Starke County was organized in 1850. However, before that time, some of the Indiana State maps showed the area that is now Davis and Oregon townships was a part of St. Joseph County.

Marvin Allen has just completed a short history about Koontz Lake which is in Starke and Marshall Counties. He mentions the St. Joseph County connection in this history. He has also included a 1898 map of the lake. Since the Koontz Lake dam has been in the news lately, I thought you might enjoy this history.

Jim Shilling

http://www.scpl.lib.in.us/historical/

http://www.starkehistory.com

A History of Koontz Lake Starke County, Indiana

On January 29, 1830, St. Joseph County, Indiana was formed by an Indiana State Statute effective April 1, 1830. The original boundaries comprised a square five townships wide by five townships high.

The future Starke County townships of Oregon and Davis were included within St, Joseph County at that time. The rest of northwest Indiana was not organized and was home to the Pottawatomie Indians.

When the Federal Census was taken in October of 1830, it listed 31 families with a total of 287 people in all of St. Joseph County. No doubt many of them were located in the South Bend area.

Koontz Lake, originally called Woodworth Lake, would have been attractive to settlers, because the possibility of its natural outlet supporting a water powered mill. But it is not known if any of those 31 pioneer families had settled there in 1830.

When La Porte County was formed in 1832, part of the western part of St. Joseph County became La Porte County. But, what was later Davis and Oregon Townships in Starke County were still attached to St. Joseph County.

All of northwest Indiana with the exception of La Porte and St. Joseph Counties, which had already been formed, was surveyed in 1833-34. Fulton, Jasper, Marshall, Newton, Porter, Pulaski and Starke Counties were then formed by a state statute in 1835 but not necessarily organized as political entities with their own governments.

When Starke County was formed February 7, 1935, it then included those two townships. While the rest of Starke County was not open to settlement until 1838, presumably those two townships had been open to pioneers since 1830.

The 1833-34 survey maps show Koontz Lake was called Woodworth Lake and was located in the top center of section 12. Later maps also show it as a single body of water well within section 12 but refer to it as Clear Lake.

Although a few settlers bought land in the general vicinity as early as 1838, Samuel Koontz, Sr. was the first to see a business opportunity and buy land near the lake. That was November 6, 1848. He had traveled to Starke County on horseback from Ohio the year before.

Others had no doubt thought the wild marshy area was of no value for farming. But the outlet for the lake ran through Samuel Koontz's property, and he quickly built a dam to power an "up & down" saw mill.