

June 1998    AREA FARMS c. 1900    EVERGREEN LODGE    “ OLD CONLEY PLACE”

Evergreen Lodge, in Mrs. George W. (Alice) Conley's name, is the subject of this issue.

In the days before Michigan became a state, many from the east traveled the Erie Canal over the Adirondack Mountains; many boarding a boat at Buffalo to cross Lake Erie, to finally arrive in Detroit. To reserve acre of land in Michigan Territory, now more easily reached, groups of people pooled resources, giving the funds to trusted members to make the arduous journey. One such person was Richard Lyon, a member of a carvers/gilders society in New York City. Brothers Samuel M. & William S. Conely were Richard Lyon's traveling companions and members of the same society. As early as 1834, 100's of acres in Brighton and surrounding township were registered in their names and others of the society.

At the age of nine, George W. Conley came to Brighton Township with his parents, Samuel M. & Rebecca, and three siblings; traveling in an ox cart. The Conleys and The Richard Lyon Family stayed with William Henry and Maryette Valentine in a 22' x 22' log house, located in the NW ¼ of Section 22. At one time 22 people lived in this house until their own log homes could be constructed. Good neighbors, the Valentines.

George W. worked on his father's farm until he was 21. Then for \$11. per month the first year, \$12. A month for two more, worked on nearby farms. October 25, 1853, he and Eliza M. Warner, daughter of Rev. Ira Warner (another early settler) were married. Shortly after they purchased the W ½ SW ¼ section 15 (80 ac.). A neighboring 48 acres were soon acquired, totaling 128, a good-sized farm. After five children and 23 years of marriage Eliza died. March 12, 1878, George W. married Mrs. Alice (Wiltse) Lamonion, bringing a son with her.

No clearing of land had been done when George W. originally bought his farm in 1854. “. . . But the lapse of 25 years has witnessed its transition into a productive and finely improved homestead.: Located on Newman Road, just around the corner from Van Amburg Road, the house and barn were shaded by big pine trees. Hence the name Evergreen Lodge owned by Mrs. Alice Conley c. 1900.

By the mid 1930s the house stood vacant. In this child's imagination ghostly faces and unexplained lights could be seen in the windows. It took courage to step on the porch, even in daylight. One night, in the early 40's a bright glow in the sky gave evidence the “old Conley Place” would be seen no more nor be the source of thrilling fantasies. Today that 40 is in 10 acre strips, the site of comfortable homes for new, live families, not ghosts. (Researched by Marieanna Bair. Compiled from 1880 History Livingston County, Milt Charboneau's First Landowners and Early Landowners and Settlers, and Atlases. With thanks to Arlene Warner, Irene Ellis and Larry Young.)