

EARLY GRISTMILLS OF THE BRIGHTON AREA (Conc.)

Brighton was not the only community in which the world of technology caught up with the formerly vital mills; they were closed. Immediately following WW I, and continuing for more than 20 years, Henry Ford began purchasing old mills in some of the smaller towns, planning to convert them into water powered plants that could supply his River Rouge complex with small automobile parts. His intentions were to provide work during the winter months for those living in rural areas and small towns. Perhaps because of lack of community cooperation, high prices on adjacent land, etc., Mr. Ford dismissed plans for the local mill.

In the summer of 1953, the sluice dam, which enclosed a quiet pond of stagnant, odorous, mosquito-infested water (across Main Street from the Old Town Hall) was disturbed (by a neighbor's shovel). Later that night, with a deep rumble and the "dangdest racket you ever heard", the mill pond was no more. Huge trees which grew in the cool, moist hollow which was the sluice way, came crashing down; a result of the suddenly released water. The pond on the north side of Main was again merely little Ore Creek. The surrounding shallow, marshy area soon made itself known to the nostrils in the warm sun. This objectionable condition forced local politicians into action. Before long the property was purchased and a small control dam built on the north side of Main, the following year. A large culvert was installed to carry Ore Creek under the street to the south side of North Street. The hollow was filled in and a parking lot constructed.

Various community organizations have endeavored to enhance the millpond and its surroundings through the years, making it a unique and desirable addition to the town and community. Brighton Kiwanians built a gazebo to commemorate the nation's Bicentennial. Sunday evenings, during the summer, hundreds enjoy concerts and the indescribable ambiance which comes as a result of people playing, working and living together. It has become a gathering place for the community just as the old mill was once the center of activity.

However, at the closing of the old mill, local farmers were not without a mill to grind their grain. A.C. Stewart & Son had, c.1900, leased an elevator by the tracks behind the Chilson Store in Genoa Township. After two years, he leased the elevator by the rail road in Brighton. About 1917-18 this business was sold to a cooperative and he bought the building on Main Street (now Mill Pond Pub) where an electric motor drove the grinding equipment. During the 20s, 30s and 40s, wagons and trucks could be driven down the alley behind the elevator. Ears of corn and other grains were dumped into the grated chute to be ground. After Stewart sold the business, those with grain to grind had to go to Howell. Today the family can visit the restored Greenoch Mill in Green Oak Township on Rushton Road between 9 and 10 Mile Roads. A living, working mill will give them a taste of yesterday and a glimpse of the energy of those who preceded us. (Compiled and edited by Marieanna Bair from: "Michigan Memorabilia" by Wm. Pless, 1880 History of Liv. Co., Mary Mathias and Charlene Kull. Corrections and additions are most welcome.)

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