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A HISTORY OF A LUMBERED COUNTY

By

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A THESIS

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Byron S. Reetz

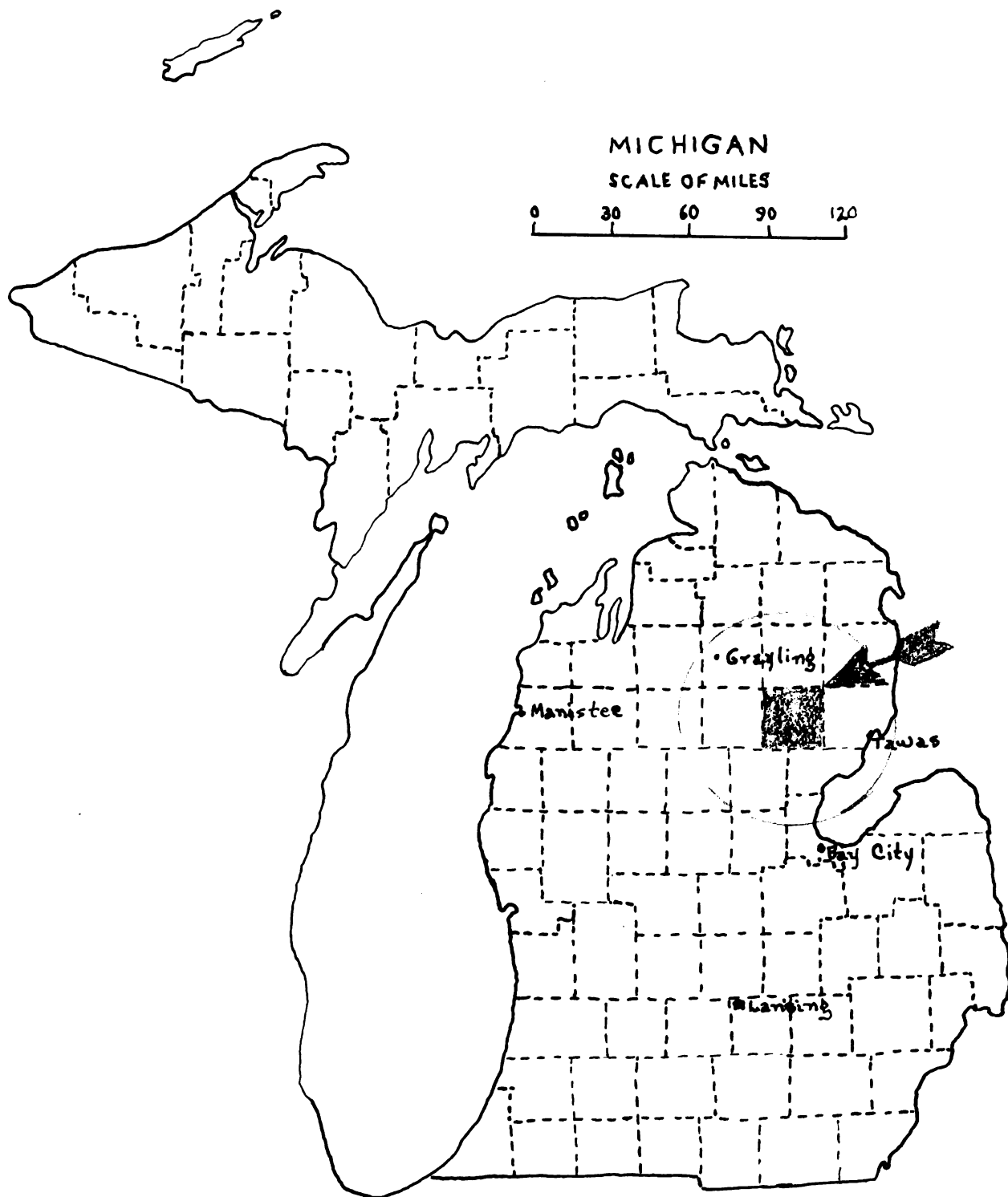


Fig. 1. Location of Ogemaw County

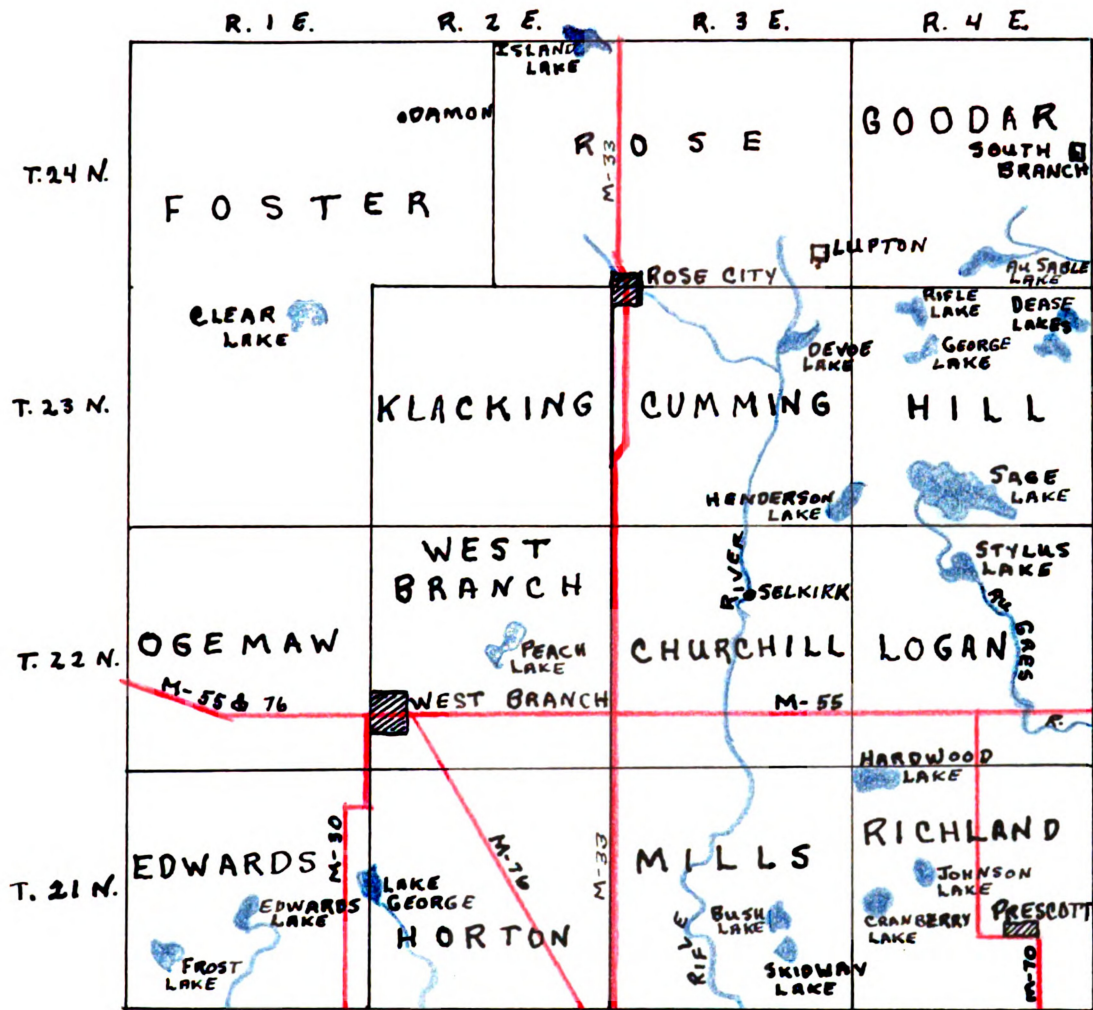


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## INTRODUCTION

Ogemaw County is located on the edge of the high plains area in the northern part of the Lower Peninsula of Michigan about twenty miles northwest of Saginaw Bay and forty-five miles north of Bay City, the nearest urban center.

Originally, Ogemaw County was covered with a magnificent forest of pines and hardwoods which remained untouched until nearly eighty years ago when the railroad reached the county. Within twenty-five years the pine had been lumbered off by absentee lumber companies, which disposed of their lands to hardwood lumber operators, farmers, and land speculators or allowed them to revert to the state for non-payment of taxes.

Farmers had appeared on the scene almost as soon as the lumbermen, and for many years toiled to clear their land and produce small crops. Many of these pioneer farmers were forced to work in the lumber camps during the winter to earn money to pay their taxes and buy the necessities they could not raise. Nearly two-thirds of the soil of the county is very poor, however, and large numbers of farmers discovered that they had settled on land that was worthless for agricultural purposes.

Upon the arrival of the farmers, schools and churches were erected and law and order were demanded, but the saloon

continued to be one of the most popular places in the villages as long as lumbering remained an important industry.

With the exhaustion of the pine resources emphasis was shifted to the lumbering of hardwood and swamp timber. Local business men made attempts to attract more farmers and other industries to the county, and for a time their efforts were successful. Population and the number of farms increased until shortly after the beginning of the twentieth century.

Education was improved -- new schools were built, nine months of classes were held instead of three or six, and a system of grades inaugurated. The number of churches had increased as had the number of fraternal organizations, all providing their share of leisure time activities.

As the last of the timber supplies were exhausted the sawmills were moved away, and many farms were abandoned. The depopulation of the sandy plains had started even earlier, and whole townships were left with hardly any inhabitants. As settlers moved away much of the land reverted to the state, and because there were no buyers for much of this land thousands of acres were set aside into state and national forests, game refuges, and for other public purposes. Schools, churches, health services, and other service organizations suffered as a result of the deteriorating economy.

Shortly before 1920 the faint beginnings of the resort business were evident, and before long it became an important



source of income. Though retarded by the depression of the 1930's the tourist industry has grown rapidly since 1940.

The discovery of oil in 1933 helped to mitigate the depression in the county, and after the coming of the Second World War the economic condition of the county has greatly improved. Agriculture has become more prosperous, and several small industries have been founded. Nevertheless, much of the money needed to operate the schools and provide other necessary services has continued to come from the state.

Large numbers of rural schools have been closed and their pupils transported to village schools where better facilities are available. The automobile has changed the recreational habits of a majority of the people, but fraternal, church, and school organizations continue to furnish a large part of the leisure time activity.

Provided a serious economic depression does not develop Ogemaw County appears to have finally succeeded in discovering a new economic base to replace the long dead lumbering industry.

## CHAPTER I

### A Pine Lumbering Community

Located on the edge of the high plains area in the northern part of the Lower Peninsula, Ogemaw County is about twenty miles northwest of Saginaw Bay and forty-five highway miles north of Bay City, the nearest urban center. The county is typical of the lumbered counties in northern Michigan that have undergone a period of prolonged economic stress since the passing of the lumbering industry.

The surface relief is similar to that of the area around the Great Lakes that was once covered with glaciers. Because of the glaciers there are numerous local differences in soil fertility and topography. (See Fig. 3)

In the northwest corner of the county is found a large area of sandy plain of very low fertility, high, level and dry, and covered with jackpine, scrub oak, poplar, sweet fern, and huckleberry brush. Running diagonally across the county from southwest to northeast is a hilly, sandy belt of low natural fertility supporting second growth stands of low value deciduous trees, some hardwoods, Norway, and white pine. A rolling, fertile till-plain extends along the southern and eastern limits of this hilly belt and here are located some of the best farms in the county interspersed with forests of maple, ash, elm, birch, poplar, and some pine. Another section of poor soils is found in the low, sandy plain in the south central section.

corresponding with the Rifle River valley and the upper reaches of the Tittabawassee River basin. Much of this area is low and wet and is covered with swamp forests while the remainder is made up of a mixed forest of jackpine, poplar, oak, and other pines and hardwoods. In the southeast section of the county lies a gently rolling till-plain, which is the location of another prosperous agricultural area with scattered forests of hardwoods intermingled with poplar and pine. All three sandy areas are characterized by wide stretches of wild land and are dotted with the remains of abandoned farms recognized by their sagging fences, apple orchards, lilac bushes, and crumbling foundations.

The northeastern part of Michigan had a very sparse Indian population, and Ogemaw was no exception. This was the result of several reasons including the poor quality of the soil, lack of wild rice in the streams and lakes, and the general isolation of the area.

There are but few Indian remains in Ogemaw County that suggest an ancient Indian culture. Most interesting are four pre-historic earthen enclosures, lying near the Rifle River in Churchill Township, which one author asserts date back at least one hundred years before the discovery of America in 1492.<sup>1</sup> These are not the only Indian remains to be found in the county. Two groups of mounds and a slush

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1. Fred L. Dustin, Report on Indian Earthworks in Ogemaw County, Michigan (Bloomfield Hills, Mich., 1932), pp. 1-25.

bed where pottery was made have been discovered in Klacking Township and an isolated mound on the western side of Churchill Township.<sup>2</sup> (See Fig. 4)

The east branch of the Mackinaw Trail connecting Saginaw with the Straits passed through the western part of the county, and the Rifle River Trail entered the county from the south, followed the river to its source, and quite probably continued on to join the Machinaw Trail.<sup>3</sup> The Rifle River Trail was later extensively used by lumbermen and settlers coming into the county with teams of horses and yokes of oxen.

Nevertheless, in historic times the Indian population of Ogemaw County has been very small and played a decidedly minor role in the development of the county. Census figures for the Indian population of the county are evidently quite inaccurate because only nine Indians are listed for Ogemaw County by the State Census of 1884, four by the United States Census of 1890, and twenty by the 1894 state census. The only Indian settlement in Ogemaw County of any importance following the arrival of the lumbermen was located by the Dease lakes in Hill Township. Yet, the 1884 census which gives the Indian population by townships does not denote any Indian population for Hill Township.

The Indian families in the Dease lakes vicinity lived in

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2. W. B. Hinsdale, Archaeological Atlas of Michigan (Ann Arbor, 1931), pp. 32-33.

3. Fred Dustin, "Old Indian Trails in the Saginaw District, Michigan," Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letter, Papers, XVIII (1932), p. 7.



log cabins and had a small log church. They were very friendly with the white settlers, and many of the Indian men worked in the neighboring lumber camps. However, when the forests had been cleared, leaving no hunting grounds and no work except that of farming, the Indians moved away. Today many of their log cabins have been converted into summer cottages by city dwellers -- even the old log church has been equipped with a cement foundation, oil heat, and electricity.

Although the Indians and their predecessors had occupied the territory for unknown centuries they had not altered the fundamental pattern of nature. At the time the white man began to show an interest in Ogemaw County it was still a virgin wilderness.

When Michigan became a state in 1837 the area that was to become Ogemaw County was a virgin wilderness, totally uninhabited except for a few Indians, and as yet neither mapped nor surveyed. The whole territory between Saginaw and the Straits of Mackinaw was as wild as it had been in 1819 when by the Treaty of Saginaw the United States Government secured title to the Chippewa lands in East-Central and Northeastern Michigan.

Saginaw, sixty miles south of Ogemaw County, was merely a rough frontier village which Bela Hubbard, who had visited the place in 1837 as a member of the Michigan Geological Expedition under Dr. Houghton, described as consisting of fifty frame houses, four stores, two warehouses, a church,

and two steam sawmills. The stockade of the fort built in 1820 was still standing. The fever of speculation had already been at work for Mr. Hubbard tells of a huge hotel being built in Lower Saginaw (now Bay City) that was large enough to house half the county and of the village of Midland, "located" opposite the forks of the Tittabawassee and Pine rivers, that contained not one building.<sup>4</sup>

Interest continued to mount concerning the vast forested area, and in 1840 the Michigan Legislature proceeded to lay out the entire portion of the Lower Peninsula into counties. Among these was Ogemaw which like many of the others was given an Indian name. Luckily, Ogemaw escaped the fate of most of these counties which had their names changed three years later. Thus, Kanotin became Iosco, Mikenauk became Roscommon, Shawono was renamed Crawford, and many others were given manufactured or locally meaningless names.

Ogemaw County derived its name from the famous Chippewa chief Ogemaw-ge-gato, who in 1819 eloquently opposed the proposals tendered by General Cass at the Saginaw Conference and asked him, "Shall we sell from under them (women and children) the spot where they spread their blankets?"<sup>5</sup> However, he was not able to contend with fire water and silver and the Indians voted to sell their lands.

As the pine disappeared in New England and Pennsylvania

4. Bela Hubbard, Memorials of a Half Century in Michigan and the Lake Region (New York, 1888), pp. 75-84.

5. Pioneer Directory of the Saginaw Valley for 1866 and 1867, as taken from George E. Butterfield, Bay County, Past and Present (Bay City, 1918), p. 64.

the lumber operators there began to show more and more interest in the Michigan pineries. Timber cruisers were sent out by the lumber firms and speculators and shortly the land in the more accessible areas of Michigan -- the Thumb, Saginaw Valley, and the Huron Shore Region -- were taken. Sawmills multiplied, slowly at first and then more rapidly, and by 1854 there were approximately twenty-seven sawmills on the Saginaw River.<sup>6</sup>

As the pressure on the pine reserves in the Saginaw Valley increased more attention was shown to the vast forests to the north of Saginaw, and the government began to press its surveys of the many unorganized counties. Three years before the government surveying party had completed its task in Ogemaw County in 1856, the first land patents had been issued for land within the county. The first lands patented were located in T. 21 N., R. 1 and 2 E.; T. 22 N., R. 2 and 3 E.; and T. 23 N., R. 3 and 4 E, and were taken by Eber B. Ward of Detroit, Volney A. Ripley of St. Clair, and Joseph Copeland of Pontiac. In keeping with the problem of transportation the land in the southern part of the county generally was taken before the land in the northern part.<sup>7</sup>

Some of the first land was directly purchased from the Federal Government at \$1.25 per acre, but much of it was secured in other ways. Originally all the lands in Michigan were the property of the United States Government. A number

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6. George W. Hotchkiss, History of the Lumber and Forest Industry of the Northwest (Chicago, 1898), p. 94.

7. "Tract Book of Ogemaw County," Ogemaw County Register of Deeds Office, West Branch.

of acts were passed by Congress largely for the purpose of disposing of these lands as rapidly as possible. Among the more important affecting Ogemaw County were the School Land Grant Act of 1836 which authorized the government to transfer Section 16 in each township to the states for primary school purposes; the Swamp Land Grant Act which gave certain swamp lands to the states; the acts authorizing land grants for railroad and canal construction; the Homestead Act; the Morrill Land Grant Act granting lands for agricultural colleges; and the acts giving land to the veterans of various wars and Indian campaigns.

Following the visit of the government surveyors the only tenants of the forests were deer, bear, and other game, and an occasional stray hunter or land looker. Tracts of pine were located, but were too far distant from the base of supplies to permit much lumbering until a railroad could be built.

As long as there was no permanent population governmental jurisdiction over Ogemaw County was shuttled between several counties. At first Saginaw County held legal authority over Ogemaw, but when Cheboygan County was organized in 1853 Ogemaw was attached to it for judicial and municipal purposes. Then in 1859 the unorganized counties of Ogemaw and Roscommon were annexed to Midland Township for all municipal and taxable puproses "until set off into other townships." However, in 1867, the same year that the first attempt at settlement was made, Ogemaw



County as a separate entity was abolished and was incorporated into the organized county of Iosco. The only limiting factors of the act were that the area formerly called Ogemaw County should become part of Tawas Township until the Iosco County board of supervisors should determine how to divide the area and that all highway taxes collected should be applied to the construction or improvement of the road running from the Tawas settlement in a westerly direction.

Striking out overland from the mouth of the Pine River in modern Arenac County in 1867, William H. Edwards, a lumberman, worked his way across to a location on the Tittabawassee River in T. 21 N., R. 1 E., a distance of about forty miles. Here he built a log house, and made a small clearing in connection with his lumbering operations. However, no efforts were made by others to follow Mr. Edwards' example until 1869 when Henry Cramer located a farm in T. 21 N., R. 4 E.<sup>8</sup>

These were but isolated cases. The real opening of the county had to await the coming of the railroad. The real character of the county in 1869 can be illustrated by the sojourn of George Sherman on Peach Lake. Mr. Sherman stayed there four months, hunting and trapping, without meeting a single person.<sup>9</sup>

A majority of the first settlers were drawn to Ogemaw

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8. West Branch Times, Industrial Edition, 1889, p. 2.

9. Howard H. Thompson, Unpublished data.

County by its forests and not its agricultural lands. A dense forest originally covered the area, except for a small acreage of open bogs and some relatively open land in the dry, sandy plains in the northwestern part of the county. Several types of virgin forest existed because of natural conditions such as soil, drainage, and relief. Most prominent was the mixed pine and hardwood forest where common hardwoods were found in association with white pine, hemlock, and Norway pine. This was located on the better soils characterized by the till-plains and parts of the hilly region. On the light, sandy soils in the northwest part of the county was found a forest composed almost entirely of pines -- Norway, white, and jackpine. Also of considerable importance was the swamp forest composed of balsam fir, cedar, tamarack, and elm because approximately 20 percent of the land is swampy or permanently wet.<sup>10</sup>

The lack of transportation was the greatest hindrance to the development of the county. None of the rivers serving the county were large enough to permit the bringing in of supplies by water and so all the necessities needed for lumbering operations would have had to be brought in by wagon over poor trails.

The first trail into the county was not blazed until 1867 when William H. Edwards succeeded in making his way to the Tittabawassee River in present day Edwards Township. The amount of lumbering carried on at his location there

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10. J. O. Veatch and others, Soil Survey of Ogemaw County, Michigan, U. S. Dept. of Agr. Bul. 28, Series 1923 (Washington, D.C., 1928), p. 904.

for the first few years is unknown.

In 1867, there were apparently many persons who still believed that the forest area to the north of Saginaw and Bay City was destined to remain a wilderness for generations. At a meeting held in Bay City about that year to consider the advisability of assisting the Jackson, Lansing and Saginaw Railroad in extending its line to Wenona, Dr. Fitzhugh, one of the largest landed proprietors of Bay City, expressed the opinion that it would be one hundred years before it would be necessary to extend the road farther north.<sup>11</sup>

However, the officials of the Michigan Central Railroad, who had acquired control of the Jackson, Lansing and Saginaw, realized that the pine of northern Michigan would have a ready market. In 1870, they began to push the rails into the northern forest and the lumbermen followed. In the interior region north of Bay City the railroads were the precursors of civilization and industry. Where the rails went the lumbermen followed and they in turn led the way for the part and full time farmers.

Reaching Wells Station (now Alger), just below the southern boundary of Ogemaw County in 1871, the railroad prompted the first real exploitation of the county's pine. A party of Ohio capitalists, after inspecting the area in

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11. Geo. W. Hotchkiss, History of the Lumber and Forest Industry of the Northwest, p. 320.

