

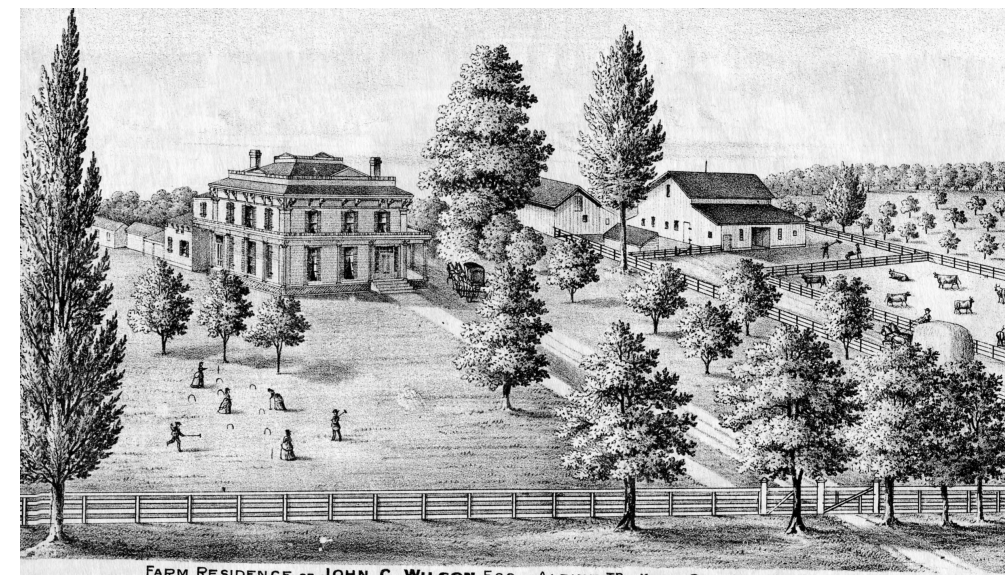
Brief History of Alpine Township

Alpine Township began as North Walker Township, and was first settled in 1839 by Mr. Solomon Wright II on property which is now Gracecoil Golf Course on Four Mile Road. Gradually other settlers appeared, including John Coffee, Richard Goodling, Abel Chase and John Platte. Some of the early surnames are still on the tax rolls of the Township. In 1847, the Township of Alpine became an independent entity, with logging and farming as the two major industries. During this time thirteen district schools were created as well as the Holy Trinity Catholic Church, which remains today. The existence of the Red Brick Tavern (est. 1870), now a private residence on Fruit Ridge Ave., remains as evidence of the historical period of toll roads and the stagecoach in Alpine Township.

With the tragedy of the Civil War years came a new demand for agriculture products from Alpine Township. During this time grain held the highest priority as a cash crop in Alpine Township. With the railroad as a major stimulus for continued growth in agriculture for Alpine, the 1880's welcomed an increase in farming which created various outputs ranging from dairy to orchard products as well as wheat.

The most substantial impact on the current cash crop, apples, occurred in 1914 with the invention of an apple storage facility by Henry Kraft. This invention forever changed the face of apple farming in Michigan and put Alpine Township on the map as a strong apple producing farm community. The "Ridge," a six-township agriculture area in Western Michigan including Alpine Township, today produces 60 percent of Michigan's apples for consumption.

In 1900, the population was 1,470. In 1930, it was 2,231. The Depression and World War II slowed the growth, which had only risen to 2,841 residents. By 1960 the



Soloman Wright built this stately home in 1837. It is a private residence on what is now Gracecoil Country Club on a 4 Mile Rd. west of Walker Ave. Engraving from an 1876 plat atlas.

population of Alpine Township nearly doubled to 4,744 persons; assisted by the development of the Westgate subdivision between 1957 and 1960 and the post-World War II "Baby Boom." In 1970, the Census gave the population as 8,163 persons. The area became more urbanized as greater needs for water, sewer, street lights, sidewalks, parks, recreation, police protection, fire protection and zoning became the issues dealt with by the Alpine Township Board. In 1990 the population was 9,863 and by 2000 it had reached 13,976 persons.

