

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

Before the coming of the railroad (the Detroit, Lansing and Northern) through Brighton Village, Main Street (Fitch Street) was a muddy street west of West Street. A bridge crossed Ore Creek but the street then went through a low, marshy area with the mill pond on the north side. One could count on soiled boots if it was necessary to walk. Wagon wheels dug deep ruts in the mud.

Anticipating the economic benefits the railroad would bring, a wooden foot bridge about 300' long was built. It extended from West Street to where the D. & C. Store (314 W. Main) is located. At the time a livery barn and a blacksmith shop stood there, on wood pilings with the mill pond water beneath. About 7-8' wide, the timbers and planks of the bridge were also on wood pilings with a 3-4' railing on each side. On the south side a row of weeping willows formed a canopy along the way. It was after 1900 before the south edge of the pond was filled in and a concrete sidewalk built in its place. Not long after, the area where the Preview Properties is now located (306 W. Main) was also filled in and the Brighton State Bank (now Old Kent Bank, 300 North Street) was built. (The telephone company switch board was upstairs.) The one story addition came still later.

On the south side of Fitch Street, across from the mill pond was the flouring and grist mill with its two raceway ponds, dam gates and two bridges below the mill on North Street. (All but North Street now beneath the city parking lot.)

On the southeast corner of Fitch and West stood a red barn surrounded by new farm machinery in bright paint. (Singer Press is located there now.) In later years the Leith Ice House was in the middle of the block on West between Main (by then it was no longer Fitch) and North Street.

Located west along Fitch were hardware stores, barber shops, milliners, liveries, the Post Office, grocery stores, dry goods stores, furniture stores, a bank, and the Western House.

Along Grand River Road were more grocers and general stores, a shoe store, ice cream and candy store, jeweler, meat market, a tin smith, the Opera House, a school, restaurant and Eastern (Brighton) House. On North Street one could find a law office, blacksmith shop, restaurant, dry goods store and a clothier. Here and there one could also find the opportunity to quench one's thirst in the company of fellow quaffers. License fees paid by saloon keepers paid for most of the concrete sidewalks in town until "local option" closed the taverns. Until about 1900 these walkways were comprised of boards, flat stones or bricks. (To be continued. Condensed and edited from: "A Scrapbook of Michigan Memorabilia" by William Pless.)

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