PROJECT SCROLL RESEARCH NOTE 2026-29

Paw Paw's village charter of 1859: Act No. 112, repealed in 1863, and the charter of 1867

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SUMMARY

The village of Paw Paw, seat of Van Buren County, is usually given 1837 (the year it became the county seat) or 1867 as its date. The session laws show a charter older than either. Act No. 112 of 1859, "An act to incorporate the village of Paw Paw," approved 11 February 1859, constituted a tract "situate in the township of Lafayette, in the county of Van Buren" a town corporate "by the name of the village of Paw Paw." Act No. 55 of 1863, approved 6 March 1863, repealed it: "An act to repeal act number one hundred and twelve, of the session laws of eighteen hundred and fifty-nine, being 'an act to incorporate the village of Paw Paw.'" Act No. 519 of 1867, approved 28 March 1867, incorporated the village again, this time in "the township of Paw Paw," renamed from Lafayette that month. The charter of 1867 is the second, not the first.

THE RECORD

1. ***Laws of Michigan*, session of 1859, Act No. 112, p. 292**

> *"[No. 112.] AN ACT to incorporate the village of Paw Paw. Section 1. The People of the State of Michigan enact, That all that tract of country situate in the township of Lafayette, in the county of Van Buren … be and the same is hereby constituted a town corporate by the name of the village of Paw Paw." Approved February 11, 1859.*

Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/publicandlocala06michgoog)

2. ***Acts of the Legislature of the State of Michigan*, regular session of 1863, Act No. 55**

> *"AN ACT to repeal act number one hundred and twelve, of the session laws of eighteen hundred and fifty-nine, being 'an act to incorporate the village of Paw Paw.'... be and the same is hereby repealed. Sec. 2. This act shall take immediate effect. Approved March 6, 1863."*

Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/actslegislature13michgoog)

3. ***Local Acts of the Legislature of the State of Michigan*, 1867, Act No. 519, pp. 1115–1129**

> *"[No. 519.] AN ACT to incorporate the village of Paw Paw. Section 1. The People of the State of Michigan enact, That all that tract of country situated in the township of Paw Paw, in the county of Van Buren ..." Approved March 28, 1867.*

Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/publicandlocala06unkngoog)

WHAT IT CHANGES

Paw Paw's village incorporation dates from 1859, not 1867 or 1837; the charter of 1859 stood for four years and was repealed in 1863, and the village was incorporated afresh in 1867.

LIMITS

The acts do not say why the charter of 1859 was repealed. The page of the 1859 act is taken from the printed volume's running heads in the text.

WHAT WE SEARCHED BEFORE CALLING IT NEW

Internet Archive full text for “incorporate the village of Paw Paw” and for the repealing act; the 1880 history of Berrien and Van Buren counties; Wikipedia; web searches (October 2026). One power agency’s website gives 1859 without a source.

Our standard for calling a finding new is set out in How we research (projectscroll.com/how-we-research/), and how we weigh each kind of record in Scrollsigns (projectscroll.com/scrollsigns/).

“New” means new to print as far as we can tell. If you know of an earlier publication, tell us and we will credit it here and raise the note’s version.

WORKS CITED

Earlier work, catalogues and databases named in this note, besides the records quoted above.

1. Michael Urbanski, “How Paw Paw Got Its Name,” *Project Scroll* (2026). https://projectscroll.com/news/how-paw-paw-got-its-name/
2. *History of Berrien and Van Buren Counties, Michigan* (Philadelphia: D. W. Ensign & Co., 1880), pp. 505–508. https://archive.org/details/historyofberrien00ensi

THE FULL STORY

The finding is set out in context, with the rest of its sources, in How Paw Paw got its name (projectscroll.com/news/how-paw-paw-got-its-name/). In the discoveries register:

- `paw-paw-charter-1859` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#paw-paw-charter-1859)

HOW TO CITE THIS NOTE

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