T. 22 N., R. 1 E. had secured a large tract of land there, organized the Ogemaw Lumber Company and started lumbering in 1871. The company erected a sawmill by a huge natural spring and named its settlement Ogemaw Springs. Dr. Cass L. Nauman, Ogemaw County's pioneer physician and one of its most versatile citizens, was secretary of the company and he came to the new sawmill village to help manage the business. In the same year Wright and Weidman commenced lumbering operations near present day West Branch, made some clearing, and built a log house which was used as headquarters for their business in the county until 1873.<sup>12</sup>

Railroad officials energetically pushed the extension of the Jackson, Lansing and Saginaw and by mid-summer of 1872 the line had been completed to West Branch, thirteen miles above Wells. Some six hundred men were employed in construction work and as much as five miles of track was said to have been laid in four days.<sup>13</sup> During the same year the railroad was completed through the village of Ogemaw Springs and on into Roscommon County.

Lumbering activity in the county increased rapidly following the construction of the railroad. George W. Hotchkiss and William H. Edwards, first lumbermen in the county, began building a sawmill about four miles north of Wells and commenced sawing operations in the summer of 1872. This mill had a capacity of 30,000 feet of lumber per day and the settlement became known as Greenwood.

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12. West Branch Times, Industrial Edition, 1889.

13. Lumberman's Gazette (Bay City, Mich.), August, 1872, p. 18.

Mr. Hotchkiss had been editor of the Saginaw Courier, a Democratic newspaper that had not proved profitable. After leaving Ogemaw County Mr. Hotchkiss went to Chicago where he became editor of the Northwest Lumberman, and later wrote his history of the lumbering industry.

The railroad established a station on the west branch of the Rifle River, named it West Branch, and for a time used it as a base camp for construction work.<sup>14</sup> In September, A. A. Sage and Company of Lapeer started building a saw and shingle mill on the railroad eight miles north of West Branch and the mill village of Beaver Lake was born. (See Fig. 5) This sawmill was described as being thirty by eighty feet in size and of 30,000 feet daily capacity. The mill was powered by two steam engines, each having two boilers and the cutting gear consisted of one seventy-two inch circular saw. The firm employed forty workers, whose daily wages ranged from \$1.25 to \$3.50 and the total investment of the company in this enterprise was but \$15,000.<sup>15</sup> This mill seems to be rather typical of the mills erected in Ogemaw County.

There were no large sawmills built as the big pine owners already had their mills in Bay City or Saginaw, and floated their logs down the Rifle, Au Gres, or Tittabawassee rivers or occasionally, after 1874, sent them by logging train to the mills. This was true of all large landholders

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14. Lumberman's Gazette, August, 1872, p. 1.

15. Lumberman's Gazette, February, 1873, p. 61.

such as H. W. Sage and Company, Pitts and Cranage, Keystone Company, Henry Gamble, the Rust's, Folsom and Arnold, E. Y. Williams and Company, Chapman Brothers, the Eddy's, and Thomas Merrill. This absentee ownership proved very costly to the county because all the profits were spent in the cities of southern Michigan or New York, Pennsylvania, and Boston, and Ogemaw was left with nothing to show for the hundreds of millions of feet of pine lumber that had been removed from the county.

Thus, lumbering activity cannot be measured by the number of sawmills in operation. The amount of timber cut on the Rifle River in the winter of 1872-73 up to February was said to total 85,750,000 feet. Some of this would have been cut in Arenac County, but a large part must have been in Ogemaw. Of the total, H. W. Sage and Company cut 4,000,000; Keystone Company - 8,000,000; Henry Gamble - 2,500,000; A. Rust and Company - 7,000,000; G. P. and B. Chapman - 4,500,000; and Pitts and Cranage - 4,500,000 feet.<sup>16</sup>

The next month's issue of the Lumberman's Gazette reported that over a hundred million feet of logs and fifty million feet of long timber had been put in the Rifle. This was more than could be handled though, for only 80,872,607 feet of logs were able to be rafted from the Rifle River Boom in 1873. This was about 20,000,000

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16. Lumberman's Gazette, February, 1873, p. 53.

feet more than in the preceding year. The increase of logs rafted from the Au Gres River Boom showed an even larger increase for the same period -- 63,281,236 feet in 1873 as compared to 23,870,742 for 1872.<sup>17</sup> The actual cut of two sawmills in Ogemaw County in 1873 was 7,000,000 feet, with 3,000,000 given as the cut of the Hotchkiss mill and 4,000,000 for the mill at Beaver Lake.<sup>18</sup>

But in the grip of the Panic of 1873 the hustle and bustle of the lumbering industry in Ogemaw County was partially stilled. The Ogemaw Lumber Company at Ogemaw Springs faced reverses, went into receivership, and was finally forced to close down. H. W. Sage and Company, along with others, took advantage of their large reserve stock of logs and did no cutting in the winter of 1873-74. To add to the misfortune the Hotchkiss mill and the surrounding village burned in a forest fire and was a total loss. Mr. Hotchkiss left Ogemaw County shortly after and others rebuilt the mill.

The demand for pine lumber continued to grow and in 1875 the amount of logs rafted from the Rifle River Boom had increased to 92,128,200 feet in contrast to the 58,687,000 feet taken to the mills in 1874.<sup>19</sup>

The Jackson, Lansing and Saginaw Railroad's advertising

17. Lumberman's Gazette, December, 1873, p. 183.

18. Michigan Secretary of State, Census for the State of Michigan, 1874 (Lansing, 1875), p. 288.

19. S. B. McCracken, The State of Michigan Embracing Sketches of Its History, Position, and Industries (Lansing, 1876), p. 42.

campaign to sell the remainder of its land grant lands continued, and in 1875 it owned over 24,000 acres in Ogemaw County for sale and it estimated these lands to contain in excess of 78,000,000 feet of pine.<sup>20</sup> The railroad originally had received over 42,000 acres of land in the county in 1861, and by 1875 had disposed of all its holdings in the southern tier of townships.

Because the Jackson, Lansing and Saginaw was the only railroad in the county and it traversed the western part, that section developed much more swiftly than did the eastern half. Of the ten communities to secure post offices prior to October, 1882 all but one were definitely in the western sector and a majority were lumbering settlements. Greenwood, Ogemaw Springs, Beaver Lake, and Piper were sawmill towns exclusively, while Churchill (now Rose City), Damon, and Lane (now Lupton) were trading centers for agricultural populations as well as being lumbering villages. West Branch was the trading center for a vast area, and Slayton and Campbell's Corners were rural agricultural communities. In 1880, over two-thirds of the population of the county was found in the western half of the county.<sup>21</sup>

The heavily pine timbered region around Greenwood was reported to be the locale of thirty or forty camps employing about two thousand men during the lumbering

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20. Guide to the Lands in the State of Michigan. Now for Sale, Comprised in the Grant of over 600,000 Acres to the Jackson, Lansing and Saginaw R.R. Co. (Mason, Mich., 1875), p. 12.

21. U. S. Bureau of the Census, Tenth Census of the United States: 1880, Population, Vol. I, p. 219.



season. Their cuttings were principally sent down the Rifle and Tittabawassee rivers to the mills at Bay City and Saginaw. In the village of Greenwood were found two general stores, a sawmill, and a saloon. Though West Branch at first had no sawmill it rapidly became a thriving trading and service village for the entire area. In 1879, it could boast two large mercantile stores -- both branches of Saginaw wholesale firms, two newspapers, drug store, hotel, a physician, lawyer, wagonmaker, carpenter, and a shoemaker. Beaver Lake had a saw and shingle mill and a general store all operated by the lumber firm of Cutting and Damon and a hotel, while Ogemaw Springs had its mills and a general store. The small hamlet of Churchill had a large general store, sawmill, and the only flour mill in the county.<sup>22</sup> Campbell's Corners and Slayton were rural post offices serving small agricultural populations.

The eastern section of the county was not to remain isolated, however. In 1870, Charles H. Prescott, a lumberman from Maine and Pennsylvania, purchased about 10,000 acres of land on the Rifle and Au Gres rivers in Ogemaw, but he did not undertake to operate until he moved to Bay City in 1878. In that year he and C. D. Hale of Tawas City formed the Lake Huron and Southwestern Railroad Company and commenced building a narrow guage line from Tawas to the southeastern part of Ogemaw County. Nineteen

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<sup>22</sup>. Michigan State Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1879 (Detroit, 1879), passim.

miles of track were laid the first year but Mr. Hale became financially embarrassed the following year and the road went into receivership. Mr. Prescott secured full control of the line in 1880 and renamed it the Tawas and Bay County Railroad. The main line was extended two miles and Ogemaw County was reached. The terminus of the road was at a station called "County Line."

According to the Census of 1880 the Tawas and Bay County Railroad had twenty-one miles of main line and four miles of siding and had cost \$54,135.86 to construct. The road was bonded for \$50,000 and had other debts totaling \$4,612.44 and the earnings for the previous year had been \$23,509.51. The logging character of the line is revealed by a breakdown of its income. Passenger revenue amounted to only \$804.11 while the earnings from freight were \$22,705.40 secured from 1,406 tons of provisions and 58,605 tons of lumber and forest products. One item of expense for the year was \$400.00 used to buy 500 cords of wood for fuel!<sup>23</sup> Such was the beginning of the Detroit and Mackinac Railway system.

Mr. Prescott evidently found the railroad too much to operate by himself and in 1881 sold the line to a party headed by Gen. Russell A. Alger. They proceeded to extend the line to Wells (now Alger) on the Michigan Central, as the Jackson, Lansing and Saginaw was by then called, converted the system

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23. U. S. Bureau of the Census, Tenth Census of the United States: 1880, Transportation, Vol. IV, passim.

to standard guage, and renamed it the Detroit, Bay City, and Alpena Railroad.

Several sawmills sprang up on the new section of the line. One of these was Prescott which at first was known as Camp Six. Two sawmills were built on the site and hotel and grocery store quickly followed.

The 1880's were, in general, a decade of great activity in the county. As the popularity of logging railways increased many parts of the county which had remained relatively untouched became centers of lumbering operations. The cost of logging railroads was not excessive in the 'eighties: total expenses for building and grading a mile of road, using thirty-five pound steel, was approximately \$4000; locomotives could be purchased for \$3,500 to \$4,000 and logging cars for \$175.<sup>24</sup> Thus, many branch lines were built and even entire new railway systems in a few cases. A logging railway had a very unstable existence, for as soon as the pine was lumbered off the rails would be taken up and moved to a new location. The pattern of the railroad grades at the terminus of an abandoned spur often looked like a many tined fork for the main line of the spur was made to serve as large an area as possible. (See Fig. 6)

The first extensive construction of logging railways took place along the course of the Michigan Central Railroad. The Hauptman Branch south of West Branch reached

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24. Howard H. Thompson, Unpublished data.

westwardly into the large holdings of D. Wright and Company, successor to the firm of Wright and Weidman, and was in time pushed onward into Roscommon County. C. H. Plummer acquired control of the mills and lands around Ogemaw Springs about 1881 and he built a large amount of railroad into his holdings. Probably the best known of all was the Thompson Branch which connected the mill town of Piper with the Michigan Central at Beaver Lake. There were, in addition, many shorter spurs leading off the main truckline into the surrounding forest.

Piper was quite typical of the sawmill villages found in northern Michigan that were owned entirely by one company or lumberman. Piper was exclusively the lumbering town of Frank M. Thompson who owned about 4,000 acres of pine in the vicinity. Founded in 1881 or 1882 the village was the home of over a hundred persons in 1889 and consisted of a general store owned by Thompson, blacksmith shop, school house, community hall, the houses of the employees, and the saw, planing, and lath mills. The mills, lumber yard, and logging operations provided employment for an average of eighty men of whom twenty-three had their families living in the village. This mill had sawed 54,000,000 feet of lumber by October, 1888.<sup>25</sup> When the timber was finally exhausted in 1891 the town was completely abandoned, and later settlers in the area tore down the homes and store for building materials.

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25. West Branch Times, Industrial Edition, 1889.

In 1886, the Detroit, Bay City and Alpena Railroad built the Loon Lake Branch from its main line in Iosco County to the northern part of that county. It cut through a small portion of Goodar Township, Ogemaw County, and a station was established just inside the Ogemaw County line. This was first called Thompson Station, but when the post office was opened in 1889 the name was changed to Hunt, and later to South Branch. Several camps were located in the vicinity and South Branch was said to have had seven saloons at one time. A spur off the main branch ran into the hills three miles southwest of South Branch where by 1889 Alvin Maltby had begun extensive hardwood lumbering operations. The mill at Lupton was built following the construction of the Maltby switch, though even then the lumber and shingles had to be hauled by wagon over three miles to the rail head.

The most ambitious logging railway program in the area was carried on by the J. E. Potts Salt and Lumber Company of Au Sable. Mr. Potts owned several thousand acres of pine land in the Au Sable River basin and much of it was miles from the river. In 1888, the company began the construction of its narrow guage lines which were in time to blanket the Au Sable valley. Much difficulty was encountered because it was decided to commence construction work at Potts (later McKinley) on the Au Sable River in Oscoda County which was many miles from the nearest railroad point. Therefore, the first logging engines and the steel

rails were shipped by rail to Piper and from there were hauled by horses to Potts. The locomotives were dismantled at Piper and assembled after reaching headquarters. They were days in getting the boilers to Potts because every few miles the sleighs would tip over and then they would have to be reloaded. An attempt was made to float the rails down the Au Sable on scows from Grayling, but that proved unsuccessful as some of the scows capsized.<sup>26</sup>

Nevertheless, the company succeeded in their endeavor and by July 17, 1891 had at least 106 miles of railway in operation.<sup>27</sup> One line, twenty-eight miles in length, spanned the pine plains between Potts and Damon, then a thriving village in the northwestern part of Ogemaw County. Over nine miles of the main line was located in the northern part of Ogemaw County where the Potts company owned considerable land, plus many miles of spurs and sidings. One of these sidings terminated about four miles northwest of Churchill and farmers in the locality took hay and other farm produce they had for sale there where it was loaded on cars and taken to the lumber camps.<sup>28</sup>

The building of these railways greatly accelerated the exploitation of the pine reserves. In 1884, the amount of lumber sawed in Ogemaw County totaled 18,000,000 feet

26. Howard H. Thompson, Unpublished data.

27. Michigan Railroad Commission, Aids, Gifts, Grants and Donations to Railroads including Outline of Development and Successions in Titles to Railroads in Michigan (Lansing, 1919), pp. 110-111.

28. Howard H. Thompson, "My Neighborhood" (1945), typescript Manuscript, in collections of Howard H. Thompson.

and 5,000,000 shingles and 4,000,000 pieces of lath were also cut.<sup>29</sup> This does not include any products from logs cut in the county but sawed in mills outside. By 1889, the end of the pine was in sight and business men evidently were beginning to worry about the future of the county. In that year the business men sponsored a special "Industrial Edition" of the West Branch Times extolling the industrial and agricultural potential of the county.

The early agricultural development of Ogemaw was closely associated with the lumbering industry. Many of the early settlers worked in the lumber camps during the logging season, and spent the summers clearing a small farm which they had often purchased from one of the lumber companies after the pine had been removed or proving up their homestead. Life for the first years was hard and money was extremely scarce. One of the factors helping the pioneer settler was the low cost of building materials. One pioneer plains homesteader reported buying enough fine logs, cut and hewn on ~~two~~ sides, to build a house 16 x 24 from Cutting and Damon for four dollars!<sup>30</sup> This cabin when completed had one large room downstairs, an upper story reached by a ladder, and two windows.

The first actual farmers, headed by John Klacking, Christopher Reetz, and Horace Sherman, began to arrive in 1872 and they settled chiefly in two areas -- one group

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29. Howard H. Thompson, Unpublished data.

30. "Pioneer Days," incomplete newspaper clipping in collections of Howard H. Thompson.

north of Campbell's Corners and the other going farther north into Damon and Rose townships. Many of these first settlers trekked into the county behind yokes of oxen using the old Rifle River Indian Trail.

There were two contrasting lines of development in the agricultural settlement of the county. Some of the farmers settled on the better lands characterized by a mixed hardwood and pine forest while the remainder homesteaded the sandy, relatively open plains region in the northwestern part of the county.

The reasons why settlers passed by the better lands and tried to farm the poorest soil in the state probably appeared quite valid at the time. Most of the early agricultural settlers homesteaded land and did not buy land from one of the lumber companies. Hence they had to locate on the lands open for homesteading and by 1870 most of the better lands were in the hands of lumber companies and land speculators.<sup>31</sup> The lands not taken were generally located in the northwestern part of the county where the land was too poor to even grow good pine. Many of the homesteaders evidently stopped at the Land Office in Saginaw on the way northward and picked out their farm before seeing the land.<sup>32</sup> The worthless quality of the land on the plains was not yet widely realized, and it took much less time and labor to clear the plains land than it did the hardwoods land. The

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31. "Tract Book of Ogemaw County," Ogemaw County Register of Deeds Office.

32. Entry of May 18, 1872, Diary of Hiram Hodge, typescript excerpts in collections of Howard H. Thompson.



early lumbering development had been along the railroad in the western part of the county and Ogemaw Springs and Beaver Lake were both in the poor land region.

The number of farms grew steadily but slowly during the 'seventies and 'eighties. The first influx of agricultural settlers arrived in the late 'seventies, with most of them homesteading lands in Foster, Damon, Beaver Lake, and Klacking townships.

In 1874, there was a total of nine farms in Ogemaw "Township," at that time including all the territory in four townships. The number of farms for Edwards Township is not known, but only five acres of wheat and four acres of corn had been harvested in that township in 1873. The only farm livestock reported in the latter township were five horses and four oxen while Ogemaw Township had nine horses, two mules, eight oxen, and six milch cows.<sup>33</sup>

By 1880, there were 223 farms in the county containing a total of 30,644 acres although only 4,130 acres were of improved land. Of the total number of farms 155 were larger than 100 acres in comparison to 27 farms in the 40 acre class.<sup>34</sup> This shows that the homesteader, who usually secured 160 acres, as yet far outnumbered the farmer who bought a forty or an eighty from one of the big landlords.

Five years later the number of farms had increased to 373 with 9,662 acres of improved land out of a total 41,271

33. Michigan Secretary of State, Census for the State of Michigan, 1874, passim.

34. U. S. Bureau of the Census, Tenth Census of the United States: 1880, Agriculture, Vol. 3, pp. 62-63.

in farms. Foster Township, which probably has the poorest farm land in the county, had more farms than any other township, with Klacking Township, also having a high percentage of sandy land, second. The meager subsistence of many of the farm families can be ascertained from the cold, unimaginative census data. The average yield of wheat was only 10.9 bushels per acre for the county as a whole -- kept so low because the average yield was but 7.78 bushels per acre in Foster Township where over one-third of the wheat was raised. Livestock was scarce, each farm averaging but one horse and one milch cow. Of the total number of farms, each averaged but three acres of wheat, 2.3 acres of oats, 1.2 acres of potatoes, and 4.7 acres of hay for the year 1884.<sup>35</sup>

The number of farms totaled 527 by 1890 and the acreage of improved land had almost doubled since 1885. The size of the farms had radically changed since 1880 and in 1890 there were more forty acre farms than any other size.<sup>36</sup> Acreage of all farm crops had increased significantly and the average yield per acre of wheat had risen somewhat. This was undoubtedly due to the fact that many of the plains farms had been abandoned by that time.

The settlement of the dry, sandy plains land was one of the tragedies incident to the development of Ogemaw

35. Michigan Secretary of State, Seventh Annual Report, Relating to Farms and Farm Products, 1884-85 (Lansing, 1885), passim.

36. U. S. Bureau of the Census, Eleventh Census of the United States: 1890, Agriculture, Vol 5, passim.

County. Beginning in 1877 the homesteading of the plains continued apace until by 1885 there were approximately 130 farms located in the area. These homesteaders tried to grow the common crops of the time such as wheat, other grains, potatoes, and hay, but after the first crops had been harvested the yields grew less yearly. The first crop of wheat was usually good, but the succeeding harvests became poorer and poorer and finally the farmer was forced to abandon his lands. The depopulating of the plains agricultural lands had begun already by 1889 and the poor quality of the soil was being recognized as is shown by the following quotation taken from the West Branch Times: "The jackpine plains which occupy the northwestern part of the county, extending north into Oscoda and westward into Roscommon, are condemned by some and pronounced productive by others. We believe the day is coming and that it is not far distant, when every acre of these plains will be settled and made to produce a fair crop every year."<sup>37</sup> In another place the editor makes the statement that there is room for several hundred farmers on the plains land of Ogemaw County. Words and fears of apprehensive business men could not stop the exodus, however.

Farming on the better lands in the county was generally successful, and once the settler had cleared some land he was able to secure good harvests. Weeds were almost unknown in the early years and insect pests were less prevalent than

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37. West Branch Times, Industrial Edition, 1889.

on the sandy plains. Hay and potatoes were the staple crops for several years because those products were easily sold to the lumbercamps and prices were good. Hay was said to have sold for twenty dollars a ton and potatoes for a dollar a bushel. As late as 1889 the selling price of those products was reported to be about 25 percent above the market price in southern Michigan.<sup>38</sup>

By that time wheat, oats, rye, peas, and buckwheat were becoming important crops, and the numbers of livestock were growing rapidly. The West Branch Times was on firmer ground when it announced that Ogemaw County was especially adapted to stock raising than it was in predicting Ogemaw was destined to become one of the best wheat producing counties in "this excellent wheat state." Showing interest in the future of agriculture, the Ogemaw County Agricultural Society was organized in 1885 and annual fairs were held thereafter.

Farm tenancy was no problem during the early history of the county. In 1889, 222 of the 223 farms located there were operated by their owners according to the census, and ten years later the number of farms rented had increased to only twenty-two out of a total of 495. One interesting phenomenon in the county's agricultural history was the establishment of a few large farms by lumber companies and operators. W. H. Edwards, the pioneer lumberman; Thomas W.

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38. West Branch Times, Industrial Edition, 1889.

Hayes, foreman and general manager of the lumbering business of D. Wright and Company; Charles Woods, a highly successful lumber jobber; C. H. Prescott and Sons; and D. Wright and Company were among the first to have large, well improved farms. These two firms showed more concern over their properties and the development of the county than did most of the absentee lumber companies.

The Forest Home Farm owned by D. Wright and Company, and located near West Branch, included four hundred acres of cleared land, a large house, three barns, horse barn, carriage barn, granary, hog barn, tool house, and hen house. An orchard of a thousand trees had been planted and over one hundred cattle and fifty hogs were kept. A spring of pure water was piped into the house and the farm had a well equipped creamery for butter making. The Prescott Farm situated in Richland Township also contained about four hundred acres of improved land and had a good house and two mammoth barns. Mr. Prescott was especially alive to the possibilities of stock raising and he kept Holstein and Hereford cattle, Clydesdale horses, and sheep.<sup>39</sup> The original purpose of these two large farms is not known. Possibly they were developed to help in promoting the sale of the firms' lands, to help provide provisions for their lumber camps, and perhaps even as a kind of hobby for the owners. The Prescott farm has remained in the ownership of the family to this day and is one of the leading Here-

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39. West Branch Times, Industrial Edition, 1889.

ford cattle breeding farms in Michigan.

Although agriculture was decidedly of secondary importance in the lumbering economy prior to 1890, it did influence the social, moral, and educational structure of the county. Farms meant a higher proportion of women and children, and the agricultural element of the population was more inclined to demand law and order and desire churches and schools than was the floating population attached to the camps and mills.

