SIGHTS AND SOUNDS IN BRIGHTON VILLAGE

It's Springtime, 1907. As one approaches the Village from the north on Grand River and comes to the Village limits (at the corner of Grand River and Cross Street), one sees a sign warning: "Speed Limit 8 Miles per Hour". Continuing, one passes over a red, wooden bridge spanning One Creek and attention is drawn to the residence of James Fulton; a veteran of the Civil War, having served three years in the 26th Infantry. For some time, had been employed as the toll gate keeper for the Detroit-Lansing Plank Road Company. That was before it was moved to the Chillico Road corner because travelers had bypassed the toll gate by turning off the Plank Road at Cross Street, coming into town via North Second Street.

Fulton’s barn stands at the edge of the Creek. It had long been used by business men as a billboard to advertise their merchandise. This spring day in 1907, one sees across the upper part of the barn “Come One, Come All to Brighton’s Home Coming” August 28, 1907. A larger than life size man and his dog, both running at full speed with the man shouting “It’s a Com to Come Too” had been painted below. The artist? One Dr. "Greenhorn". Not his real name, nor a fully licensed veterinary, he displayed some talent as an artist and had successfully trained enough animals, especially horses, for several farmers to respect his ability. That barn with its message became the area’s first bill board.

Continuing into town, the road became a low, narrow strip between two swampy ponds for the next three blocks; a sea of mud in wet weather. The ponds and swamps on either side were inhabited by turtles, muskrats and frogs (which were in full ‘croak’ at this time of year). All day the red winged black birds (a certain assurance of spring) flew from cat-tails to cat-tails singing their accompaniment. One was south of Liberty Street before encountering the next building which was on the east side. Not until one was half way past the Village Cemetery, readily visible across the swamp on the west, did one pass another building. After dark the only light available was that of the lightning bugs, which wouldn’t be out until summer, or the weak glow from a lamp in a window. High land beyond the ponds served as pasture for sheep and cattle who contributed to the sounds of Brighton. Stray dogs occasionally disturbed them and soon the farmer’s shouts could be heard putting a temporary end to their surounding.

Sounds too faint to be heard (“Toot and be dammed?”) were responses made by those driving a horse drawn rig when the driver of an occasional automobile tooted his horn to pass. The shoe was on the other foot when these same horse drivers bought an auto. Then they made sounds intimating horse drawn rigs should get over to the edge of the road and not be allowed on the road after dark.

The next time you drive Grand River north from Main consider the sights and sounds of Brighton in 1906. (Condensed and edited from writings of W. A. Piess, Ed. M. Bair.)

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TRAIL TALES

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

The Brighton Area has long been among the fastest growing in the state. Why do people come to this area? What are they seeking?

Besides merely shelter many find the sense of history, the nostalgia connected with an area which has been settled for some time, a desirable entity. The sense of history emanating from the old buildings, natural resources such as lakes, streams, swamps, trees, etc., gives visual evidence of where we’ve been. It does not make sense to destroy all that in order to build new as so many other communities in the state. Appreciation for our area’s historic resources is to be promoted.

If people can be encouraged to read a plaque on a building and take a good long look at it, have we not moved a step away from the throw-away society? How sad to have to read a plaque at a vacant lot describing a place or event which is a part of our Area’s history.

While a few citizens can spearhead a historic preservation movement in the Area, they will be successful only if they have open, viable support of the community.

(W. Abuse' Editor) + + + +

1986 MEMBERSHIPS 1986

Since the July issue the following have paid 1986 dues: Dr. Robert Cheeky, Ted & Doris Carmack, and H.B. Larry & Barbara Lawrence. New business/professional membership, WELCOME! Don’t remember if you’ve paid 1986 dues? If there is an ‘86’ on the mailing label you have paid. All administration expense, including this newsletter, are budgeted to be paid by members’ dues. All donations and (page 2, please.)