THE

NON-INDIGENOUS SETTLEMENT

OF OAKLAND COUNTY: *CONNECTIONS TO OUR PARKS*

New Beginnings

Non-Indigenous settlers began migrating to Oakland County during the early 1800's. The land these settlers came upon was covered in a variety of land types, such as **forests, prairies, and oak barrens.**



Oak barrens are a type of savanna dominated by oak trees.



Majority of settlers were originally from New York seeking affordable farmland.

Migration to Oakland County was slow at first due to the belief that it was mainly swampland and inadequate for farming. It soon was discovered that Oakland County had very good land for farming.

Early Towns

The first towns of Oakland County developed along **Indigenous trails** that had become early roads. Non-indigenous settlement also took place along **waterways** that had enough power to operate a mill.



Waterford Mill
Waterford, MI





James H. Davis House
Springfield Oaks County Park

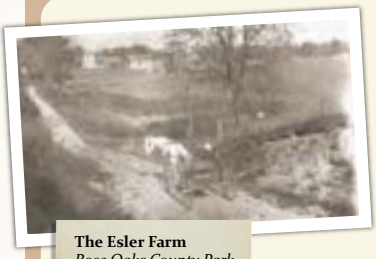
One early town that developed along a waterway is the town of **Davisburg**. The Davis family built a mill dam along the Shiawassee river in 1836 that jump-started the town of Davisburg. The historic Davis family farmhouse still stands today at **Springfield Oaks County Park**.



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The Esler Farm
Rose Oaks County Park

Abundant Acres

As towns grew along Indigenous trails and waterways, railroad development soon followed. These railroads made it easier for farmers to get their crops to market. By the mid 1800's, Oakland County had become a successful agricultural county.

All of our Oakland County Parks were once thriving farms, like the **Esler Farm** located at what is now **Rose Oaks County Park**.



Evidence of Oakland County's 19th century agricultural success can be seen in the historic **Ellis Barn** at **Springfield Oaks County Park,** constructed in **1884,** that still stands today.





The Ellis Barn
Springfield Oaks Park



Oakland County became a leader in the growing of apples and the raising of sheep.



Early 20th century buggy from Pontiac Buggy Company

Growth of Industry

By the late 1800's, Oakland County's economy was thriving due to its **mills, railroads, and sprawling farms**. Readily available resources had led to the growth of factories. For example, lumber had prompted the development of a large number of **carriage making businesses** in Pontiac.

OAKLAND COUNTY PARKS
OaklandCountyParks.com

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For more opportunities to learn about the non-Indigenous history of Oakland County and Oakland County Parks, scan the QR code: