

KING STRANG ONCE CONTROLLED COUNTY AREA

Emmet County, as territory of the United States, traces its origin back to the Congressional Ordinance of 1787 which set up the Northwest Territory.

The story starts far earlier as the French crown claimed the area in the 17th century. Then the British gained possession after the fall of Quebec when the French, in 1763, ceded their rights to the British crown.

The British were still in possession of much of the Northwest Territory when the ordinance of 1787 was passed. It was not until 1796 that the United States took possession of Detroit and later it returned to the hands of the British during the War of 1812.

The Michigan territory was set up in an act of Congress approved January 11, 1805. In 1836 Congress accepted the constitution and government of Michigan and the new state became a reality on January 26, 1837.

Back when General Lewis Cass was the territorial governor, he set up the County of Michilimackinac which included the northwest part of the Lower Peninsula and a large part of the Upper Peninsula.

In 1840 the northern part of the Lower Peninsula was laid off in unorganized counties, attached to the County of Michilimackinac for administrative purposes. The name Tonedagana was given to the territory which is now Emmet and Kishkonko to that which is now Charlevoix County.

In 1843 these names were changed to Emmet and Charlevoix. Robert Emmet, the Irish patriot, and Pierre Francois Xavier Charlevoix, early French explorer and missionary, were honored in the choice.

In the winter of 1853, James J. "King" Strang, the Mormon leader, was state representative and he succeeded in getting a bill through the legislature uniting Emmet and Charlevoix Counties under the name of Emmet. The act provided for holding an election at St. James on Beaver Island. At the same time the townships of Peaine, Galilee and Charlevoix were organized.

The first two covered the Beaver Island group and Charlevoix Township included all that which is now Charlevoix County.

Charlevoix mainlanders objected to the Mormon control and obtained a legislative act in 1855 separating the mainland territory from the islands. Under that act the townships of Little Traverse, La Croix, Bear Creek and Old Fort Mackinaw were organized.

The county seat was established at Mackinaw City but county business was transacted at Little Traverse until 1867 when the county seat was moved to Charlevoix.

There was a real hassle over the moving and the county seal and other official property disappeared. Dennis T. Downing, the county clerk, was charged with embezzlement. It was all settled with the organization of Charlevoix Township in 1869 and the seat of Emmet County was returned to Little Traverse.

In 1875 the township of La Croix was changed to Cross Village. Friendship, Maple River, Bliss and Pleasant View were organized in 1876. Next year came Readmond and Littlefield. Center was set up in 1878 and Carp Lake in 1879. Egleston, now McKinley, was organized in 1884.

Thus, at the end of 1884, there were 12 townships in Emmet County.

Later changes were:

Wawatam was set up from part of Carp Lake Township; Springvale was carved out of Littlefield, which received part of Maple River; Resort was made from the west park of Bear Creek; and West Traverse was set up from the west park of Little Traverse. This gave Emmet its present 16 townships.

Petoskey became the county seat on July 10, 1902 by vote of the board of supervisors.