The population of Ogemaw County totaled **but twelve** persons in 1870. In 1874, the population, as far as can be determined, was 207 located in Edwards and Ogemaw townships.<sup>40</sup> Edwards Township reported 58 inhabitants, 54 of whom were men, and probably nearly all employees of the mill at Greenwood. Ogemaw Township had a total population of 149 including 50 females.<sup>41</sup> This preponderance of males can be attributed to the almost exclusive lumbering activity of the county. The farming settlement made north of Campbell's Corners in 1872 helps to explain the larger number of women in Ogemaw Township. Between 1874 and 1880 population increased on an average of 284.5 persons yearly, as the census of 1880 shows a total population of 1,914. (See Fig. 7) Ogemaw County was still a man's world as males

40. Only two townships were organized at that time, the remainder of the county being included in townships located partially in Iosco County of which Ogemaw was then a part.

41. Michigan Secretary of State, Census for the State of Michigan, 1874, pp. 64-65.

made up over 61 percent of the population.<sup>42</sup>

By 1884, population had spurted to 3,637, a 90 percent increase in four years. The number of women also continued to rise proportionately. The youthful character of the population is evident from the figures that disclose the average age in the county for males was 24.8 years and for females was 20.8 in comparison to 29.4 years for males and 28.9 for females in Lenawee County.<sup>43</sup> Population continued to increase for the next six years and stood at 5,583 in 1890. In three townships a decline had already set in -- Foster and Beaver Lake especially had lost heavily quite in contrast to Damon, the third one of the plains townships which, showing an increase of 715 persons since 1884, was in 1890 the most populous township in the county.<sup>44</sup>

The ratio of foreign born to native born remained remarkably stable during the early period of the county's history. In 1880, the foreign born comprised 39.6 percent of the population and ten years later was only 1 percent lower, which was above the average for the state as a whole. Canada and Newfoundland supplied by far the largest number of immigrants, and most of them apparently were English speaking. The French Canadian element never seems to have been important in the county. In 1880, with a total of

42. U. S. Bureau of the Census, Tenth Census of the United States: 1880, Population, Vol. I, passim.

43. Michigan Secretary of State, Census for the State of Michigan, 1884 (Lansing, 1886), Vol. I, passim.

44. U. S. Bureau of the Census, Eleventh Census of the United States: 1890, Population, Vol. I, Part 1, p. 191.

758 foreign born in the county, Canada was the birthplace of 569 and Germany was second supplying 83. Ireland, England, and Scotland followed in that order. In 1890, these same five countries were the birthplaces of nearly all the foreign born in the county. Consequently Ogemaw did not have a problem of trying to assimilate a large alien population as most of the foreign born already spoke the English language and were acquainted with many of the democratic customs. The only important non-British group were the Germans who usually adapted themselves to American ways with considerable ease.

The German element tended to settle on farms in two main areas, northern Edwards Township, and north of Campbell's Corners, both of which had fertile soil. The West Branch Times in 1889 spoke highly of these two groups stating, "These people have the industry and thrift characteristic of this nationality and they are improving their farms faster than any other settlers in the county." The German group in Edwards had not come directly from Germany but had stopped in Bruce County, Ontario for a time, and Saginaw County, Michigan had been the home of many of the Germans in the Campbell's Corners group for a few years prior to their arrival in Ogemaw.

Over half of the native born population in 1880 had been born in Michigan, and New York state supplied more than half of the remainder. Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Vermont were the homes of several of the settlers with a few coming



from Massachusetts, New Jersey, Wisconsin, and Illinois.<sup>45</sup>

In many instances whole groups seemed to emigrate to Ogemaw and settle in one neighborhood. One of the earliest examples was the colony from Roscoe, New York that founded the Churchill settlement in 1872-73. Included in this group were William, Allan S., and Alciabides Rose, Charley Barber, Sherman Neal, Hiram Eorden, George Crippen, Sr., Allan Cook, Levi Stewart, Wesley and Chester Cochran, and Scott White.<sup>46</sup> Later many other New Yorkers settled in that same vicinity. In 1879, a community of people belonging to the Society of Friends came to Ogemaw County from Ohio and founded the settlement of Lane, which was later renamed Lupton in honor of one of the leading families of the group. The West Branch Times in 1889 mentioned, "This neighborhood is especially noted for the good feeling and fraternal relations existing among the families." Lupton was known as the community where "peace and harmony prevail."

Though peace and harmony were gradually coming to all the communities in the county by 1889 that was by no means the rule during the 'seventies and early 'eighties. The pioneer days witnessed some strange scenes and law and order were almost unknown. A gang of sixty or one hundred lumberjacks would frequently swoop down upon the town and run things to suit themselves for awhile. Nearly every

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45. U. S. Bureau of the Census, Tenth Census of the United States: 1880, Population, Vol. I, p. 514.

46. Lillie Andrews, "Rose City in the Rough," type-script Manuscript in collections of Howard H. Thompson.

village had at least one saloon -- some had several -- and they were never closed day or night, Sunday or holiday. Whiskey and the mail were often passed out over the same counter. Fights and rows were common when the woodsmen came to town, but there was said to be a surprising lack of "downright crime."

However, in 1878, a great deal of excitement was caused when the bartender at the West Branch House shot and killed Tom Hayes, described by the West Branch Times in 1889 as a "woodsman who was a terror to this whole north country." According to the Times the bartender, a young nephew of the hotel's proprietor, had refused Hayes a drink because he was drunk and Hayes then started over the bar. He paid no attention to the revolver brandished by the bartender and was shot. The bartender was acquitted by a coroner's jury, who found the shooting to be justifiable homicide.

By 1889, West Branch was trying to forget its riotous past and the Times proudly stated, "For morality, order, and good government, West Branch is much above the average new town. All business places are closed on Sundays. Saloons are closed at nine in the evenings, and there is a general absence of black-guardism or rowdyism."

After the pioneer farmers arrived the county began to take on a more permanent appearance. The first school in the county was erected in the farming settlement north of Campbell's Corners, and men teachers were secured for the

first two terms. The third teacher in the school was Mrs. John Freed who left her home in St. Clair County and came into the wilderness to teach. She did not receive any pay for one year as there was no money in the district treasury, but she stayed at the school for three years. At one time she had as many as fifty-seven pupils on her roll, and many of the pioneers could always recall that they had received much of their formal education from her.<sup>46</sup> With so much work to do the boys were often unable to attend school for any length of time and many of them had no more than three or four years of "book learning."

New districts continued to be formed as the county grew in population. The West Branch Times in 1889 could report:

So soon as a few settlers have made an opening in the forest, their petition goes in for the organization of a school. Men who had no opportunity in their day of even getting the rudiments of an education, are as a rule, anxious that their boys and girls shall grow up intelligent and useful members of society, and the school tax is paid more willingly than any other of the taxes. The wise foresight of our state fathers in providing a one mill tax and a primary school fund, greatly assists the pioneer in maintaining a school.

In 1878, thirteen school districts had been organized and 126 pupils were attending school and by 1890 there were forty-three organized districts, forty-one of which actually were maintaining a school, with 1,124 pupils enrolled. School revenue also increased sharply. In 1876, district

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46. Marinda Weir, "A History of Ogemaw County," typescript Manuscript, Rose City Public Library.

taxes collected amounted to \$2,507.55 and \$734.60 was received from the State mill tax, while in 1890 district taxes alone had risen to \$10,950.94. The first primary money received in 1880 by Ogemaw schools totaled only \$52.94 but this same source provided \$1,559.55 in 1890.<sup>47</sup>

Ogemaw County never had a large number of log school houses in contrast to many of the older counties in the state. This was undoubtedly because of the low cost of constructing frame buildings in an area where pine lumber was so cheap. The school house in District No. 1 of Damon Township was built for a total cost of \$350.00 in 1875.

School was held sometimes for only three or four months out of the year though by 1885 the average for the county was six months. This was often divided into two terms -- a "summer" term of four months and a "winter" term of two.<sup>48</sup> The first graded school in the county was at the village of West Branch and was probably instituted about 1884, and a new four room school was built in 1887. Prof. B. Bennett became principal of the new school and was largely responsible for increasing the enrollment in the high school department. He went around the countryside urging the young people who had finished their work in the district schools to come to the high school at West Branch.

Although, Churchill was smaller than many of the

47. Michigan Superintendent of Public Instruction, Reports, 1876-1890, passim.

48. "District Director's Book," School District No. 2, Hill Township, Ogemaw County, 1885-1903, passim.

settlements in the county it had the first resident minister, Reverend Bullock of the Methodist denomination. Allan S. Rose, proprietor of the prosperous general store and small sawmill in the village, later built the parsonage and a large community building which was used for church services. The first church was built by the Congregationalists in West Branch in 1881, however, and was followed by a Methodist church four years later. Membership and attendance at the Methodist church outnumbered that of the Congregational church in 1889, though the Catholic Society was larger than either. Other denominations began forming organizations so by 1890 there were thirteen though only eight had church buildings. The thirteen organizations included two Methodist, three Baptist, two Roman Catholic, and one each of Congregational, Friends, Latter Day Saints, German Lutheran, Wesleyan Methodist, and Free Methodist. These were all found in rural farming areas or in villages with a relatively permanent population. There is nothing to indicate that such lumbering communities as Greenwood, Ogemaw Springs, or Beaver Lake ever had a church, though itinerant preachers held services occasionally.

None of the large lumber operators ever lived in Ogemaw County so the leadership of the social, economic, and political life of the county rested mainly with the business and professional men. George N. Hauptman, who directed the activities of D. Wright and Company and was one of the owners, spent some of each year at the company's

farm near West Branch and he evidently encouraged the formation of the West Branch Business Men's Association and the Ogemaw County Agricultural Society.<sup>49</sup> Mr. C. H. Prescott, though he did not reside in Prescott, helped found the Baptist Church there.<sup>50</sup> However, the county, township, and village offices were held by such men as Dr. C. L. Nauman; lawyers S. V. Thomas, D. P. Markey, Devere Hall, and Nelson Sharpe, all of West Branch; Allan S. Rose, business man from Churchill; and C. J. Phelps, a farmer from Foster Township. The county usually voted Republican, but the Democrats had considerable strength and often succeeded in electing a few popular men to county office.

Governmental organization in Ogemaw County proceeded in much the same manner as that of other Michigan counties. In 1873, when Ogemaw was still part of Iosco County, the townships of Edwards and Ogemaw had been formed largely due to the efforts of George Hotchkiss of the Greenwood sawmill and Dr. C. L. Nauman of the Ogemaw Springs mill. In 1875, the state legislature organized Ogemaw as a separate county and the first county elections were held the following spring. Thereafter, townships were created as the population warranted though there seems to have been no population requirements. The first census taken after Damon and Hill townships were organized, showed that the

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49. West Branch Times, Industrial Edition, 1889.

50. Clyde M. Campbell, "The Prescott Community" (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Department of Sociology, Michigan State College, 1934), p. 62.

former had a population of 260 while Hill had but 30 inhabitants. By 1888, the last township had been organized, for a total of sixteen. (See Fig. 8)

The principal problem connected with the governmental operation of the county was the collection of taxes from the giant absentee lumber companies who often complained about the valuation of their lands and of the excessive taxes. The tax rolls of the 1870's and 1880's show numerous cases where the companies had paid their taxes under protest, and the rolls for the 'seventies especially indicate that the township supervisors were unable to find out who owned much of the land. There are many examples of taxes paid on tracts of land whose ownership was listed as unknown. Henry W. Sage and Company actually requested a rebate on its school taxes paid in at least one school district in 1888. The school board of District No. 2, Hill Township, in that year adopted a resolution, at a special meeting called for the "purpose of considering the proposition of H. W. Sage and Co.," stating that the school tax of the company was excessive and agreed to give a rebate of \$100.00 to it.<sup>51</sup>

Community life in 1889 was still largely centered around the lumbering of pine, but almost everyone realized that the pine would soon be gone. There were eleven villages or hamlets and all were dependent on the lumbering industry to a great extent. The business men of these communities

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51. "District Director's Book," District No. 2, Hill Township.

fearing they would lose their livelihood when the pine was gone unless more settlers were brought in had the West Branch Times print a special edition in 1889 for distribution in southern Michigan and out-of-state.

Though called the "Industrial Edition," it was chiefly for the purpose of inducing farmers to come to the county as attested to by these headlines: "Ogemaw County -- the Banner County of Northern Michigan, Over 200,000 Acres of the Best Farming Lands," and "From \$100 to \$1,000 Will Purchase an Eighty."

The paper frankly stated:

The preparation of this edition of the Times has involved much care and time. It is prepared with the thought that our county needs advertising. The outside world are unaware of the great advantages of Northern Michigan. Men are passing us by and going to the far west where they have agriculture only to depend upon. Mixed industries tend to the greatest general prosperity. With a view to arrest a portion of the tide of western emigration and to induce home seekers to inspect our lands, this volume has been issued.

The paper spoke in glowing terms of the general prosperity of the county and though admitting that the pine was nearly gone affirmed that the "supply of hardwood is almost inexhaustible," and predicted it would be the basis of industry in the county for years to come. That the editor, perhaps, realized the supply of hardwood was not inexhaustible was evident in this statement, "Now every tree represents value and none of it can afford to be wasted." The editor assured the readers that there was



enough hardwood on nearly every forty to provide the settler a good living until he could get his land cleared and into crops.

Optimism seemed to overflow from every paragraph in the paper. The Times was justly proud of West Branch, the prosperous county seat (it had been incorporated as a village in 1885) with its new school and county buildings, bank, opera house, three churches, public library, four hotels, three weekly papers, three physicians, a dentist, veterinary surgeon, six lawyers, and six fraternal organizations. Many stores lined its broad streets, and there was a flour mill, McCrossen Cart Manufacturing Company plant, brewery, soda water plant, wooden bowl factory, veneer plant, brick yard (unperfected it's true), wagon works, two sawmills, and a planing mill to provide employment. In addition a paper mill and a stave and heading mill were said to be among the possible future developments. The future of West Branch, a town of 1,300 (not the 2,000 the paper claimed) inhabitants, seemed secure. As the Michigan State Gazetteer remarked, West Branch was the "most prosperous town on the Mackinaw Division of the M. C. R. R., and is surrounded by the finest farming land in Northern Michigan."<sup>52</sup>

Other villages in the county deemed by the West Branch Times to have promising futures were Churchill and Prescott,

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52. Michigan State Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1889-90 (Detroit, 1889), p. 1835.

both in good agricultural areas. The future of such communities as Ogemaw Springs, Beaver Lake, Damon, and Piper was not painted so brightly, probably because the editor had the recent example of the almost total disappearance of Greenwood, another lumbering village.

One interesting scheme being discussed was the piping of water from the giant spring at Ogemaw Springs to Bay City and Saginaw, and C. H. Plummer, owner of the spring, was trying to persuade those cities to put their money in this pipeline rather than in municipal water plants. The Michigan Central Railroad was said to have completed the first twenty-five miles of its survey for the proposed railroad to run from Beaver Lake to Alpena. Apparently, Ogemaw County business men were not the only ones who expected northeastern Michigan to remain a thriving and prosperous region after the pine was gone.

The people of Ogemaw County were watching the pine lumbering era draw to a close with a feeling of what can best be described as "hopeful anxiety." They were not sure just what the future would bring, but they generally believed that their good fortune would continue.

## CHAPTER II

### The Decline of Lumbering and Emergence of Agriculture

In the thirty year period following 1890 a great change came over Ogemaw County. That year had found the life and economy of the county geared largely to the tempo of the pine lumbering industry. The pine was almost gone, but great tracts of hardwood and swamp forest remained to be exploited.

At the same time the hardwood sections of the county were entering an era of prosperity, the plains area was rapidly becoming a deserted, abandoned region. There was little but pine on the plains land and that was disappearing. In 1891, the mill at Piper was moved out and the town abandoned that year. The following year Davison Brothers, who had owned stores at Beaver Lake and Damon and Mio and McKinley in Oscoda County, sold all their property and moved out of the state. They sold their holdings at Damon, consisting of five hundred acres of land, general store, hotel, and barns (used to house the horses for their stage line), to A. J. Warner, a local farmer, for five hundred dollars.

Damon Township, having more inhabitants than any other in 1890, was so quickly depopulated that in 1893 the township was vacated and attached to the bordering townships of Rose and Foster by the board of supervisors. Foster Township had a population of 167 in 1890 but in 1894 had only

136 persons despite the addition of half of the former township of Damon. Beaver Lake Township, likewise showed a great decline, with a population of 97 in 1894 as compared to 284 in 1890. The mills at Ogemaw Springs, the county's first settlement, were moved away and the post office discontinued in 1893.

The State Census for 1894 reported a total of five sawmills; five saw, shingle, and lath mills; one saw and planing mill with sash and door factory; and seven shingle mills in the county. All but one of these mills were small with low valuations. A typical sawmill had a valuation of \$1,700, hired twelve employees, and was idle about seven-and-a-half months in 1893. Most of the mills were idle six months out of the year or more and consequently total wages paid were small. Daily wages at the mills ranged from \$1.20 to \$1.47 for ordinary labor and up to \$2.40 for skilled mechanics.

As long as any pine remained little interest was shown in other kinds of timber, but as the pine stands grew fewer the lumbermen turned to logging off what remained. Prior to 1885 the mills refused to cut hardwood lumber and the farmers, clearing their fields, found no sale for hardwood logs. In 1884, only 8,383 feet of hardwood lumber was cut in the county as compared to some 18,000,000 feet of pine.<sup>53</sup> Within five years the first significant hardwood operations

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53. Howard H. Thompson, Unpublished data.

had been started by the Maltby Lumber Company, in the northeastern part of the county.

During the 'nineties the importance of hardwood lumbering grew swiftly and soon surpassed that of pine. In fact, the northern part of the county showed a much higher level of prosperity from 1890 to 1910 than it had ever enjoyed in the pine era. This was because the pattern of hardwood lumbering was not identical with that of the earlier period. Instead of the bulk of the holdings lying in the hands of a few absentee lumber operators who took the pine out of the county to be sawed, the hardwood tracts were owned, generally, by smaller concerns, often locally owned, which manufactured the product within the county. This was, perhaps, largely because the hardwood logs could not be floated down the rivers as the pine logs had been.

In 1892, Myron H. and F. F. French, West Branch bankers, and Allan S. Rose, Churchill business man, formed the French Land and Lumber Company, capitalized at \$100,000. This firm secured approximately 17,000 acres of hardwood lands, mostly in northern Ogemaw County and proceeded to establish the town of "Rose City." Rose City was platted a half mile east of the old village of Churchill and the people gradually moved to the new location.

Rose City's prosperity was assured when, in the same year the town was platted, the French Land and Lumber Company began the construction of a large heading and stave mill

for the making of barrel heads and staves on the creek flowing through the village. This mill cost the company around \$75,000. In the same year a new store was erected for Allan S. Rose in the center of the town. The agreement for the construction of this building specified that "one store building three stories high, forty-eight feet wide by eighty feet long, the ground floor to be built for store purposes ..., said building to cost when completed not less than four thousand dollars."<sup>54</sup> The cost of building in Ogemaw County was still very low.

With the building of the heading mill and the projection of other industries in the Rose City area, the Detroit, Bay City and Alpena Railroad decided to extend its line from Maltby to Rose City. It solicited aid for the construction of this extension from the townships lying adjacent to it and from the farmers and property owners living within the area to be served. As a result about one hundred farmers of Ogemaw County executed promissory notes payable to the Detroit, Bay City and Alpena "when the said railroad is completed and trains running thereon." The Township of Rose bonded for \$5,000, and business interests contributed large sums making a total of nearly \$35,000 paid entering into the construction of the branch, in addition to the right of way which was

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54. Agreement entered into by Allan S. Rose and Horatio S. Karcher, parties of the first part and Helen Rose, party of the second part, October 18, 1892, type-script copy in collections of Howard H. Thompson.

granted for nominal sums.<sup>55</sup>

The branch extension was pushed energetically by the company; the construction gang reached the townsite of the new village of Lupton on November 1st, and the first regularly scheduled train ran from Emery Junction on the main line, to Rose City on January 1, 1893.<sup>56</sup> As a result of a reorganization, the Detroit, Bay City and Alpena became the Detroit and Mackinac Railway about that time.

Rose City experienced an immediate growth in building activity. There had been but a general store, sawmill, flour mill, and a hotel in the town prior to 1892, but by 1895 it had two general stores, three hotels, flour mill, a drug store, physician, hardware, restaurant, dry goods store, meat market, two blacksmiths, barber, and two sawmills with two more located near the town.<sup>57</sup>

In 1892, Levi R. Lupton, a minister of the Friends Church as well as a thorough going business man, conceived the idea of establishing a town whose cornerstones would be Christianity and temperance. He secured the assistance of his brother Isaac, George T. Stanley of Selkirk (where another colony of Friends had settled just previously), and Leander Hole of Ohio and they formed the firm of Lupton Brothers and Company and built the first store in

55. Brief for the State of Michigan and for Protestants, before the Interstate Commerce Commission, Abandonment by the Detroit and Mackinac Railway Company of the Rose City Branch, June 6, 1929.

56. Carl R. Henry to Howard H. Thompson, February 29, 1944, "Correspondence," in collections of Howard H. Thompson.

57. Michigan State Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1895-96 (Detroit, 1895), p. 1431-32.

the new village, which was located just south of the old settlement of Lane. The post office was moved to Lupton in 1893, and several sawmills were in time erected in the vicinity.

The French Land and Lumber Company went into bankruptcy in 1897, largely because of the failure of the French bank at West Branch, and the heading mill at Rose City passed into the hands of J. R. Raible who owned other mills at Pinconning, Alpena, and Midland. Later the mill was purchased by the Greif Brothers Cooperage Corporation of Cleveland, Ohio and the mill was kept in excellent working order. This was the largest mill of its kind in Michigan, and was composed of four industrial sections -- stave, heading, hoop, and shingle -- with the heading division being by far the most important. The mill was powered by four steam engines, and had three turners, producing 18,000 sets of heading per day.<sup>58</sup> Wages were low with the men receiving \$1.00 to \$1.25 per day, and they were paid but once a month.

A mild sort of lumbering boom rippled over the county shortly after 1900, and new camps and mills were built. Even the jackpine plains felt some of the renewed activity, as lumbermen moved in to cut the jackpine which the earlier operators had passed by. The general level of prosperity of the plains area can, perhaps, be shown by

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58. J. R. Raible to Howard H. Thompson, August 5, 1944, "Correspondence," in collections of Howard H. Thompson.



the following illustration. For two years Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Warner, who owned the store and hotel at Damon, leased their business while they cooked for the men in the Cross Brothers camp located near there. U. M. Guilford was one of the most important lumbermen on the plains during this period and he cut but 1,000,000 feet of jackpine lumber from 1902 until 1906.

