THE GRAND RIVER TRAIL (Cont.)

The Federal government bowed out of road building in Michigan when it became a state in 1837. While the Grand River Road reached as far as Brighton by 1840 with bridges over the Rouge, Huron and various small streams, nothing more than a trail for a horse existed west of Brighton. (Funds for road building came from the sale of land, subscription and taxes.)

When the Government surveys were made in the 1820's there was no provision for a right-of-way for roads; it was left up to the local land owners to provide the land. Perusal of a township map will show the roads were usually laid out along property lines. A road 3 rods wide took a strip 1½ rods wide off the property on each side of the line. Where swamps or lakes made it necessary to cross a farmer's land, he gave all of the land for the road. The new settler, having just claimed the land from the government for a small amount and needing roads, didn't object to this practice.

With the elimination of the toll houses along the Grand River Road c. 1880, (altho' the original contract signed in 1850 called for tolls for 60 years for the investors) it became a free road and subject to the same method of maintenance as other roads in the county. This was accomplished by the division of the townships into 'road districts' with an elected 'pathmaster'. In early spring the pathmaster would "call out" all of the men in his district to work out their road tax. (Each 60 acres of land owned meant 2½ days per year of road work.)

Bringing their teams, wagons, plows, drags, shovels and pikes, etc., the farmers would haul gravel or dirt into low places, smooth ruts by dragging with a barrow, drain holes by digging trenches to run water off into the ditches other farmers had plowed. Since it was a diversion from their usual solitary life in the fields we can hope the farmers enjoyed this road repair work. Those who didn't or could not work out their $1.00 tax had to pay in cash. As a boy of 10, Bill Pless, as other boys his age, was credited as a man against his father's road tax, driving a team hauling gravel from the pit to the hole in the road.

The "pathmaster" system served well for the time. Farmers were able to transport their produce to market without much difficulty over the roads they had built. He also built the fence along the road and kept the road side free of obnoxious weeds and brush often planting rows of maples or evergreen trees along the road. These, along with the growth of native trees, all combined to shade the traveler and his horses besides making a pleasant landscape. (To be continued. Condensed and edited from "A Scrapbook of Michigan Memorabila" by Wm. A. Pless and "1880 History of Livingston County".)

BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. Box 481
BRIGHTON, MI. 48116

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ANNUAL MEETING, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 12
6:30 pot luck is planned for the Fourth Annual Meeting of the Society. Bring the usual dish to pass and dinnerware. Coffee and tea will be provided. The meeting will be held at the Miller Community Center, 850 Spencer Road. The public is invited.

The Annual Reports of Officers will be presented, the Nominating Committee will present the slate of nominees for election of three Directors for 86-88, the 1986 Budget and a short program will conclude the evening's activities.

BAKE SALE, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5
At the Brighton Farmers' Market, off North First St., Saturday, October 5, 8-11 P.M., the Society will hold a bake sale.

Chairman Janice Beach and her committee will be waiting to receive all your goodies that day. Please have your items there by 10 a.m. If you need to deliver things the day before, or have any questions, please call Janice, 229-9678.

Can't make a baked contribution? ... a cash donation will be most acceptable. Checks can be written to the Society. (And keep wishing for good weather.)

EDITORIAL

Does it seem the Society is always trying to raise money? You're right. Preservation and restoration activities don't just happen. There are lots of hard working volunteers but cold, hard cash is vital. Donors have been generous in the past, this is very much appreciated.

To accomplish the goals of the Society, fund raising is a continuing effort. The confidence exhibited by financial contributions is encouraging to the volunteers. The recent request of $2000.00, from the Carma (Case) Nilson Trust is gratefully accepted and taken as a sign of confidence in the ability of the Society to accomplish its goals and purposes (and its continued existence).

M. Bair, Editor

MEMBERSHIPS 1985

Since the last issue the following have paid 1985 dues:

Esther Clark, Samuel & Joan Deyo, Joanne Marentette, George Frieskorn, Lucille Frieskorn, Mary Walsh, Margaret Memard. WELCOME.

By board action (unless specified for 1985) any dues paid after October 1 will be designated for the following year. To be a member in good standing dues are to be renewed by April 1 of any year.

Society Bylaws, Article II, Sec. 2 - Dues are renewable by December first of each year.

RECAP, SEPTEMBER MEETING

Over forty people m-m-m-md the pot luck held at the September 10, General Meeting. Margaret O'ferron informed the group of Brighton High School Centennial plans for 1986. Questions were answered and several names were added to her list of people helping with the plans. Lots of community support is needed.

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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 the above purpose is worthwhile and should be promoted.