Dair, George Dair, Wm. Halstead and Mr. Scramling; during the year 1867 by Win. Peoples, R. S. G. Carhartt, Wm. Bryan, Levi Bush and Mr. Charles H. Parker; Mr. Wilson Reed bought out Mr. Scramling's homestead right this year. In 1868 Rev. A. Barnard located the old homestead, entered and vacated by Mr. Hall. In 1863 Mr. Parker commenced clearing up his place with the

intention of making a fruit farm, and well he succeeded, and to-day there is not a finer orchard in Benzie county than the one started by the industry and intelligence of Mr. Parker, but he did not live to reap the full benefits of his labors, dying April 11, 1885, and his place has passed into other hands.

Mr. Levi Bush came with the intentions of putting up a sawmill on the Betsie river, but after spending his entire fortune in getting machinery and trying to dam the river, he gave up his place and went west to Idaho, and died there. I will not make mention of those who settled later in Joyfield, as they are not in the pioneer class, with the exceptions of the two Spaulding brothers, who, I think, settled there about the year 1868.

In the early part of 1864, Mr. Joy, Sr., succeeded in getting a postoffice established, he being appointed postmaster. The office was given the name of Joyfield at the suggestion of Rev. Charles E. Bailey. As Mr. Joy's family were the only residents in the township for about a year, the revenue of the office was not very large. Mr. Joy was postmaster twenty years, when, on account of poor health he resigned, and Win. A. Joy was appointed. He held the office some time and then resigned, and G. T. Johnson was appointed to fill his place, who held the office till 1889, when R. J. Reed succeeded him and still serves (1897). Joyfield was the second office to be established in the county. In 1868 the town was organized as a township, taking the same name as the postoffice. George Dair was the first supervisor elected, W. P. Kibby, clerk, and J. W. Rhodes, treasurer; said election being held the spring of 1869. The township is now divided into four school districts. Each district has a good frame schoolhouse, and are all well supplied with the necessary maps, and other fixtures needed in well regulated schools. Mrs. Milo Halstead was the first teacher in the township; she taught school in what is now district No. 1, in a little log schoolhouse which stood on "Joy's" corners, where the Methodist Episcopal Church now stands.

The first meetings were held at the residence of Rev. A. Joy, in the spring of 1865. A Sunday school was organized with Mrs. Joy as superintendent. Meetings were kept up by Mr. Joy till Mr. Barnard moved into town, when he assisted him, preaching on alternate Sundays. A few years later a Methodist Episcopal Church was organized, and is the only church organization in the township now.

The first wedding occurred in 1866, when Mr. Frank Harmon and Leora Jaquays were married by Rev. A. Joy.

The first death occurred December, 1864, Mr. Noah Fuller dying at that time. Of the old pioneers who settled in Joyfield previous to 1866, but two are alive at this time, viz., Joseph Davis and Wm. A. Joy. Rev. A. Joy died February 11, 1890; his wife, Mrs. L. D. Joy, September 13, 1886; Wm. Davis, December 4, 1881; his wife, Mildred Ann, December 17, 1895; Gordon Johnson, August 25, 1892; Joseph W. Rhodes, December 29, 1879; Margaret Fuller, wife of Noah Fuller, November 4, 1883; B. W. Perry, October 3, 1890; and Wm. McBain in 1894.

The first child born in the township was Horace B. Davis, who is married and with his two children still lives in the township.

The vast forest that covered the township in 1863 has mostly disappeared, and in its place we see farms with large clearings, good buildings and fine orchards. Joyfield is destined to be one of the best, if not the best, township in the county.