IS THERE A DOCTOR IN THE AREA? (Cont.)

After the first quarter of the 1800s many schools of medicine were founded in the mid-west, and many floundered into oblivion, after teetering on the brink of insolvency for a few years. Compatible facilities, teachers, research equipment, etc., all had to be reimbursed by the tuition paid or the in-kind contribution of the student. Add to that the cost of room and board and one is amazed that there were so many in the medical profession.

As the seminal 'medical schools' proliferated, it was realized that a study of the human body would have to be a necessary part of learning how to restore health to a patient. Why did a healed bone often result in a crooked limb? Why did a break in the skin result in a frequently fatal infection? Was there a connection between drinking water from a stream in the meadow where the cattle were grazing and the high, incapacitating fever? Why did formerly healthy pioneers develop the 'ague'?

The lack of understanding of how the human body works, the paucity of understanding of the complexity of diseases, necessary sanitation, etc., all conspired to make it possible to promote a multitude of cures. (The patient of today will also attempt any cure when desperate.) A medley of 'irregulars' and quacks prolificated. There were those healers who promoted the use of steam systems, roots, herbs, water cures, the reading of the bungs on the skull, Indian cures, eclecticism, the inclusion of religion and morality with medical research - all made for a countless variety of possible cures for the Michigan pioneer. The inclusion of calomel (mercurous chloride), alcohol, human waste, blood letting, etc., in the little black bag her doctor carried makes one marvel that any of the pioneers survived and were able to do the work of settling the area. Small wonder that 'Dr. Chases' Receipts' sold over 4,000,000 copies. Similar health care books would be found next to the bible in the home library.

Some medical instructors realized that to learn how the human body was constructed might reveal some clues. To accomplish this the dissection of corpses presented the only answer. Even today there is a natural aversion to the dissection of the human body. It is not difficult to imagine the terror, superstition and fear of people 150 years ago to that idea. It was not easy to sustain a dependable stock of cadavers. Often inventory was maintained by the use of professional body suppliers who not occasionally visited the local Potter's Field under cover of darkness. Knowledge of this practice was rather widespread, all of which added to the mistrust the pioneer had of the medical profession. The length of time a student spent at his studies varied with the school attended. Then, as now, 'diploma mills' were flourishing. (By Marianna Bair. To be continued. Anyone with information regarding the subject matter of these articles is urged to contact her. 229-6402)

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

THANKS, THANKS, THANKS,

The Brighton Area Historical Society would like to say thanks to Rudy Herrmann as he steps down as a director of the Society. Rudy has been active in the Society not only as a board member but as president for many years. He will continue to give support and help to Society projects and services, as always. The Society is truly honored to have someone with Rudy's willingness and concern as a member. Much of the Society's success has been because of Rudy. We all say THANK YOU!

The Society has appointed Ricci Bandkau to fill the board vacancy. Ricci is a longtime Brighton person and will be a wonderful addition to the Society. She has volunteered to work on membership and oral history activities in addition to her work on the board. We all say WELCOME!

FOLK ART FAIR PLANS

The Society will have a booth at the Summer Folk Art Fair, August 10, 11. People are needed to work at the booth. Call Mike Cuthbert, 229-4550, to volunteer your time. Plan ahead for this event.

The next general meeting of the Brighton Area Historical Society is scheduled for Tuesday, May 14. A potluck at 6:30 will take place before the general meeting at 7:30. The meeting will be held in the Miller Intergenerational Center on Spencer Road.

The program will be a discussion by the membership regarding future meeting. A survey will be taken on scheduling of meetings, how many to have a year, and the programs for that year, which will interest people and get them to attend.

We hope you will come and give your input regarding this important matter.

Remember- the Society is only as strong and valuable as its membership allows it to be. We need your help to make this an important part of the Brighton community.

BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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GENERAL MEETING MAY 14

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