

December, 2006

LEWIS M. CURRY- A STORY ON THE LEVEL

Eight children were born to John and Polly Curry while living in New York and Pennsylvania. Among the very earliest names recorded in the area's history is that of Curry. John and Polly's sixth child, Enoch Waldron, b. May 17, 1821, arrived in Brighton in 1841. He bought land in Brighton Township in the Pleasant Valley area; property now known as General Motors Proving Ground. Four of Enoch's siblings came to Michigan before 1844: Lewis Madison, Mary Elmira, Henry Winston and Volney Manning. (Two children died by ten years of age. A daughter, Sarah Ann Fulcifer, died at 26 years.) In that year John and Polly followed their children settling near Enoch and wife, Laura Eleanor Groff, of Hamburg township, whom he married in 1849.

Enoch's son, Lewis M. was born January 21, 1850, in the settlement along the Grand River Trail. The family then spent several years in Canada and Lewis M. began working as a mason. After becoming proficient in the work he began to study architecture, moving to Chicago in 1892. While there he drew plans for several Illinois state office buildings; the Marshall Field Block and others, providing ample evidence of his abilities in this field.

Lewis M. spent a year in Alaska as a mining engineer for Marshall Field's syndicate in 1898. About the turn of the century he returned to Brighton. During this period he invented and patented the Spirit BMIU level and the Curry excentric plane. This he sold to the Stanley Plane and Level Company ". . . at a good figure." The factory for building this plane was still in operation in Brighton at the time of his death, January 14, 1909. Lewis M. had married Rebecca Sparks in 1849; they had two children Roy W. and Enoch II, who died as a child. The Lewis M. Obituary notes he was buried in Calvary Cemetery in Brighton. However records are inconclusive in this regard.

Don Rosebrook of Louisiana, from whom much information was gained regarding the level patented by Lewis M. Curry, noted additionally that local retailer of the time, Grant Broadmore, also developed, and manufactured a level at the King Level Works in Brighton. The patent dates indicate the strong possibility Curry and Broadmore collaborated. Mr. Rosebrook donated a copy of both Curry's and Broadmore's patent applications and photos of the level. (Compiled by Marieanna Bair from Curry's family genealogical information from John Curry of Lansing, formerly an archivist with the State of Michigan; census records; atlases; and 'Early Landowners and Settlers of Livingston County; and obituaries copied by Milton Charboneau.