

History of Standish by Dr R McGurk
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The History of Standish, by Dr. R. McGurk

The city of Standish, situated on the Macinac division of the M. C. R. R., was first a part of the Arenac township, Bay County, becoming a part of Lincoln township in 1882. The town was first platted in 1871 by Mr. John D. Standish, who owned all the land in the vicinity. The plat was made by the late P. M. Angus, who came on foot from Whitefeather to do the work, the railroad not having been built as far as Standish at that time. Before the plat was recorded Mr. Standish had disposed of some of his interests and the name was changed to Grenton and was so recorded. At the next session of the legislature, Mr. Standish succeeded in having the name changed back to "Standish". The first industry in the place was a saw mill built and operated by Mr. Standish. This he afterwards disposed of to Cross, Wright, and Co.

Standish was incorporated as a village in 1893 and Mr. James E. Austin was elected as its first president. In 1903 it was incorporated as a city. Mr. H. J. Randall was elected its first mayor.

Standish was without a railroad until the early part of 1871, when the Jackson and Lansing road was built, now the Michigan Central. The train at that time ran as far north as Wells Station. The building now used as a freight house and office was the first depot built. This was used as a passenger and freight depot until 1889, when the new stone depot was erected. The grounds surrounding the new depot were cleared and graded by the Business Men's Association. Previous to the building of the railroad Standish was reached by stage from Pine River. The first passenger coach to arrive in Standish was attached to a construction train on July 4, 1871.

The first hotel in the village was built in 1871 by Sheriff Burmel, of Bay City, and named the Standish House, and was under the management of William Shillinger. This hotel was afterwards purchased by George W. Shillinger who occupied it until 1881, when he sold it to Jerome B. Davis. It was destroyed by fire in March 1902. Mr. Jacobs, of Bay City, built the Jacobs House in 1871 on the lot now occupied by Mrs. Norn's residence. It was burned in about 1875 and was not rebuilt. The Sherman House, built by R. Callahan in 1893 afterwards sold to Mr. Cummings of Flint, was also destroyed by fire in 1902.

The present hotels are the Ryland Hotel, the Hotel Central, built in 1881 by George W. Shillinger, now owned by Weaver and Nerreter, and conducted by Mr. S. B. Warren, and the Farmers Home, owned and occupied by Mr. Maxon.

The first store was owned by a Mr. Currie, in 1871. Cross, Wright & Co. built the Richardson building and put in a stock of general merchandise. The building and stock was purchased by the late D. W. Richardson in 1875, who did an extensive business for a number of years. This store and the one owned by Mr. J. M. Groat, were the only ones in the village until the spring of 1884, when Gould and Wells put in a stock of merchandise, occupying a building adjoining the Standish House until 1886, when the Wells block was built. Since that time the number of stores and business places have steadily increased.

The following named firms and individuals are now doing business in the city. Otto Bernthal & Co., S. Blumenthal and Harry Blumenthal, dry goods and gents furnishings; Keller & Co., Francis, Smith & Lee, George Grier, J. Gwisdala and W. Biskner, groceries; N. B. Weaver, hardware and furniture; A. Hanses, hardware; Forsyth & Downer and O. A. Marfileus, drugs; C. M. Schoerpf, Jewelry; William Gidley, shoes; D. Fish, jewelry and bazaar; W. N. Pomeroy & Son and D. C. Beaton, agricultural implements; H. A. Hardy, pianos and musical instruments; J. C. Howard & Son, furniture and undertaking; H. G. Greanya and Claud Snow, tobacco, cigars and confectionery; Peter Halcro, harness; Nelson Ireland, Ford automobiles, with an up to date machine shop and garage; W. C. Grottemeyer and James Harrison, meat markets; J. S. Elwell, undertaking; J. C. Frye, cabinet shop and undertaking; Otto Wendt, photograph gallery; S. O'Keef, pool room and bowling alley; F. C. Conrad, pool room; John Rancour, soft drinks; Leon Larocque, shoe repairing; Mrs. P. M. Miller, bazaar and millinery; Mrs. Hardy, millinery; Mrs. Oetting, restaurant; Mrs. DeFord, bakery; A. Page, cabinet shop; Chamberlain & Henderson, insurance and real estate; P. Betzing, tailor shop; C. Walters, feed barn; Glasure & Glasure and H. G. Smith, livery; E. M. Knight, Geo. Jackson, F. Server, Sr. and August Schauer blacksmiths; Thomas Williams, W. A. Beebe and Joseph Pero, barbers; L. H. Weaver, Star theater; D. Kiley, coal and ice; Forsyth & Nowak, real estate and the Michigan Cooperage Co., who own and operate a heading mill at Turner. In 1890, Mr. C. L. Judd opened a private bank in the north part of the Shillinger building, now the Hotel Central. This was the first bank in Arenac County, and was under the management of Mr. H. F. Barbour. In 1891, the bank was moved into the Opera House block, erected by Mr. Judd, did business until Nov. 1896, when it failed. The depositors received about 60 per cent of their money when its affairs were settled. In 1897 Mr. A. Forsyth opened a bank in the same building, which he conducted until 1898, when he sold out to Noble, Sleeper & Co. This bank under the management of Mr. C. R. Holden did a successful business until 1903, when the State Bank of Standish was organized, which purchased the interests of the old bank. This institution under the able management of its president H. A. Chamberlain, has had a rapid growth and is doing a prosperous business.

