Many of the surrounding communities, by 1860, had several physicians in place. Between 1838 and 1850 thirteen physicians had come to Howell. Fowlerville, Hartland, and Pinckney all had several doctors during this period of time. Often these doctors didn’t stay more than two years and not all had a medical degree. Several practiced the “Thompsonian” system. (This term is unfamiliar to this writer. Perhaps someone can enlighten us.) Several were homeopathists.

Dr. Thomas Curtis (physician of the mid 1830s of whom we wrote earlier) had his office in the tavern he built in Kensington. A physician often was in the drug store business. (Conflict of interest?)

Several served with the Michigan units in the Civil War. Among these was Dr. William J. McIlench, U.S. Army Assistant Surgeon General. The doctor was born 9-13-31, on a farm in Schoharie County, New York. He acquired a little more than the basic education available in the local school district and arrived in Michigan to teach in Brighton and Green Oak Townships in 1853. Within the year he “began reading medicine with Dr. Ira P. Bingham of Brighton and in the fall of 1855 entered the medical department of the University of Michigan, graduating with the class of 1858.” Because of extra studies he undertook he was considered better equipped than the average young doctor. He expanded his medical education by attending lectures and keeping up with medical developments. Except for a few months in New Hudson and service in the Civil War, he spent 52 years in Brighton practicing medicine. (Not all of Dr. McIlench’s patients survived his ministrations. In 1893 he operated on Andrew Keary who “died while under chloroform on his own kitchen table as Dr. McIlench was operating.”)

In 1868, he married Margaret Sowle whose parents came to Brighton in 1845 when she was an infant. The doctor was also involved with city government. He is listed as one of the first two assessors when Brighton became a village in 1867. Dr. McIlench died in 1-1-11 and is buried in Fairview Cemetery beside his wife who died in 1904.

In 1890, William C. Brown, who was born in Gallupville, New York, 1851, came to Brighton. He was a nephew of Dr. McIlench and practiced with him. Not long after his arrival he married Louisa Becker, daughter of John Becker of the Flipp and Becker Hardware Store. (Later Rats’ Hardware, now the Kristall, S.E. corner Main & Hyne.) When Dr. Brown set up his own practice it naturally followed that his office was set up on the second floor of the hardware store. (By Marianna Bair. To be continued. It is hoped that persons with knowledge of medical practitioners in the area, since the turn of the century, will contact her. 229-6402)

BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. Box 481
Brighton, MI 48116

HISTORICAL RENOVATION ON OLD TOWN HALL

An Old Town Hall Restoration Committee has been formed with the city and historical society to begin an historic renovation on the inside and outside of the Old Town Hall. There will be three phases to be completed. Phase One will be restoration of the upstairs for city offices. Also in this phase is restoration of arched windows and doors in the front and side of the building.

Phase Two will be restoration of the upstairs for the Historical Society. Upon completion of the upstairs, the society plans to house a museum and archives which will be open to the public. The Society will be helping with financing of this phase.

Phase Three will be restoration of the brick and foundation work on the outside of the building.

Gary McIlench and Penny Szczeczenowski have been appointed to represent the Society on this committee. If you have questions or suggestions, please contact them.

The March General meeting of the Brighton Area Historical Society will be held on March 12 at the Miller School Intergenerational Learning Center.

A potluck at 6:30 will be followed by the meeting at 7:30.

Charles Bidwell, a native Brighton man, will be speaking on the past and present of the Brighton fire Department.

Plan on an enjoyable evening with your friends.