

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

The formation of Livingston County in 1837, confirmed the stability and determination to survive of the early settlers.

Saw mills and grist mills were constructed following the damming of streams flowing through the area. Ore Creek and Woodruff Creek furnished the water power necessary for the operation of these mills.

Log houses were the first shelter for the settlers. When a saw mill was in operation the settler transported many wagon loads of tree trunks to the mills and took home flat planks. The laborious hand sawing was eliminated. Now lumber was available for the construction of a home and furniture similar to that which had been left in the East. Often the expense of sawing the logs into planks was paid for on a barter basis in that a number of logs were cut for the farmer and then some for the mill owner.

The availability of lumber encouraged several to settle in the vicinity of the mill. Soon those owning the surrounding land surveyed their property and platted villages with streets and lots for houses. Not all those platted were destined to become permanent villages; some showed promise for a while but then fizzled. One of those to survive was the village of Brighton.

In 1833, Maynard and Almon Maltby cleared six acres, planted wheat and built the first log cabin and a dam across Ore Creek in the vicinity of Third Street. They erected the first saw mill in the area; cutting most of the material with which early houses were built.

In 1850, with the construction of the plank road between Detroit and the new capitol at Lansing underway, the Grand River Trail had become one of the major thoroughfares in the state. Brighton was mid way between the two cities and travelers in the continual procession of teams pulling wagons, coaches and buggies found it a convenient place to stop for refreshments.

Among the earliest buildings in the settlement was the log tavern built by Wm. Dutcher, located on the southeast corner of Spencer and Grand River, on the hill in the "upper town". Ben Cushing, having been the first proprietor of that first log tavern purchased a site in "lower town" at the corner of Grand River Trail and Fitch (Main) Street. There he built the Brighton Hotel in 1850. (This building burned in 1929.) His son, George, was a successful grocer for many years. (To be continued. Condensed and edited from: "A Scrapbook of Michigan Memorabilia" by William Pless.)

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