

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

The exceedingly bountiful harvest of 1838 was complained of by many as a calamity, insofar as the resulting low prices prevented farmers from realizing a financial profit from their agriculture. But the distress of seeing their granaries bursting with stores of unsalable bread-stuffs was a light one to the settlers compared with that of seeing their families in danger of suffering for lack of provisions.

It is to the everlasting credit of these pioneers that they 'stuck it out'. As soon as shelter and subsistence had been provided for their families the new settlers turned their attention to the education of their children. A large portion of these pioneers were from New York and New England. They brought with them definite opinions on the need and value of a proper observance of educational and religious institutions.

Several families, which could consist of 12-15 children, would meet to organize a 'bee' to build a school. They had the 'know-how' since all had built the log cabins in which they lived. Fieldstone fireplaces provided some warmth and desks and benches were made by splitting logs, smoothing the flat side with a broad-axe, and driving round poles into holes bored in the under side to serve as legs. Occasionally there was a splinter in an uncomfortable place. The teachers were usually the daughter or son of a local family or a resident of a nearby settlement. Often the teacher would 'board around' with first one family and then another. This was often part of the teacher's wages.

Whether taught in the cramped quarters of the cabin or the single roomed log school house, there was laid the foundation of many an honorable and useful career.

Religious observances were also considered among the top priorities of these newcomers. Traveling preachers of both Protestant and Catholic persuasion were heard in various homes until places of worship were erected.

The first regular religious services in Brighton Township were held by Rev. Wm. A. Clark, DD, from New York City in the spring of 1837. Rev. Father Patrick Kelley became the first resident priest in Green Oak Township, holding services and instruction in private homes until the autumn of 1838 when a log church was built. St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, still in operation, was one of the earliest churches in Hamburg, Township. The house of David Hight, during 1835-36, was the early site of Baptist services in Genoa Township. Rev. Freiderich Schmidt in 1842, came to the township to preach, as a circuit rider, to the German Lutherans who organized into a still existing congregation. (To be continued. Condensed and edited from: "History of Livingston County, 1880" and "A Scrapbook of Michigan Memorabilia" by Wm. Pless.)

BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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