More important were the hardwood and swamp timber operations, and of the twenty saw and shingle mills found in the county about 1905, thirteen were located in the northern part.<sup>59</sup> The records show that a large number of spurs and sidings were constantly being built and taken up off the Rose City Branch of the Detroit and Mackinac Railway in Ogemaw County from 1900 to 1908.<sup>60</sup> The Detroit and Mackinac contemplated extending the Rose City Branch through to Mio, Oscoda County, where a large hardwood mill was to be built,<sup>61</sup> but the idea was never put into execution.

The entire area lying between Rose City and South Branch was systematically worked over. Among the most important operators were Briggs and Cooper, Prescott and Miller, and the Eastman and Robinson Lumber Company. Briggs and Cooper bought large holdings north of Lupton and in 1903 built a logging railroad into their timber.

59. Michigan State Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1905-06 (Detroit, 1905), passim.

60. Detroit and Mackinac Railway Co., Annual Reports, 1897-1930, passim.

61. "Saginaw Valley Notes," American Lumberman (Chicago), Nov. 8, 1902, p. 21.

This railroad was unique because part of it was standard guage and the balance the more common narrow guage. This arrangement created a big problem as the logs and lumber had to be transferred from narrow to standard guage cars; consequently, a third rail was added so either guage cars and engines could be used.

In 1905, Briggs and Cooper sold their timber, rolling stock, and part of their railroad to the Prescott-Miller Company who for some reason proceeded to abandon this railroad. The next year the Detroit and Mackinac built a spur from Rose City into the same area for the company. By that date logging railway construction was a relatively simple task. It was reported:

In a new country like this it is often necessary to run a temporary road out into the bush to clean up the timber, and the officers (of the D. and M.) think nothing of building twenty or thirty miles this way. The steam shovel had made this a relatively cheap undertaking. The earth is lifted wholesale and deposited on flat cars and these cars are cleaned off by an apparatus that looks like a snow plow that is fitted at the rear of the train and is drawn forward by the locomotive sweeping the earth off every car as it passes over.<sup>62</sup>

Miller's Mill (as the company's mill was called) was located two-and-a-half miles east of Rose City. Comprising the settlement were the large mill, a general store, a boarding house, and the homes of several families.

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62. Detroit and Mackinac Railway Co., Annual Report, 1901, p. 20.

One of the largest hardwood sawmills in the area was Robinson's Mill located northwest of South Branch.

Originally, this area had been lumbered of its pine by the McGraw Lumber Company which in 1907 sold its rights to Samuel A. Robinson and S. E. Eastman. A new mill was erected and a logging railway twenty-two miles long was built from South Branch northwesterly into Oscoda County.

Lumbering operations did not actually get under way until 1909, but a fair sized community soon sprang up around the mill. The company maintained a general store, the post office -- the settlement was known officially as Goodar, and the two large boarding houses for the single men. It also built many rough, tar-paper houses which it rented to the men with families for four dollars per month. The second floor of the store was used for a hotel.

Altogether, the Eastman and Robinson Lumber Company employed about two hundred men of whom sixty-five to seventy-five worked in the mill and lumber yard. The remaining men worked in one of the two camps -- one a few miles from the mill and the other located about half-way between the mill and Mio.

Wages were on a par with other wages in the area with common laborers paid at the rate of \$1.00 per day and if they lived at one of the boarding houses this was deducted from their pay. A few of the skilled mill workers received four dollars and the mill superintendent

\$6.00 per day.<sup>63</sup>

When run at capacity the mill could saw from fifty to sixty thousand feet of lumber a day, though the monthly cut averaged from 1,000,000 to 1,250,000 feet. Three boilers were used to provide power to run the saws and a dynamo which furnished about 175 lights for the settlement.

Having a large number of families living around the mill the township found that a school was necessary. This school, called the Goodar School, had all the limitations and inconveniences that could be associated with a mill town school. There sixty or more pupils were crowded into a one teacher school, and the equipment was very meager. One of the first teachers at the school recalls that text books were very scarce, and the only ones available were old and worn. She had to use a worn green window shade for a blackboard. Many of the pupils were from transient families and had not attended school regularly making the school difficult to handle.

A teacher's life in such a community left much to be desired and so one teacher seldom stayed more than two years. The location was quite isolated and if the teacher missed the logging train or hand car into South Branch on Friday afternoon she had to walk over three miles to the Maltby station where she could board the train for Rose City.

Other areas in the county experienced a revival of

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63. Bernice Anthony, "Robinson's Mill" (1945), type-script Manuscript, Rose City Public Library.

lumbering activity, too, as is shown by the following news items from the American Lumberman: "John Tolfree is putting in 2,000,000 feet of hardwood logs in Ogemaw County for the Gale Lumber Company, at West Branch. The mill of the Gale Lumber Company is being repaired and will start operations again this week;"<sup>64</sup> and "The old Squires and Stirling sawmill on the Rifle River, five miles east of West Branch, and which is owned by James Norm, will be places in commission early in January and will manufacture lumber, lath, and shingles. Mr. Norm calculates that he has enough timber to run the mill three or four years yet."<sup>65</sup>

The towns of Lupton and Rose City boomed between 1900 and 1910 in contrast to West Branch which lost population between those dates. In 1905, Rose City could boast three general stores, meat market, two hotels, two physicians, two drug stores, a milliner and dress-maker, shoemaker, two confectionery shops, photographer, jeweler, dry goods store, bowling alley, livery, barber, dentist, lawyer, two saloons, cheese factory, restaurant, hardware, furniture store, two blacksmiths, flour mill, a bank, weekly newspaper, new twelve-grade high school, Methodist and Episcopal churches, and a telephone exchange. There were two nearby sawmills in addition to the large heading mill, the town's most important industry.

Though it had a population of only four hundred around

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64. "In the Eastern Michigan Woods," American Lumberman, December 20, 1902, p. 34.

65. "Eastern Michigan News," American Lumberman, December 27, 1902, p. 20.

1905 it was the largest town near the lumber camps to the north and east, and the two saloons were kept busy. Rose City had a reputation in keeping with a lumbering town.

Rose City was unfortunately divided into two governmental units because the township line separating Rose and Cumming townships passed through the very center of town. Consequently, neither township would spend any money on the main street or other improvements. Petitioning the State Legislature in 1904, the residents asked for a city charter, which was granted in the following spring, and Rose City was incorporated as a fourth class city. The first ordinance passed by the new city council was one to regulate the opening and closing hours of saloons and other places where liquor was sold. It stipulated that all such places could open at 6:00 A. M. and must be closed at 10:00 P. M.

The hardwood lumbering era was probably fully as colorful as was the earlier period, although there were no longer the dangerous logging drives down the Rifle River. Many are the stories told of events -- some comic, some of death and superstition -- that took place in the Neil McDonald, Dick Evans, Hank Ash, and other camps during that period. The work was still long and hard, and the men worked in the woods from dawn 'til dark and never saw their lodgings by daylight except on Sunday. In fact, one lumberjack once remained in camp over Sunday just to see what it looked like in the daytime.

There was always more or less revelry going on in camp for the lumberjack was always the practical joker. A typical game with which they enlivened their evenings was called "Scuddy." It was played by blindfolding a man and having him turn "bottoms up" to the crowd. Anyone could hit him and he could earn his release only by guessing correctly who had struck the blow. From dire necessity, the men came to know what to expect from each man.

But the lumberjack had his superstitious side, too. A lumberjack was killed one day when a tree branch fell down, breaking his neck. Having nothing but a horse and dray to haul out the body, the men went to the nearest house and got a horse and concord buggy. One of the men wrapped the dead man up in a blanket and held him in a sitting position on the seat, while the other led the horse because he was afraid to ride in the buggy with a dead man. After reaching camp, a couple of the lumberjacks got their dead comrade ready for burial. They were disturbed because the stove poker, which hung on the wall back of the stove kept swinging. The camp boss said this swinging was a sign of bad luck. After several trials, they got the swinging stopped -- and then were just as perturbed when they couldn't start it swinging again. After this a man cut his foot; and, as the men kept seeing a black cat in the woods, many of them quit this camp.<sup>66</sup>

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66. Adelia Lince, "Tales from the Skidways," typescript Manuscript, Rose City Public Library.

Working in the mills was a dangerous occupation, too. The whirling saw, flying knots, fans and pulleys, and bursting boilers all helped add to the numbers of injured and killed. The boiler at the Thomas Campbell mill in Rose City burst one day, blowing one of the workers to bits, and another man was killed in the heading mill when his clothes became caught in a huge fan. Many fingers and occasionally an eye were lost there and many men suffered broken bones.

The woodsmen were generally known to like their liquor and they found ways of quenching their thirst. On Saturday night most of them headed for the saloons in Rose City, South Branch, or elsewhere, and often when one of the men had to go into town during the week for some purpose his buddies would give him money to buy liquor to bring back. On the road between Robinson's Mill and South Branch lies Whiskey Spring. Legend has it that, whenever, a lumberjack or mill hand was returning to the mill from South Branch he had to sample the whiskey. Whiskey Spring made a good stopping place. There the spring water could be added to the liquor making full jugs to carry back to camp.

The lumbering era was drawing to a close in Ogemaw County, however. In 1910, Miller's Mill sawed its last log, and one by one the others were forced to close down. Robinson's Mill, the last of the big sawmills, was moved away in 1914 when its timber resources had become depleted, and in 1916 the Greif Brothers Heading Mill in Rose City



was shut down. The expense of bringing in logs from outside was too great. Thereafter, lumbering operations virtually ceased with the exception of the occasional small operator with a portable sawmill.

It is interesting to note that the reports of the county superintendents of poor suggest that the peak of unemployment in the county did not appear until about 1905. Relief expenditures for families or persons not living at the poor farm remained approximately the same -- averaging \$517.99 per year -- for the period from 1885 to 1900, and in the latter year only nineteen families or persons received such assistance. However, by 1905 the relief load had increased to forty-six and \$1,804.11 was spent. The numbers on relief and the amount spent remained about the same for the next ten years, and then diminished somewhat for in 1920 only twenty received aid amounting to \$1,421.15. The average number of persons living at the poor farm varied from six to fourteen, though much more money was spent for maintaining the poor farm than for outside relief.<sup>67</sup> These reports cannot give a complete measure of unemployment because many families were cared for by neighbors rather than by the county.<sup>68</sup>

The economic problems of Ogemaw County multiplied after 1890 rather than tending to diminish. Most important

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67. Michigan Secretary of State, Abstracts of the Annual Reports of the County Superintendents of Poor, 1880-1920 (Lansing), *passim*.

68. Howard H. Thompson, "My Neighborhood," p. 5.

was the land question. As the pine was lumbered off, actual value of the land fell greatly, and on the plains practically vanished. Not only did the valuation of the taxable land decline, but, in addition, thousands of acres of land was allowed to revert to the state for non-payment of taxes. There had been some tax delinquency from the time the county was first organized, but by 1885 it had reached alarming proportions.

In that year the total amount of taxes that were not collected reached the sum of \$14,631.74. Some townships were affected much more than others; the amounts ranging from \$138.01 in Ogemaw Township to \$2,410.90 in Hill. The big offenders were the lumber companies, who believed that the amount they would receive from selling their lands would not compensate them for the expense and bother involved. One of the few large lumber concerns to attempt selling their holdings after the pine had been removed was H. W. Sage and Company, which turned over its lands to the Sage Land and Improvement Company. Among the owners who failed to pay taxes in 1885 was the Jackson, Lansing and Saginaw Railroad, which apparently despaired of ever selling some of its remaining lands in the northwestern part of the county.

The amount of taxes left unpaid annually remained remarkably constant after 1885 and by 1910 had declined only to \$11,191.36. By 1900, the Sage Land and Improvement Company had begun to let some of its unsold lands go back.

In that year in Foster Township slightly over \$630.00 in taxes were collected while \$1,038.94 were allowed to go delinquent.<sup>69</sup>

Much of the land reverting to the state was worthless, because it was valueless for agricultural purposes and little or no interest had been aroused in favor of commercial forestry. On November 8, 1907, the state owned 39,418 acres of reverted and unsold land in Ogemaw County, 11 percent of the total land area. This was below the figure for most of the surrounding counties, however, as 27 percent of Oscoda County, 18 percent of Alcona and Crawford counties, and 16 percent of Iosco and Roscommon counties had accumulated to the state. By June 30, 1908, total state lands in Ogemaw County had risen to 41,599 acres.<sup>70</sup>

Faced with the problem of utilizing thousands of acres of land for which it had no sale the state authorized the formation of the Ogemaw State Forest in 1914, located north of West Branch. A large area of the forest had been planted to white, Norway and jack pine by 1920.

For the ordinary citizen it was risky to plant pine plantations because of the uncontrolled fires that swept over the plains every summer. History of the early forest fires in Ogemaw County is similar to that of nearly every lumbered county in Michigan. It is the story of lumber

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69. "Delinquent Tax Return Rolls," 1885-1910, Ogemaw County Treasurer's Office.

70. Michigan Commission of Inquiry, Tax Lands and Forestry, Report to the Governor and Legislature of the State (Lansing, 1908), pp. 8 and 41-42.

operators creating vast areas of slashings, followed by fires burning this slash, and many thousands of acres were burned during the peak of the lumbering era. For more than a decade following the turn of the century, forest fires were prevalent, some from land clearing, some from lumber operations, and many were set by natives to improve the huckleberry crop on the sandy plains. Large fires burned over thousands of acres in 1891, 1902, and again in 1911. Those of the latter year were particularly bad -- even the high school at West Branch was closed so the boys could go help fight the raging fires. These fires had a devastating effect on the future prosperity of the county because it destroyed the small pine which could have furnished marketable timber by the 1930's or 1940's.

The amount of land put up for sale due to non-payment of taxes increased steadily after 1885, and in 1900 and again in 1901 four full pages of the Herald-Times was needed to list the descriptions of tracts being offered at the annual tax sale. By 1904, the list was much smaller, but following 1910 the amount of land offered for sale began to increase once again.<sup>71</sup>

The state land policy of attempting to get the reverting lands off the hands of the state, by offering them for sale or homesteading, and back on to the tax rolls as

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71. "Tax Sale Records," 1885-1919, Ogemaw County Treasurer's Office.

quickly as possible resulted in many evils. The lands were seldom bought by purchasers who had any intention of living on the land, but rather for speculative purposes or for the timber that remained on it.

A study made of the state land sales in nineteen Michigan counties, including Ogemaw and the surrounding counties of Iosco, Alcona, Crawford, Roscommon, and Oscoda showed that over 82 percent of all the land sold had been purchased by land speculators from large cities or towns. The larger purchases in Ogemaw County included: John Tolfree, West Branch banker and lumberman - 7,158 acres; Michigan Manufacturing and Lumber Company of Holly - 3,521 acres; U. M. Guilford, West Branch lumberman - 2,124 acres; and the Flint Land Company, Ltd. - 3,304 acres. There were many sales involving from four hundred to eight hundred acres made to individuals living within the county as well as to downstate purchasers.<sup>72</sup>

This accumulation of land in the hands of speculators resulted in some of the most flagrant cases of misrepresentation and out-right fraud in land sale history. Speculators from Chicago, Detroit, and other cities bought land for platting into resort developments or for small holdings for farming, fruit raising, and similar purposes. They paid almost nothing for this land, and then sold it for as high as fifteen to twenty dollars per acre.

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72. Michigan Commission of Inquiry, Tax Lands and Forestry, Report, pp. 51-59.

An example of such an occurrence in Ogemaw County was King's Addition to Beaver Lake. Albert W. King of Chicago secured some land adjacent to the abandoned lumbering town of Beaver Lake and in 1905 proceeded to plat this into several thousand lots 125 feet by 25 feet in size. An elaborate plat map of the addition was drawn showing plots reserved for a school, hotel, depot, and park and with streets having such names as Ogemaw Boulevard and King's Avenue. Actually, there was no lake within miles of the location and the soil was the poorest of sand. The number of lots sold is not known, but the first addition approved in May, 1905 was followed by King's Second Addition to Beaver Lake in July.<sup>73</sup> By 1910, several pages of the "Tax Delinquent Return Roll" for Foster Township were needed to list the delinquent lots, and the names of the owners suggest Eastern or Southern European ancestry. Most of the lots were probably sold to poor workers in Chicago.

Perhaps, even worse than the selling of worthless lots was the advertising campaign launched after 1890 to lure farm settlers to the cut-over regions of Michigan. Speculators were joined by the state government, "development" bureaus, and local business men's associations in publishing alluring advertisements lauding their worthless lands as being among the best farming lands in the nation.

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73. "Plat Book of Ogemaw County," Ogemaw County Register of Deeds Office.

Ogemaw County was advertised but not with quite the reckless disregard for the facts as was done by some of the northern business men's associations and development companies.

The French Land and Lumber Company of Rose City sponsored this advertisement in 1897:

### "ROSE CITY"

This beautiful little town situated at the terminus of the Rose City Branch is the headquarters of the French Land and Lumber Company. They are offering for sale the finest farming lands in Northern Michigan.

The farming lands of Ogemaw County and especially in the vicinity of Rose City are the very best in the State. The County has an almost unlimited quality of unimproved real estate for sale at from \$4 to \$8 per acre. The soil is rich clay and well watered by springs of the purest water in the world.

These lands in the vicinity of Rose City where factories, business houses, churches, an excellent graded school, and railway communications made a most desired location.

Residence lots in town sold on \$25 payment.<sup>74</sup>

How did the facts fit this description? It was true that Ogemaw had some of the finest farming land in Northern Michigan. A classification of Ogemaw's soil on the basis of its natural character and agricultural value indicates that 13 percent is first class land, soil on which agriculture can be carried on as a business, and with a profit in normal times, and 22 percent is second class land which ordinarily can be depended upon to produce fair crops.<sup>75</sup>

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74. Detroit and Mackinac Railway Co., Unnamed brochure (Bay City, 1897).

75. J. O. Veatch, Agricultural Land Classification and Land Types of Michigan, Mich. Agr. Exp. Sta. Bul. 231 (East Lansing, Revised, Oct. 1941).

Unfortunately, however, for any purchasers inveigled into buying land by that advertisement, the lands of the French Land and Lumber Company were located generally in areas of second and third class soil. The implication that all the soil in the vicinity of Rose City was a "rich clay" was misleading, to say the least, inasmuch as the best land in the area had already been settled. Only the more hilly and less fertile lands were left, in the main.

The following advertisements, describing land in adjoining Roscommon County are typical of the advertising used to sell land in this region.<sup>76</sup>

We have a glorious climate, the best water on earth, and easy cleared land which produces as much money per acre as any in the United States or Canada. Come and be one of us.

Wm. F. Johnston  
Roscommon, Mich.  
(Secretary of Roscommon  
Business Men's Association)

Roscommon County will grow more and better wheat, oats, rye, speltz, timothy hay, clover seed, beans, field peas, potatoes, cabbages, sugar beets, turnips, and rutabagas to the acre than any other County in the State, or in Illinois, Indiana, or Ohio .... Our land will pay double the value per acre that the average high priced land of Illinois, Indiana and Ohio does. And yet such land can be bought for \$6.00 an acre up.

Chicago Offices: 607 Atwood Bldg. St. Helen Development Co.

Corner Madison and Clark Streets. St. Helen, Michigan

This company, the St. Helen Development Company, built large chicken coops on several of the plats it offered for sale and sold them for chicken farms. They were soon

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<sup>76</sup>. Michigan Commission of Inquiry, Tax Lands and Forestry, Report, pp. 48-50.



abandoned, however as the soil was too poor to grow feed.

Ogemaw County joined the Northeastern Development Bureau, which was organized in 1910 to advertise northern Michigan. One of the first brochures of the bureau simply and rather truthfully stated:

One of the central counties .... Ogemaw is distinctly a farm, fruit, and dairy county, especially the latter. Probably no county in the state has as many small lakes, rivers, and creeks, and flowing wells of purest water as Ogemaw, which together with its great variety and abundance of both wild and tame grasses, combine to form an ideal dairy section.<sup>77</sup>

Although neither the county nor any local organizations evidently tried to lure settlers to the plains area of the county (with the exception of the "Industrial Edition" of the West Branch Times in 1889), the general advertising of the area aided unscrupulous promoters to sell the plains land. They sometimes bought farms that were about to be abandoned for as little as fifteen dollars for a 160 acre homestead and sold them at prices ranging from 100 to 150 times the price.

One real estate agent was said to have paid \$25.00 for 160 acres of land in Ogemaw which was afterwards sold to a party in Ohio for \$3,500.00, and in the deed the agent reserved 125 maple trees when there wasn't a maple tree within seven miles.<sup>78</sup> The real value of this plains land can be illustrated by the example of one pioneer homesteader

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77. Northeastern Michigan Development Bureau, A Land of Undeveloped Possibilities (Bay City, 1910), p. 12.

78. Michigan State Board of Equalization, Proceedings, 1896 (Lansing), p. 81.

in Foster Township who in 1889 had traded his farm on which he had worked for ten years for a cow and a horse, and considered he had got the best of the bargain. At the time of trade the farm included ninety acres of cleared, fenced land, frame house and barn, wagon shed, well, chicken coop, and pig pen.<sup>79</sup>

The state was also guilty of inducing new settlers to take up farms on worthless plains sand. After 1893 the state was able to open much of the tax reverted land for resettlement even though it was realized by many groups that such sandy lands were of no value for agricultural purposes. Between 1903 and 1911, 10,700 acres of this land located in T 24 N., R. 1 E. (original Foster Township) was sold by the state at an average price of seventy-three cents an acre. Of this total nearly 6,000 acres were purchased by four men undoubtedly for speculative purposes, while the remainder went to twenty purchasers evidently for agricultural purposes.<sup>80</sup> Thus, the state was responsible for a second tragedy on the plains and several families were to face financial disaster.

The efforts of the various agencies and associations to attract homeseekers to the area achieved remarkable success. The population of the county jumped from 5,638 in 1894 to 9,121 in 1904, and the number of farms increased

79. Paul A. Herbert, "The Development of a Marginal Land County in Northern Michigan" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Forestry, University of Michigan, 1941), p. 18.

80. George S. McIntire, "A History of Tax-Delinquent Land in Township 24 North, Range 1 East, Ogemaw County, Michigan," Michigan Academy of Science, Arts and Letters, Papers, XXV (1939), pp. 429-31.

over 83 percent.<sup>81</sup> Nevertheless, the increase in population was not evenly spread over the county. The depopulation of the townships with the poorer soils continued and between 1895 and 1903 three more townships were vacated.

The increased number of farms was one of the most promising portents for the future of the county. As late as 1896 it was claimed that the county had to import large quantities of flour, hay, meat, and feed to supply the demand in excess of home production.<sup>82</sup> As time passed, not only the number of farms in the county increased, but the farms already in existence were improved. While the number of farms had increased 83 percent from 1894 to 1904, the valuation of farm land and buildings was bettered by 109 percent, the value of implements by 210 percent, and the value of farm livestock had increased 276 percent.<sup>83</sup>

The agricultural growth of the county continued rapidly until by 1910 there were 1,283 farms located in the county, the highest ever counted with the exception of the depression year of 1935. With total farm property valued at \$3,696,987, the county showed a healthy increase of 196 percent for the preceding ten year period. Although the number of farms remained stationary between 1910 and 1920 (there were two less in 1920), the valuation of farm

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81. Michigan Secretary of State, Census for the State of Michigan, 1894 & 1904, passim.

