

## IS THERE A DOCTOR IN THE AREA?

Not all settlers in the Brighton area had background in the skills needed to survive in the wilderness. In the process of felling trees and shaping logs, with which a cabin could be built, an ax or an adz swung by a settler inexperienced in that kind of work, occasionally resulted in a broken bone, severed limb or deep flesh wound. If the skin was broken infection often set in and eventually the limb was lost or the patient died of blood poisoning. The bite of a massasauga called for deep cuts into the area of the wound and a tourniquet tightly fastened. The result often was extreme blood loss, damage or loss of the limb to gangrene (resulting from the tourniquet) which usually lead to loss of life also. Sometimes a poultice was applied to 'draw' the poison. In any event such an accident could be a disaster of considerable measure.

A burn was treated with various combinations of oils, waxes, salves and herbs. If healing took place, permanent disfigurement or crippling was usually the result.

If it was felt a doctor's assistance was required or would be valuable to the recovery of the patient, the nearest doctor was summoned. In the western part of the county, Dr. Cyrus Wells told of often traveling 20-30 miles through the forest and around the swamps on horseback to tend a patient. Dr. Pattison, (cited earlier) located in Dibbleville (later known as Fentonville and then Fenton) frequently tended the sick in Highland, White Lake, Grand Blanc, Deerfield and Hartland. A lot of territory to cover on foot or horseback.

Brighton's first physician (and first in the county) Dr. Wilbur Fisher from Ann Arbor, came in 1836. Described as a peculiar character "he was not the possessor of a finished medical education, but having good natural ability and still more tact, he secured an extensive practice, and was on the whole a successful physician", as narrated in the 1880 History of Livingston County. Perhaps the mere presence of a person who seemed to know what he was about, inspired a certain confidence in Dr. Fisher's patients. "His medicines were certainly given in sufficiently large doses to cure, if quantity were the desideratum."

Dr. Ira P. Bingham, (brother of Gov. Kinsley S. Bingham of Green Oak Township) located here as a physician in 1841. He had been here six years before, left and returned.) His practice continued for almost 40 years. A physician and surgeon of considerable skill and reputation, he served as the principal doctor of the village and surrounding country. Dr. Bingham also cared about the political structure of the county; serving as Judge of Probate in 1858, among other positions. (By Marieanna Bair. To be continued. The writer urges person with knowledge of medical practitioners in the area, since the turn of the century, to contact her. 229-6402)

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