

Hope College

Hope College Digital Commons

Collection Registers and Abstracts

Archives and College History

September 2013

H96-1279. Village of Douglas. Records, 1864-2002. 3.25 linear ft.

Hope College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.hope.edu/collection_registers



Part of the [Archival Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Repository citation: Hope College, "H96-1279. Village of Douglas. Records, 1864-2002. 3.25 linear ft." (2013). *Collection Registers and Abstracts*. Paper 821.
https://digitalcommons.hope.edu/collection_registers/821
September 9, 2013.

This Register is brought to you for free and open access by the Archives and College History at Hope College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Collection Registers and Abstracts by an authorized administrator of Hope College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@hope.edu.

H96-1279. Village of Douglas.

Records, 1864-2002. 3.25 linear ft.

One business day required for collection retrieval – please contact archivist.

Abstract

The land on which Douglas lies was previously inhabited by Pottawatomie Indians. In 1851, Jonathan Wade built the first house in the area of what became the failed city of Singapore. Wade, however, named his town Dudleyville, after his brother from Canada. Other early white settlers included William Scoville and Robert McDonald. Of more influence was William Dutcher, who purchased land in the area and officially platted it, naming it Dutchville. Later, Wade sold a portion of land to Dutcher in 1861 and the city was replatted and re-named again, apparently at the suggestion of other settlers, who had since moved there. Eventually, by decision at a town meeting, the town was named after the American Statesman, Stephen A. Douglas. It also appears, however, that Wade's nephew, Col. Fred May, who came from Douglas on the Isle of Man, also suggested the same name. A debate about the origin of the village's name continues, but the most likely explanation for the name involved a combination of these two sources above. The town was incorporated as a village in 1870.

The area was home to many sawmills and the related lumber industry which was integral in providing for the rebuilding of Chicago after the Great Fire of 1871. The lumber industry worked itself out of a job and the area turned over to fruit production. Peaches from the area were called "Michigan Gold" and were sent by steamship to the Chicago market. A maritime industry thrived in the harbor shared with Saugatuck. A resort, tourist, and "cottage" culture emerged in the 1880s and took a propitious turn in 1910 when a group of Chicago artists established the Summer School of Paintings on Ox-Bow Lagoon, and when a huge dance hall, called the Big Pavilion, was built on the waterfront.

Dreams of a booming city at the mouth of the Kalamazoo River faded away as the population stagnated then decreased, hitting a low of 305 in 1920. The village has grown steadily and has all but merged with Saugatuck. The issue of forming a conjoined city with neighboring Saugatuck has been an issue for most of the history of the village. Douglas remains a cultural and art center with an historic downtown and an active historical society.

This collection consists of materials relating to the history of the Village of Douglas in Allegan County, Michigan. Included are newspaper clippings, ordinances, council proceedings (minutes), registration lists for elections, a history paper by Larry J. Wagenaar, property tax assessment records, and records of the village treasurer and clerk. Also includes a copy of a map of the village in 1864 and an oversized street-layout map from 1961.

Accession No:	H96-1279
Provenance:	Village of Douglas
Donor:	Custody Agreement
Processed by:	Michael Douma, July 2003

History

The land on which Douglas lies was previously inhabited by Pottawatomie Indians. In

1851, Jonathan Wade built the first house in the area of what became the failed city of Singapore. Wade, however, named his town Dudleyville, after his brother from Canada. Other early white settlers included William Scoville and Robert McDonald. Of more influence was William Dutcher, who purchased land in the area and officially platted it, naming it Dutchville. Later, Wade sold a portion of land to Dutcher in 1861 and the city was replatted and renamed again, apparently at the suggestion of other settlers, who had since moved there. Eventually, by decision at a town meeting, the town was named after the American Statesman, Stephen A. Douglas. It also appears, however, that Wade's nephew, Col. Fred May, who came from Douglas on the Isle of Man, also suggested the same name. A debate about the origin of the village's name continues, but the most likely explanation for the name involved a combination of these two sources above. The town was incorporated as a village in 1870.

The area was home to many sawmills and the related lumber industry which was integral in providing for the rebuilding of Chicago after the Great Fire of 1871. The lumber industry worked itself out of a job and the area turned over to fruit production. Peaches from the area were called "Michigan Gold" and were sent by steamship to the Chicago market. A maritime industry thrived in the harbor shared with Saugatuck. A resort, tourist, and "cottage" culture emerged in the 1880s and took a propitious turn in 1910 when a group of Chicago artists established the Summer School of Paintings on Ox-Bow Lagoon, and when a huge dance hall, called the Big Pavilion, was built on the waterfront.

Dreams of a booming city at the mouth of the Kalamazoo River faded away as the population stagnated then decreased, hitting a low of 305 in 1920. The village has grown steadily and has all but merged with Saugatuck. The issue of forming a conjoined city with neighboring Saugatuck has been an issue for most of the history of the village. Douglas remains a cultural and art center with an historic downtown and an active historical society.

Scope and Content

This collection consists of materials relating to the history of the Village of Douglas in Allegan County, Michigan. Included are newspaper clippings, ordinances, council proceedings (minutes), registration lists for elections, a history paper by Larry J. Wagenaar, property tax assessment records, and records of the village treasurer and clerk. Also includes a copy of a map of the village in 1864 and an oversized street-layout map from 1961.

Container List

Box 1

Map, Dudleyville/Douglas, 1864

Newspaper Clippings

Holland Sentinel, 1992-2002

The Commercial Record, 1954, 1964, 1967

Paper, "Douglas: A Unique History of a Community," Larry J. Wagenaar, 1987

Box 2

Bonds and Oaths, 1929-1938
Council Proceedings, 1871-1895, 1938-1947 (2 volumes)

Box 3

Council Proceedings, 1948-1963, 1965-1972 (3 volumes)

Box 4

Receipts and Expenditures, 1936-1952
Treasurer's Records, 1896-1924
Ordinances, 1924-1968

Box 5

Clerk's Register of Warrants, 1895-1919
Clerk's Account Book, 1961-1969

Box 6

Property Tax Assessments, 1892, 1894, 1896, 1897, 1898 (6 volumes)

Box 7

Property Tax Assessments, 1899, 1900, 1906, 1907 (5 volumes)

Box 8

Registration for Election, 1902-1930, 1934-1946 (2 volumes)

Oversized

Map of Douglas, 1961