

7. Voted, That each individual shall be obligated to settle the lot which he takes by the first of October, 1837, and in case of delinquency in this respect both the village and the farm lot be sold to some other person, in which case the purchase money shall be refunded by the agents of the colony, with interest from the time it was paid.

8. Voted, That each of the settlers, when he unites with the colony, shall advance \$212.50, for which he shall be entitled to a farm lot of 160 acres and a village lot of ten acres, to be assigned to him according to the rules of the colony. . . .

9. Voted, That each settler, when he receives a deed of his village lot, shall give a note to the agents of the colony, payable in two years from the first of September, 1836, for the sum of twenty-five dollars, and this sum shall be appropriated towards defraying the expenses of building a meeting-house for the use of the colony.⁷

The constitution also contained a drawing showing how the village should be platted.

Three agents were delegated to locate and purchase government land at \$1.25 an acre in Michigan. On April 2, 1836, Simeon S. Church and William G. Henry started by stage for Michigan, joined in western New York by Wait J. Squier. After reaching Detroit they continued by stage to the United States land office at Kalamazoo. Prior meetings in Vermont had established certain criteria for choosing a contiguous area for the colony. The site was to have good water, fertile soil, woods, and prairie. Location on or near a waterfall, access to navigable water, close to another town, and proximity to a canal or railroad were also to be important selection factors.

Extensive areas in Kalamazoo, Barry, and Ionia County were explored, but none met their requirements. By 1836 most of the good quality land had been purchased by the large influx of settlers and speculators. But Church met a surveyor who knew of a tract of land located at T 3 N and R 6 W in Eaton County. Checking the plat at the land office in Kalamazoo showed only one parcel had been purchased in the township. After exploring the site, the committee returned to Kalamazoo and purchased the land, on May 27, 1836. There were two primary reasons for choosing the Vermontville site: (1) the large contiguous area of available land, and (2) the anticipated Clinton and Kalamazoo Canal which had been surveyed along the Thornapple River Valley less than a mile from where the village was to be situated. The rolling topography, the heavy forestations of beech and maple, the abundant fauna, and other characteristics of the land resembled

7. *Ibid.*, 16-17.

their home region. However, the site failed to meet many of the original requirements. There was no waterfall, the land was all virgin forest, there was no navigable waterway and the canal never was built, no roads went into the area, and the nearest villages, Charlotte and Hastings, were fourteen miles distant, with the trip to the nearest gristmill at Marshall a long twenty-eight miles.

In the south half of section 21, the village was platted one mile and forty rods east to west by a half mile north to south. According to the original plan, there were thirty-six lots, each twenty rods wide and eighty rods in length and comprising ten acres each (Fig. 2). The lots fronted on the east-west street which later became the Charlotte to Hastings road. The north-south street, also dividing the village in half, became the Marshall to Ionia road. One acre taken from each of the four center lots formed the public square. This land was set aside for a school, a church, and meeting house.

The farms were situated around the village. Figure 2 shows that the agents purchased 6,400 acres, slightly more than the original amount suggested. Moreover, almost seven square miles of additional land were purchased by some of the original colonists in other sections adjoining the colony purchase.

By the date of the purchase some colonists had arrived and helped in platting the village. Those present chose their village lots and immediately went to work felling trees, building log houses and log shanties, and clearing a few acres for crops. Potatoes and corn were planted among the stumps and logs. A two-story cabin called the colony house was erected to provide shelter as the newly arrived settlers built their own log cabins.⁸ The majority of the settlers arrived in 1837-1838. Depending on weather conditions and mode of transportation, the trip from Vermont to Vermontville took three to five weeks. Those who travelled the entire route by wagon usually crossed into Canada at Lewiston, New York, and re-entered the United States at Detroit.⁹

Approximately half of the original signers never moved to Vermontville. On October 3, 1836, as their articles of association required, the colonists met at the colony house to distribute the 160 acre farms by lot, a characteristic custom among town proprietors in seventeenth-century New England. The owners of the best farm lots, by location,

8. Edward W. Barber, "The Vermontville Colony: Its Genesis and History. With Personal Sketches of the Colonists," *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections*, 28 (1897), 212.

9. Taber, 315.