

EVOLUTION IN THE BRIGHTON AREA - FROM WILDERNESS TO SUBDIVISIONS

"The basket with the cooked chicken did you pack?" "Ya, und der jug of cider from the keller auch." "Karl, I thought the last jug at the Christmas party was drunk. August some of that gut wine for the ladies will have."

It's 1885. Thankful for the bright moon which makes driving horses much safer at night, we're riding in the buggy with a Genoa Township neighbor of August Westphal on the way up Weicker's Hill (Brighton Road, west of Bauer Road). We're going to the barn dance and pot luck held in celebration of the new barn August has recently built. Constructed of pit sawn beams with the most modern technology available it is a grand addition to the rough hewn timber barn built in 1868. It will hold all the feed needed by the sheep and cattle bring raised on the 160 acres August bought in 1855 from P. Donley. Charles Joseph, from Washtenaw, had originally purchased the property (NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the NE $\frac{1}{4}$, Section 35) from the U.S. government in 1837, when Indians, wolves and other wild game were plentiful.

August Westphal was 11 when he came to Genoa Township with his parents in 1844 from Germany. Now, at 52, he was a prosperous farmer with two big barns and a house built to last many years. A small house, in which 10 children were raised, had been built in 1868. The second, much larger house, still standing, had been built in 1875. (The home of David & Charlene Kull, 1988.)

Most settlers were quite young when they arrived in the township (25-50). A large percentage were children, of course. Coming from countries which had been in existence for hundreds of years, they brought with them their skills and customs. Having no one but each other on whom to depend, the settlers helped and supported each other. The dour pictures one views of early settlers in the area convinces one they had no sense of humor and certainly didn't enjoy life. Yes, hard work was a fact of life, but when it was time to have fun that was done wholeheartedly also. The completion of a new barn called for a celebration in which all would join. Can't you hear the fiddles, the wind instruments, the drums, the dancing feet and the laughter rolling over the hills of Prairie View Subdivision?

Just prior to WW I, Conrad Seim acquired the Westphal place. The steeply rolling hills caused some of his buddies to good-naturedly tease him about his limp. Charles Weatherly, aware of the natural attractiveness of the landscape, purchased the property from Conrad's descendants and began construction of Prairie View in 1972. Now instead of sheep grazing, lovely homes wander up and over the old Westphal place. (Edited from "Michigan Memorabilia" by Bill Pless; "First Land Owners, Livingston County" by Milton Charboneau; and conversations with Charlene Kull and Helen Conricorde.)

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