

BLACKSMITHING IN THE BRIGHTON AREA (cont.)

Andrew Sharp, Jr., only 12 years old, came from Bennington, Genesee County, New York, with his father, Andrew Sharp, Sr., in the fall of 1837. After stopping for one week in Pontiac, they then moved into Genoa Township and settled on the west line of town. A blacksmith by trade, Sharp, Sr., built a shop on his place and used it a number of years. The son learned the same trade and operated a shop two years in Howell.

In "A Brief History of Brighton" by Seth Jacobs, 1907, we learn that "One Warren Hill came to the village in an early day and built ...two buildings on Grand River Street, (one) occupied by C.L. Reed (a blacksmith) and Reickoff Bros. (jewelers). The building on the corner (next to W. North Street) was occupied as a residence..."

In 1847, Orlando A. Fuller bought the building which was the first school house in the village, built in 1837, on Grand River Trail (third house east of Hope Street). The structure was moved to the south side of Fitch (Main) Street, west of Grand River Trail on a lot owned by John Becker. It was used as a blacksmith shop until 1878, when it was moved again, to the rear of the lot and used as a barn.

Lewis Dorr, Sr., was a very early settler in the area (Genoa Township). He operated a tavern and stage coach stop on Grand River Trail northwest of Brighton at Kellogg Road. Dorr also had a blacksmith shop there to cater to the needs of stage coach and freight wagon operators, et al. John Becker (probably born in Germany) worked for Dorr (c. 1850-60) as a blacksmith, wagon maker and tin smith. He and Louisa Dorr, Lewis' daughter (born in Genoa Township) were married. (Both are buried in the Village Cemetery in Brighton along with their two year old child.)

In 1874, Henry Ratz, bought Lewis Dorr's farm and tavern including the blacksmith shop. Henry's son, George B., finished his growing up years in that location and learned some about the blacksmith trade in that shop.

Anticipating the expansion of the west side of Brighton with the coming of the railroad shortly after the Civil War, Main Street was extended westward across the south end of the millpond. The street was low and muddy most of the time, so a footbridge was built next to the pond, over the water, for pedestrians. It spanned a distance of about 300', from the village hall (Old Town Hall) to where the D. & C. Store is now located (314 W. Main). At that time a livery barn and a blacksmith shop stood on wood pilings with the millpond water beneath the buildings. (To be continued. Compiled and edited by Marieanna Bair from writings of Wm. Pless, Seth B. Jacobs, 1880 History of Livingston County and Foxfire 5.)

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