

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

Following the War of 1812, Congress decided that the Territories of Michigan, Illinois and Louisiana should be surveyed and set apart as military tracts, out of which each soldier serving in the army should be entitled to receive one hundred sixty acres of land fit for cultivation. But the surveyors of Michigan Territory reported to the surveyor-general that the land was so poor there would not be more than one acre out of a hundred "that would in any case admit of cultivation." These stories were then spread by land speculators who had acquired large tracts for profit. So Congress passed a new law, April, 1816, authorizing the locating of soldiers' lands to Missouri Territory in order to properly repay these brave men.

There were those who believed that this judgement of the land was false and chief among those was Governor Lewis Cass. Resolving to disprove this bad reputation of the fitness of the land he set out from Detroit with several other friends on a tour. Although the first 25 or so miles seemed to confirm the dismal tales of the surveyors they emerged upon higher ground and into a more open and desirable country. From that point their journey continued over a dry and rolling country (present day Oakland County), through green groves of oak and along beautiful lakes. One of these lakes they named Wing Lake, another they called Cass Lake and another Elizabeth, the governor's wife. Their reports soon dispelled the idea that Michigan was a worthless desert, "but instead a beautiful and fertile land, awaiting only the touch of the settler's axe and plow, and ready to yield an abundant increase to reward his toil."

Immigration to the Territory slowed during the summer of 1832 due to the epidemic of cholera, brought by the soldiers sent to fight the Black Hawk War, and the Black Hawk Indian War, of which only the apprehension reached Michigan Territory. By the end of the year tho', the epidemic cleared and Black Hawk was defeated.

It was on Portage Creek in today's Putnam Township, in 1828, that Col. Salmon Peterson settled as Livingston County's first white land owner. Lee and Benjamin Curtis came to Green Oak in 1830, Col. Samuel Mapes to Hartland Township in 1831 or '32. Jesse Hull settled his family in Hamburg Township in October, 1831. Brighton Township's first residents included Elijah Marsh, Job Cranston, Maynard and Almon Maltby in the fall of 1832 with Gardner Bird arriving the following February. What did they find on their arrival? A wilderness of heavily timbered land, with open areas of heavy sod, thick with matted grass roots. Streams and lakes were abundant and usually surrounded by swampy, marshy areas. Pitching a tent on dry ground or building a temporary lean-to, the felling of trees for a cabin was started. (To be continued. Condensed and edited from: "A Scrapbook of Michigan Memorabilia" by Wm. Pless, "A Short History of Michigan" by John Kern, "History of Livingston County, 1880," and "Michigan, From Primitive Wilderness to Industrial Commonwealth" by Quaife and Glazer.)

BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 481  
Brighton, Mi. 48116

Printed courtesy:  
OLD KENT BANK  
300 W. North St.  
Brighton, Mi. 48116