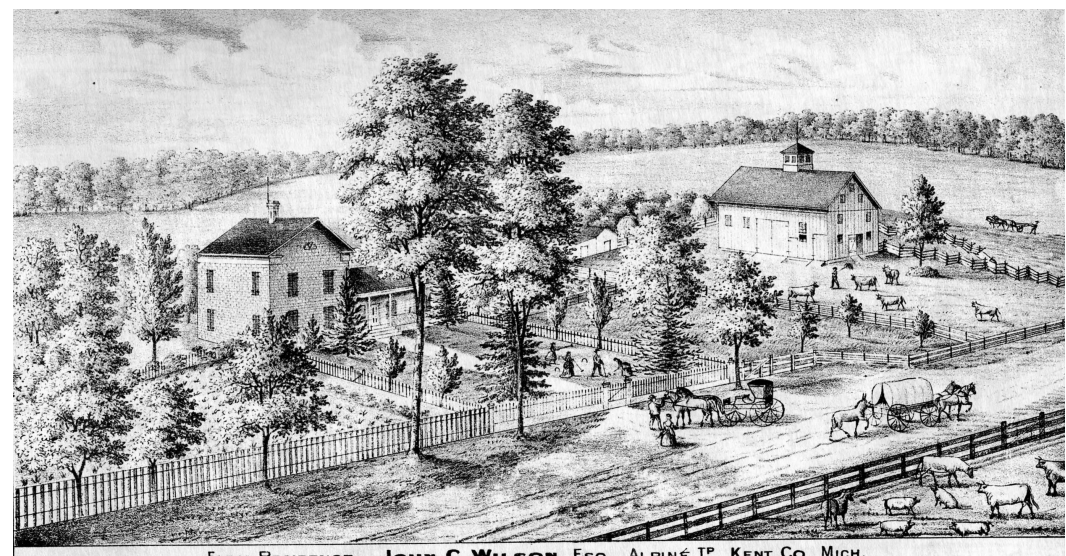
Today, most of Alpine's population is centered in Sections 25 and 36, which include Westgate, York Creek Apartments (1,764 dwelling units), York Creek Estates, condos and single family homes. A significant commercial area has been developed on Alpine Avenue, with stores such as Best Buy, Wal-Mart, Sam's Club, Menards, Art Van Furniture and numerous smaller businesses and restaurants. Industry is also an important tax base with Behr Industries, Commercial Tool & Die, Advanced Tooling, Rapid Engineering and other industries.

Plainfield Charter Township and Alpine have had a very close relationship since the 1960's when the water system was started and Alpine's residents were important customers in making it happen. That relationship has continued to today.

Alpine has a "425 agreement" with Plainfield which protects the water system investment and whereby Plainfield at one time, did grounds maintenance for Alpine and all of the burials in Alpine's cemeteries.

Sewer issues have monopolized many meetings since 1996, as the North Kent Sewer System (five communities) has become an Authority addressing many critical concerns facing it today.

Agriculture is still the principal industry, and most of it in orchards, vegetables, cash crops, dairy and bedding plants. Alpine adopted "sliding scale" farmland preservation zoning



This 1832 home is still in use as a private residence at the intersection of Stage Ave. and 6 Mile Rd. Engraving from an 1876 plat atlas.

In 1989, Today, new tools are being considered and researched to protect this very unique and valuable prime agricultural land.

