Following an early, centuries old, Indian trail between Detroit and Lansing, (Michigan Village) the Grand River Trail traversed the county through its center, southeast to northwest; the route by which most settlers came to the Brighton Area. Surveyed prior to 1832, prospectors, trappers and homesteaders usually followed the trail by foot or on horseback. Wagons pulled by teams of oxen, would bring the family and its possessions once property was recorded by the purchaser. The felling of trees and pulling of stumps, building of bridges and filling of swamps made possible the use of stagecoaches for travel and transport.

The staging business over the Grand River Road (sand, dust, rats and mud, depending on the weather) between Howell and Detroit about 1838 was begun by Allen C. Weston and continued by Benjamin J. Spring and others. Stagecoaches made remarkably fast time from Detroit to Lansing, the 90 miles traversed in 12 hours; drawn by four to six horses which were changed every 12-15 miles. This resulted in inns and horsebarns being located along the route. The fare was about 7½ per mile per person. The stage drivers also carried mail at 25c - 50c per letter. From these small beginnings grew the heavy traffic which afterwards passed over the Plank Road.

By 1852 the Grand River Trail was 'planked' from Detroit to Lansing. This route, built by the Detroit and Howell Plank Road Company (a company of private investors), became an immediate financial success. Toll was charged for the use of the road. Toll gates were built every 5-6 miles. Old maps indicate toll houses at Academy Drive, Chailis Road and Ore Creek in Green Oak, Brighton and Genoa Townships.

The importance to Livingston County of this road was second only in importance to the which resulted from the opening of the railroad in 1871. Until that time, the Plank Road was one of the principle thoroughfares of the state; the means by which farmers' produce was delivered to market and items necessary for surviving the wilderness were transported to the pioneer from the city. This great and continually increasing business over the plank road ceased almost entirely with the opening of the railroad.

Following this diversion of a large part of the travel from the plank roads, it became the policy of the various road companies to remove the planking as it decayed and to fill in with substantial gravel so that by 1880 the entire line was a solidly graded turnpike. While toll was still being extracted, much complaining by the travelers, mostly local at that time, assured the quick demise of the gates. (To be continued. Condensed and edited from A Scrapbook of Michigan Memorabilia by William A. Pless and Livingston County History, 1880.)

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

Printed courtesy
OLD KENT BANK

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

Issue No. 24
September, 1985

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.

EDITORIAL

At the heart of the Historical Society is a cadre of caring, working people who feel it is important to the future of the area to become well acquainted with its past.

Besides having the confidence of their convictions they find the gathering, preserving and restoring of the history of the area to be challenging and satisfying. It seems they do not always know the meaning of the word 'impossible.'

It is especially rewarding when the younger members of our community join the Society. A good-sized membership is essential to the success of any organization. Committee chairmen find that calling on members to help with an event results in good participation.

Others in the community are encouraged to join and reap these same benefits.

MEMBERSHIPS 1985

Since the last issue the following have paid 1985 dues:

- Terry McKeon, Sandy Rasmush, Joan (Pinney) Roe, Fran Stokes, WELCOME

As of this newsletter we have 292 dues paying members. Many people check the various activities on the membership form in which they'd participate. This helps the chairman of events when they need assistance.

As may have been noted many of our members are from out of town. They often balance their inability to help with projects by purchasing patron dues. Many thanks for your support and the confidence shown.