Evolution in the Brighton Area - From Wilderness to Subdivisions

Struggling through the wet area in the south east corner of Genoa Township (at that time the north half of Hamburg Township) around the lake (Lime Lake), it was with relief Henry Earl arrived on higher ground. But what a steep hill to climb! Not only was it higher ground in Section 26, it was very high and very rolling. Henry had examined the 160 acres he had purchased from the U.S. government for $400 in July, 1836.

Henry and his wife, Nancy, lived in Saline, as did Nathaniel and Abigail Carr, who purchased an adjoining 120 acres. Within three years, Carr had acquired Earl's interest and by 1844, the tax records indicate John & Nellie Weichers paid taxes on 233 acres purchased from the Carrs.

The Weichers built a small house (log) on the very top of the hill on the section line along which most roads were eventually built. To add to the difficulties of life, the well was located at the bottom of the hill for many years. Most settlers did not build on the low ground because of the "Michigan fever" or ague which was prevalent among the settlers. It was thought to be caused and spread by the miasma and vapors of the lakes and low lands.

The Weichers were one of the many German families which early settled in Genoa Township. These diligent pioneers soon felt a need to resume the corporate worship they had known in their homeland. John Weichers is listed as a charter member of the "Evangelical Congregation of St. George in Genoa," organized in 1845.

By 1859, John Weichers was also a merchant, owning a building and business on the southwest corner of Grand River and Main in town. This building was torn down after Wh II.

In 1905 Emil Bauer owned the Weichers property, which, by then, had a typical farmstead of two floors with a large central chimney in the upstairs bedrooms. That same year Henry Webber appeared on the records to be followed within a few months by Henry Herbst and, in turn in 1907, John Herbst. The property was in the Herbst family for almost 80 years. Can one imagine the changes which, until 1986, when Weichers' Hill was made less steep, the huge oak trees along Brighton Road must have had pass beneath them? The settlers' oxen gave way to horses. The Model T could be put into neutral and one could coast all the way around Lime Lake. The advent of electricity created an entirely different world. Presently there is not a cow, sheep, chicken or barn (or the old house) on Weichers' Hill.

Within the past 2-3 years, Rolling Meadows subdivision has made good use of those hills on Brighton Road, west of Bauer Road. When standing on top of Weichers' Hill one sees many fine homes being built for the industrious 1980 settlers of the Brighton area. (Compiled and edited from "Michigan Memorabilia" by Bill Pleas; County Register of Deeds Office; conversation with Helen Herbst Rau.)

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Printed courtesy: Old Kent Bank
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Address Correction Requested

Brighton Area Preservation News

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 this purpose is worthwhile and should be promoted.

Brighton Area Historical Society
P.O. Box 481
Brighton, MI 48116
Vol. VII, No. 6
June, 1988

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Recap May 10, General Meeting

Did you ever fall asleep in the grainbin of a feed store? As a child, born of early settlers in the area, Mathias told of this event and other episodes of growing up in Brighton. An active and inquisitive youngster of the early 1900s, Mary's terrific memory took us back to a less hectic and chaotic time. Thank you, Mary, for your captivating recital.

Tuesday, September 20, is the date for the next General Meeting. A pot luck at 6:30 will begin the evening, a short business meeting at 7:30 will be followed by another narration by a Brightonite. Who will it be? Let us know if you would like to take your turn or have someone in mind you'd like to hear. Public invited.

DUES
Finance Comm. June 6, 7 PM.
Old Town Hall Rest. Comm. June 7, 21, 7 PM
Board Meeting: June 9, 7 PM
Above - at the Old Town Hall, 202 W. Main,
Lyons School Comm June 22, 7PM at Lyons
School, 11455 Dunn Rd.

1988 MEMBERSHIPS

Patrons:
Robert Clark, Norman & Mary Beth
Guest (Levonston).
Couple/Individual:
Bob & Marie Carr, Larry & Jean Clark (Milford), Dorothy Roberts
Foster (California), Harry & Mary Griffiths
Kathryn Hodgson, Eleon Hornung (Howell),
Bruce & Janet Owens, Mary Pearssall.

Sincerely thanks to all who have paid 1988 dues.
The label on this issue of Trail Tales notes the year for which dues are paid. (If there is no date but you wish to continue receiving the newsletter and demonstrate support for the Society and its goals, please consider some form of membership.)