



Grand River Trail

TRAIL TALES

Brighton Area Preservation News

The purpose of the Brighton Area Historical Society is to preserve, advance and disseminate knowledge of the history of the Brighton Area.

The membership is composed of people who feel this purpose is worthwhile and should be promoted.

P.O. Box 481
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Brighton, Mi. 48116
March 1991

BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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HISTORICAL RENOVATION ON OLD TOWN HALL

An Old Town Hall Restoration Committee has been formed with the city and historical society to begin an historic renovation on the inside and outside of the Old Town Hall.

There will be three phases to be completed. Phase One will be restoration of the downstairs for city offices. Also in this phase is restoration of arched windows and doors in the front and side of the building.

Phase Two will be restoration of the upstairs for the Historical Society. Upon completion of the upstairs, the society plans to house a museum and archives which will be open to the public. The Society will be helping with financing of this phase.

Phase Three will be restoration of the brick and foundation work on the outside of the building.

Gary McCririe and Penny Szczechowski have been appointed to represent the Society on this committee. If you have questions or suggestions, please contact them.

MARCH GENERAL MEETING

The March General meeting of the Brighton Area Historical society will be held on March 12 at the Miller School Intergenerational Learning Center.

A potluck at 6:30 will be followed by the meeting at 7:30.

Charles Bidwell, a native Brighton man will be speaking on the past and present of the Brighton fire Department.

Plan on an enjoyable evening with your friends.

PATRONS: A. Colton Park; Joan Pinney-rice (Calif.)

COUPLE/INDIVIDUAL: Pat & Josie Arnold; Bert & Marieanna Bair; Dave Barton; Mildred Bender (92); Marian Carney; B.T.O. Clark (Shepherd); Larry & Jean Clark; Lois Clark (Midland); Dale & Doris Clixby; Iris Cole; Bernie & Bonnie Corrigan; Gene & Judy Dahlin; Homer & Evelyn Dothager; (IL.); Libby Eisenhardt; Joe & Irene Ellis; Emil & Joan Engel; Blanch Esper; Loretta Farley; Nancy Fredenberg; Ellouise Gibson (Okemos); Iris Glebe; Nancy Hackney; Katherine Hampton (Nrthvl.); Mildred Harrington; Dorothy Hartman; Barton Helmuth; Merrill & Ruth Herbst; Elenor Hornung; Mary Hubert; Don & Shirley Jenks (92); John & Heanette Linahan; Barb Lorence (92); Don & Carolyn Kerr; Mark & Carol McMacken; Patrick McMacken; Tim & Leslie McMacken; Jere & Kay Michaels; Joe & Irene Mike; Herb & Ruth Munzell; Jim & Judy Myrray; Roland & Jane Owens; Scott Owens; Irene Paquette; Rev. John & Sandra Park (Union Lake); John & Dorothy Pennela; Charles & Norma Jean Pless (Roscommon); Betty Polaske; Doris Preskorn; sherrel Rutter (Detroit); Fred Schiller; Celia Schaffer; Ed & Connie Sherman; Paul & Kay Spangler; Margaret Squires; Ann Stratigos; Jerry & Gwen Swann; Jim & Penny Szczechowski; bill & Jane Tomlinson; Rosemary Ulmer; Anna Westin; Pat & Marge White (92); randy & Kyle Wilson;

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THANKS

Dr. Gerald & Mrs. Whalen for the photos they sent of the West family of Spencer Road, Oak Grove School and the Kensington church. Also to Mildred Harrington for allowing the copying of an early picture of the Old Town Hall. These will be filed in the Society Archives. Do you have pictures we could copy?

HOWELL LECTURE SERIES

The Livingston County Historical Society is continuing their Old Home Lecture Series.

MARCH 21- WHAT COLOR SHOULD I PAINT MY HOUSE?

Robert Schweitzer will discuss authentic colors for period houses. He is an architectural historian from Eastern Michigan University.

APRIL 30 - HERB GARDENS

Edith Salyer will give a slide presentation showing formal and informal gardens and plants in the herb garden.

All lectures are held at Howell High School in room L-8 at 7:30. The cost is \$3.00, payable at the door or in advance through Howell Community Education.

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ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

To better fulfill the Society's goals, it is vital that oral histories be collected.

There is a large number of local residents who should be contacted regarding their recollections of life in the Brighton area.

The Society recently purchased a small tape recorder. Now people are needed to conduct the interviews. Also needed are people to transcribe the tapes already completed.

Call Marieanna bair, 229-6402, with your offer to help.

IS THERE A DOCTOR IN THE AREA? (Cont.)

Many of the surrounding communities, by 1860, had several physicians in place. Between 1838 and 1858 thirteen physicians had come to Howell. Fowlerville, Hartland, and Pinckney all had several doctors during this period of time. Often these doctors didn't stay more than two years and not all had a medical degree. Several practiced the "Thompsonian" system. (This term is unfamiliar to this writer. Perhaps someone can enlighten us.) Several were homeopaths.

Dr. Thomas Curtis (physician of the mid 1830s of whom we wrote earlier) had his office in the tavern he built in Kensington. A physician often was in the drug store business. (Conflict of interest?)

Several served with the Michigan units in the Civil War. Among these was Dr. William J. McHench, U.S. Army Assistant Surgeon General. The doctor was born, 9-13-31, on a farm in Schoharie County, New York. He acquired a little more than the basic education available in the local school district and arrived in Michigan to teach in Brighton and Green Oak Townships in 1853. Within the year he "began reading medicine with Dr. Ira P. Bingham of Brighton and in the fall of 1855 entered the medical department of the University of Michigan, graduating with the class of 1858." Because of extra studies he undertook he was considered better equipped than the average young doctor. He expanded his medical education by attending lectures and keeping up with medical developments. Except for a few months in New Hudson and service in the Civil War, he spent 52 years in Brighton practicing medicine. (Not all of Dr. McHench's patients survived his ministrations. In 1893 he operated on Andrew Keary who "died while under chloroform on his own kitchen table as Dr. McHench was operating.")

In 1868, he married Margaret Sowle whose parents came to Brighton in 1845 when she was an infant. The doctor was also involved with city government. He is listed as one of the first two assessors when Brighton became a village in 1867. Dr. McHench died in 1-1-11 and is buried in Fairview Cemetery beside his wife who died in 1904.

In 1880, William C. Brown, who was born in Gallupville, New York, 1851, came to Brighton. He was a nephew of Dr. McHench and practiced with him. Not long after his arrival he married Louisa Becker, daughter of John Becker of the Pipp and Becker Hardware Store. (Later Ratz' Hardware, now the Gristmill, S.E. corner Main & Hyne.) When Dr. Brown set up his own practice it naturally followed that his office was set up on the second floor of the hardware store. (By Marieanna Bair. To be continued. It is hoped that persons with knowledge of medical practitioners in the area, since the turn of the century, will contact her. 229-6402)

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