

Back to the Beginning (Part 2): History of Haslett

About three miles north of Okemos is the village of Haslett. By the 1840s, thirty five farms and a school made up the swampy area around Lake Lansing, which used to be known as Pine Lake. Jane Rose, Executive Director of Meridian Historical Village, explains, “The Haslett area was actually the area that saw the first settlers. When settlers come to an area, they want to pick the best property to claim or to purchase; they are going to go for the best water sources.”

In 1879, the inner-urban trolley was established and it came from the city of Lansing to Pine Lake. Suddenly, Pine Lake became a popular summer destination. The Spiritualist Association led by James and Sarah Haslett bought up land around Pine Lake making it into a resort area mainly for spiritualists. After James Haslett’s death, Sarah gave the land to the Haslett Park Association and an amusement park where the spiritualists’ camp had been was complete with a figure 8 wooden roller coaster, tilt-a-whirls, and cars that spun around up into the air over Haslett Road and a merry-go-round.

One of the most popular ballrooms in Michigan, The Dells was built in 1924. Jane Rose stated, “It was a real magnet. I mean they drew large, big-name people.” Haslett has seen much change from its early days. The Dells was hit hard by the depression, the amusement park closed and its merry-go-round was sent to Cedar Point in Ohio.

Tourism still thrives in Haslett during the summer but one can tell much has happened since the late 1800s. However some of the old remains, such as the Haslett Women’s Club which began in 1905 and still persists to this day. Education has also remained largely important in Haslett with residents being strong supporters of education. Haslett is a village with a past worth remembering. ●

Thanks to the following people who helped with historical information and dates: Jane Rose, Meridian Historical Village; John Grettenberger, Okemos resident; Eric Stelljes, Historian; and Elaine Davis, Historian.



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