

Preserving our Culture, Arts & Heritage

History of Canton Township

The Canton we know today is reflective of the Canton of yesteryear. Our values have remained, with our focus continuing to be our families, schools, and businesses - our community. We look to where we came from to help shape the Canton we know today, and to guide our growing community into the future.

Civilization arrived in Canton by the 1830's. Land had been cleared, homes had been built, farms begun, and schools and churches organized. In 1834 a six square mile area bounded by Joy Road on the north, Van Born Road to the south, Hannan to the east and Napier to the west became known as Canton. Canton was named after a city in China due in part to the enhanced trade relations the United States had with China at that time.

Canton was and continues to be governed by a Board of Trustees. In 1874 the first township hall was built on the corner of Canton Center and Cherry Hill Roads. It seated 400 people and was built at a cost of \$700.



Beginning with the first settlers in Canton, self-sustaining farming was the main source of income. The farm provided the necessary food and products for a family's livelihood, while the extra could be sold or bartered for goods, services or cash. The typical farm family owned six or eight milk cows,



hogs for marketing, hens for eggs and meat and a few sheep. Ice cut from nearby rivers in the winter kept food and milk preserved in the summer. The abundant maple trees provided maple sugar each spring.

From 1925 to 1970 Canton was touted as the "Sweet Corn Capitol of Michigan." Farmers within a day's horse and wagon drive to Detroit took advantage of the opportunity and raised the profitable sweet corn to be sold at the Farmers Market. Today, thousands of bags of sweet corn still travel to

Detroit and points in between raised by the descendants of the early farmers, the Hauks, the Schultzs the Palmers and the Colmans.

Dairy farming was also important in Canton due to its central location. At first farmers took their milk to local creameries located in the villages of Sheldon Corners and Cherry Hill. From these creameries, Canton's milk was distributed to larger nearby communities, including Detroit. Today one large dairy herd still exists in Canton, run by descendants of another early family, the Gills.

