

GETTING HERE Transportation in Independence Township

Exhibit sponsored by

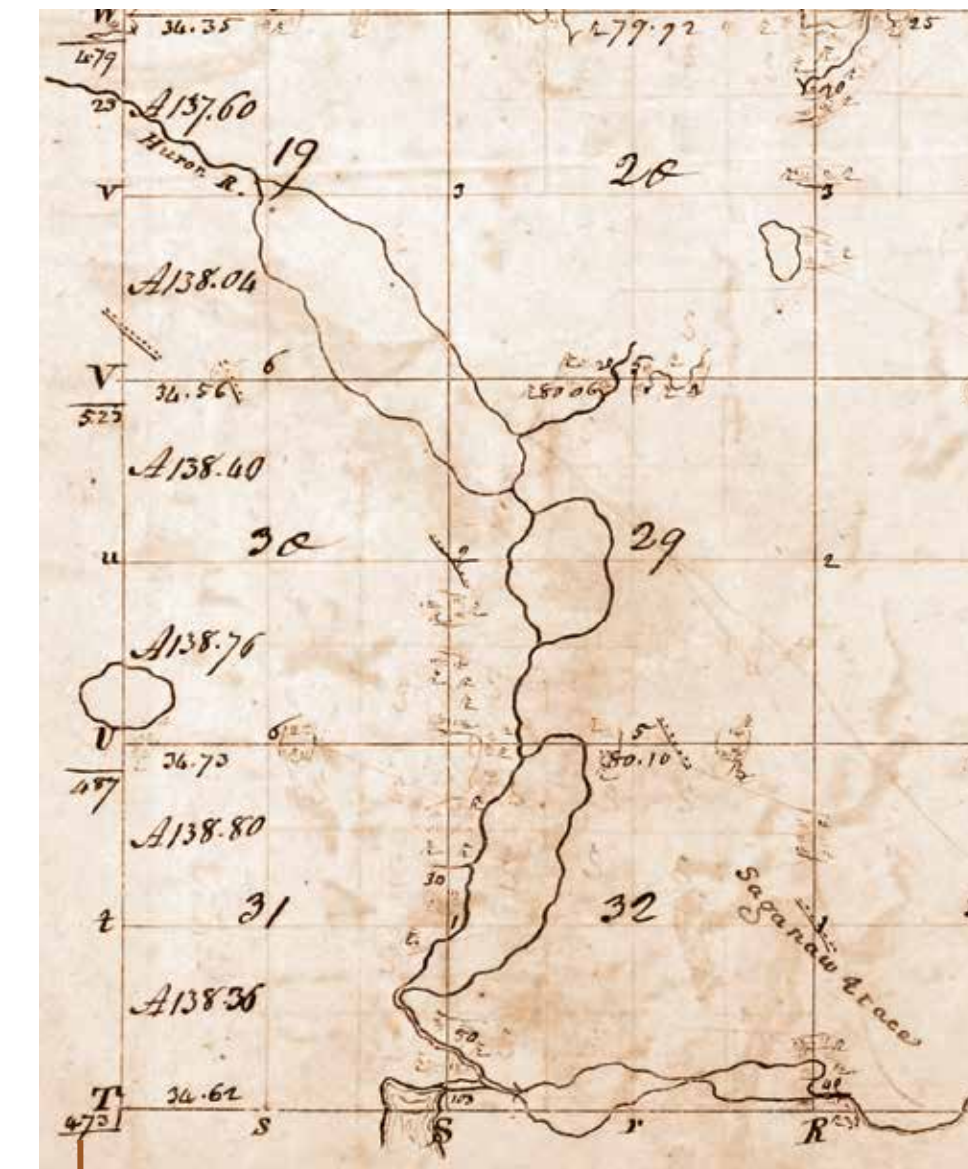


The Saginaw Trail was once a footpath

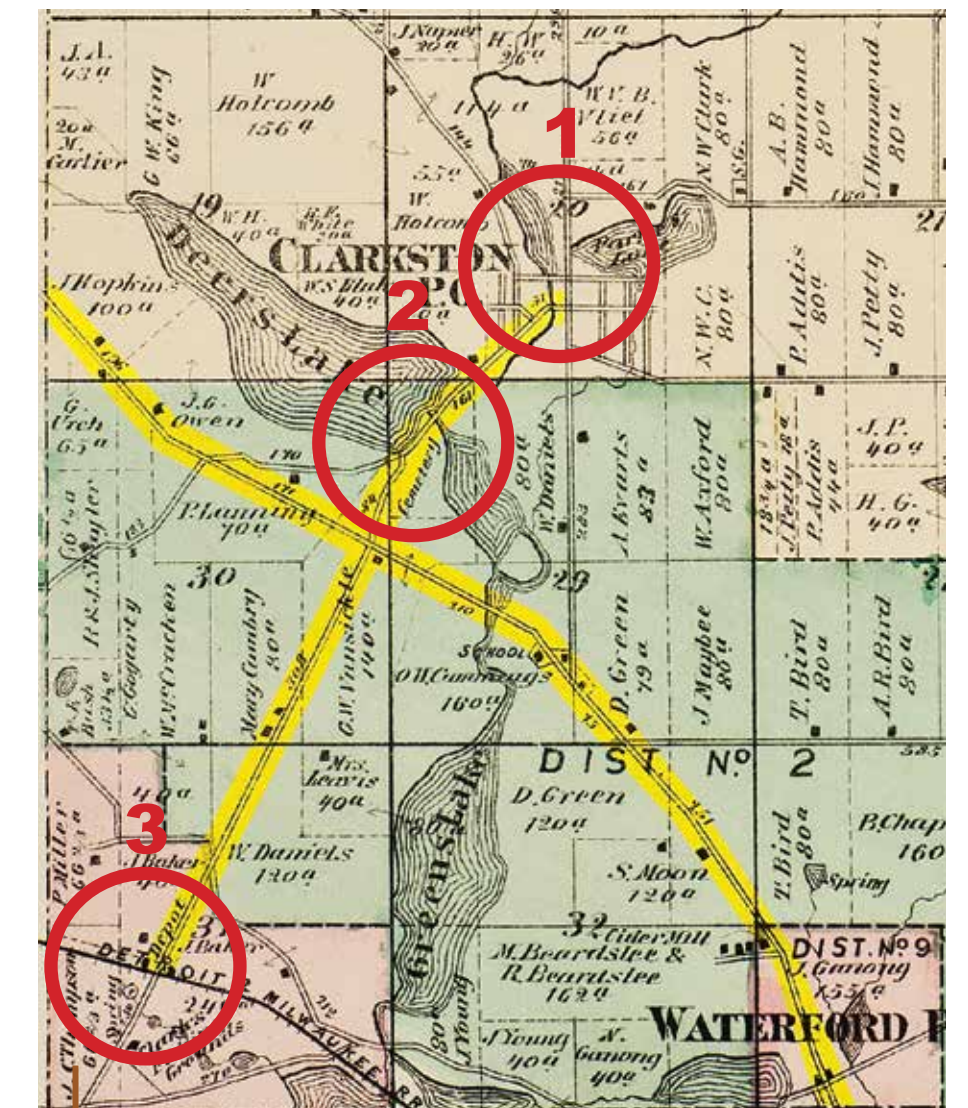
through this wooded region, used by Native Americans. In the 1820s, the trail became the first road in the region for travel from Pontiac through the southwest corner of Independence Township and on to Saginaw. It was vital to the settlement and growth of the area, and came to be called Dixie Highway. When the first railroad and depot were built nearby in the 1850s, Depot Road became the main link to Clarkston for mail, shipping and travelers. As automobiles became common in the early 1900s, paved roads gave drivers better access to the attractive businesses, homes and recreation of Independence Township.



The first settlers in the early 1800s struggled through marshy terrain with no roads. Illustration by James Russell. All images, other than the 1817 township survey map, are courtesy of the Clarkston Community Historical Society.



On this original 1817 township survey map, the only path is labeled "Saginaw Trace." That trail and road have been called the Saginaw Turnpike, Saginaw Trail, the Dixie, and Dixie Highway. Map courtesy of the Michigan Historical Museum.



On this portion of the 1872 township map, Dixie Highway and Depot Street are highlighted. At Circle 1 is downtown Clarkston, at circle 2 is the cemetery and the spring in the intersection of Depot and Deer Lake Roads, and at circle 3 is the train depot.



The "witch's-hat" style depot was built about 1900, and it replaced the original 1850s depot that burned down.



The Deer Lake Inn was one of the area's most popular resorts of the late 1800s and early 1900s. Tourists visited the inn by train, or by car via Dixie Highway.



In this 1909 postcard, the entry gate of Lakeview Cemetery faces Depot Road and Deer Lake. This photo was taken from inside the cemetery gates.



Bicycle travelers pause for refreshment at the spring in Depot Road in front of the cemetery gate, about 1900. The spring was a popular milestone for travelers in the area.

Your Pathway
To Independence