82. Michigan State Board of Equalization, Proceedings, 1896, p. 81.

83. Michigan Secretary of State, Census for the State of Michigan, 1894 & 1904, passim.

property continued to increase significantly. By 1920, the average value of farm land in Ogemaw County was \$19.86 per acre as compared to \$9.55 in 1910. However, this was far below the state average of \$50.40 an acre. The proportion of the land area in farms increased from 15 percent in 1890 to 26 percent in 1904, to 39.5 percent in 1910, and reached 44.8 percent in 1920.<sup>84</sup> Much of this increased activity and the increase in value was because of the rise in farm prices and land values brought on by the First World War.

The most significant development in agriculture over the period from 1890 to 1920 was the great increase in the numbers of livestock kept with corresponding rises in the production of hay and grain, with the exception of wheat which declined after 1904. In 1920, there were 12,180 head of cattle in the county as compared to but 2,525 head in 1890. The number of sheep increased from 810 to 10,643, swine and poultry fourfold, and each farm averaged better than three horses.

The amount of land in hay crops grew from 4,418 acres in 1890 that averaged less than a ton per acre to 22,209 acres in 1920. In that year more than 80 percent of the hay crop consisted of clover and the average yield was nearly one-and-a-half tons an acre. The acreage of oats, corn, field peas, barley, and rye all showed considerable

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84. Less than half of the land in farms could be classed as improved, however, In 1920, only 40.3 percent of total farm land was improved and some of that was not plowland.

increases.

By 1920, dairy products were by far the most important source of farm income, whereas in the 'nineties wheat, potatoes, and hay had been raised for the chief cash income. The sale of livestock became more important, and though potatoes, wheat, and field beans were raised their relative importance in the over-all picture was much less.<sup>85</sup>

The emphasis on livestock and dairy farming, perhaps, resulted from necessity. With only 13 percent of the soil ranked as first class the amount of good crop land was strictly limited. However, second class land, which comprises approximately 22 percent of the land in the county and some of the third class land<sup>86</sup> can be used for pasturage and to raise hay. Because of the glaciated character of the soil there are wide local variations in fertility, and each farm tends to have an area better suited for pasture than for any other use.

Along with the increased stress on livestock and dairy farming went the need for larger farms. Thus, there were more farms in the eighty acre class than there were forty acre farms in 1910 though the latter was in second place. However, ten years later, while the eighty acre farm was still the most prevalent, second place went to the

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85. U. S. Bureau of the Census, Eleventh Census of the United States: 1890, Agriculture, Vol. 5, passim; and Fourteenth Census of the United States: 1920, Agriculture, Vol. 6, Part 1, passim.

86. Third class land makes up 25 percent of the total land area.

farms in the 100 to 174 acre category, and the even larger farm was becoming more numerous.

As the size of the farm increased, and more machinery was needed the number of mortgaged farms grew as well as the amount of farm tenancy. By 1920, of the farms reporting, nearly twice as many had mortgages as did those without, but the average mortgage was not excessive -- 27.3 percent of the total value of the farm. The number of owner operated farms declined from 92.7 percent of the total in 1900 to 85.9 in 1920.

Although the population of the county declined between the years 1904 and 1910 and again between 1910 and 1920, the large increase in the number of farms tended to distribute the inhabitants more evenly over the county, excepting the jackpine plains area in the northwest corner. As a result the townships of Ogemaw and Mills were reorganized in 1913 and 1914 respectively.

The peak of population in the county was reached in 1904 when 9,121 persons were enumerated by the state census of that year. United States census data for 1910 showed a population of 7,947, a decline of 13 percent, but thereafter the outward migration slowed down. From 1910 to 1920 the loss of population was but 2 percent. The decline for the sixteen year period from 1904 to 1920 can be attributed to the ebb of the hardwood lumbering industry which had passed its height in 1906 and had virtually ceased after 1916.

It is interesting to note that in 1904, the year the county reached its peak of population, both the village of West Branch and the unincorporated town of Rose City petitioned the state legislature for city charters which were granted the following year. Both of these towns, which were the two most important service and merchandising centers in the county, suffered much more population loss than did the county as a whole. West Branch showed a loss of 13.4 percent and Rose City a decline of 35.3 percent from 1910 to 1920 as compared to 2 percent for the county as a whole.

In keeping with the change from a lumbering to an agricultural economy the character of the population was also altered. The proportion of foreign born white people in Ogemaw County, which in 1890 had been 38.1 percent as compared to 26 percent for the state, declined much more rapidly than the rest of the state. By 1920, the percentage of foreign born whites was 15.3 percent, though 64.4 percent of the native born had a least one parent of foreign birth. Canada still led as the homeland of the great majority with Germany and England following. The 1920 Census indicated for the first time a sizeable ethnic pocket of Central Europeans in the county as the Hungarians had become the fourth largest group of foreign born. They settled mainly on some of the poorer land in Mills Township and to a lesser extent in Richland and Logan.

The number of males in comparison to the number of

females also declined after 1890. Whereas, according to United States census data males made up 60.8 percent of the population of the county in 1890 (52.1 percent for the state) by 1920 they represented but 51.8 percent of the population, which was less than the state average. The percentage of females in the county rose most rapidly from 1890 to 1894, rising nearly 6.5 percent, but after that the change was gradual.

The change over from a lumbering to an agricultural way of life did not change the dominant position of the Republican Party. Rather the party was more securely in control than previously. The Herald-Times in 1896 remarking on the large crowd at the Republican Caucus in West Branch stated that such a turn-out showed that the people were interested in their duties.<sup>87</sup>

Records show that in 1912 over 81 percent of the registered voters were Republican. For that year the qualified voters of the county included 1,401 Republicans, 215 Democrats, 63 Socialists, 36 Prohibitionists, and 3 Independents. Some of the townships showed such wide ranges as 141 Republican-5 Democratic and 154 Republican-5 Democratic. Two of the townships had more Socialists registered than Democrats.<sup>88</sup> There did not appear to be any trend which would aid in explaining why voters registered as they did. A careful study of the poll list of

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87. The Herald-Times (West Branch), March 6, 1896.

88. "Enrollment Record, Ogemaw County, 1912", Ogemaw County Clerk's Office, passim.



Klackung Township showed that the plains farmers were about as strongly Republican as were the farmers on the good lands. A slight tendency was noted for the German Catholics to remain Democratic while the German Lutherans had become Republicans, however.

The increase in population and the number of farms helped greatly, however, to change the way of life and the outlook of the county.

A plat atlas of the county printed in 1903<sup>89</sup> showed most of the land had passed out of the hands of the pine lumber companies and was owned by hardwood operators or by farmers. Showing the trend was the example of George H. Plummer, who was said to have owned most of the township of Ogemaw and village of Ogemaw Springs in 1889, but who in 1903 owned only 680 acres in the township and no land whatever around abandoned Ogemaw Springs. Instead John Tolfree, a West Branch banker and hardwood lumber operator, owned more than 3,200 acres in the township.

Quite a contrast was provided in the pattern of ownership in West Branch Township (T. 22 N., R. 2 E.) as compared to that in Hill and former Ogemaw townships. In West Branch Township, with a high percentage of good farming land, the largest contiguous tract of land was 280 acres owned by the Sage Land and Improvement Company. However, that company owned about 7,700 acres in Hill where the soil

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89. P. A. and J. W. Myers, Plat Book of Ogemaw County, Michigan, (Minneapolis, 1903).

was less fertile and more hilly, and former Ogemaw Township, with similar soil and surface features (without the lakes, however), was owned by a few large landholders.

The inability of the original owners to sell some of their plains land was typified by the Jackson, Lansing and Saginaw Railroad (M. C. R. R.) which still owned more than 2,000 acres of land in original Foster Township (T. 24 N., R. 1 E.) in 1903. The state, also, owned Section 16, the primary school section, apparently never having been able to dispose of it. Only five occupied farm homes were signified on the map of the township.

With the increase in population also came an increase in the number of organized school districts in the county, and a large rise in school attendance. In 1890, there were forty-three districts and by 1910 the number had been enlarged to fifty. The actual number of new districts was more than seven, however, because two townships, Foster and Goodar, had become township units.

Faced with a tremendous loss in population, Foster Township could not afford to maintain schools in the seven organized districts located within its boundaries, and in 1897 succeeded in getting the state legislature to pass a law making the township a single school district. The law stated that the district would be a corporate body known as "The Public Schools of the Township of Foster," and that the board of trustees would have the authority to close any schools deemed necessary. Goodar Township

became a township unit district shortly after the turn of the century.

The number of pupils enrolled in the schools in Ogemaw County increased greatly from 1900 to 1905 and then rose rather slowly until, in 1915, 2,473 pupils were attending school. This was the peak of school attendance in the county, and following 1915 the enrollment dropped steadily for many years. By 1920, it had declined 20 percent from the 1915 figure.<sup>90</sup>

As enrollment increased the quality of education also advanced. Though the school at West Branch had been graded in the mid-eighties, it was not until 1895 that other districts began to follow suit. One of those to do so in that year was the Rose City school. At that time the school was yet a one-room, one-teacher school with an enrollment of sixty-nine pupils. The teacher was paid the sum of \$280.00 for the nine months of school, and total expenditures were but \$1,685.00 for the entire year.<sup>91</sup> However, that same year the construction of a new building was commenced which was opened as a ten grade school with two teachers. The first high school class of two members graduated in 1898 with an impressive commencement program. The essays -- "Elements of Success" and "Life's Pathway" -- read by the graduates were almost lost amid three recitations

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90. Michigan Superintendent of Public Instruction, Reports, 1890-1920, passim.

91. Michigan Superintendent of Public Instruction, Report, 1895, passim.

presented by other pupils, two addresses, two mandolin duets, songs by four individuals or groups, and the presentation of diplomas.

Enrollment in the Rose City school continued to rise and in 1903 an addition was added to the building and it became a full twelve grade school and five instructors were employed.

Other village schools in the county were also affected. In 1895, there were but fifteen pupils attending the Lupton school, while by 1903 a new brick building was built, a four year high school added, and three teachers were needed. In 1916, however, the eleventh and twelfth grades were discontinued and pupils wishing the full high school course were sent to Rose City. Prescott similarly experienced an increasing attendance and although a new school had been built about 1886 it was necessary to enlarge it in 1890 and add another teacher for a total of two, which, it was believed, would be enough for all time. However, in 1912, a third teacher was hired, and in 1915 a new two story brick building was erected. It was not until 1917 that a ten grade curriculum was put into effect and 1921 when the last two grades were added.<sup>92</sup>

The growth of the West Branch school was even more remarkable. Increasing from an average enrollment of 101 in 1884 to 581 in 1910 the school saw many changes.

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<sup>92</sup>. C. M. Campbell, "The Prescott Community," pp. 75-76.

The number of teachers increased from two to twelve, and a new high school was built. Attendance slipped between 1910 and 1915 and even more during the next five years. By 1920, only 315 pupils were enrolled which was a smaller total than in 1890.<sup>93</sup> Part of this decrease in enrollment can be attributed to the opening of St. Joseph High School in West Branch in 1916.

During this period some of the more prosperous rural districts built brick or cement block school houses, and a few had enrollments large enough to warrant two teachers.

There evidently was a lack of interest in secondary education as high school attendance records remained small for the entire period. In 1905, there were 68 high school pupils enrolled at West Branch and 31 at Rose City. Though the former had 125 high school pupils in 1915, its total had declined to 93 by 1920, and Rose City had only 39.<sup>94</sup>

Teachers' salaries were low, considerably under the average for the state as a whole, but were as high as those of other counties in the area. The average monthly salary in 1890 of men teachers in Ogemaw County was \$37.43 and \$31.73 for women. Thirty years later the average monthly wage had advanced to \$88.60 and \$70.97 for men and women respectively. The superintendent of the West Branch school

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93. Michigan Superintendent of Public Instruction, Reports, 1884-1920, passim.

94. Ibid.

received but \$750.00 for the year 1904-05.<sup>95</sup>

Teachers were, as a rule in the rural schools, paid even lower salaries and were paid at irregular intervals. Not until 1908 did a teacher in District No. 4, Rose Township, receive \$50.00 per month and the teacher who followed got only \$45.00. In addition, one of the pupils was paid the sum of \$2.00 per month in 1908 for doing the janitor work.<sup>96</sup>

It was not customary to have nine months of classes in most of the schools until after 1900. About that time the rural schools began to have school from September to May rather than the old two term system.

Annual expenditures of the school districts remained low though they increased steadily after 1890. Teaching expense was the most important item as the budget of a school in 1891 shows. In that year the district paid out \$249.50 for teachers wages, \$13.50 for books, \$2.40 -- insurance, \$2.20 -- digging well, \$4.26 -- fuel (wood), \$3.00 -- clearing grounds, \$9.00 -- board members' salaries, and \$15.87 -- other expenses. Total expenditures for the year amounted to \$299.73, but in 1910 this same school had expenses amounting to \$530.30 with \$405.00 going for instruction.<sup>97</sup> Village school expenditures were

95. Michigan Superintendent of Public Instruction, Reports, 1884-1920, passim.

96. "District Assessor's Book," District No. 1, Damon Township, 1891-1913, passim. District No. 1, Damon Township became District No. 4, Rose Township in 1893 when the eastern half of Damon was merged with Rose.

97. "District Assessor's Book," District No. 1, Damon Township. See footnote No. 96.



almost as low proportionately. Rose City, with a ten grade school in 1900, spent only \$1,369.96 and \$4,058.90 in 1915 when it had twelve grades. Disbursements of the West Branch school, however, increased from \$3,961.36 to \$13,372.54 for the same period.<sup>98</sup>

Most of the increase in funds needed to operate the schools after 1900 was secured from greatly enlarged primary payments though district taxes rose, too. The amount of the primary payments increased more than tenfold between 1900 and 1920 while the sum of the district taxes collected raised less than four times the amount levied in 1900. The dependence of the schools on state aid had begun.<sup>99</sup>

The district school of the time undoubtedly fell far short of meeting the standards required of schools in the southern part of the state. The local school board, usually, was made up of three of the leading farmers, whose only interest seemed to be the hiring of the teacher and buying wood for the winter. As a result books were scarce, teaching equipment was generally lacking, and educational advantages were meager. The county school commissioner seldom was able to make more than one or two visits to a school during the year because of transportation problems. Nevertheless, the pupils who received their education in

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98. Michigan Superintendent of Public Instruction, Reports, 1890-1920, passim.

99. Ibid.



these schools got the fundamentals of reading, arithmetic, spelling, history, and geography, and many went on into business, teaching, and other professions.

The years following 1890 saw an increase of several churches within the county -- many of them located in the countryside and, therefore, serving the rural population. Following the turn of the century the Congregational Church in West Branch, faced with a falling membership and the difficulty of keeping a pastor, disbanded, and its building was taken over by the Free Methodists several years later. The Protestant Episcopal denomination established churches in West Branch and Rose City, and by 1913 the latter town also had Lutheran and Free Methodist churches as well. However, the Methodist Episcopal churches in both towns seem to have remained the larger of the Protestant sects.

The rural churches in the county were all of Protestant denominations with the exception of St. Joseph's Catholic Church at Klacking Creek which had been one of the first churches established. Among the country churches organized after 1890 were a Friends, three Methodist Episcopal, two Latter Day Saints, two Free Methodist, and a German Baptist Brethern. The latter church was built by a colony of members of that sect who settled in Logan Township in 1905 and for many years had a loyal congregation of about one hundred members.<sup>100</sup>

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100. C. M. Campbell, "The Prescott Community," p. 63.

Leisure time activities of the people of Ogemaw County did not change radically from 1890 to 1920, though that period saw the beginning of commercialized recreation. However, most of the activity remained centered about the many fraternal organizations and the churches.

Each community had at least one lodge or society and most had several. In 1889, West Branch had chapters of Masons, Odd-fellows, Knights of Pythias, Grand Army of the Republic, and the Order of Eastern Star, and soon the other villages and farming communities in the county had their complement as well. In the countryside the Grange and the Gleaners, a life insurance organization, were most popular. The monthly meetings of the Gleaners were held at the home of one of the members, usually alternating from one home to another; the local Granges commonly had halls. The whole family attended and enjoyed singing, dancing, games, and pot luck suppers following the meetings. The Farm Bureau had secured a large membership by 1920, and actively tried to provide many services to its members and other farmers.

The social events of the county probably were typical of those occurring in the village of Lupton, which were as one writer recalls:

There were the delicious ice cream socials and the oyster suppers, gotten up by the W.C.T.U. ladies to raise money with which to pay for their hall, the dances at the Maccabee Hall, and the occasional public installations of the Sir Knight Maccabees, in all their resplendent regalia. Coupled with these were

the Minstrel shows and the Medicine shows, the local temperance programs, and the revival meetings, with coasting and skating parties to give the needed variety.<sup>101</sup>

Another form of recreation enjoyed by many were the excursions to Tawas Bay sponsored each Sunday during the summer by the Detroit and Mackinac Railway, and less frequent ones to Bay City.

By 1905, West Branch and Rose City each had its bowling alley and billiard hall and the moving picture theater had arrived in West Branch before 1913. Within a few years Rose City and Prescott had motion picture theaters set up in converted store buildings, too. The ice cream parlor, soon to become such a popular American institution, was in evidence by 1905.<sup>102</sup>

With the end of the lumbering industry in sight attempts were made to start other businesses in the county. One of the first was the portland cement industry. Two different attempts were made about 1900 to establish cement plants, one in Edwards Township and the other near Lupton. The Hecla Portland Cement and Coal Company of Bay City built a large plant on Edwards Lake in Edwards Township, and a five-and-a-half mile branch of the Michigan Central was constructed to connect the factory with the railroad. Several Negroes were brought in to do the work, and for a

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101. Adelia Lince, "Memories from the Pine," typescript Manuscript, Rose City Public Library.

102. Michigan State Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1905-1913, passim.

brief time a small settlement complete with store prospered. This plant depended on the marl deposits of Edwards Lake for raw material, and the company owned most of the land around that lake and in addition large tracts on nearby Lake George and Chapman Lake.<sup>103</sup> However, the effort failed and within a short time was abandoned. The endeavor of the Lupton Portland Cement Company to set up a plant on North Lake met with even less success.

Around 1911, the Rose City Chemical Products Company, a corporation, was formed by Ohio people to manufacture turpentine from pine stumps. At first a large supply of stumps was accumulated at Island Lake, north of Rose City, and the cement foundation for a plant was built there. For some reason this start was abandoned and a large steel manufacturing plant was built in Rose City. However, only a few gallons of turpentine were ever made, because the company explained that the peculiar reddish color of the turpentine prevented its sale. Nevertheless, it was believed by some local persons that the officers of the company never intended to manufacture any turpentine.

Other portents for the future were the Chicago Last and Die Company plant and a combined machine shop and planing mill which had been established in West Branch before 1905 and remained there for several years.

Keeping pace with the agricultural development of

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103. P. A. and J. W. Myers, Plat Book of Ogemaw County, Michigan.

the county were the erection of two elevators in West Branch and one each in Rose City, Prescott, and Lupton. Six banks, all privately were operating in the county by 1913, and West Branch and Rose City each had a cheese factory.

The first sign of what was to become one of the most important factors in the future prosperity of the county was the appearance by 1913 of the first garage in the county, located in Prescott. Roads remained in poor condition for many years. Most of the roads in the county were under the supervision of the townships, and the farmers were allowed to work out their road tax. Consequently few roads ever received any gravel, and in the clay areas were mostly impassable in the fall and spring.

At the time the state had little money to spend on roads and the only state highways prior to 1920 were numbers 55, 76, and 30. State highway 55 followed rather closely the route of the old Tawas and Manistee State Road across the central part of the county except that for a distance deviated south to reach Prescott and then continued on to Whittemore in Iosco County. The only highway entering the county from the south until shortly before 1920 was number 30 which connected West Branch with Gladwin. Around 1918, Highway 76 was built between West Branch and Standish where it connected with the Bay City road. Needless to say, these state highways were in about the same conditions as the local roads.

Nevertheless, the first beginnings of the tourist

industry were to be found though the railroads were depended on for transporting any venturesome vacationer into the county. Even before the Jackson, Lansing and Saginaw Railroad had been completed as far as the Straits of Mackinaw the potential value of the area as a vacation-land was being discussed. In 1872, the Jackson News said:

This road is opening up a section of the country that for wildness of scenery and picturesque beauty cannot be surpassed in this country, by penetrating these vast old forests . . . those solitudes are soon to echo with the shrill scream of the locomotive, and those beautiful lakes that for ages have nestled in those dark forests, will soon be the scenes of happy parties from the highest circles of civilization. As soon as the railroad is completed a ride to Mackinaw and a visit to the intermediate points of interest will be one of the most delightful of summer trips that can be imagined.<sup>104</sup>

Unfortunately for Ogemaw County and the entire area the "vast old forests" were soon to be a broken, twisted, unsightly mass of slashings and stumps or of burned and blackened acres. Under such conditions a prosperous tourist trade did not develop.

The first actual resort development in the county evidently was started at Peach Lake, about three miles east of West Branch, before 1889. There the Bay City Camp Meeting Association laid out grounds for their annual grove meetings, erected cottages, and a large dining hall was built at the edge of the lake.<sup>105</sup> However, this site was

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<sup>104</sup>. Jackson News, 1872, requoted from the Lumberman's Gazette, August, 1872, p. 18.

<sup>105</sup>. West Branch Times, Industrial Edition, 1889.

abandoned after a few years and a more permanent resort development was still several years in the future.

The first recreational literature stressed the good hunting and fishing to be found in the area. As early as 1885 Greenwood was described as being one of the best points on the Michigan Central Railroad for sportsmen, "game of all kinds being found in great abundance."<sup>106</sup>

The Detroit and Mackinac Railway early began to advertise the excellent fishing and hunting to found along its line. Around 1897, the railroad published a pamphlet extolling the outdoor sports in which the fishing and hunting around Rose City, Lupton, and Prescott were mentioned. The sportsmen were told that they could find good hotels, liveries, and guide services at either of the three towns.<sup>107</sup> In an 1898 brochure Rose City was said to be in the midst of some of the best trout fishing in the territory.<sup>108</sup>

Sage Lake, the largest lake in the county, seems to have been the locale of the first two summer resort hotels in Ogemaw. These were the Ranger House, operated by J. E. Ranger who also had a store in connection with the hotel, and one owned by A. H. Brown who had several cottages in

<sup>106.</sup> Michigan State Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1885 (Detroit, 1885), p. 896.