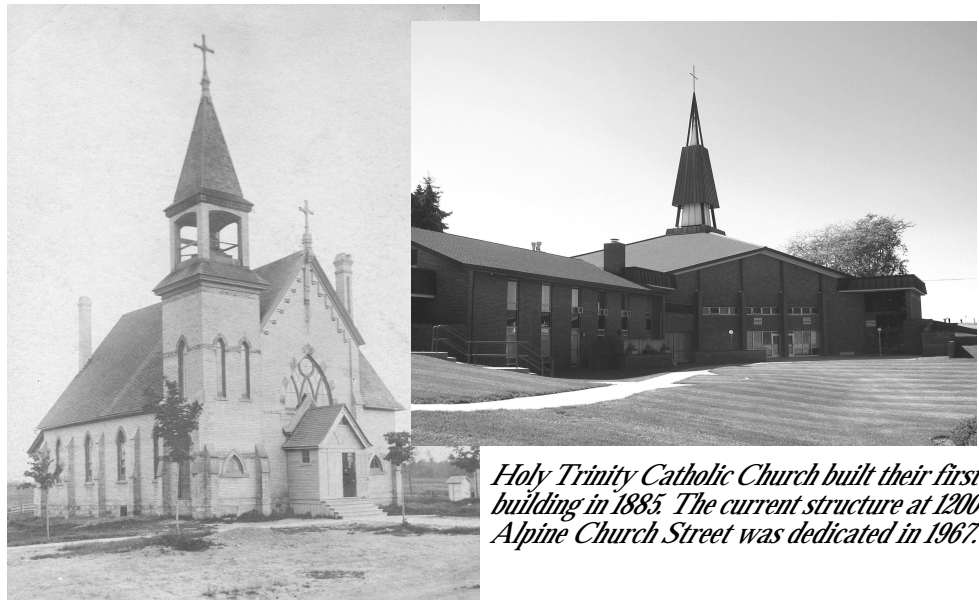
In 1979, Alpine became a "charter" township under the Charter Township Act, which was designed to make annexation more difficult. In 1996, Alpine de-chartered and again became a "general law" township. This was because of a loophole in the Charter Township Act, which made annexation very easy to accomplish, as the Township had no authority to provide input or to prevent it.

Alpine became a member of the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council in 1993 and is involved in regional planning for managed growth in the area. Alpine Township recognizes that it is not an island, and it must work together with other units of government and agencies to address the additional people expected in the metropolitan area over the next ten to twenty years. In that regard, Alpine Township has begun to prepare for development through the creation of specific master plans which focus on smart growth solutions and agricultural preservation.

For Alpine Township's 150th anniversary, David Wier a local historian and teacher, was commissioned by the Alpine Township Board of Trustees to research and write the history of the Township. The Alpine Historical Commission was also instrumental in assisting with research, photos, and the coordination of the publishing.

The book, "150 Years of Alpine Township History", by author David Wier, is available at the Alpine Township Offices.

Author Mary Rasch Alt in her book "Images of America: Alpine Township" uses early photographs to provide a pictorial history of Alpine Township. The book, published in Alpine Township's 160th anniversary year, is available at the Alpine Branch Library.



Holy Trinity Catholic Church built their first building in 1885. The current structure at 2000 Alpine Church Street was dedicated in 1967.

Public Buildings

Alpine Township Center (Offices and Hall)
The Alpine Township offices are located at 5255 Alpine Ave. at the northwest corner of Alpine Ave. and 6 Mile Rd. The building, a former restaurant, was purchased by the Township in 1996 and renovated.

Kent District Library-Alpine Township Branch
The Alpine Township Branch of the Kent District Library is located within the Township Center.

Alpine Township Fire Stations
Alpine Township provides fire fighting and emergency medical services from three locations. Fire Station No. 1, the main fire station, is located at Alpine Ave. and Alpine Church St. This site previously included the Township offices/hall from 1961 to 1996. Fire Station No. 2 is located on 7 Mile Rd. just east of Fruit Ridge Ave. Fire Station No. 3 is located on 9 Mile Rd. between the railroad tracks and Alpine Ave.

Alpine Township Historical Museum
The restored 1860 Township Hall at 7 Mile Rd. and Walker Ave. serves as the historical museum. This building served as the Township Hall from 1860 to 1961 and for a short time in the 1870's also served as a Grange Hall.

Alpine Township Community Center and Historical Commission Office
The building at 7 Mile Rd. and Baumhoff Ave. now houses the Historical Commission offices and genealogical collection. The other half of the building is used for general community and senior use. This building housed the Alpine Township branch library from 1976 to 1996 and was Wheeler School prior to that.

