

There are thousands of residents who work in the many businesses and industries located in Holland Township. But over a century and a half ago, when the Michigan Legislature created Holland Township on March 16, 1847, wildcats, panthers and wolves greatly out-numbered its residents.

The township was named Holland at the behest of the Reverend Albertus C. Van Raalte. Earlier in 1847 Reverend Van Raalte had led the first of what would become many groups of colonists from the Netherlands. By 1853, 1,418 people had arrived to tame the wilderness. And by 1860, Holland Township was home to 1,991 residents. Many lived in settlements that have become little-remembered ghost towns, while others established farmsteads.

The settlement of Groningen was founded in the spring of 1847 by Dutchman Jan Rabbers. An entrepreneur, Mr. Rabbers built a dam and sawmill on nearby Frenchman's Creek, opened a store and started a manufacturing enterprise. During the 1850's others started a furniture factory, grist mills and a tannery. In 1851 Jan Hendrick Veneklasen began his brickyard in Groningen. By 1892 the operation had been moved to Zeeland where approximately 20 million bricks were produced each year. Most of Groningen's enterprises moved to New Groningen, less than a mile north, when the road connecting Holland with Zeeland was relocated in 1856. Norde Holland, settled in 1848 by Jan Van Tongeren and Noordeloos were two other settlements located in northern Holland Township.

The first township meeting was held at Reverend Van Raalte's house on April 2, 1849. Most of the Dutch settlers were not yet American citizens, so just ten voters participated in the first election that saw Henry D. Post selected as supervisor. The newly-elected township board established its first tax to be raised to cover the year's expenses - a whopping \$25.00!

John Roost was elected supervisor in 1858 with 337 voters turning out. Wiepke Diekema was elected supervisor at 12 successive annual elections, beginning in 1870.

The geographical boundaries of Holland Township changed throughout the 19th century. Originally included within its boundaries were all of present-day Park and Zeeland Townships.

The Township's present charter was established in 1968. In 1976, a new Township office building was dedicated. That year also saw enacted a comprehensive land use plan.

Extension of water and sewer lines made possible extensive development, including HEDCOR's Northside Industrial Park and Westshore Mall, opened in 1988.

Many recreational opportunities are offered through use of the Township's extensive bike path network and the acquisition and expansion of Beechwood, Quincy, Dunton and Helder parks.

The public road system has been bettered year by year and the Township has upgraded its volunteer fire department buildings and equipment to keep pace with its growth.

Seeing Holland Township today, the immigrants of 1847 would be proud of their descendents' many accomplishments.