Barns were often built very near the road. In order to set the separator so the straw stack could be built where the farmer directed, the engine had to be placed on the other side of the road and the long, heavy belt strung across the road. The farmer provided access around the barn for the horse drawn traffic of the time and no one seemed to mind the delay. The coming of the automobile put an end to stringing the belt across the road.

A bit of friendly rivalry ensued among the farmers’ wives as they prepared meals for the threshing crew. Usually two meals were prepared for up to 20 men for as many days as it took to finish the threshing. A hired crew received breakfast also.

The meal preparation entailed many hours in a hot kitchen (in hot weather) peeling, cooking, roasting, baking, table setting, table clearing, dish washing; and it would begin again for the evening meal. The farmer’s wife enlisted the aid of female relatives. If she didn’t have enough daughters, to help with the work. As with the men, this favor was returned in like manner. Her customers were always appreciative and hungry. Working from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., their appetites matched the generous meals.

The threshers, garbed in bib overalls, long-sleeved shirt, red bandana handkerchief around the neck in an attempt to keep out itch, picky, chaff, and heavy shoes were ready when the dinner bell by the back door was rung. A wash bench was set up outside with pans of water, bars of soap and several towels. The threshers appreciated the opportunity to escape from the sweat, grime and chaff which had accumulated. The younger children kept them supplied with fresh water from the cistern as they clustered near the chatting and often teasing men. The fresh water bucket with one dipper for all to use, was welcomed by the thirsty workers. Usually a mirror was hung in a handy place and a comb could be run through wet, tousled hair. After all, one of the young ladies serving might be a special someone. It should be noted that occasionally workers brought their lunch and went home for supper because of that particular farmer’s wife’s lack of culinary skills. (By Marieanna Bair. To be continued.)

BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. Box 481
Brighton, MI 48116-0481

1994 WAS A GOOD YEAR

To help all be aware of the Society’s activities this past year an annual report has been compiled. It makes for encouraging reading.

Five General Meetings were proffered. A video of the history and restoration of the State Capitol was presented in March. In May a hot dog roast and tour of Lyons School and a sale were held. July saw a historic tour of West Main and an ice cream cone from the Yum Yum Tree, hosted by the Society board members. A repeat tour, this time of E. Grand River, was offered in September. David and Charlene Kull hosted the Annual Meeting at their home in November. This included a tour of their restored Italianate home which was the highlight of the evening.

Monthly issues of Trail Tales were prepared. Thanks to Ethel Gebben and her helpers, for folding, labeling and mailing and to John Linkham for distributing copies to local businesses for the public.

With the leadership of Nancy Fredenburg and Dave Barton, the society’s restored buggy appeared in the July 4th parade. She has also been seen to the microfilming of early issues of the Brighton Argus and conducted some oral history interviews. A policy re: Oral History has been adopted. Nancy continued as Membership Chairman until Tom and Aubrey Leith picked up the ball. (Dues are what pay the administration bills of the organization – they keep us free of the red ink.) Please turn to ‘994’ on page 2.

DATES TO REMEMBER
Dec. 9. 9-11 a.m.: work at archives.
12. 7:30 p.m. Board meeting.
25: Happy Holiday!!!

December 9 and 12 meetings will be at the Old Town Hall, 202 W. Main, upstairs.

CORRECTION!!!
“A Few Brighton Firsts” in the November issue noted that the bank at Kensington was organized 12-12-1857. The correct date is 12-29-1857. Thanks to Jim Vichich.

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