Schools

Within the Kenowa Hills School District portion, there is Kenowa Hills High School on Hendershot Ave. north of 4 Mile Rd.; Kenowa Hills Middle School located to the east across Hendershot Ave.; and Alpine Elementary School located at the southeast corner of Alpine Church St. and Baumhoff Ave.

The Sparta School District contains the Englishville Alternative High School on Vinton Ave. south of 10 Mile Rd.

Within the Comstock Park School District, there is Greenridge Elementary on Oakridge Ave. and Stony Creek Elementary in the Westgate subdivision on Lantern St. The North Kent Alternative High School is located on Rusche Dr. and 6 Mile Rd. Comstock Park High School is located in Plainfield Township on Division Ave. north of 6 Mile Rd. directly across from Alpine Township.

Holy Trinity Catholic School, which provides preschool through 8th grade education, is located on Alpine Church St. and Cordes Ave.

Lakes

Cranberry LakeSections 6 and 7
Mead Lake (formerly New Boston Lake)Section 12
Hopkins Lake (formerly Mud Lake)Sections 28 and 29
Stevenson LakeSection 10
Baumhoff Lake (formerly Downer's or Baumhoff Pond)Sec. 10

Recreational Facilities

Alpine Township Sports Complex
Alpine Township Sports Complex is located at the southeast corner of Alpine Church St. and Baumhoff Ave. This is a 20-acre recreation area with three softball fields, several soccer fields, volleyball and tennis courts, a half-mile long senior citizen walking track and concession stand/restroom area. An adult softball and youth soccer program is offered annually.

Westgate Neighborhood Park
Located on Westshire Dr, this township park offers playground equipment, tennis courts, and restrooms on approximately seven acres.

Wahlfield County Park
This 265-acre Kent County park is located at the northwest corner of Alpine Ave. and 8 Mile Rd., and offers hiking and walking nature trails, playground equipment, two picnic pavilions, restrooms, cross country ski trails and winter sports.

Dwight Lydell County Park
This 39-acre Kent County park off West River Dr. and Lamoreaux Dr. offers its patrons tennis courts, playground equipment, ball diamonds, fishing, picnic facilities, walking trails, restrooms, basketball hoops and winter sports.

Alpine Golf Course

This 18-hole private golf course and club house is located at the northwest corner of Alpine Ave. and 7 Mile Rd., contains 120 acres and is open to the public.

Gracecoil Country Club

This 36-hole private golf course and club house is located on 4 Mile Rd. between Peach Ridge Ave. and Walker Ave., contains 227 acres and is open to the public. The residence on the property was built in 1837 by Soloman Wright.



Trinity Congregational Church built the building above in 1872. The current structure at 2723 4 Mile Road was dedicated in 1967.

Cemeteries

Englishville Cemetery is located on Vinton Ave. just north of 9 Mile Rd. This Alpine Township cemetery was owned by a cemetery association up until 1999. The property was a private burial ground until the Alpine Burial Society No. 1 was formed in 1857.

Pine Grove Cemetery (formerly Alpine Cemetery) is located on Vinton Ave. just north of 7 Mile Rd. It was established in 1837 when Alpine Village was founded. In 1850, John Colton conveyed the cemetery to the newly formed Alpine Township. The size of the cemetery increased in 1894, 1921, 1961, and 1970. The earliest graves are dated 1842. An October 1940 fire destroyed all the cemetery records.

Saur-Cross Cemetery (also known as Cross Cemetery, Saur Cemetery, Saur-Cross Cemetery, Old Cemetery) is located on 7 Mile Rd. east of Fruit Ridge Ave. next to Fire Station No. 2. The exact boundaries of this inactive cemetery are not known.

Alpine Center Cemetery (also known as Alpine Town Hall Cemetery, Old Alpine Cemetery) is located on 7 Mile Rd. just west of Walker Ave. next to the Alpine Township Historical Museum, the former Township Hall. Edward Wheeler provided the land for the cemetery in 1854.

