

BLACKSMITHING IN THE BRIGHTON AREA (Conc.)

In 1910, Adolph Martin and his bride, Bertha Young, came to Brighton from Dortmund, Germany. A brother and other relatives were already located here. An expert blacksmith, he realized "there were greener pastures in Brighton" so they moved from their Clark Lake residence after only six months.

The Stuhrberg blacksmith shop on Grand River (where the Canopy is now located, 130 W. Grand River) was rented by the Martins. In 1914, they purchased the blacksmith shop on the northwest corner of North Street and Grand River (Champs Pub, 140 E. Grand River) from Norm Rosburn. Their living quarters were upstairs.

About 1926, this building was replaced with a cement block building, which had a bar in front and his shop in the rear. It was at this time the Rolison Hardware (111 W. Main) was built by the same builder. (His daughter remembers his irritation that his building was not completed first.) Their home then was across the street on the site of the North Street Professional Building, 121 W. North St.

Customers would bring cars in to him for repair. He often had to devise the repair from his experience and knowledge of metal. One customer subsequently acquired a patent for himself on Martin's repair job. As most blacksmiths, he was also a ferrier, going to the horse barns when necessary. At the time he located in Brighton, seven smiths worked in the area; he outlived them all. When he retired he was the last smith in town. By then he had gone into the farm implement business. In the 1946 "Victory Home Coming" book an advertisement "Compliments Adolph Martin, Implement and Repair Shop" can be found.

In 1915, he became a U.S. citizen. Aware of the benefits of living in a country where thrift and industry resulted in a satisfactory living for himself and his family, he often extended a helping hand to others. An example of his generous nature is depicted in a story a daughter relates - During the depression of the 1930s she encouraged him to try to collect from the many who owed him. "Do you have enough to eat?" "Yes." "Are you going to school?" "Yes." "These people may be having a harder time than we are." She replaced the box of unpaid invoices back on the shelf.

Many of the area's smiths were people, who like Martin, had learned the trade in Europe and emigrated from their homeland. An appreciation for the opportunities in the U.S. seems evident in the responsible manner in which many conducted their business. The Martins, the Beckers, Hartmans, Dorrs, Herbsts, Webers and others (including wives) changed the wilderness into farm lands and towns. Today this area is home to new settlers who are also trying to be trustworthy citizens so those who follow can be proud too. (Compiled and edited by Marieanna Bair from the Argus-Dispatch Centennial Issue, 1967 and with the aid of Elsa Martin Stegenga.)

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