The Arenac Independent, the first paper published in Standish, was owned and edited by Mr. E. J. Dunn during the latter part of 1883, and until April 1884, when it was purchased by Mr. J. J. Decker. It was a four page sheet, only two pages being printed by

Mr. Decker. The plant was moved to Omer, the county seat, in 1885 and the paper was published in that place until March, 1889, when it was moved back to Standish. Mr. Decker sold out to Nelson Ireland in 1893. Mr. Ireland improved and enlarged the paper, added new presses, and a gasoline engine for power, and continued to publish the paper until December 1908, when he sold out to the present owner, Mr. Harry Myers, under whose management the paper has been enlarged to 12 pages part of the year, and otherwise improved until it is one of the best county newspapers in northern Michigan. Mr. Decker also published the Standish Daily Times in connection with the Independent. In 1895, the Leroy Brothers opened a printing establishment and published the "Wave". It was a weekly paper. This was discontinued in 1896, on account of lack of patronage.

In 1895, Mr. George Cassidy built the first grain elevator, on land east of the railroad opposite the Norn Mill. This he afterwards sold to the Standish Elevator Co. This Company erected a large elevator north of the freight depot. The bean elevator that is owned and operated by Francis, Smith & Lee was built by France and McRae in 1902.

The first church erected in Standish was the Catholic Church, on the lot north of the S. Tong residence. It was a small frame edifice of Gothic design and was used for service until 1889, when the new church was completed. Under the care of Rev. Father Ducet the church has been enlarged and the Priest's residence completed.

The Congregational Society first held services in the old school house, with Rev. E. Branch as pastor. In 1882, the present church was erected on land donated by Cross & Dyer. Rev. Hill is the present pastor.

The M. E. church was erected in 1893, and the Rev. George Huckle was the first pastor. It has been under the charge of Rev. J. Bacon for the past three years.

The Episcopalians, Dr. Nimmo, pastor, hold services in the Weaver Hall. This society expects to erect a new church during the coming summer on a lot owned by them on Grove street.

The Polish Catholic Church, erected in 1911, has a resident priest and a large congregation.

The first post office was established in Standish in 1872, with W. S. Gaily as postmaster. D. W. Richardson received the appointment in 1873, and held the office until 1889, when George N. Shillinger was appointed. He was succeeded by Daniel Sullivan in 1893, who held the office one term. The present postmaster Mr. L. H. Tovatt, received the appointment in 1897 and has held the office continuously ever since. During his incumbency the office has advanced from a fourth to third class, three rural routes have been established and a postal savings department added.

In April 1892, the question of removing the County Seat from Omer to Standish was submitted to the voters of the county and carried by a substantial majority. On May 10th of the same year the books and records of the county were officially moved to

Standish. The county officers had quarters in the Opera House block, and the session of the circuit court was held in the Opera House until the new court house was completed. Mr. C. L. Judd contributed three thousand dollars and the Standish Business Men's Association one thousand dollars toward the erection of the present court house. The following citizens of Standish have held county offices: Sheriffs, - George Hannon, the first sheriff of Arenac county; George W. Shillinger, George Robinson and Alexander Caldwell; Judge of probate, - J. S. Elwell; P. M. Angus, county treasurer; James J. Decker and R. J. White, county clerk; prosecuting attorney, - M. D. Snow, S. E. Hayes, J. J. McCarthy and B. J. Henderson; register of deeds H. A. Chamberlain. Ex Sheriff Weaver, who served two terms, was elected while a resident of Omer. James Glasure, who also held the office two terms, was elected from Deep River township. The late W. N. Pomeroy was a resident of Adams township when first elected.

George Glasure is the present School Commissioner. The present Judge of Probate J. W. Dunn, was elected from Moffatt township and has become a resident of Standish. Three citizens of Standish have been members of the State Legislature, viz.; W. R. Dyer and J. J. McCarthy, representatives and A. Forsyth, Senator.

The first school house was built in Standish in 1871 on the lot now occupied by the primary school building. Mr. S. R. Hobler, now of Bay City, was the first teacher.

The first fraternal society organized in Standish was the K. of L. assembly. This society developed into a strong organization, but was later disbanded. The Odd Fellows Lodge was organized in 1887. Bowring Lodge F. & A. M., in 1895, and the Forresters in 1890. The Maccabees, Lady Maccabees, Woodmen, Eastern Star, Yeomen and Gleaners have organizations with a large membership.

Standish was first lighted by electricity in 1896. The Standish Electric Co.; organized by parties from AuSable, installed a direct current system. The dynamo was installed in a building on a lot now occupied by the bean elevator. In 1897 an alternating current machine was installed for commercial lighting. The streets were lighted by arc lamps until 1908, when a series of fifty incandescent lamps were installed. This number has been increased to fifty-four. The plant was purchased by the Michigan Manufacturing and Mercantile Co. in 1897. In Oct. 1911, the plant was sold to C. F. Hall who has erected a new brick power house and will move the lighting machinery as soon as the new building is completed.