<sup>107.</sup> Detroit & Mackinac Railway Co., Unnamed tourist brochure (Bay City, 1897), Transportation Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>108.</sup> Detroit & Mackinac Railway Co., The Birth of Ocqueoc: a Legend of Presque Isle County, Michigan and Other Tales (Detroit, 1898), Michigan Historical Collections, University of Michigan.

addition. Rates were low -- only one dollar per day -- at both places, possibly reflecting the small patronage.<sup>109</sup>

More important to the county were the individually owned cottage resorts, because they meant an important addition to the taxable real estate. The first bona fide cottage development was Crystal Beach Park, platted in 1914 on Bush Lake in Mills Township. This venture evidently met with some success for in the next year Huffman's Addition to Crystal Beach Park was platted as were Eymer's Outing Grounds on Sage Lake and Grand View Park on Bush Lake. The year 1917 saw two new developments and another in 1919 ended the resort platting for the decade.<sup>110</sup> These early developments were platted mainly for local use; the business and professional men of the nearby towns and villages erected most of the first cottages, but they did open the way for a more widespread movement in the 'twenties.

The budding resort business could not be expected to provide the income which had been lost to the county when the last of the timber disappeared. As already noted thousands of acres of land were not suitable for farming and had been abandoned and much of this same land had little to recommend it for recreational purposes. Though farm prices were high because of conditions engendered by the war, signs of agricultural decline could be noted

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109. Detroit & Mackinac Railway Co., Health and Pleasure Resorts, Inexpensive Outings and Vacations (Bay City, n.d.), Transportation Library, University of Michigan.

110. "Plat Book of Ogemaw County," Ogemaw County Register of Deeds Office.



such as the closing down of the cheese factory in Rose City.

Thus, as the people of Ogemaw County entered the 'twenties the future of the area did not appear as bright as it had in 1889. With vast stretches of uninhabited land, hundreds of poorly developed farms, and a declining population further economic distress appeared inevitable.

### CHAPTER III

#### Ogemaw Develops a Diversified Economy

As the inhabitants of Ogemaw County paused momentarily on the threshold of the 'twenties they were riding the high tide of prosperity engendered by the First World War. Market prices of farm produce were still high and land values had climbed steadily. The average farmer optimistically believed his good fortune would continue, and as Ogemaw was almost exclusively an agricultural county by 1920 the "good times" were reflected over the entire county.

The prices of farm land had risen magically during the war until by 1920 farm land values had more than doubled from the 1910 amount. High prices continued until 1921, when the market price of produce dropped in the aftermath of the short depression that began in 1920. However, land prices did not fall accordingly. The average value per acre of farm land in 1925 was \$18.61, having declined by \$1.25 per acre from 1920.<sup>111</sup>

During the land boom many farmers from Southern Michigan had purchased farms at the inflated prices. A one hundred acre farm in Klacking Township, which had cost its owner \$4,000 in 1906, was sold in 1919 for \$9,000. The new owner was unable to make the payments required by

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<sup>111</sup>. U. S. Bureau of the Census, United States Census of Agriculture: 1925, The Northern States, Part 1, p. 607.

the contract because of the decrease in farm prices, and some four years later the former owner once again had the farm.

Though the number of farms had declined between 1920 and 1925, acreage of land actually in crops did not fall greatly which suggests that the farms on the poorer soils were once more being abandoned. Nevertheless, the value of crops harvested in 1925 was less than a third of that in 1920.

The number of farms continued to decline during the last five years of the decade so that by 1930 only 985 were in existence.<sup>112</sup> Halted by the great depression beginning in 1929, the downward trend was stopped and soon was reversed as large numbers of city laborers began returning to the land where living costs were lower. In 1935, with the nation still in the throes of the depression, 1,312 farms were enumerated and more land was found in farms than at any other time in the history of the county. However, the amount of cropland harvested did not increase greatly and there were fewer cattle, hogs, and sheep than in 1930.<sup>113</sup>

Such a condition meant that many of these "new" farms were farms in name only and were not capable of supplying even the necessities of life to the operator and his family.

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112. U. S. Bureau of the Census, Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, Agriculture, Vol. 11, Part 1, passim.

113. U. S. Bureau of the Census, United States Census of Agriculture: 1935, Vols. I and II, passim.

Consequently, they were forced to seek assistance, adding to the numbers on relief.

However, in the late 'thirties as the wheels of industry began to turn at an increasing tempo the marginal and part time farmers began returning to the cities. By 1940, the number of farms had dropped to 1,080, and then increased slightly to 1,093 in 1945.<sup>114</sup> The amount of cropland harvested has remained remarkably stable since 1925 indicating that agricultural land usage has undoubtedly reached its optimum development.

The farms found in Ogemaw County today are, on the whole, in much better condition than they were fifteen or twenty years ago. This has been brought about by a variety of reasons -- one of the most important necessarily being the great increase in farm prices. In 1932, wheat had been selling for 40 cents a bushel, oats at 16 cents per bushel, beans at \$1.50 per hundred weight, pork at \$3.45 and beef for \$3.25 per hundred weight, and butterfat at 21 cents per pounds.<sup>115</sup> Prices had increased by 1936, but they were still low with the market price of wheat at 85 cents a bushel, oats at 24 cents per bushel, beans - \$1.90 per hundred, butterfat - 35 cents a pound, alfalfa seed - \$9.00 a bushel, and eggs - 20 cents per dozen.<sup>116</sup>

With the beginning of the Second World War in 1939

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114. U. S. Bureau of the Census, United States Census of Agriculture: 1945, Vol. I, Part 6, pp. 30-31.

115. C. M. Campbell, "The Prescott Community," p. 49.

116. Ogemaw County Herald (West Branch), January 30, 1936.

farm prices began to advance steadily and in general reached their peak in 1948. They did not decline greatly, however, as in 1951 wheat was bringing \$2.20 per bushel, oats - 89 cents per bushel, beans - \$6.50 per hundred weight, eggs - 39 cents a dozen, and alfalfa seed - \$37.80 per bushel. Of even more significance was the good prices for livestock. Hogs were selling at \$21.50 per hundred, medium to good steers for \$26.50 per hundred up, good to choice veal calves at \$38.00 to \$41.50 a hundred, and cull sheep were bringing more than choice ones did during the depression.<sup>117</sup> Good dairy cows -- grades not pure-breds -- were bringing as much as \$390.00 at farm auction sales.

High livestock prices were most important to the economy of the county because the trend toward dairying and livestock raising which had already started before 1920 was very pronounced by 1951. Farmers have been made to realize that they will not only make more money from livestock, but also that their land is not suited to cash-crop farming. This change has been brought about through the help of the county agricultural agent, 4-H club work, and the Agricultural Adjustment Administration and Soil Conservation Service.

The importance of the livestock and dairying industry was evident from the 1945 census. The value of all crops

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117. Ogemaw County Herald, April 26, 1951.

harvested had been \$1,571,645, while only \$194,608 of this amount was sold, but the value of all livestock and livestock products sold amounted to \$1,203,973.<sup>118</sup>

By 1945, the principle farm enterprises in order of their monetary importance were: dairying, hay, and beef cattle, with poultry, sheep, hogs, oats, and wheat also of major importance. As far as crops were concerned, their acreage importance had changed little since 1925. In 1944, 57.5 percent of the cropland was in hay with corn, oats, wheat, beans, and potatoes following in that order. The acreage of wheat increased during the war because of government requests for that product, though the production of potatoes has declined steadily over the years. Over half the hay grown was classed as alfalfa and the sale of alfalfa seed had become a major source of farm income.

Attempts had been made to grow sugar beets, flax, and fruits but without notable success. Soil and climate features were not suitable and the expense of transporting the product to the distant processing plants was too great. The raising of cucumbers has been important at times, particularly during the 'twenties and again after 1940. Although the West Branch Times in 1889 had prophesied that Ogemaw would become a great fruit county the number of fruit trees (apple, cherry, pear, plum, and peach) declined from 31,303 in 1920 to 20,853 in 1940, increasing

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<sup>118</sup>. U. S. Bureau of the Census, United States Census of Agriculture: 1945, Vol. I, Part 6, pp. 54-55 & 104-105.

again to 25,486 in 1945. Nearly all the trees are found in small orchards on the regular farms, the 1945 census classifying only five fruit farms. Over four-fifths of the trees are apple, and cherry trees account for over half of the remainder. Apples, cherries, and pears bear quite regularly, but the danger of unseasonable frosts probably will prevent the growth of commercial fruit farming on a large scale. However, the constant improvement and development of more hardy varieties may in time change the situation.

The improvement of agricultural practices and the awareness of the people of the need for changes has shown a lack of consistency. Though the services of a county agricultural agent had been engaged by the Ogemaw County Farm Bureau in 1919, as late as 1923, one-third of the members of the county board of supervisors voted against appropriating \$1,200.00 to meet the county's share of the expenses of the agricultural agent.<sup>119</sup> The county has never secured a full time 4-H club agent, but shares one with Arenac and Iosco counties. As a result the amount of time the agent can spend in the county is limited, and enrollment of club members has remained lower than it otherwise might have been. Though the first 4-H club was formed in 1922 only 96 projects were completed as late as

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<sup>119</sup>. Ogemaw County Board of Supervisors, Proceedings, 1923-24.

1935. Between 1935 and 1943 the number of projects completed averaged 337, and then jumped sharply to 732 in 1944 when additional interest was aroused because of the war effort. Difficulty has been experienced in keeping up enrollment due to the increased number of closed rural schools, but this complication can be overcome as is shown by the 4-H club program in the Rose City school.

However, many changes have occurred which point to the greater prosperity of the agricultural segment of the county and to the better utilization of natural resources. The number of dairy farms increased from 211 in 1930 to 351 in 1945, the number of livestock and poultry farms from 113 to 177, while the total number of general farms decreased from 459 to 213. The average farm has continued to increase in size. The number of farms of less than 100 acres decreased from 652 to 428 between 1925 and 1945.

The increasing use of expensive machinery has made it imperative for the farm operator to enlarge his acreage of crop land. The number of tractors on Ogemaw County farms has grown from 96 in 1930 to 490 in 1945, but the total number of automobiles and trucks on farms has shown less increment. That much of the machinery had been purchased after 1940 is shown by the 105 percent increase in the value of farm implement and machinery for the five year period from 1940 to 1945.<sup>120</sup> Along with the augmented

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<sup>120</sup>. U. S. Bureau of the Census, United States Census of Agriculture: 1945, Vol. I, Part 6, pp. 30-31.



use of machinery has gone a tremendous decline in the number of farms hiring farm labor (375 in 1925 vs. 79 in 1945). The number of farms reporting the use of electricity and having running water, bathrooms, and radios has grown phenomenally. The number of telephones in farm homes is the only convenience which has shown a decline.

This decline in the number of telephones can partially be explained by the rise in telephone rates. When telephone service cost but one dollar per month nearly every farm along a line had a telephone, but when rates were raised in the 'thirties great numbers of subscribers had their telephones removed, and many of the lines were abandoned. Ogemaw County has only one Michigan Bell exchange (at West Branch) while those at Rose City, Prescott, and South Branch have been small independent companies. Michigan Bell has greatly expanded its farm line service since the end of the Second World War, however.

Interest has also been shown in improving the strains of livestock and in bettering the yields of crops. Fairly large numbers of registered cattle have been secured -- among the most popular being Holstein, Brown Swiss, Hereford, and Shorthorn -- and the Michigan State College Ram Truck has for years made scheduled stops at West Branch so local sheep raisers could buy better sires. Ogemaw County Hereford breeders were among the leaders in organizing the Northeastern Michigan Hereford Calf Association. This organization was formed to promote the raising of feeder

cattle in the area, and since 1945 has held annual Hereford calf and feeder sales at West Branch where members can sell their young cattle to those interested in fattening the cattle for market. The cattle are also judged for quality prior to the sale. New varieties of grains have been tried and the use of commercial fertilizers has become more widespread.

In spite of the great improvement in the overall agricultural situation there were still many indications of poor, unrewarding farms. The 1945 census classified 211 farms in the county as subsistence farms, those that produce only enough for the home use of the family leaving little for sale. As late as 1944, 503 farms were reported whose total value of farm products sold or used by the farm household for the year was less than \$1,000, while the median farm had an agricultural income of \$1,500 to \$2,499. Though farm tenancy has not become a major problem, the number of mortgaged farms continued to remain large with 43.4 percent of all owner operated farms having mortgages in 1940. This was diminution from the 1930 total, however, These and other similar indications show that a large fraction of the agricultural population of the county does not enjoy a very prosperous existence.

One of the most significant facts to emerge from the data of the 1945 census was the almost complete abandonment of the sandy plains for agricultural purposes. Foster Township, actually two-and-a-half townships in size, was the

location of only one farm in that year.<sup>121</sup> Original Foster Township (T. 24 N., R. 1 E.) which had some seventy-nine farms in the early 1880's had not one in 1945.

As already noted the depression of the 1930's adversely affected the agricultural economy of the county by lowering farm prices and forcing large numbers of city dwellers to attempt farming the sub-marginal lands. Luckily for Ogemaw County two entirely different causes tended to mitigate the effects of the depression on the county as a whole. These were the tourist industry which had become fairly well established by 1930 and the discovery of oil in 1933.

The tourist trade became an important factor in the prosperity of the county during the 'twenties. The general thriving conditions of the cities coupled with the improvement of automobile transportation motivated large numbers of urban dwellers to become interested in acquiring summer cottage sites. Ogemaw County, lying not too far distant from the industrial centers of Michigan and Ohio, was in a favorable location for early development. The county has a total of 179 lakes, of which 121 are larger than five acres in area. It has been estimated that 63 of these have 52 miles of good shore line capable of resort development.<sup>122</sup>

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121. U. S. Bureau of the Census, United States Census of Agriculture: 1945, Photostats of data relative to Ogemaw County minor civil divisions.

122. Michigan Department of Conservation, Land Economic Survey, "Forest and Economic Report of Ogemaw County" (Lansing, 1923).

In 1923, the Land Economic Survey found cottage developments on twenty-two lakes with only about four-and-a-half miles of shore line actually developed. During the decade of the 'twenties, however, seventeen more lakeside subdivisions were opened, though the tempo was slowed down decidedly by the depression -- only seven plats being established from 1930 to 1940.<sup>123</sup>

The depression brought a slackening in resort construction, but it did usher in the era of the rambling tourist who stayed but a day or two in one place and then moved on. The state truck lines into the county had been greatly improved by 1930. Highway 76 had been paved as far as West Branch and M-33 was constructed from M-55 to Rose City in 1925 and from Rose City north to Mio in 1926. Commencing in 1932 the Ogemaw County Road Commission began taking over the township roads, a task that was completed by 1936. This was the real beginning of better roads in the countryside as the roads were then graded and graveled, and snow was removed in the winter.

Much more attention was shown to the tourist trade by the business men after the advent of the depression than before. Merchants at West Branch promoted a Trout Festival in the spring beginning in the early 'thirties while an annual Partridge Festival was sponsored at Rose City starting in 1934. These occasions were complete with contests,

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123. "Plat Book of Ogemaw County," Ogemaw County Register of Deeds Office.

parades, and entertainment and drew large crowds. A model tourist park on Houghton Creek was established in Rose City in 1934, also, and was noted for its log cabins, rustic dining pavilion, baseball diamond, and shuffle-board and tennis courts. Indicative of the change was the action of the county board of supervisors which in 1933 voted to become a member of the East Michigan Tourist Association. County membership in the old Northeastern Michigan Development Bureau was dropped completely in 1938, probably reflecting the opinion that it was almost impossible to attract industry to the county, but tourists would come. The Ogemaw County Tourist and Sportsman's Association was organized in the late 1930's and in co-operation with other county agencies advertised Ogemaw County as the "all-year Sportsmen's Paradise." The fishing in its many lakes and miles of trout streams, the hunting of deer and small game, and the attractions of its thousands of acres of wild land were all pointed out.

The Civilian Conservation Corps did much to make the area more attractive to campers and sportsmen during the 'thirties. Trout streams were improved, camp grounds complete with tables and stoves were built on Ambrose Lake in Foster Township and on Island and Loon lakes north of Rose City, and many acres of plains land were planted with pine which in time will add much beauty to the area and provide employment to a number of men.

The war brought an end to the organized festivals,

but it also put dollars into the pockets of the city worker once again. Starting in 1940, renewed activity was shown in resort development, and in the following ten years no less than forty-two subdivisions were platted and opened for sale -- fourteen in the year 1946 alone. This same period saw large numbers of cabins erected far from any lake shore as well, to be utilized mainly as deer hunting abodes. It is hard to estimate the importance of the deer hunting season, but a veritable army of red-garbed men (and women) descend on the county each fall, taxing the facilities of the county to their utmost. In 1943, the ladies of the Rose City Community Club, due to the shortage of restaurants in the town, served over four thousand meals during deer season. Meals have been served every year since in the Rose City Community Building, a beautiful log building constructed with federal funds during the depression, but the success of the first year has never been equalled.

In 1948, the Ogemaw County Ski Park was opened providing a source of winter tourist revenue, and a winter sports carnival is held annually. Fishing through the ice has become very popular, and because the roads are kept free of snow many cottage owners have begun the practice of coming up for week ends during the winter where formerly they had kept their cottages closed for several months out of the year.

The Rifle River Area, a 4,277 acre tract of land

enclosing the headwaters of the Rifle River, will undoubtedly in time become a popular recreational area. This expanse of wild land, which was purchased by the State Conservation Department in 1944 for \$75,000, was originally the summer estate of the late automobile manufacturer Harry M. Jewett, who spent about a quarter of a million dollars in constructing fences; building roads, a beautiful log lodge, and other buildings; improving the waters; and rearing pheasants. Located about four miles east of Rose City the area has nine lakes varying from an acre-and-a-half to 125 acres in size and many miles of trout streams. In 1950, the Conservation Department began a \$200,000 improvement program for the upper watershed of the Rifle River to restore the river to its original trout fishing productivity.

It is undeniable that the tourist industry has become one of the greatest sources of income for the county. Its importance to the merchants in the towns and at the cross roads can hardly be imagined. During the off-season the theater in Rose City goes on a two or three night a week schedule, the bakery, hotel and self-serve laundry close their doors, and other stores and service establishments experience a distinct loss of trade. The remaining villages and towns of the county show the same reliance on the tourist trade, though the merchants of West Branch, which is the banking and service center for a wide area, are somewhat less dependent on the summer trade for their

livelihood.

The widespread ownership of resort property has contributed greatly to the enlargement of the tax base of the county. The valuations of the three townships of Mills, Foster, and Hill, which have experienced a large part of the resort construction, have increased much more than have the valuations of the other townships. Between 1915 and 1951 taxable property had increased 490 percent in Mills, 360 percent in Foster, and 319 percent in Hill as compared to 150 percent for the county as a whole.<sup>124</sup>

The first test oil wells in Ogemaw County were drilled in 1932 in Horton Township, but the first producing well was not completed until July 20, 1933 and that was located in West Branch Township. Initial production was rated at only 190 barrels per day, but a wave of drilling and speculation was touched off that brought several new residents to the West Branch area and induced considerable construction work. Oil production in Ogemaw County has never been great and the size of the West Branch field was limited. By August 1936, there were 128 wells producing 2,300 barrels of petroleum a day, and though the number of active wells had increased to 225 in 1943, daily production had diminished to 1,350 barrels.<sup>125</sup> An oil refinery was

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124. Ogemaw County Board of Supervisors, Proceedings, 1915-16 and April session, 1951, passim.

125. Margaret Koopman and Rupert Koeninger, eds., "Rural Life in Ogemaw County" (Central Michigan College, 1945), mimeographed, p. 17.



built in West Branch in 1936 which has a capacity of 1,500 barrels of crude petroleum per day, but the plant was so constructed that it could be operated profitably on a 500 barrel run.<sup>126</sup>

Although output has continued to decline, exploratory drilling still goes on and a small field in Foster Township was discovered recently. The Arenac Field, located about four miles south of Prescott, was opened in 1937 and has been connected by a pipeline to the West Branch refinery.

The tourist and oil industries were unable to provide employment for everyone in the county who was out of work or to be of much assistance to the average farmer. Even before the depression had commenced, signs that the economy of the county was deteriorating were in evidence. The number of farms had declined greatly after 1920, no industry had replaced the dormant lumber and timber industry, and the elevator at Lupton and one of the Rose City banks were discontinued. As early as 1926 the Detroit and Mackinac Railway had petitioned the Interstate Commerce Commission and the Michigan Public Utilities Commission for permission to abandon its Rose City Branch. Though denied at that time, the railway renewed its plea in 1929. According to the railway's freight tonnage on the branch had declined from 21,656 tons in 1921 to 11,258 tons in

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126. Ogemaw County Herald, January 30, 1936.

1925, but then increased to 23,202 tons in 1928 and 29,771 tons for the first ten months of 1929.<sup>127</sup>

Despite the advance in freight tonnage and the protests of the state attorney general's office that public aid had been granted the railway at the time of the construction of the branch, of the line's unfair method of apportioning tonnage and revenue to its branches, and of the hardships which would ensue to the people along the branch if it was removed, the Interstate Commerce Commission gave the Detroit and Mackinac permission to abandon the branch to both interstate and intrastate commerce because the Michigan Public Utilities Commission refused to concur in the decision. The Interstate Commerce Commission granted the request because it declared there was no indication of any possible future developments along the branch, which certainly seemed true at the time. Nevertheless, this action has probably destroyed any chance for factory construction in Rose City or other villages on the former branch in this era of decentralization of industry.

Though the removal of the railroad did not make the depression any more severe, it was a sign of the lack of industry to make use of the large numbers of unemployed. Other signs of the depression were not lacking, either. In 1933, the board of supervisors passed resolutions asking the federal government to expand its forestry projects, and

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<sup>127</sup>. Interstate Commerce Commission, Reports, Vol. 133, pp. 158, and Vol. 162, p. 210.

the state to finish paving M-76 between West Branch and Roscommon and to extend the time limit for paying taxes for the year 1933. The following year the board asked the Civil Works Administration to raise its quota for Ogemaw County because it was "entirely too low to take care of approximately 1,600 registrations registered with the National Reemployment Commission."<sup>128</sup>

Unemployment was a serious problem in the county after 1930, as many unemployed city workers returned to their old homes adding to the numbers on the relief rolls. For the fiscal year ending October 1, 1930 the county spent a total of \$7,476.52 for relief, of which \$4,412.05 went for expenses of the county poor farm, while for the year 1933 the county paid out \$47,268.64. By 1935, though there were still 567 persons listed on the unemployment rolls the cost of relief to the county had dropped because of increasing federal help. In that year the county spent but \$9,446.83 in comparison to \$84,228.54 spent by the Federal Government for direct and work relief.<sup>129</sup>

That the depression did not end until after the Second World War had started seems evident, for as late as the year ending July 1939 the direct relief load of the county was \$21,365.55 which had been reduced to \$1,972.82 by 1942. Though unemployment has not been serious

<sup>128</sup>. Ogemaw County Board of Supervisors, Proceedings, 1933-34, passim.

<sup>129</sup>. Ogemaw County Board of Supervisors, Proceedings, 1930-31 -- 1935-36, passim.

since then the budget of the Ogemaw County Social Welfare Bureau for 1951 amounted to \$22,600.00, showing how difficult it is to cut down on governmental expenses.<sup>130</sup>

The hotel and the elevator in Rose City burned during the mid-thirties and were not rebuilt, and while a second elevator had been erected in Prescott in the early 'twenties it was only operated part time during the depression. Both banks in Prescott and the one at Rose City went into bankruptcy and never reopened.

