

EARLY GRISTMILLS OF THE BRIGHTON AREA (cont.)

Lyman Judson sold the Brighton Mill (northwest corner of W. North Street and S. West Street) to Egbert F. Albright and Chester Thomson in 1856. Under their operation for the next 25 years, the turbine water wheel was replaced by three others of improved style and two run of stones were employed. It is thought they were also the builders of a brick addition, complete with a tall chimney, to house a steam boiler to provide power in the dry summer months when Ore Creek's water flow was reduced to a trickle. During those times the pond dried to such a low level the rotting pond lilies and marsh grass caused an objectionable odor in the downtown and adjacent area.

In the mid 1870s mill ownership changed to Charles T. Hyne and sons Will, Fred and Frank. All had large farms in the area and other business interests, including a grain elevator and a coal and lumber yard. "HYNE BROS" was just visible on the sign on the mill's last day.

Along W. Main Street a foot bridge over the stream and its swampy edges was in use until after 1900. At that time low areas were filled, the street improved and a sidewalk laid. It's 1895, imagine traversing that walk: on the south side one sees the mill, its raceway ponds, the dam gate, foaming water in the spillway, the two bridges on North Street; and on the north side one looks out on the mill pond, the little church on the hill in front of the cemetery, homes to the west, and white boats tied here and there along the shore and under the foot bridge.

By 1907, the Galbraith family was advertising 25# sacks of their "Ideal" wheat flour for .55¢ and a like amount of "Gold Seal" flour for .60¢. Those prices included free delivery "to any part of the village."

Following the Galbraiths, Brighton Mills was operated by a partnership of two unrelated men named Thompson. Will, an experienced miller, worked in the mill full time. His partner, John, was an ambitious man following many different pursuits. He was a rural mail carrier by profession, but he also kept and milked a herd of cows in a barn on the north east corner of Grand River and Main Street. He also helped his partner install an electric motor to supplement water power.

Although it had been a favorite of at least two generations of homemakers, the "Ideal Bread and Pastry Flour" produced at the Brighton Mills was faced with stiff competition in the marketplace. Housewives were buying 'baker's bread' made in Detroit and delivered by truck. Prepared and packaged foods such as cookies, muffins and cupcakes were stocked in the local grocery stores. It wasn't long before the tired old mill, along with the tired old millers, was forced to shut its doors. (Compiled and edited by Marieanna Bair from: "Michigan Memorabilia", William Pless and the 1880 History of Livingston County. To be cont.)

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