Holy Trinity Cemetery is located on Alpine Church St. at its intersection with Cordes Ave. It is a private cemetery associated with the Holy Trinity Catholic Church across the road, both of which were previously located at the intersection of 5 Mile Rd. and Baumhoff Ave. until approximately 1900.

1850 State of Michigan Agricultural Census

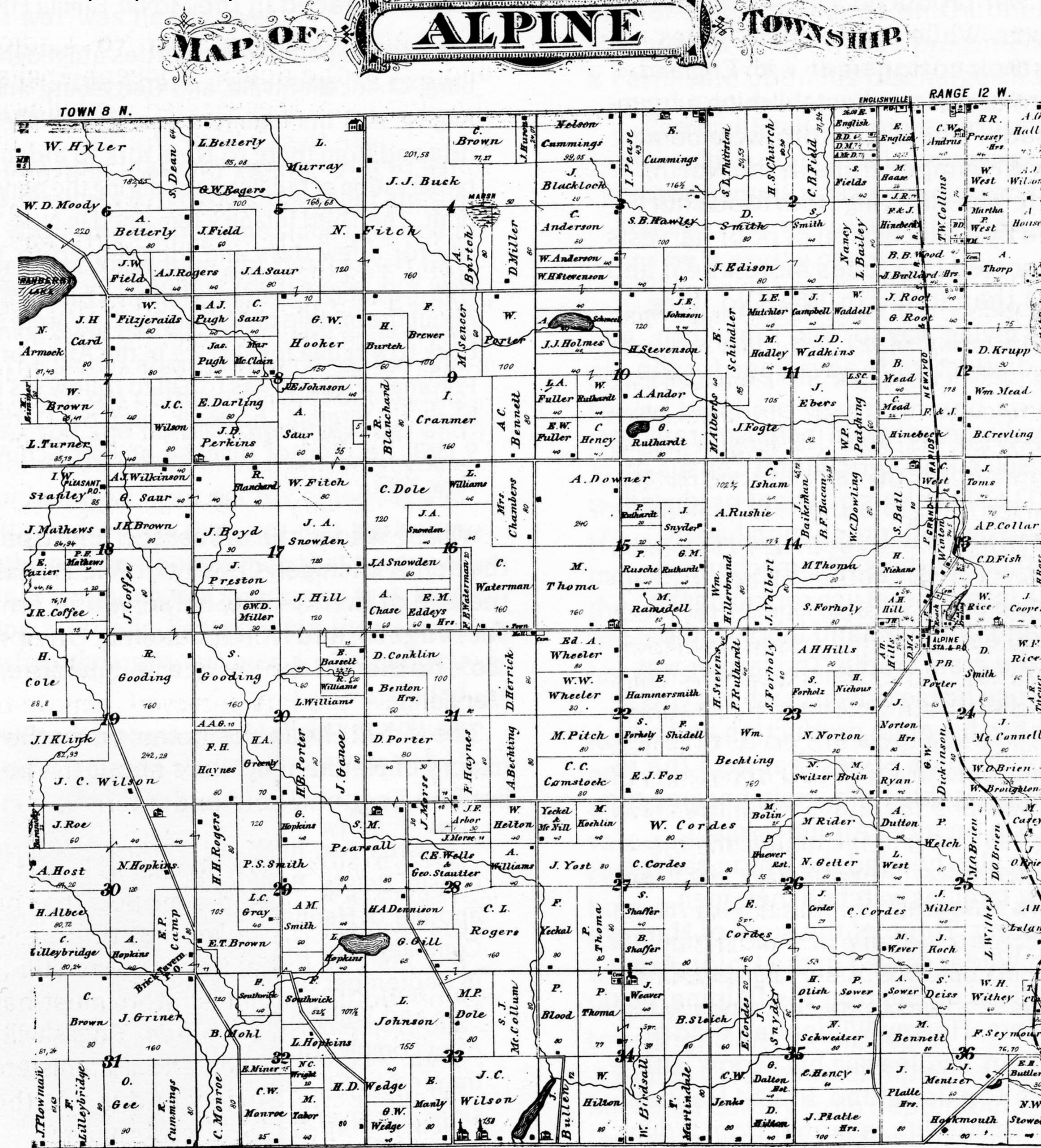
In 1850, there were 36 families involved in agriculture with 5,010 acres of farmland. The average farm size was 140 acres with only a third of it improved land. Using the Township's present-day boundaries (which are almost the same as they were in 1850), the percentage of the Township in farmland in 1850 was 22%. In 2002, based on remote sensing imagery analyzed by Michigan State University, it was approximately 54%.

