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

Formed in 1836, Livingston County was typical of incorporated areas. The settlers’ political heritage was brought from New York and New England, organizing as townships with the various Clerks, Supervisors, Treasurers, etc.

During the time of Governor of Michigan Territory Lewis Cass’ administration, Michigan changed from a land of Indians and fur traders. The southern tiers of counties became frontier farms and villages. Michigan was on its way to statehood when the reins of leadership were transferred to 19 year old Stevens T. Mason. Many of Michigan’s leaders doubted his ability but it wasn’t long before they were convinced he was a very capable “boy governor.” During his eight years of administration, population increased five-fold to 86,000; much more than the 60,000 required for statehood by the Ordinance of 1787. By 1835, a constitution had been prepared; the Toledo War had been survived and by 1837, Michigan became the 26th state to join the Union.

With the preparation of the constitution a representative and two senators were elected and sent to Washington demanding statehood. Instead of seating the three Michigan legislators the Congress insisted upon the settlement of the disputed Michigan/Ohio boundary. When Ohio became a state in 1803, a proviso was included that its northern boundary would be from the southern point of Lake Michigan, but instead of running straight east it would end north of the Maumee River. Since the Michigan Territory southern line followed the 1787 Ordinance line, due east from the southern point of Lake Michigan, there was a piece of land 70 miles long by five miles wide at the Indiana border and eight miles wide at Lake Erie, the Toledo Strip.

Because Ohio, Indiana and Illinois were already populous states with representation in the Congress they had more ‘pull’ than Michigan Territory’s three legislators. President Jackson, not wishing to jeopardize the votes of those three states offered a compromise to Michigan – Give Ohio the Strip and instead acquire a large portion of the western Upper Peninsula.

Upon learning that Ohio intended forming counties of the disputed strip, Gov. Mason called out the militia and ordered the arrest of all Ohio officials who tried to accomplish political jurisdictions over the Strip. President Jackson removed Mason from office because of his military activities but before leaving Mason directed about 1000 militia to prevent Ohio from conducting official business in the Strip. The Ohio jurists held a midnight court and were our of harm’s way by the time Michigan militia arrived. Not wishing to risk further disobedience to the President, Mason and the soldiers returned to Monroe and disbanded. (Condensed and edited from “A Short History of Michigan” by John Kern. To be continued.)

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EDITORIAL

Why did (and do) people come to the Brighton Area? We can conclude from historical research that when the first settlers arrived and stayed in 1832, they were looking for a place where they could grow as a family and as individuals. Isn’t that what people still move to the area?

The Brighton Area didn’t just suddenly appear – it is a result of people who got out and worked to make it happen. Today it’s our turn to make it happen.

Yes, the early settlers lived somewhat differently than we do. We’ve never shorn sheep or ridden a wagon for miles over rutted trails in order to buy flour, lamp fuel, or coveralls. And there is no great desire to return to those ways. The basic yearning for permanence and stability in our lives can be filled by being aware of the fact that others have proceeded us.

Can we pass this feeling of permanence and stability on to our precious children? Not if there is nothing from past years from which to learn. It seems we better put down the TV guide, stop running in so many different directions and start making it happen. (Ed. M. Bair)

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Hill, 1987

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.