BRIGHTON AREA FARMERS: FROM BEEF TO DAIRY c. 1960 (CONCLUDED)

Depending on the number of milking cows in a herd at a given time, a stainless steel tanker is driven to the dairy farm each 24-48 hours and, after testing for purity, draws off the milk which has been accumulated by the farmer. These tankers, ranging in size from 15,000 to 20,000 gallons (384 per gallon), transport the milk to a distant milk processing facility. Michigan milk produced in the county is delivered to the Michigan Milk Depot in Plymouth.

It is obvious many changes have taken place in the farming business in the county. In 1967 there were 208 dairy farms, of which 191 were milked by hand. In 1969, that total is down to 32. Already in 1967 there were no dairy farms in Green Oak and Brighton Townships. Most dairy farms are now found in the northern tier of townships. Milk size has also changed, ranging from 20-500 head they average 36 head of cattle - up from an average of 30 in 1960. The need of costly equipment is there whether for 30, 60 or 100.

Simple economics decrees that the more cattle the lower the unit cost. The capital investment involved in starting any farming business precludes all but those who are beguiled by a farm by parents. As more people move into the area the farmer finds his land assessed at higher rates. Most find it financially unfeasible to continue.

Perhaps to ensure that a farmer’s life is not without a few disturbing features, Mother Nature stirs the pot. One such time was March, 1973. A severe snow storm closed roads for days and caused some to lose electrical power. Unless one had a generator handy, this was a double whammy. Without electricity cows had to be milked by hand (they must be milked regularly); dozens of them. However, after all that work, the milk had to be dumped for several days until the tanker could get through to pick it up. Nor could the milk be properly cooled or pumped from the bulk tank to the milk truck. Even those who had power to continue normal milkings (2-3 times daily) also had to dump several milkings down the drain because of the snow blocked roads.

On the lighter side: The story is told of the old farmer who hoarded his milk checks, not cashing them for several months. This bothered the bookkeeper at the milk factory when he balanced his accounts, but the farmer wouldn’t respond to his appeals. A neighbor heard about it and told the bookkeeper he could get him to cash them because the farmer listened in on the party telephone line. That neighbor and another feigned a conversation, “Have you cashed your milk check yet?” “No.” “You better not waste time. Because I heard in town that the factory might not have the money in the bank for all the checks.” The old farmer was waiting at the bank door before it opened the next morning. (Compiled from “Michigan Memorabilia” by Bill Pless.)

*Practical Home Veterinarian, 1913. David Roberts, DVM; interviews with Mary Taylor, Clarence Taylor, A.J. Southwell, Alice Newcomb, Fred Catrell and John Leech, County Agricultural Agent. Also newspaper articles by Andrew and Claudine Jackson and Duane Girbach.

BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. Box 48
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EDITORS

TRAIL TALKS
Brighton Area Preservation News

The purpose of the Brighton Area Historical Society is to preserve, advance and disseminate knowledge of the history of the Brighton Area.

The membership is composed of people who feel this purpose is worthwhile and should be promoted.

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DATES TO REMEMBER

* Apr. 9 9-11 a.m. A.R.C. Archives.

** 16 Stained Glass Tour.

* 25 7:30 P.M. Society Board Meeting. Members welcome.

May 13 2nd Annual Michigan One-Room
Schoolhouse Conference. Lona.

** 25-26; Michigan Archival Association
Meeting and Workshops.

21-26; Michigan Architectural Week

* at Old Town Hall 202 W. Main St.
**See related articles. For more information on any of the above, call M. Bair 229-6402.

EDITORIAL

Altho’ the Society enjoys an active board, volunteers are necessary to fulfill the purposes of the organization. A membership person to keep records in order: A publicity person to promote the various projects and events: Newsletter editor or co-editor: a fund raising chairman, Lyons School helpers, etc., are just some of the places you can fill. Contact Pres. Bair or any board member. You’ll find it satisfying and rewarding.

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MICHIGAN STAINED GLASS SURVEY


** **

MICHIGAN HISTORICAL MUSEUM SEeks your home MOVIES

Looking for a larger audience to screen your home movies? The Michigan Historical Museum in Lansing is searching for certain older home movies to include in its 20th century exhibits. Home movies, portraying life in the 1920’s have the potential to make the 1920’s more personal and the museum exhibits more engaging for visitors.

Opening in January, 1995 this exhibit will complete the story of Michigan from the Ice Age to the present. Movies showing towns, vehicular traffic, various activities and social movements, the arrival of immigrants, delivery vehicles, etc., are especially desirable. Contact: Denise Yockey, 517/373-2520

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