The land problem, already serious before 1920, became even more grave after 1925. In 1923, less than 5 percent of the total land area of the county was owned by the state or Federal governments. In two years, -- 1927 and 1928 -- however, 27,960 acres of reverted tax lands were deeded to the Conservation Department by the auditor general, and by 1940 the state held 77,597 acres of land in Ogemaw County as well as 4,497 platted lots.<sup>131</sup> The total has declined somewhat since, though in 1945 the state and federal governments combined owned about 23 percent of the land area.<sup>132</sup> Much of this land lies in the Ogemaw State Forest, the Ogemaw State Game Refuge, and the Huron National Forest, and so is not for sale.

The large governmental holdings in Ogemaw and similar

130. Ibid., 1950-51.

131. Michigan Department of Conservation, Biennial Reports, 1927-1928 and 1939-1940, passim.

132. Ibid., 1945-1946, pp. 69-70; and Lauren H. Brown, Michigan Farm Organization and Practices, Type-of-Farming Area 9, Mich. Agr. Exp. Sta. Spec. Bul. 336 (E. Lansing, Feb. 1946), p. 30.

counties took such a large percentage of the land off the tax rolls that in 1917 the state legislature voted to pay five cents an acre annually on all tax homestead and swamp lands held by the state. This was increased to ten cents in 1927 and at the same time it voted to give twenty-five cents per acre on all state forest and game preserve lands.

Land held for speculation constituted 55 percent of the total in 1923 when the Conservation Department conducted its survey,<sup>133</sup> and five years later over 7,000 acres was owned by land companies and approximately 6,100 acres by various banks.<sup>134</sup> Much of this land was allowed to revert for non-payment of taxes during the depression. Though large amounts of land continue to be purchased by persons living outside the county, their motives are usually different, since they are generally purchasing the land for their own use as hunting or fishing grounds or cottage sites rather than buying it for speculative purposes.

Population had fallen steadily after 1904 reaching a low of 6,595 persons in 1930. Because of the homeward trend caused by the depression, the increment of oil field laborers, and the increasing tourist industry, population raised to 8,720 in 1940 and to 9,281 in 1950, an all-time high for the county, not even surpassed during the lumbering

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133. Michigan Department of Conservation, Land Economic Survey, "Soil and Agricultural Report of Ogemaw County" (Lansing, 1923).

134. Michigan Department of Conservation, Land Economic Survey, "Ownership Maps of Ogemaw County" (Lansing, 1928).

era. Census data for 1940 disclosed that the foreign born element of the population had fallen to a mere 7.9 percent. Most of them had come to the United States several years previous for there were only forty-nine foreign born under thirty-five years of age.

The depression affected politics in Ogemaw County as it did throughout the nation. As late as the November election in 1930 the Republican candidate for governor showed a three to one lead over his Democratic opponent in the county and the Republican candidate for United States Representative had a majority of sixteen to one. However, the tide began to turn somewhat and Franklin D. Roosevelt was able to secure majorities, albeit rather small (1,774 to 1,631 in 1936), in 1932 and 1936. A Democratic county sheriff and county clerk were also elected, but that was about the extent of the Democratic victories. By 1938, the Republicans were firmly in control once again except for the county clerkship which was not recaptured until 1944. Republican majorities have never been as large since 1938 as they were previous to 1932.<sup>135</sup> West Branch which has a large segment of its population connected with the oil industry has been more heavily Democratic than the rest of the county, as a rule. The president of the refining corporation has been the titular head of the city

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135. Ogemaw County Board of Canvassers, "Reports," 1930-1950, passim.

and county Democratic organizations and was mayor of West Branch for several years.

Retail and wholesale trade and manufacturing have all shown large gains since 1930. In that year 101 retail outlets were located in the county with sales amounting to nearly \$2,000,000,<sup>136</sup> but the special census of business in 1933 disclosed that there were but 77 stores with sales of \$1,076,000.<sup>137</sup> By 1948, the number of retail and service establishments had increased to 184 which reported sales of \$8,295,000.<sup>138</sup> Between 1930 and 1948, the number of food stores increased from 16 to 50, restaurants and lunch rooms from 5 to 36, and gasoline stations from 14 to 29. No better proof is needed of the great importance of the tourist to the county.

The number of wholesale establishments has kept pace with the growth of the county, too. There were 13 in 1930 as compared to 21 in 1948 while sales had grown from \$550,698 to \$3,871,000. Manufacturing has also shown great progress with the number of plants increasing from 4 in 1939 to 12 in 1947.<sup>139</sup> In the latter year there were 116 employees who earned \$287,000 in salaries and wages.

Many kinds of manufacturing establishments are found

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136. U. S. Bureau of the Census, Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, Distribution, Vol. I, passim.

137. U. S. Bureau of the Census, Census of American Business: 1933, Retail Distribution, Vol. III, p. 26.

138. Rand McNally Commercial Atlas and Marketing Guide, 82nd Edition (New York, 1951), p. 216.

139. Rand McNally Commercial Atlas and Marketing Guide, 82nd Edition, p. 217.

in the county. Among them are two milk plants, soda pop plant, three sawmills, refinery, furniture factory, box factory, and a precision tool plant. The latter, a large factory in West Branch which went into production in 1950, employs two shifts of workers.

A majority of the new stores and manufacturing plants have concentrated in West Branch and Rose City, and both towns look much more prosperous than they did ten or fifteen years ago. Since 1940, twenty-one businesses have been established at Rose City including a hotel, motel, two cabin camps, cheese plant, two sawmills, and a garage and automobile agency. In 1951, there were fifty business places at Rose City in comparison to thirty-seven in 1905 at the height of Rose City's lumbering activity. West Branch has shown an even larger increment for the same period with approximately 150 business establishments<sup>140</sup> against 87 in 1905. The other villages of the county and sites of greatest resort development have also benefited.

The period since 1920 has seen a marked change occur in the educational system of the county. The one room school has been disappearing gradually -- some being absorbed into village school systems while other school districts have closed their schools and transport their pupils.

It has been already noted that the peak of school en-

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140. West Branch Telephone Directory, April, 1951.



rollment had been reached in 1915 and as the numbers of school children dwindled many of the districts discovered they had neither the school population nor the income to afford keeping their schools open. This was first true in the sandy soil areas of the county and during the 'twenties several of the schools were closed, never to be reopened. The number of rural districts maintaining school remained about forty-two, however, for a number of years. It was not until the early 'forties that their rapid decline had set in, and by 1945 only twenty-five rural schools were open, which had further dropped to twenty-four in 1950.<sup>141</sup> (See Fig. 9)

There were, in 1951, only two public high schools in operation in the county. The West Branch school has shown the most remarkable growth of any school in the county -- its enrollment increasing from 315 in 1930 to 834 in 1950 and the number of instructors from 12 to 32. The Rose City school remained small until in 1943 when a reorganization took place and a township unit was formed. Other districts have been annexed and by 1948 it was the largest district in the county with respect to land area. In 1950, the school's attendance was 383 and 16 teachers were employed as compared to 163 pupils and 7 teachers in 1930.

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141. Ogemaw County School Commissioner, School Directories, 1930-1950, passim.

The high school at Prescott burned in 1941 and never was replaced because of the refusal of the voters to approve the financing of a bond issue. Consequently, the high school pupils are transported to Sterling, though a grade school has been built. This was in direct contrast to the action of the people of the district at Rose City, whose school burned in 1945. There, plans for rebuilding were started immediately and a new high school was ready for occupancy in 1948. The cost of maintaining a high school in the modern age is a heavy burden on the taxpayers because of the low valuations. While most of the rural school districts had a tax of but six mills in 1950, the school tax of the West Branch district was set at twenty-five mills and the Rose City district was collecting a twenty-four mill levy. The consolidation of rural school districts with these two high school districts would appear to be the logical way of dividing the tax-burden more fairly, as most of the rural school graduates must attend one of these schools if they are to receive the benefit of a high school education.

Financing of education has become increasingly the responsibility of the state. The inability of the districts of the county to support a school with the many classes and services demanded by modern education is shown by a breakdown of the receipts of the school districts. In 1925, \$54,625.19 was collected in district taxes and

\$37,898.00 was received from the State Primary Fund. By 1947, only \$32,736.31 was secured from the district school levy, while \$35,258.00 was obtained from the Primary Fund and \$111,034.95 in other state aid.<sup>142</sup> There is not a district in the county that could maintain a school on the scale it does today without this help from the state. Some of the districts have valuations as low as \$56,875.00.

The physical plant of the West Branch school was augmented by two large additions in 1950, and is one of the finest in the state for a school of its size. The facilities at Rose City are not as good, however, and the Community Building must be used for a gymnasium. The high school curriculum in both schools has undergone considerable revision, and today emphasis is placed on vocational courses in agriculture, home economics, and commercial subjects.

High school enrollment has continued to remain rather low; the percentage of pupils completing high school is lower for the county as a whole than for the two districts maintaining high schools. The difference is particularly noticeable in comparing the large rural area included in the Rose City district with the remainder of the county (excluding West Branch). The consolidation of districts seems to increase the high school enrollment. The median

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142. Michigan Superintendent of Public Instruction, Reports, 1925-1947, passim.

number of school years completed by county residents twenty-four years of age and older in 1940 was only 7.9 for men and 8.4 for women. This relatively low educational attainment was probably due to transportation difficulties, to the low economic status of residents, and, perhaps, even a lack of appreciation for the benefits of a secondary education.

Small community libraries are located in both West Branch and Rose City -- the former dating from the 1880's, but the one in Rose City was not established until 1936 and began as a WPA recreation project. The library at Rose City is frequently used by resorters. Circulation of both libraries runs heavily to popular fiction.

The number of Protestant churches has been increased by the growth of the more evangelical sects such as the Church of the Nazarene, Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ, and the Fundamental Baptist. Meanwhile, many of the old rural churches had disappeared by 1951. There were twenty-eight church organizations of which twenty had resident ministers -- only one, St. Joseph's Catholic Church in West Branch, had a congregation large enough to necessitate two pastors. . Ten churches are located within the immediate vicinity of West Branch, three in Rose City, two each in Prescott and South Branch, one each in Lupton and Selkirk, and the remainder are country churches.<sup>143</sup>

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143. Ogemaw County Herald, April 26, 1951.

Leisure time activities have not changed greatly since 1920 except that motoring has opened an entirely new form of recreation which has become more and more popular over the years. Increasing numbers of the population have taken motor trips to distant states, and the Sunday picnic at one of the nearby lakes has become commonplace. A number of combined taverns and dance halls have been opened since the repeal of prohibition, and the motion picture theaters are well attended.

Nevertheless, much of the social life of the county has continued to center about the various lodges, organized groups, churches and schools. Many of the old organizations such as the Grange, Maccabees, Gleaners, and Knights of Pythias have entirely disappeared or have become moribund. New societies and clubs have taken their place, however, and bowling leagues, home economics clubs, veterans' organizations, 4-H clubs, and similar groups have built up active memberships. The Farm Bureau has increased in strength, and West Branch, Rose City, and Prescott all have active chambers of commerce. Many of the communities sponsor baseball and basketball teams, but the tendency has been for the sports programs of the high schools to fill that need. There is a serious lack of an organized youth recreational program, which becomes especially pronounced during the summer months.

On the whole, however, the economic situation and the way of life of the inhabitants of Ogemaw County has shown

a decided improvement in the past fifteen years. Agriculture has become relatively stabilized, the petroleum industry remains important, and the future of the tourist industry and of manufacturing appears good. Even the lumbering industry has revived within the past ten years as the harvesting of second growth timber has gotten underway.

The author of a study in 1940 stated that if the natural resources of the county were developed to the maximum degree possible, the county would be able to support a population of 16,000.<sup>144</sup> A large part of this great increase would have to depend upon the lumbering industry, but there are still great tracts of open wild land which have not been replanted to pine. Moreover, there is no widespread appreciation of this failure to re-establish the productive capacity of the thousands of acres of sandy soil and the resultant benefit that would accrue to the county if the waste land could be put back into use.

Though, there are many opportunities for future development, they are of a nature that will not bring great wealth to the county as the factories have to the cities of southern Michigan. It is difficult to see how Ogemaw County will ever entirely free itself from a dependence on

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144. P. A. Herbert, "The Development of a Marginal Land County in Northern Michigan," p. 127.

the state to help maintain its schools, health and welfare services, and roads at minimum standards.

## CONCLUSION

Ogemaw County, in the period of eighty years since its first settlement, has passed through several stages of economic development. First the lumbering of its pine forests was the major activity, and that was replaced by an economy based on hardwood lumbering and farming. As the importance of lumbering decreased, agriculture became the major source of income. Within the past thirty years, however, the tourist, petroleum, and manufacturing industries have helped to restore the prosperity that was lost when the lumbering industry disappeared.

Political control of the county has been held almost exclusively by the Republican party. Though the Democrats had considerable strength before 1890, their position declined steadily thereafter until the depression of the 1930's, when they succeeded once again in electing a few candidates. Since 1938, however, the Republican party has regained its traditional ascendancy. Political leadership of the county has been supplied mainly by business and professional men and a few influential farmers.

The quality of education has steadily improved since the time many districts could afford only three months of classes during the year. More children are attending high school since large numbers of the rural schools have been closed and their pupils transported to village schools.



The automobile and the growth of commercial recreation has altered the old pattern of leisure time activity, but Ogemaw County has many rural and village social organizations.

Although history has recorded many changes in the way of life of its people, Ogemaw is still, essentially, a rural county.

## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

The writing of history for a small specified area necessarily limits the amount of material from which the historian can draw data for his monograph. Though the settlement of Ogemaw County began only eighty years ago it proved difficult to find information concerning the early period of the history of the county. The old newspaper files have been destroyed, nearly all the old settlers had passed away, and because of the small population little has been published that relates to the county.

The information available can be classified into a number of distinct categories. One of the most important sources of information on the early history of the county is the large amount of material found in the collections of Mr. Howard H. Thompson of Rose City, who has gathered information from old newspapers, letter, interviews, and other sources. The county archives and governmental reports tell the story of land acquisition, tax delinquency, population growth and decline, and give other similar data. The few fugitive newspapers, magazine articles, and the promotional literature help to record the flow of events and reveal contemporary ideas and problems. Three doctoral and one masters theses and several term papers have provided some information on a variety of topics, while a few general histories of Michigan and the northern

have supplied background information. A small number of maps and atlases were of much assistance.

The following bibliography is a selection of the materials found to be the most valuable in the preparation of the study. First are listed the general works used in briefly surveying the field for background material. Next are presented the archival and governmental sources of information. These are followed by the newspapers, periodicals, and pamphlets used in obtaining information and recreating the spirit of the past, and next are noted the formal studies which have been written about Ogemaw County or the immediate area. Finally, the maps and atlases are discussed.

#### General Works

The single, most valuable study of the cut-over region ever written is Harold Titus, The Land Nobody Wanted: the Story of Michigan's Public Domain, Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station Special Bulletin 332 (East Lansing: Michigan State College, 1945). Of the histories the most complete treatment of Northern Michigan is found in Perry F. Powers, A History of Northern Michigan and Its People (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1912). Also of some assistance was George E. Butterfield, ed., Bay County, Past and Present (Bay City: C. and J. Gregory, 1918). Some material relative to Ogemaw County is located in George W. Hotchkiss, History of the Lumber and Forest Industry of the

Northwest (Chicago: Geo. W. Hotchkiss & Co., 1898), and incidentally Mr. Hotchkiss lived in Ogemaw County for a short time in the early 1870's. The best treatment of the Indian occupation of the county is found in Wilbert B. Hinsdale, Archaeological Atlas of Michigan (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1931).

#### Official Records and Publications

A wealth of information was gleaned from the county archives located in the County Courthouse at West Branch. Unfortunately, these records are scattered in several vaults and rooms with little or no foresight having been used in placing the records in the different places. However, the "Tax Rolls," "Delinquent Tax Return Rolls," "Tax Sale Records," Board of Supervisors "Proceedings," school records, and similar documents yielded materials in their respective fields. Many of the records date back to 1876, but the Board of Supervisors, "Proceedings" go back only to 1907 while the election reports and school directories are but for the years following 1929. The "Proceedings" of the board of supervisors give an extremely good picture of the many problems faced by the county, and show the level of taxation and valuation of the minor civil divisions and county expenditures. One interesting document is the "Ogemaw County Enrollment Record, 1912" which lists all the registered voters in the county by name, voting precinct, and political party pref-

erence for that year. Another is the "Plat Book of Ogemaw County" which shows the information relative to all village and resort plats which have been established in the county. The "Tract Book of Ogemaw County" lists each land description with the name of the person who first acquired it and the date.

A panorama of district school development is presented in the "District Director's Book," District No. 2, Hill Township, which covers the period from 1885 through 1903 and is in the possession of Rose City High School, Rose City, Michigan; and in the "District Assessor's Book," District No. 1, Damon Township, 1891-1913, owned by Mrs. Delia Richardson, County Superintendent of Schools, West Branch.

Photostats of the "Records of the Appointment of Postmasters, Ogemaw County, Michigan," from the Records of the United States Post Office Department were secured from the National Archives in Washington, D.C.

A number of reports have been issued by special commissions of the state government and the various state departments which bear on the history and problems of Ogemaw County. The Michigan Commission of Inquiry, Tax Lands and Forestry, Report to the Governor and Legislature of the State (Lansing, 1908) deals with the problems of tax delinquency and the reverted lands. The Michigan Railroad Commission, Aids, Gifts, Grants, and Donations to Railroads Including Outline of Development and Successions in Titles

to Railroads in Michigan (Lansing, 1919) gives a concise summary of railroad building and changes in the county up until that date. The Michigan Department of Conservation, Biennial Reports, "1921-1922-- ."; Michigan State Board of Equalization, Proceedings, "1875-1936."; Michigan Superintendent of Public Instruction, Reports, "1876- ."; Michigan Department of State, Annual Abstracts of the Reports of the Superintendents of the Poor, "1880-1938."; and Michigan Secretary of State, Annual Reports Relating to Farms and Farm Products, "1879-80--1903-04." were all very helpful.

An excellent guide to the acts passed by the state legislature concernign counties and minor civil divisions is Dennis E. Alward and Charles S. Pierce, Index to the Local and Special Acts of the State of Michigan, 1803 to 1927 (Lansing: Robert Smith Company, State Printers, 1928). The texts of these acts relative to Ogemaw County are recorded in Michigan Acts, "1840-1873" and Michigan Local Acts, "1875-1915."

Statistics of population, agriculture, business, and manufacturing are found in U. S. Bureau of the Census reports beginning with the 1880 enumeration. In addition the condition of agriculture is further recorded in U. S. Bureau of the Census, United States Census of Agriculture, "1925- ." (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office). The Michigan Secretary of State, Census for the State of Michigan, "1874-1904." (Lansing) reports on many

items not found in the United States Census.

### Newspapers, Periodicals, Pamphlets

Though at least five different newspapers -- Ogemaw County Journal, West Branch Herald, West Branch Times, West Branch Democrat, and the Ogemaw County Republican -- had been published in West Branch, the Rose City Review in Rose City, and the Prescott Enterprise in Prescott prior to 1920 all the old files of these newspapers have been destroyed. Only a few isolated copies were available. Among these, however, was a copy of the West Branch Times, Industrial Edition, 1889, owned by Mr. Arthur J. Babcock of West Branch. This special edition is the most valuable source of information on the early history of Ogemaw County. The Lumberman's Gazette (Bay City, Mich.), of which only the first three volumes (July 1872 - Dec. 1873) were available, and located in the Michigan State Library, Lansing, records the opening of the lumber industry in Ogemaw County. The growth and decline of villages and towns is shown in the many editions of the Michigan State Gazetteer and Business Directory (Detroit: R. L. Polk & Co.).

The Detroit and Mackinac Railway Company, Annual Reports, "1897- ." present a picture of activity along its branches in the county.

### Formal Studies

A complete report on the soil and climatic conditions

of the county as well as much history is J. O. Veatch and others, Soil Survey of Ogemaw County, Michigan, U. S. Department of Agriculture Bulletin 28, Series 1923 (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1928).

An excellent account of the development of Ogemaw County particularly with reference to land use and forestry is Paul A. Herbert, "The Development of a Marginal Land County in Northern Michigan" (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Forestry, University of Michigan, 1940). Of special interest is Clyde M. Campbell, "The Prescott Community" (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Department of Sociology, Michigan State College, 1934), which reviews the social economic, and political history of that area of the county. Relating briefly to the county are Charles M. Davis, "The High Plains of Michigan" (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Geography, University of Michigan, 1935) and Elwyn Martin, "Land Types of the Saginaw Drainage Basin" (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Geography, University of Michigan, 1949).

Several papers relating to Ogemaw County history have been written by members of extension classes conducted by Central Michigan College within the county. Bernice Anthony (Mrs.), "Robinson's Mill" (1949), typescript manuscript, Rose City Public Library, vividly portrays the existence of a hardwood lumbering mill town. Life at the turn of the century in a small village in the county is recalled in Adelia Lince (Mrs.), "Tales from the Skidways"



(1949) and "Memories from the Pine," typescript manuscripts, Rose City Public Library. Howard H. Thompson, "My Neighborhood" (1945) typescript manuscript, private collections of Howard H. Thompson, tells of the development of a rural area. The collective report of a class is Margaret Koopman and Rupert Koeninger, eds., "Rural Life in Ogemaw County" (Central Michigan College, 1945), mimeographed booklet.

