

“Town House” (1853-1955): History of the First Pittsfield Township Hall

by Marcia Ticknor

Location: North of Morgan Road at the end of Thomas Road.

The organizational town meeting of the Township of Pittsfield (then named Pitt) was held in the log cabin home of John Gilbert on the Chicago Road (Sauk Trail) now 6356 Michigan Avenue on April 8, 1834.

The 1835 annual meeting used the school near the McCracken Inn, which probably stood on the southwest corner of Campbell and Textile Roads. The next year they met at To(a)lman Brown's on the northwest corner of Platt and Ellsworth Roads. However, the annual meeting during the following year was held at the school variously described as "near Rufus McCracken's Inn", near Charles Woodward's, or as the schoolhouse in district three. The 1856-plat map indicates a school on the southwest corner of Campbell and Textile. This school was listed as District 3 and also as District 7 and eventually built on Morgan and called Town Hall School, District 3.



By 1845, the old minutes talk of the "expediency of building a house for township and school". However, the subject seems to have been dropped until 1851 when a committee was appointed to build a town hall in conjunction with the school district. The committee consisted of Horace Carpenter, David Depue, and Dr. Nathan Webb. At the annual meeting of 1852, the committee proposed that the township build a basement "for township purposes" under the new school. This idea was not approved by the meeting. A committee of Horace Carpenter, Nathan Webb, and Horace Welch was empowered to procure a "suitable house for the township" and fifty dollars was to be raised. In 1853 the same committee became the building committee and three hundred-fifty dollars was to be raised by taxes assessed on the property in the township. An Article of Agreement was signed June 2, 1853 for the building of a Town House.

This Town Hall located on Morgan Road at the End of Thomas Road was in use from 1853 until November 1955 when the new Township offices and fire department building was completed. The new building was located at 701 W. Ellsworth Road, corner of State Road. This building underwent at least two additions and renovations while being used as the Township Office. In January 1986 the police and fire department moved to 6227 W. Michigan Avenue.

Source: Information for this entry is derived from a report written in the 1980's by the First Pittsfield Township Historical Society. The Archives possess the 1853 article of agreement and photos of moving into the "new" buildings in 1955.

Article of Agreement: Agreement to Build the First Township Hall, 1853

This Article of Agreement made this 2nd day of June AD 1853 between John W. Smith and Alverson Drury and Thomas Smith of the first part and Horace Welch, Horace Carpenter, and Nathan Webb

building commissioners of the township of Pittsfield in the county of Washtenaw in the State of Michigan of the second part. Witnesseth that the aforesaid parties of the first part for and in consideration of the sum three hundred and fifty five dollars to be paid in the manner herein after specified do agree to furnish material and build and finish in a good substantial and workmanlike manner a Town House on lands purchased for this purpose in said township. Said house to be constructed of the size and in the manner herein after described to wit.

The length thereof to be thirty (30) feet and the breadth thereof to be twenty four (24). The foundation to be stone laid in lime mortar two feet high, and eighteen (18) inches thick one foot of the height whereof to be below the surface of the ground. The posts to be eleven feet & four inches in length. The walls to be oak plank fastened each to his fellow with two dowels and covered with inch boards nine inches wide, the joints to be covered with battens four inches wide. Eight windows of six lights, glazed with panes nine by thirteen inches each. There is to be an outer and inner door. The inside of the wall ceiled as high as the bottom of the windows and lathed and plastered above and overhead

There is to be a partition finished in like manner and with the inner door forming a lobby or entry way six feet by twenty four and also a principal room twenty four feet square. The floor is to be one and a fourth inch plank and matched. The room to be surrounded by movable benches and furnished with a substantial table four by six feet and in each corner of the room a shelf two feet long and fourteen inches wide, securely supported by brackets

The windows to be furnished with double shutters of a single panel each.

The roof to be covered with ash shingles laid four inches to the weather and finished with a proper cornice projecting at least one foot from the frieze.

The building is to be well painted outside and inside such color as the above named commissioners shall direct and furnished with a sufficient chimney.

All the work on said building is to be done in a good and workmanlike manner and the plastering to be finished on or before the first day of November next.

And the aforesaid commissioners do hereby agree to pay to the aforesaid John W. Smith, Alverson Drury, Thomas Smith, parties of the first part the sum of three hundred and fifty five dollars in the following manner to wit forty seven dollars to be paid by an order drawn on the Treasurer of the aforesaid township of Pittsfield payable to the said Smith, Drury and Smith on their order on demand, and the balance, say three hundred and eight dollars to be paid in like manner by orders drawn to treasurer aforesaid and made payable on the first day of February AD 1854.

And it is further mutually agreed by the aforesaid parties that if any doubt shall arise as to true meaning and intent of this article of agreement it shall be construed as the aforesaid commissioners shall understand it.

In witness whereof the parties have each mutually set their hands and seals this day of June in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and fifty three.

Signed & sealed in the presence of: John W. Smith, Alverson Drury, Thomas Smith of the first part
Horace Welch, N. Webb Commissioners