

ISRAEL AND JULIA ARMS MOVE FROM MASSACHUSETTS

By 1826, Israel and Julia Ann (Parsons) Arms were in Michigan Territory, undoubtedly in Detroit as it was the first place to come ashore in Michigan for early travelers and settlers after crossing Lake Erie. (The other settlements were Fort Mackinaw and Sault Ste. Marie.) Israel and Julia were both born in Massachusetts. A son, John, was born in 1828 in Michigan Territory. South Lyon Cemetery records and the 1840 census records indicate a daughter, Harriet, was born in 1825, probably in Massachusetts.

By 1835, they were living in Washtenaw County, when Julia recorded 40 acres in Brighton Township, NW¼ of the NW¼ of Section 10, on April 27, 1836. The following February 23, Israel recorded the NE¼ of the NE¼ of Section 33 in Hartland Township. More land was acquired later in Sections 9 and 10 in Brighton Township. Over the next 16 years, six more children were born to them. Their neighbors included the Warners, Bidwells, Kellys, Marshes, Rosses, Conelys, etc; all one mile or more distant through the wilderness. However, they were near enough for Nancy, born June 20, 1830, to meet and marry Seth Bidwell December 19, 1850, after the death of his first wife, Laura Hutchins.

The Arms family set about building a home and clearing land to farm in Brighton Township. Besides farming, Israel also constructed farming equipment. These were so practical and functional that he was awarded a premium for farm implements at the first Livingston County Agricultural Society Fair, which was held in Brighton on October 6, 1853. Both Israel and son John were charter members of this organization, which was organized in 1853. In 1843, Israel is Justice of the Peace in Brighton Township, and among the first trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church of Brighton in 1854. Born February 29, 1804, Israel died December 3, 1856, about ten years after his last child, Catherine, was born. In 1860 July and her three youngest children (Edwin, Julia Ann and Catherine) are living in Brighton Township near son John. By then, daughter Eleanor had married E. A. Calkins in South Lyon. After 1850, son Henry appears to have left Livingston County. Born November 29, 1801, Julia died February 24, 1874, and is buried next to Israel in Pleasant Valley Cemetery, Brighton Township.

John inherited his father's talent for producing farm implements. He was well known for making the first 'Yankee Grain Cradle' in the county. Until then, the backbreaking, labor-intensive sickle was used. The cradle scythe allowed the harvester to stand while swinging the cradle by the two handles on the shaft. A long curved knife was at the bottom of the shaft, along which were several curved, finger-like wood slats attached above the knife, parallel to it. Each swing (still laborious) cut near the base of the stalks of grain, dropping them against the slats. The backward tip of the cradle deposited the grain to the ground where it was gathered, tied and stood on end with other bundles. Besides being less work, this method resulted in a three-fold increase in acreage cut, as opposed to the .5 to .75 of an acre in a day when a sickle was used. John used the power from upper Woodruff Creek, in Section 10, for producing his tools and later moved to Brighton Village, where he had a small factory on Ore Creek in the Third Street/Hamburg Road (Brighton Lake Road) vicinity. "He also did a general wood lathe business," according to the newspaper reporter.

John married Martha Crane, ca. 1854. They had seven children, at least one of whom died in infancy. By 1880, they were living in Green Oak Township near South Lyon. John died in 1901 and Martha in 1906. Both are buried in the South Lyon Cemetery.