In 1843 the Livingston County Agricultural Society was formed for the purpose of encouragement and advancement of agriculture. This is barely ten years since the first settlers came to this wilderness area. In that short time land was cleared of trees, swamps were drained by digging ditches and the prairie was furrowed by the plow. The foremost crop at the time was wheat. This was the main ingredient in the pioneer’s diet. With oxen, occasionally a horse, tree stumps were pulled and burned. Prior to this the trees had been girdled in order to allow the sun to reach the ground. Plowing the soil always brought stones of all sizes to the surface. One of the daily jobs of the children was to pick them up into piles.

With a pan of wheat, or a seeder strapped over the shoulder, the farmer scattered the seed. After 3-4 months and warm weather the ripe wheat was ready to be harvested. When the heads were heavy with grain the pioneer’s anxiety grew with each passing wind or rain storm. Would his grain be flattened to the ground where it might be wet and begin to rot? His family, the cattle, sheep, etc., depended on him.

Finally after several hot, dry days it was time to cut the wheat. One walked through the wheat swinging the cradle scythe, letting it fall in windrows. Family members followed, gathering up the windrows until the arm was full, then tying it with a handful of grain stalks. Several of these bundles were stacked, cut the ends, into small groups supporting each other.

These bundles were then pitched into a wagon, hauled to the barn, or some protected area. A canvas, or some sort of ground cover was spread out. The dry wheat was spread about and the beating of the wheat with a flail began. Sometimes the oxen or horses were driven over the wheat to extract the grains. Ingenious farmers soon figured out a roller type contraption to which the draft animals were hitched. To thresh the wheat.

Wind power was used to separate the grain from its hull. Either by tossing it into the air by hand or the use of a fanning mill. This was turned by hand, whereby air was blown through the grain. The winnowed grain was usually poured into gunny sacks. Later barns were built with a granary or a separate building constructed. The remaining chaff and wheat stalks were used to refill the farmer’s mattress each year and as bedding for the cattle. (by Marieanna Bair, to be continued.)

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

SPAGHETTI SUPPER??

The dates has been changed to Friday,
October 21, 4:50-7:00. The Fire Hall,
615 W. Grand River is the site. A fun
time for everyone Volunteers are
needed:

A. To request donations of cash and/or
food.
B. To cook and kitchen help.
C. Decorating and set up help.
D. Clean up, greeter, ticket seller,
publicity, etc.

A more extensive list was in the August
Trail Tales. Call Marieanna Bair, 229-
6402 with your offer of help. Board
personnel are all involved with a pro-
ject(s). Volunteers must come forward
to proceed with this 15th Spaghetti
Supper.

1995 BOARD AND DIRECTORS

Several of those on the board are willing
to continue serving another year. However
it is vital that new (or old) faces be
included on the board. Call a board member
and tell them of your desire to help the
Society in the pursuit of its goals. The
various projects and fund raising events
need your support. Read this issue of Trail
Tales and see where you fit in.

GENERAL MEETING SEPTEMBER 13

Another walking history tour is planned
for a General Meeting. This will go down
South Grand River, via West Street, to Bright-
ton Lake Road, we’ll meet 6:30 (dress for the
weather) at the Veterans’ Rock by the Mill Pond again. We’re looking for a megaphone or
portable mike. Refreshments will follow. The
public is invited. Bring a friend.