

History of the Fenton Area

It was 1834 when Clark Dibble, a native of New York, explored the wilderness along the Shiawassee River where two Indian trails met.

Dibble was among the thousands of people, mostly from eastern states, who left their homes in search of new territories and land on which to build their future homes.

Congress had passed the "Squatter Act" in 1830, and land was available for \$1.25 per acre.

Legend has it that Dibble was actually looking for Grand Blanc. But because of inaccuracies in an 1815 survey by the Surveyor General of the United States, it is believed he missed his trail and stumbled into what is now Fenton instead.

Other settlers, including William M. Fenton and Robert LeRoy, also natives of New York, followed soon after.

In 1837, Fenton and LeRoy bought land, a saw mill and water rights from Dibble, who moved to White Lake Road in Tyrone Township.

Dibble died in June of 1841. Historians say he perished after saving his dog from the path of a falling tree.

Fenton and LeRoy had the settlement, then called Dibbleville, platted with limits from South Street to Roberts Street and East Street to West Street.

The original plat was drawn on a pine board which is on display at the Fenton Museum.

According to legend, Fenton and LeRoy engaged in a game of poker in order to give the village a name.

The stakes were that the town would be named after the winner. The loser would have the consolation prize of having the main street named after him. He would also have the choice of naming the other streets in town.

Fenton won the game and the village was dubbed "Fentonville."

LeRoy named some of the other streets in town, such as Ann and Caroline, after members of his family.

Fenton and LeRoy built the first hotel in 1837. LeRoy opened the first store during the same year and in 1838 was appointed postmaster. The first school house opened in 1838 and Dr.

S.W. Pattison became the town's first physician.

The settlement prospered and in 1863 was incorporated as the Village of Fenton, although the name Fentonville lingered for a number of years.

Fenton Township was established in 1834 and became a Charter Township in 1980.