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townships in the spotlight



Park Township

If you were not intentionally looking for it, you might drive right past the quaint and cozy little community of **Park Township** (St. Joseph Co.). Now quietly situated Mendon and Three Rivers, Park Township once thrived as a rapidly developing part of southwestern Michigan, booming with economic growth.

In the 1920s and '30s, there were two general stores, two gas stations and two garages. A woolen mill, a grist mill, a dam to power the grist mill, a saw mill, a mill race for steamboat travel, a mint oil company, a pickle station, a hardware store, a shoemaker's shop, eight school houses, pedestrian and bicycle paths along the side of the roads, and a stationhouse for train passengers and freight were just a few of the numerous highlights of the historical Park Township. Unfortunately, much of what once was has been destroyed by numerous fires that plagued the township during its early establishment. Nevertheless, Park Township has maintained its warm disposition as a welcome spot for weekend travelers.



Named after its park-like appearance, Park Township is known for its burr and white oak trees. Early settlers of the 1800s found deer and bears to be plentiful. Today, hunting is still one of the favorite seasonal sports of Park Township. Other main attractions are Park Township's plentiful therapeutic

waters with Portage River flowing along the eastern parts, Spring Run and Flowerfield Creeks flowing into the Rocky River along the west side, as well as Cotherman and Fishers Lake. If swimming, hiking, boating, fishing, camping, and outdoor enjoyment are your favorite things, then Park Township is a great place to visit.

The township was settled by innovators who saw potential for growth and development.

Past township resident Frank Dentler was an inventor of many things, including a rubber-tired sulky for horse racing (*pictured at right*), and the famous Dentler Bagging system, which was an asset to farmers and is still used today. Now, a new generation of settlers has caught a glimpse of the rich history and enormous business potential of Park Township, and has decided to blaze trails of building an innovative community once again.



Park Township is structuring its 2014 master plan to serve as the basis for township decisions regarding land use, land development proposals, public service improvements, preservation strategies, and zoning provisions. Supervisor **Joe Eichorn** and his fellow board members are avid supporters of enhancing the beauty, respect, and honor of Park Township's family-friendly community. The township's leadership focuses on promoting the continual development of attractive residential areas and supporting services. Ongoing efforts are to preserve and protect historical and scenic values, restore the natural beauty of the township, and maintain the continuous preservation of streams, valleys, and wooded areas for parks and open spaces. Conversations have included discussions of a community center, educational and training services, more recreation, and additional business/retail establishments being added to the historical Park Township in the very near future.

—Submitted by *Cymantha White*, Park Township planning commissioner, educator and freelance writer