### Maps

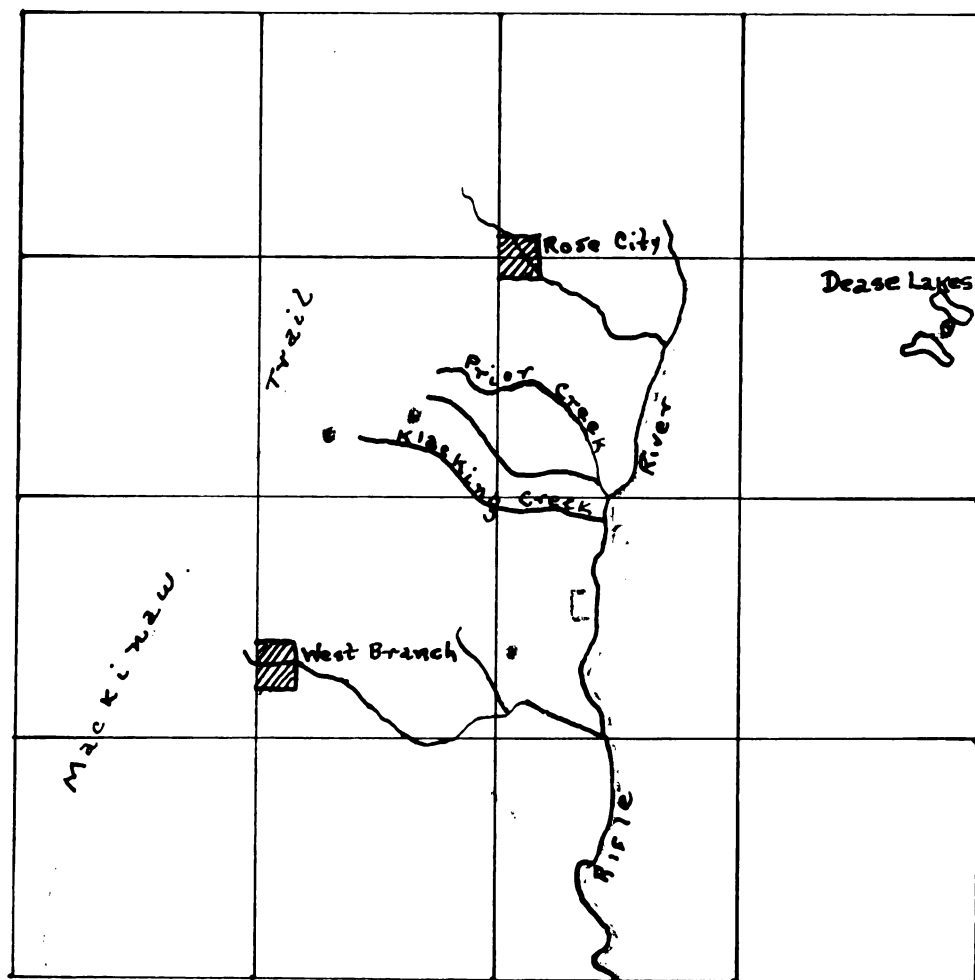
The oldest map of any value for the study of Ogemaw County is H. F. Walling, ed., Atlas of the State of Michigan (Detroit: R. M. & S. T. Tackabury, 1873), Michigan State College Library. The growth of post offices and railways can be found on the maps on the flyleaves of the various editions of the Michigan State Gazetteer and Business Directory. P. A. and J. W. Myers, Plat Book of Ogemaw County, Michigan (Minneapolis: Consolidated Publishing Co., 1903), imperfect copy in Michigan Historical Collections, University of Michigan, shows land ownership, roads, schools, and other data. Of special value were the maps printed by the Michigan Department of Conservation, Land Economic Survey including "Cover Map of Ogemaw County, Conditions of 1923" (1923), "Soil and Lay of the Land Map of Ogemaw County" (1923), "Ownership Maps of Ogemaw County" (1928), and "Tax Delinquency Map of Ogemaw County" (1930).

## APPENDIX



Fig. 3. Physiographic Map of Ogemaw County\*

\*Adapted from Michigan Department of Conservation, Land Economic Survey, "Soil and Agricultural Report of Ogemaw County" (Lansing, 1923).



- Indian Trail      ○ Ancient Circular Enclosure  
 ● Indian Mound      □ Three-Sided Embankment  
 ⊙ Indian Settlement Site

Fig. 4. Indian Remains in Ogemaw County\*

\*Adapted from Wilbert B. Hinsdale, Archaeological Atlas of Michigan (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1931).



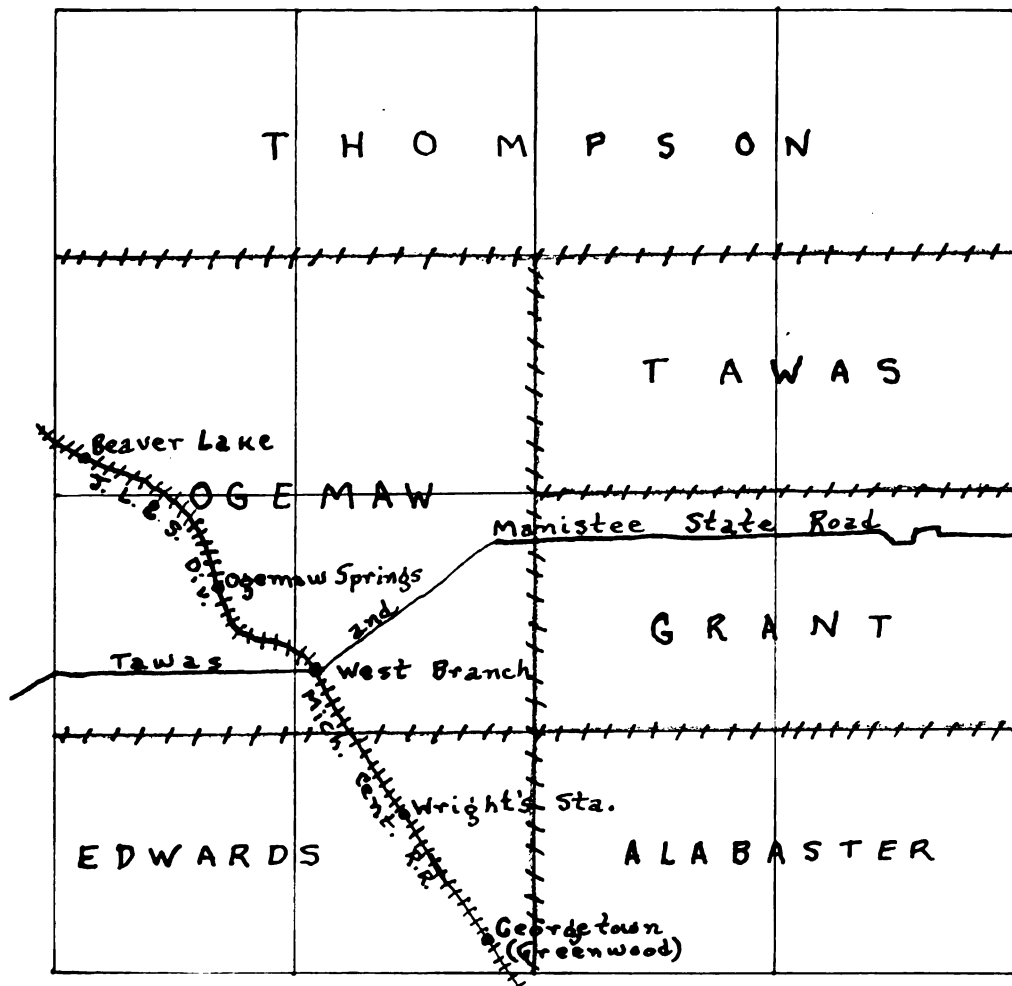


Fig. 5. Ogemaw County in 1873\*

\*Adapted from H. F. Walling, ed., Atlas of the State of Michigan (Detroit: R. M. & S. T. Tackabury, 1873)

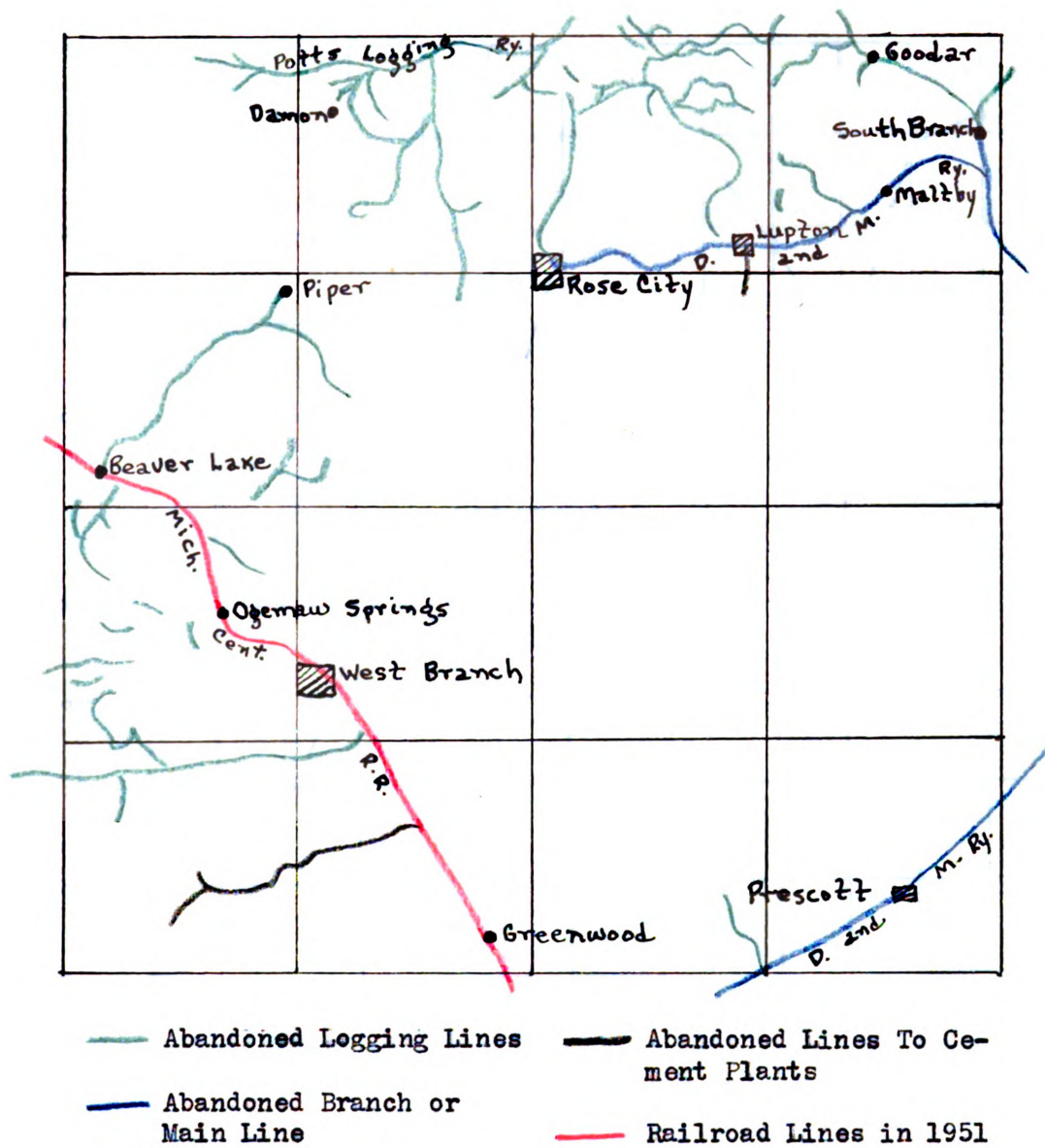


Fig. 6. Railroad Map of Ogemaw County

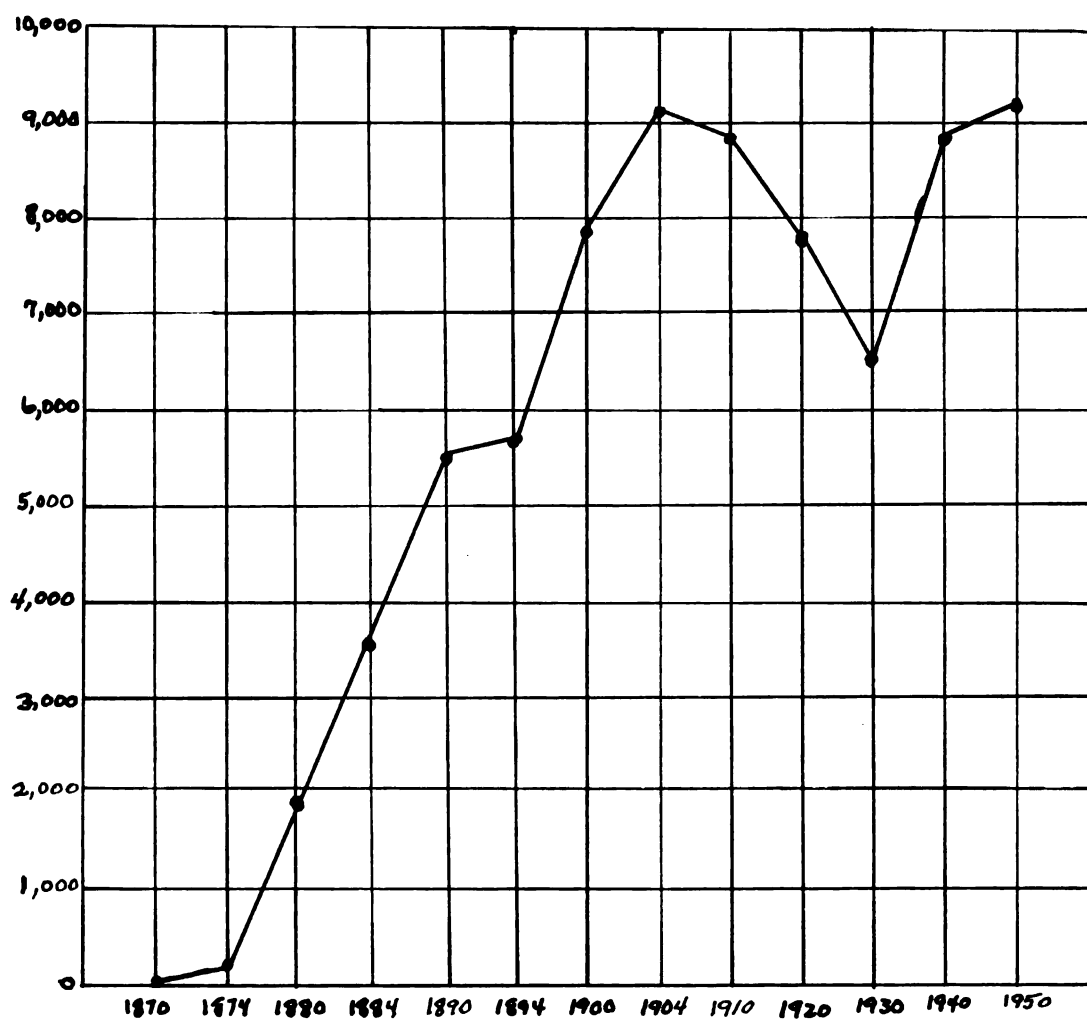


Fig. 7. Population Growth and Decline



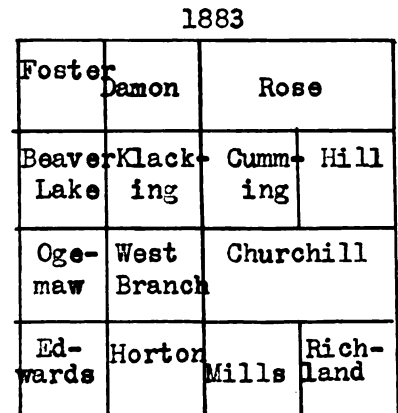
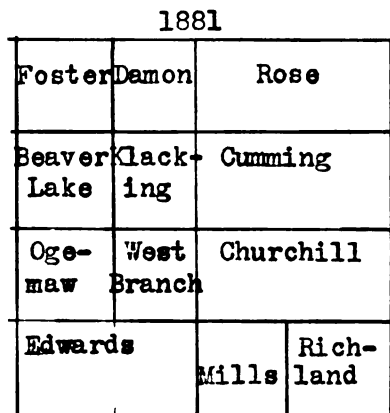
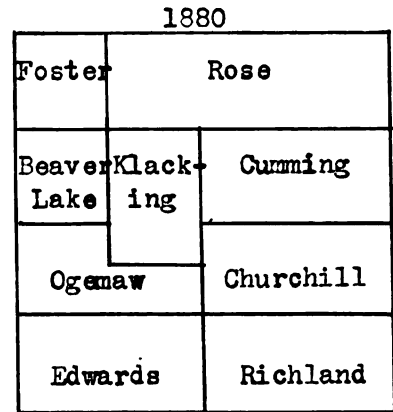
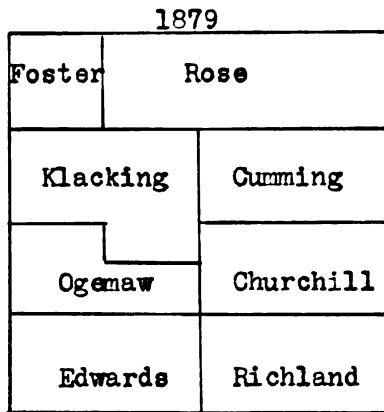
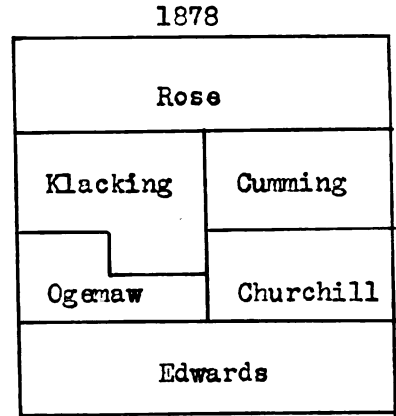
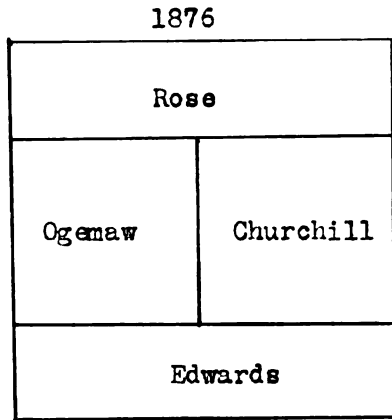
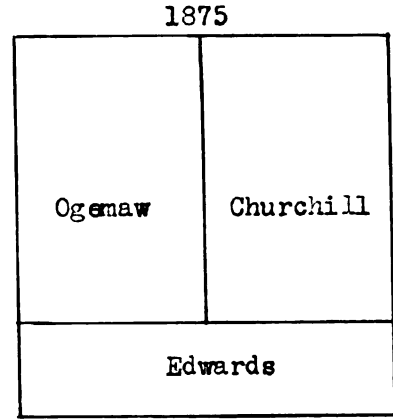
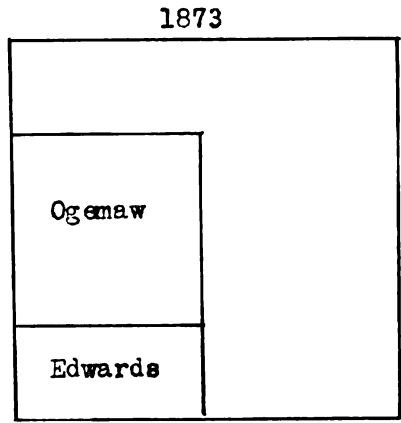


Fig. 8. Organization of Townships

1887

Foster	Damon	Rose	
Beaver Lake	Klack- ing	Cumm- ing	Hill
Oge- maw	West Branch	Chur- chill	Logan
Ed- wards	Horton	Mills	Rich- land

1888

Foster	Damon	Rose	Goodar
Beaver Lake	Klack- ing	Cumm- ing	Hill
Oge- maw	West Branch	Chur- chill	Logan
Ed- wards	Horton	Mills	Rich- land

1893

Foster	Rose		Goodar
Beaver Lake	Klack- ing	Cumm- ing	Hill
Oge- maw	West Branch	Chur- chill	Logan
Ed- wards	Horton	Mills	Rich- land

1895

Foster	Rose		Goodar
Beaver Lake	Klack- ing	Cumm- ing	Hill
Oge- maw	West Branch	Chur- chill	Logan
Ed- wards	Horton	Mills	Rich- land

1899

Foster	Rose		Goodar
	Klack- ing	Cumm- ing	Hill
West Branch		Chur- chill	Logan
Ed- wards	Horton	Mills	Rich- land

1903

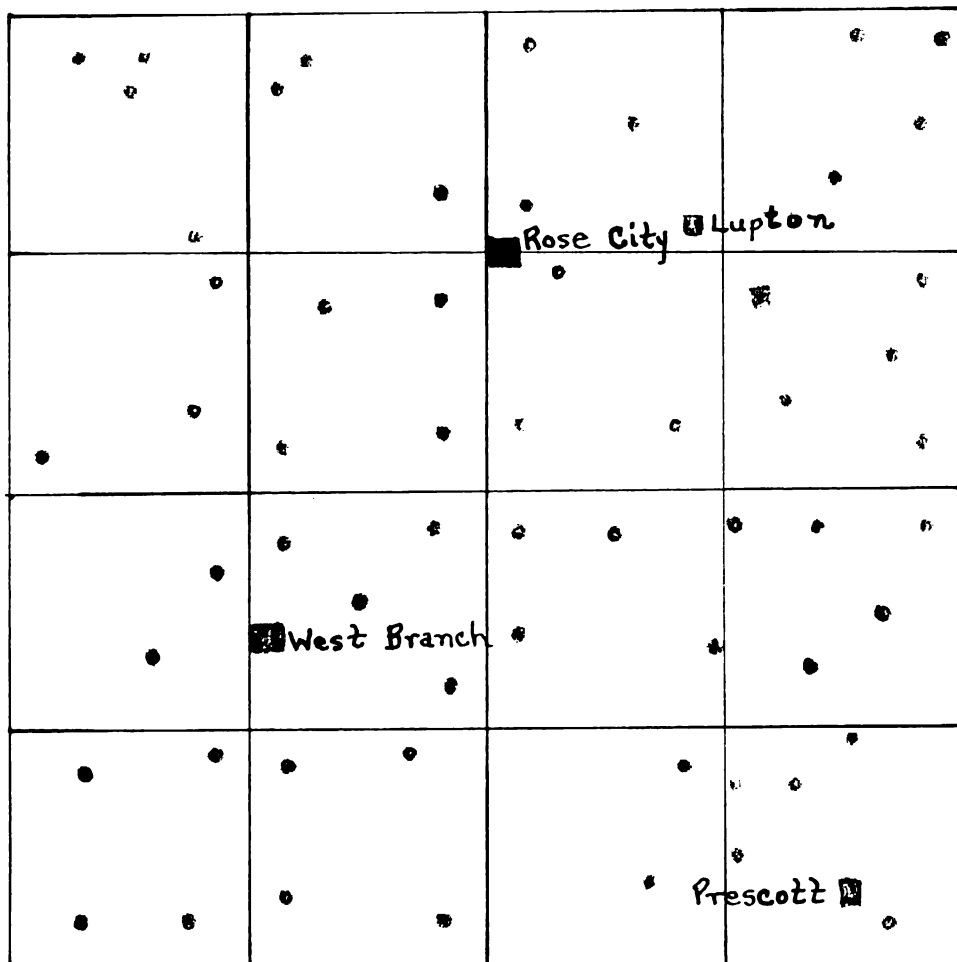
Foster	Rose		Goodar
	Klack- ing	Cumm- ing	Hill
West Branch		Chur- chill	Logan
Ed- wards	Horton	Richland	

1913

Foster	Rose		Goodar
	Klack- ing	Cumm- ing	Hill
Oge- maw	West Branch	Chur- chill	Logan
Ed- wards	Horton	Richland	

1914

Foster	Rose		Goodar
	Klack- ing	Cumm- ing	Hill
Oge- maw	West Branch	Chur- chill	Logan
Ed- wards	Horton	Mills	Rich- land



• Closed Rural School    ◻ Grade School With Two Teachers or More  
 • Open Rural School    ◻ Twelve Grade High School

Fig. 9. Schools of Ogemaw County

ROOM USE ONLY

~~10 15 52~~  
OCT 15 52

~~Dec 5 56~~

~~Dec 15 58~~

~~JAN 17 1966~~

~~SEP 8 1967~~

~~OCT 10 78~~  
152



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