EVOLUTION IN THE BRIGHTON AREA — FROM WILDERNESS TO SUBDIVISIONS

It's a sunny, Sunday afternoon in 1875, and we're going to visit the W.T. Tunis family who live about 3/4 miles NE of town on the north line of Section 28 in Brighton Township. The sleigh in which we're riding east out of Upper Town of Brighton Village, takes Noble Street for two blocks then continues on Spencer Road past the Lee Addition, past Mud Lake. Driving E/NW 1/2 miles brings us near the NW corner of the property. If we continued north another 1/2 mile our trail would connect with the Flint Road. (This road came out of the village's northern end and, scirring marahen and steep hills, connected with the road known as Hanganlin before continuing north.) Instead we turn a short way down a road coming from the east (Bunol Road) where Grandpa Tunis' house is located. We are warmly greeted and the horse put in the barn. The wood stove is glowing and the hot cup of coffee encourages Jack Frost to leave our fingers and toes.

Much of the area through which we've come is low and wet during the summer. We have crossed a stream which drains swamps for 8-10 miles north, continuing its flow in a SE direction through Tunis's acre. (This stream is dammed just inside the southern border of the township and provided power for the Woodruff Mills and the Pleasant Valley Mills.) Mr. Tunis built a home for him family shortly after arriving in Michigan Territory from New York City in 1835, and buying his land from the U.S. government.

By the time we take our leave it is getting dark. The bells on the horse's harness warn other sleighs in the intense dark and equally intense silence of the night. Few of us today will ever know such an intense dark or quiet. In 1892, his descendents sold to James Hamilton who then sold to Frank Poland in 1907, a farmer from New York state born of "Mohawk Dutch" in Pennsylvania. Frank died in 1948 and his widow, Mary sold the remaining land to Alvin Thompson the following year.

The advent of the auto and increased speed created the necessity for removing the sharp right angle turns which, in 1875, could be easily navigated. The road we know as Old 23 was constructed in the 1930s, bypassing the village through which the road to Flint once ran. Prior to that time the road between Ace Arbor and Flint, as most major roads, followed a circuitous trail; sometimes straight, along settlers property lines, and sometimes following the path of least resistance when confronted with steep hills or wet area. In the early 1900s another improvement came off the drawing boards and the new 23 expressway was built through the west half of what had been the Tunis farm and blocking Bunol Road's intersection with Old 23.

All of this road building made it possible for new settlers. The resulting demand for homes brought on a building boom. Contractor Mr. C. Long answered some of that demand by constructing Colonial Village Subdivision in the mid to late 1960s. During the next few years a crop of homes grew on the acres which had been laboriously cleared in order to grow farm crops and a garden. Today that crop of homes brings forth people who care as much about their community and work as hard as their predecessors.

From the Liv. Co. Register of Deeds office and with the help of Rae Poland Schmidt.

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TRAIL TALES

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.

EDITORIAL

If this Society is to do the job for which it was organized a lot of people are needed who will volunteer for various activities and projects.

All board members and committee chairpersons are busy people (just like you) but somehow make the extra effort necessary to keep this thing going. (They get off their posteriors.) Try to say "Yes" when they call. (Better yet, you call them.) (M. Bair, Editor.)

(Memberships, Cont.)

Bass/Prof.: Advance Craft Home Builders, Inc., Citizens Trust, Old Kent Bank and Dr. & Mrs. G. E. Whalen.


Many thanks to those who have paid '88 dues. Trail Tales is distributed to a broad audience beyond our paid membership, including those assumed to be interested in the Society's goals and projects. Their concern will prompt them to unite with the paid membership and help keep it possible.

The date after your name on the mailing label indicates your membership status. If there is no date it means someone else is footing the bill.