

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 2½ 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/NE 1½ miles brings us near the NW corner of the property. If we continued north another ¼ mile our trail would connect with the Flint Road. (This road came out of the village's northern end and, skirting marshes and steep hills, connected with the road known as Hilton before continuing north.) Instead we turn a short way down a road coming from the east (Buno 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' acres. (This stream is dammed just inside the southern border of the township and provided power for the Woodruff Mills and the Pleasant Valley Mills.) Wm. Tunis built a home for his 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 Foland 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 Ann 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 1960s 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 Buno 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 Wm. 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 Mae Foland Schmadtke.)

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