In 1850, every farm grew potatoes and had at least one milking cow; most had two. The prominent agricultural products in 1850 were wheat, Indian corn, oats, Irish potatoes, hay, wool, butter, and maple sugar and slaughtered livestock. Orchards were only beginning in 1850 as forested lands had not yet been converted into mature fruit trees. The total value of orchard products in 1850 covering the four farms that listed orchards was \$78.00 (\$2,077 in 2006 dollars using the Consumer Price Index to compute relative value).

Population

1850 - 620 persons ("150 Years of Alpine Twp. History")
2000 - 13,976 persons (U.S. Census Bureau)

1876 Plat Map of Alpine Township



1876 Plat Map from the "Illustrated Historical Atlas of the Counties of Ottawa and Kent" by H. Belden & Company, 1876.

Historical Settlements & Post Offices

Alpine Station (a.k.a. Coltonville, Alpine Village) was located at the intersection of 7 Mile Rd. and Vinton Ave. This settlement grew along the Grand Rapids, Newaygo & Lake Shore Railroad (now Marquette Rail) and contained a railroad station, store and hotel. The Alpine Post Office operated here from 1862 to 1937.

Englishville was located on 10 Mile Rd. west of Vinton Ave., partially in Sparta Township. It developed along the toll road from Grand Rapids and later the railroad and contained 200 people in 1880. In the past, it contained several stores, a hotel, a Baptist church, a shingle mill, a school and the Englishville Post Office which operated from 1856 to 1916.

Ballards Corners (a.k.a. Ballards) was located at the intersection of 10 Mile Rd. and Sparta Ave., partially in Sparta Township. It had a general store, church, school and Ballards

Post Office which operated between 1889 and 1903.

Wilder Center was located at the intersection of 4 Mile Rd. and Walker Ave., partially in Walker Township. Over the years this settlement has had a general store, gas station, wheel shop and a welding shop.

Peach Ridge Station was located at the intersection of 10 Mile Rd. and Fruit Ridge Ave.; mostly in Sparta Township. Currently there are several orchard-related businesses at this intersection.

Mill Creek became what is now known as Comstock Park. Most of the area known as Comstock Park lies within Plainfield Township, but a small portion lies in Alpine Township's Section 36. Mill Creek Post Office was operational from 1848 to 1906.

Pleasant Post Office: Stage Ave. south of 8 Mile Rd., operated 1847 to 1889.

Brick Tavern Post Office: Fruit Ridge Ave. north of 5 Mile Rd., operated 1874 to 1878.

Ula Post Office: 8 Mile Rd. and Peach Ridge Ave., operated 1886 to 1902.

Map Layout & Design Information
Map layout and design by RFGIS staff using information provided by Alpine Township staff and the Alpine Historical Commission.

1847-2007
160th Anniversary
Street Map

Original Alpine Township Plat
drawing by Patrick Brechtling

ALPINE TOWNSHIP EST. 1837

ALPINE TOWNSHIP

Welcome to Alpine Township!

Alpine Township Board of Trustees
Marta Brechtling, Supervisor
Jean Wahlfeld, Clerk
Janice Brechtling, Treasurer
Ron Cordes, Trustee
Jim May, Trustee
Sharon Steffens, Trustee
Ted Wallace, Trustee

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