

HAYES TOWNSHIP GROWTH FROM 1960-2020

TOWNSHIP		OTSEGO COUNTY
1960	138	7,545
1970	416	10,422
1980	870	14,993
1990	1,437	17,957
2000	2,385	23,301
2010	2,619	24,164
2020	2,725	25,091

As you can determine from the above census figures, Hayes Township doubled its population during the 1970's by 454 persons. Between 1980 and 1990, another 567 people moved into the township. During the 1990's, another 948 people called Hayes Township their home.

As we reflect and remember the 60's, there was great change in our world; the migration began to the north and the concept of safe environments and the draw of all that nature provides for us. Also, it must be noted that along with the increased numbers in our county and the number of seasonal homes that were built, our tourism base grew by the weekend activities from the "visitors". During this time, snowmobiles became popular, and Gaylord was the best place to enjoy this outdoor activity due to the large amount of snowfall in the area.

When Otsego County was formed, timber was king after the civil war and into the early 1900's. Also, during this timeframe, the Homestead Act provided for 160 acres of land to those who would move north. During the 1920-1930 period, the county lost eight percent of its population every ten years. During the 1940's, the country went to war which certainly had a lasting effect on Otsego County. The 50's saw only limited growth but the 1960's began the new wave of change.

Standard Products, a company based in Ohio, decided that their automotive products could be made in Gaylord, Michigan. Through the years, this company brought stability and growth not only for residents but also for the needed workforce that moved here, established their homes and raised their children. During the best of times, the employment force was nearly 400 people. Both men and women were employed and were given a living wage with benefits. Many farm wives went to work, which allowed the farmers to continue with farming. Today, Cooper-Standard is still in our community and provides stability for hundreds of employees.

Gaylord is very fortunate to have two expressway entrances into our town. It has been a real advantage and we have the leaders of that time to thank for the foresight and vision. It truly has made a lasting

contribution. With the advent of I-75, travel to the North was much easier and people wanted to be in the north enjoying what was offered. Even though the building of the expressway did cause changes to the properties adjacent to the design, it has become a boom in all parts of northern Michigan.

Because of the I-75 corridor, another large company came to Gaylord and provided employment to generations of workers. In 1965 US Plywood opened its doors and offered jobs and greater security to many families of this region. It was a devastating blow when Georgia Pacific closed its doors in 2006.

Another huge factor in the growth in Gaylord and the county was the Antrim gas/oil boom. Apparently, large areas were sitting on this natural resource, and the time was right to drill the thousands of wells to bring the gas/oil to the surface and sell to companies. These resources created a whole new industry and provided more people employment and stability for improved living standards in the north. While we still have operating wells in the area, the boom is over and many of the workers moved to new exploration areas in the country.

With the added populations through the years, the town grew in numbers and the main street stores were growing. Over the last years during the 2000's, the big box stores have arrived, and more people have visited Gaylord for shopping and other advantages we offer in our town and county. Also, due to a change in people's lifestyles, the Golf Mecca became a reality, and the tourism dollars had a new avenue to provide.

Hayes Township experienced the growth it has because of all the factors listed above. Lake Arrowhead, Wilderness Valley, and Manuka Lake were all developed with a mix of permanent residents and seasonal residents. Jack Morris, a land developer, also divided many sections of land into ten-acre tracts that became very popular in the township. Another factor for growth was the modular home industry that made building the weekend or future retirement home a quick affordable reality.

With growth, came the demands of services that were necessary for the quality of life. The hospital had to grow to meet the demand, the schools had to expand to meet the education of many more students, and the communities had to provide stores to sell needed products for everyday life. It is important to remember the leaders who had the vision to reinvent Gaylord with the Alpine theme and the Alpenfest celebration each July. Also, with growth, we experienced the need to continue to offer employment, housing, and keep evolving in order to meet the demands of the growing area.

However, the trend slowed from 2000 to 2020 as the growth was much less with only 340 people moving into the township during the last twenty years. You can also see the slow increases in the county population during this time. We are maintaining what we have and facing new challenges.

I have lived in Hayes Township since 1968 and have witnessed the changes noted in this article. The township is a rural township, a bedroom community, that has been able to grow to accommodate the needs of its residents and seasonal families. Opportunities for a country style of living and the enjoyment of nature, lakes, forests, and resources have evolved and will continue to accommodate the future needs.

Submitted by Mary Sanders