

BOYCE WOODS NATURE PRESERVE

Family History

Boyce is a name found among the pages of the early history of Muskegon. Early reports found Jonathan Boyce in Muskegon in 1845. Some time before 1852 he returned to his home in England and came back to Muskegon with his wife Ann. Traveling with them was Jonathan's oldest brother, Edward, his wife, Mary Ann and their four young children, George, 6 or 7 years old, William and two youngsters who died the first winter in Muskegon because of the harsh conditions. Jonathan was in the lumber industry, logging and milling and shipping his timber on his schooners out of Grand Haven to Chicago. For awhile Edward was in the lumber business with his brother, Jonathan, and then he became a butcher and owned a meat market on Ottawa Street

George was a successful businessman, having invested in the lumber business with his father, Edward, and his Uncle, Jonathan, and he also owned a wholesale meat market on Pine Street. George married and had six children: Edward, Cora, Mabel, MaryAnn, Georgie and William. He had loaned some money to a friend, but instead of being paid back in cash, an almost 80 acre piece of property was given in payment. The family always referred to this as the "M-20 Property".

In 1916 George gave it to his son, William, who later sold it to his brother, Edward. On the property along M-20 highway there was a house, garage and additions were made as well as several buildings for a "junk yard" business. Edward passed away at the age of 65 in 1948.

The property was inherited by Edward's nephews, the four sons of William, his brother, and it was then divided so each nephew received a portion of the land.

The oldest son of William and grandson of George, George Gaylor, was one of the beneficiaries of a portion of the 80 acres. George Gaylor often reminisced about good times with his Uncle Ed at the property, and enjoyed Bear Creek and the beautiful natural setting of the land. He was a man who loved being in the out-of-doors, photographing the tiny spring flowers and the brilliant colors of fall.

Both George Gaylor and his wife, Elaine (Brink) grew up in North Muskegon and graduated from North Muskegon High School in 1936 and 1940 respectively. Since 1951 they made their home in Kalamazoo with their two children, often returning to Muskegon to visit family and friends. George Gaylor passed away in 2003 and Elaine passed in 2011.

It is with great honor for the Family of George Gaylor and Elaine Brink Boyce to Gift this 27 acre parcel of land to the Muskegon Conservation District. This land is located on Roberts Road near the corner of M-120. It is heavily wooded with Bear Creek running through the property and an abundance of many wildflowers, wildlife, birds and all of nature in its four-season glory.

It is the hope of the George Gaylor Boyce Family that trails will be developed and that the public will be able to hike, photograph, explore the untouched land, to relax and find the beauty and peace that is waiting to be experienced.