

A RAILROAD COMES TO THE BRIGHTON AREA

July 4th, 122 years ago, Brightonians, by the 100s, were waiting at the railroad crossing on W. Main. They were there to celebrate the opening of the Detroit, Lansing and Northern Railroad. They were impatient; they had been waiting a long time.

In fact, September 21, 1864, saw the incorporation of the Detroit & Howell Railroad company. Four Commissioners and 16 Directors were among the first officers. Wm. McPherson, Treasurer, was the main promoter and to him must major credit be given for the procuring of subscriptions, securing rights-of-way, etc.

It was September, 1866, before the president of the railroad reported that sufficient stock had been sold to begin construction between Plymouth and Howell. But it was 1868 before much work was done and then the money ran out.

On June 23, 1868, the Howell & Lansing Railroad Company was registered with the state. These two railroad companies merged on April 11, 1870 and became the Detroit, Howell & Lansing Railroad Company. (In September, 1870, this company consolidated with another to form the Detroit, Lansing, Lake Michigan Railroad Company. Soon after this became the Detroit, Lansing & Northern to be renamed Pere Marquette by 1915.) By working from both Detroit and Lansing the tracks met in Fowlerville in August, 1871.

One could board or leave the train at Green Oak Station, Brighton, Genoa Station, Howell and Fowlerville. For .22¢ one could travel from G.T. Junction to Green Oak Station, 38 miles; to Brighton, 44 miles cost .24¢, and to Genoa Station, 47 miles, the charge was .26¢ according to a poster dated August 21, 1871.

The aforementioned Wm. McPherson was an astute businessman. Early in 1871, certain of the route the railroad would take through Brighton, he, his brother Edward and Hiram H. Smith, president of the Detroit, Lansing, Lake Michigan Railroad, formed a partnership to buy land in Brighton. The Smith-McPherson Addition included land lying north of W. Main bought from Elizabeth Cushing and that south of W. Main from Elijah Fitch. By early 1872 lots were being sold in an area four blocks north and south of W. Main out to the Genoa Township line at 7th Street, for residential purposes.

Lumber yards sprang up on both sides of the tracks, also grain storage facilities, coal yards and stockyards. The Western House Hotel was built in 1869. A depot was built at the west end of Cedar Street. With no fanfare or publicity at the time the depot seemed to disappear one August day in 1968. The community was unaware of the planned removal until it was gone. (By Marieanna Bair. To be continued.)

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