WINTER ACTIVITIES OF AN EARLIER TIME IN THE AREA

The winter of 1930 was especially good for the ice harvesting business in the area. In March it was still thick enough to support men, horses and machinery. Spring would come before long, but the unusually cold winter enabled local farmers, who were relieved of the toil of planting and harvesting crops, to earn some cash during the winter; hard cash was always hard to come by.

Very early on, farmers who had lakes on their property often harvested ice and stored it in their own ice houses for use by the family. By utilizing a saw with handles on each side, which could be gripped with two hands, ice was cut into manageable blocks. Sawdust from the saw mill and shad hay were packed into the closely placed blocks and covered over the top. (Marsh hay was considered by some to be a better insulator than saw dust.) If sufficient ice had been harvested home cranked ice cream would be made for the Independence Day celebration. The ice helped cool food during the summer months.

Between 1832 and 1855 employment in the area was limited to farming (or clearing land), sawyers, millers, tavern keepers, general and dry goods stores, blacksmithing, foundry workers, distillers, masons, carpenters, teachers, doctors, lawyers and politicians. In the winter months some found work at filling a huge ice house at Worden Lake.

Truman B. Worden came to Genoa Township from Wayne County in the spring of 1835. Among the property he purchased were 20 acres in Section 25, most of which was covered by the lake which bears his name. Worden, who had a house on Grand River on top of the hill in town, was the first death in the village in November 1837 and the first buried in the village cemetery. (Rather dubious distinctions.)

Eastern House, built in 1850, got its ice from Worden Lake. Others in the village used ice from the mill pond. (Who the harvesters were we don’t know.)

The advent of the rail road to the county was, beyond doubt, a major contributor to the proliferation of commercial ice businesses after 1870. Large ice houses, many stories high, located at Island Lake, Whitmore Lake and Worden Lake, were all near the tracks. These ice companies serviced homes and markets in cities such as Detroit and Toledo, where rail road connections were in place pre 1870. The Toledo Ice house at Whitmore Lake burned c. 1930. It was located near the northwest shore of the lake. (Prepared by Marianna Bair. To be continued. To make a more complete record for Society files comments, corrections, additions gratefully accepted. 229-6402)

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

GRAND RIVER TRAIL

BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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GENERAL MEETING SET

The next General Meeting of the Brighton Area Historical Society is scheduled for Tuesday, April 14. A potluck supper will be held before the meeting. If you would like to attend this, please bring a dish to pass and enjoy the company of other Society members. The General Meeting will begin at 7:30. A local speaker will be talking about recollections of Brighton.

The meeting will be held at the Intergenerational Center at Miller School. The Society hopes to see you there. Come and enjoy the evening and bring a friend too.

SOCIETY NEWS

Those members who have been storing photos and other archival materials for the Society can now bring them to the Old Town Hall for storage in our new archives in the upstairs of the building.

As the upstairs project for restoration begins, the Society is now able to accept historical photos and reference materials dealing with Brighton and the surrounding area. If you have something you think the Society may be interested in please call Marianna Bair who is currently working on this project.

The next Board Meeting of the Society will be held on Thursday, March 12, at 7:00. The meeting will be held at the Old Town Hall. You are invited to attend.

Brighton has many historic sites which should be protected. Applications for the Michigan Historic Site Registration are available through the Society. If you are interested, please contact a board member.

Did you know? Brighton is celebrating its 125th year in 1992.