

Pewamo

Founding of Pewamo

While there were a few European people living in the area as early as the 1830's, the town of Pewamo was not established until July 25, 1859. Robert Higham, chief engineer of the Detroit and Milwaukee Railroad, selected this site for a railroad station.

One of the owners of the land was J. C. Blanchard. Mr. Blanchard remembered an Indian chief he once hunted with along the Grand River named Pewamo. He suggested the new town be named Pewamo for him.

Growth of the Town

During the early days the village saw slow growth due to poor roads in the area. As roads improved the town began to grow.

Along with a train depot, over the years the town had restaurants, bars, a hotel, a bank, a grain elevator, a grocery, a hardware, a drugstore, a dress shop, a dance hall, a gas station, a creamery, a car dealer, a canning factory, a boat factory, a blacksmith, an apple drier, a furniture store, and other businesses.

The first churches in town were protestant. The Methodists built the building on West Main Street in 1913 after the previous one was destroyed by fire.

One interesting business was the Cotter store. James T. Cotter along with Nick Hauck started a peddler business in 1884.



Pewamo Train Depot

Mr. Cotter would drive his horse and wagon through the rural areas around Pewamo. As he travelled, he would barter for farm produce in exchange for other groceries and dry goods. Along the way he would hand out free pieces of candy to farm children.



Early 1900's

In the 1920's cars became popular and people wanted good roads to drive on. M-21 was built in 1920 with Pewamo on the route between Port Huron and Holland. Pewamo became a busy place with lots of traffic running through it. In 1933 a new by-pass was built so traffic no longer went through town.



Pewamo celebrated its 150th birthday in 2009.

Pewamo Public School

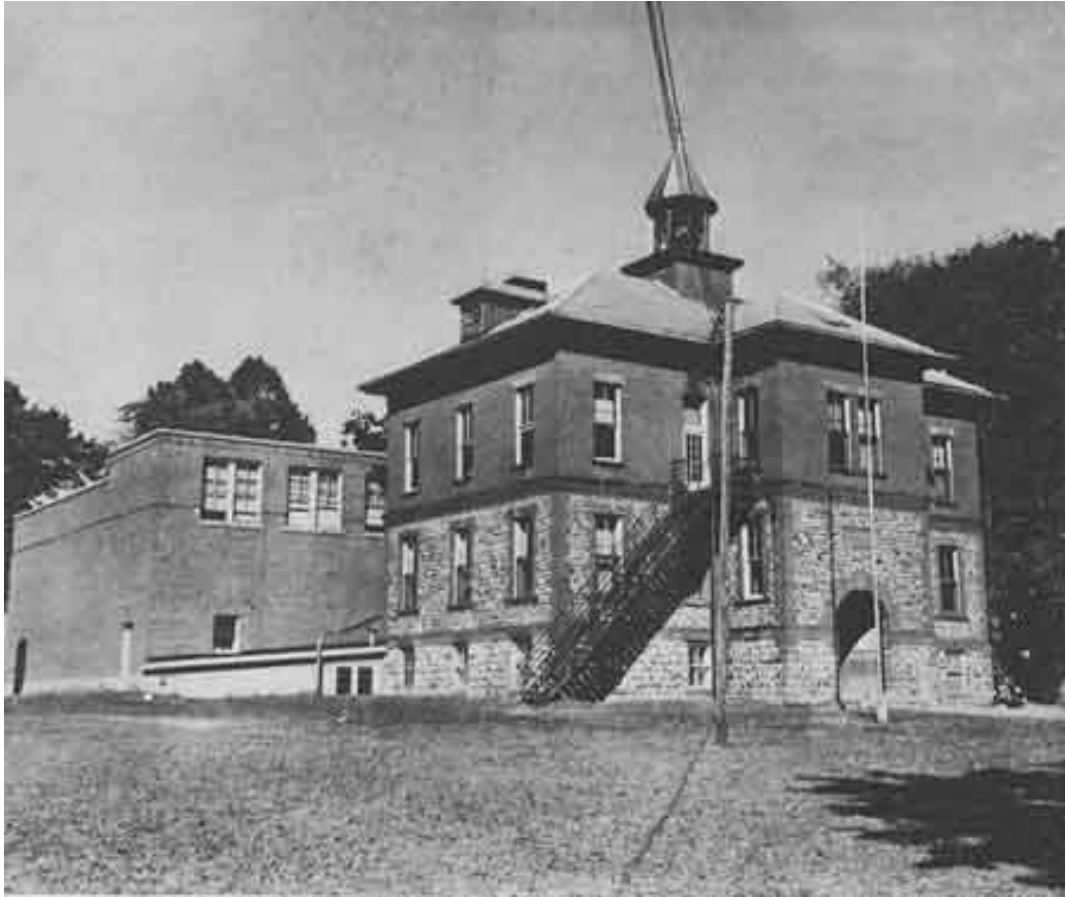
Pewamo 1959

A public school was started in Pewamo shortly after the town's founding. By 1872 a brick school had been built on Jefferson Street on the westside of town. By the 1880's it had added high school classes. The first high school graduating class was 1888.



Pewamo School 1928

In 1941 six neighboring one-room schools joined Pewamo and formed the Pewamo Agricultural School. The gymnasium and additional rooms were added on at that time.



Pewamo Agricultural School 1961

Pewamo voted to join with Westphalia to form the Pewamo-Westphalia Community Schools in 1959. The last graduating class from Pewamo was in 1961.

In 1961 the old school building was torn down except for the gymnasium and replaced with a four-room elementary building. That building has been added onto several times including replacing the old gymnasium with a new one in 1991.

St. Joseph Church and School

Beginning about 1900 Pewamo was visited by Father Landers of Hubbardston who would conduct mass in the homes of Catholic families. Since there were enough Catholic families it was decided to build a church here.

The church property was purchased from George and Nancy Dutton. The church cornerstone was laid in 1903 and the church was built for \$12,000. The first mass was held on Christmas of 1903.

The next projects were to build a rectory and establishment of a cemetery in 1906.

Catholic school classes were started and held in the Hunt home until a school was built in 1913. The old school building was torn down and replaced by a new building in 1959. It was later enlarged.

A convent was added in 1942 and the church enlarged in 1951.



Old St. Joseph School



St. Joseph Church

Note: Railroad Street during the early days is now called Main Street. State Street was the original main street in Pewamo.

Additional Sources:

Centennial of the Village of Pewamo (book)

[A Visit to Pewamo](#)

[Pewamo High School Yearbooks and Graduate List](#)

[A Visit to St. Joseph Church](#)