

BRIGHTON'S OLD TOWN HALL LIVES (Conclusion)

Following the coming of the rail road, 1871, the west side of town (west of Ore Creek) boomed with merchants and residents. Friction as to location of the Post Office, construction of sidewalks, amount of gravel on the streets, etc., developed between the "Eastsiders" and the "Westsidiers."

In 1877, the residents petitioned for a building suitable for a village hall, a lockup and fire fighting equipment. A location suitable to both sides was needed. In March, 1874, Godfrey Westphal had been granted permission to build a store, which burned October 28, 1875, on the site of the present Old Town Hall. The city bought the Westphal property for \$350 but no building started because they felt the estimates of \$1673 and \$1850 were too high.

The following year a second petition arrived. Wm. Pipp bid \$2460. James Collett's bid, \$1950, with completion the next year was successful. Collett then found a \$200 error in his bid. Council cooperated and granted him the extra funds. February, 1880, was probably the first time the building was used.

To relieve the conflict of the "East" and "Westsidiers", a fire bell was installed in the Hyne elevator when one was placed in the belfry of the Town Hall. Cisterns to supply water for fire fighting were located on both sides of town.

The first floor accommodated the hand pumper and other fire fighting equipment the volunteer "Brighton Hook and Ladder Company #1" (February, 1876) had acquired. Two large doors opened outward on the front of the building with a smaller entry next to it. The lockup was in the back. The second floor was used by the council as meeting rooms and for elections. Justice was dispensed in this room by the Justices of the Peace or six man juries. For many years the entire township voted in the building. The balcony across the entire front of the second floor held political orators seeking local, county and state positions and was used for special events such as Memorial Day services (begun by the Grand Army of the Republic after the Civil War, 1884.)

In 1927, a small space was set aside for a library upstairs. When the fire department built more spacious quarters across Main Street after WW II, the library moved downstairs until 1957, when the Kiwanians renovated the old Detroit Edison substation for the library's use. Some time prior to the Fire department's move out of the building, the tower and bell had been removed as a perceived safety measure. (The bell has been installed in a prominent position in front of the department's latest building, 615 W. Grand River.)

By 1966, the recently vacated Brighton State Bank building, just west of the mill pond, was purchased and the city moved its offices to that location. The library moved back into the Old Town Hall until 1981, when it was incorporated into the new municipal building. The city then began renting the first floor to a book seller. (Comp/Ed by Marieanna Bair from Pless' "Michigan Memorabilia")

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