

## THE BRIGHTON AREA AND THE SESQUICENTENNIAL OF MICHIGAN (Cont.)

- The holding of Ft. Stephenson by General Harrison and the winning of the Battle of Lake Erie by Commander Oliver Perry and the newly formed American Navy ended the British Naval supremacy in the North West. Only the signing of the Treaty of Ghent (Dec. 24, 1814) which returned all territory captured by either side during the war caused the British to lose control of the entire Northwest Territory.

The very poor condition of Detroit (its public buildings had been destroyed, records carried off, private property ravaged and near famine conditions) caused the army commander to recommend that the citizens be removed and the Michigan territory be allowed to revert into a wilderness.

But with peace restored and the arrival of Gen. Lewis Cass as Territorial Governor in 1815, a renewed hope was awakened and nourished. Many new arrivals from the east and those who had survived the war in Detroit indicated a bright future waiting in the wings for Michigan. (Cass had a hand in the Northwest Ordinance of 1785 which outlined the division of land and recognized the need of an educated citizenry by the setting aside of lands for schools and universities.)

The first public land office in Michigan opened for business in 1818. By 1819 Michigan sent its first Representative to the National legislature and by 1824 had a Representative Legislature in Detroit. By then the Treaty of Saginaw concluded by Cass with the Ottawa and the Chippewa Indians opened almost half of the Lower Peninsula to settlement. (By 1842 Cass had arranged treaties with the Indians to all of present day Michigan.) The completion of the Erie Canal in the mid 1820s, provided a cheap and safe water route from the East to Lake Erie steamers and Michigan Territory.

When Illinois became a state in 1818, Michigan Territory included all remaining lands of the Northwest Territory between the Mississippi and Lakes Michigan and Superior. The 4000 mile journey of Henry Schoolcraft exploring the region drew national attention to Michigan Territory.

Fur trading in the Territory, at its height in the early 1820s, declined as a result of overtrapping and the encroachment of pioneer farming by the end of the decade. Townships and sections were laid out by surveyors according to the Ordinance of 1785, and with the reduction of the cash price of an acre to \$1.25 for the 80 acre minimum, it was possible to secure a farm for \$100.00. The opening of the Erie Canal assured settlers of a safe journey and a means of sending produce to market. The number of immigrants swelled from 1820's 9000 to 1830's 29,000 and by 1840 to 212,000. The availability of the cheap transportation on the canal caused Michigan's population to be almost entirely from the northeastern states. (To be continued. Condensed and edited from: "A Scrapbook of Michigan Memorabilia" by Wm. Pless, "A Short History of Michigan" by John Kern and "History of Livingston County, 1880.")

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