The first industry in the town was the saw mill built by Mr. Standish. This mill was sold to Cross, Wright & Co. in 1872. A saw mill was also built by Mr. Lane on what is now the D. Wheeler farm. Cross, Wright & Co. sold their interests to Cross & Dyer, who built a new mill on the site now occupied by the planing mill. The plant was destroyed by fire in the fall of 1883, and rebuilt in 1884. Cross & Dyer sold their interests to C. L. Judd, who sold the mill to the late James Norn, who continued to operate it until about 1902, when it was destroyed by fire.

Austin & Co. built a large band saw mill in 1890 on the north side of the mill pond and operated it until 1893, when it was dismantled. The buildings now occupied by the

International Milk Prod. Co. were erected in 1894 by the Star Woodenware Co., who manufactured tubs and pails for two years, and the plant was sold in 1897 to the Michigan Mfg. & Mercantile Co., who converted it into a heading mill and operated it for four years. The plant has since been owned and operated by the Standish Mfg. Co., which went into the hands of a receiver in 1904, and the Citizens Mfg. Co., who operated it as a woodworking factory until 1908, when it was sold to the Michigan Cooperage Co.

The present industries in the city are: the flouring mill, built in 1889, by the Grey Milling Co., and now owned by Thomas Milne, who also handles all kinds of rough and dressed lumber; the woodworking factory of Randal and Kilmar, under the management of Mr. O. G. Kilmer, does a large business in dressed lumber, lath, door and window frames, and has recently added machinery for the manufacture of porch seats. The dried milk factory, owned and operated by the International Milk Prod. Co., while not employing many men, pays out thousands of dollars to farmers for milk and furnishes a fine market for that product. During the summer of 1911, over 22,000 pounds of whole milk were received daily at the factory, and this amount will be largely increased during the present season.

F. Server Jr. has just completed and is operating a foundry and machine shop and is making a specialty of stump machines. Robert Ouderkirk manufactures overalls, jackets, and canvass gloves in his factory on Cedar Street and finds ready sale for the output. L. H. Weaver owns and operates a cigar factory, and Julius Perlberg manufactures large quantities of brick and tile.

The first physician to locate in Standish was Dr. Coughell, in 1871, who remained only a short time. The present practicing physicians are Dr. Gareau, who located in the city in 1904, Dr. G. P. McNaughton, who succeeded Dr. E. C. Warren in 1906 and Dr. Springer, who came to Standish in Nov. 1911. The dental profession is well represented by Dr. E. G. Weeks and Dr. Souter.

There are four practicing lawyers in the city. M. D. Snow, who located here in 1893; S. E. Hayes, at present city attorney, came to Standish from Maple Ridge in 1893; J. J. McCarthy, who came in 1896, and B. J. Henderson, the present prosecuting attorney.

Dr. Kellog, veterinary surgeon, has been practicing in the city for the past five years.

The first telephone line [in] Arenac County connected Standish with Omer, the only telephone line in the town being located in the Shillinger building. The expense of supporting the line was partly paid by the county. About ten years ago the Michigan State Telephone Co. built a line from Bay city and opened an exchange in Standish. The business of the company has had a rapid and substantial growth under the management of Forsyth and Downer. The number of subscribers at present is about one hundred and seventy.

Standish has only once been honored by the presence of a candidate for the presidency of the United States. During the campaign of 1888, the Honorable Benjamin F. Buther, candidate for the president on the Greenback ticket made a five minute speech from the

platform of his special car. His speech was well received by the large number of people who came from all parts of the county to hear the distinguished speaker, but his personal appearance did not leave a good impression. One disappointed Greenbacker remarking that he could not vote for such a homely, sleeping looking candidate.

In April 1910, Standish, as part of Arenac County, was placed in the dry column after an exciting contest. The question of local option will be voted on again at the coming April election. As to the probable results of the election the writer offers no prediction. After two years observation of the workings of the law from a moral and business standpoint, each voter should be able to decide the question for himself and cast his vote accordingly.

A few of the first settlers who located here when Standish was a hamlet surrounded by dense pine forests are still residents of the city. They are Mrs. P. M. Angus, who came with her husband from Saginaw County in 1871. Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Larocque, who came from lower Canada in 1872; John Wilson, who located here in 1872, coming from Ontario; Mrs. D. W. Richardson, who came from Almont, Mich. in 1872; Mrs. John Ross and Mrs. James Smith, daughters of George Beardsley, who came to Standish about 1876; Robert Page came from Clio, Mich. in 1873.

Standish is surrounded by a fine farming country. The land is being rapidly settled and improved, and all kinds of grain, hay, beans, sugar beets, etc., are produced, which find a ready market. A business men's association has recently been organized, nearly every business man has signed the articles of the association and pledged themselves to use their best efforts to advance the welfare of the city. While the growth of Standish has not been rapid, it has been substantial, and it has become one of the best business towns north of Bay City.