AREA FARMERS C. 1900

Research of local farms and farmers, listed in the Brighton Argus, continues. Lake View, the farm of Willard Beach, is the subject of this issue.

In 1839, Willard's parents, Smith (b. 1800, N.Y.) and Harriot (b. 1802, N.J.), moved with their young family to an unbroken land in Brighton Township. Smith had bought 160 acres, NE 4th Section 22 (Pleasant Valley Road 1 mile N. of Bun) sight unseen, as was so often the case, in 1833.

As the Becher's earliest neighbors, Willard O. and Mary Ann Valentine have acquired the reputation of welcoming newcomers into their cabin until new log houses could be built. The 1850 census records Willard, Jr., is living with Willard and his widowed mother, Harriot. William's brother, James, is living in the Aaron Beach household a half mile south. These boys have lost both parents. The father died in January and mother the following September, 1843. They are the first two burial records on the two acres set aside on Smith's farm for a grave yard, as noted on the earliest maps. Smith's is the next grave dug in the plot, 1849.

Upon the death of his father, the property came to Willard. He married neighbor Alvira Bird, c. 1850; also born in New York. (Her family came to the area about the same time as Willard's.) It is possible the families were already acquainted. Willard and Alvira have two children. Jane is born in 1852 and Wilbur S. in 1858. By 1852, Willard has bought the WI NW 25, across the road, which includes Beach Lake. About 1874 some of this land is transferred to the Wesleyan Methodist Church congregation for a building site. (NE corner Pleasant Valley/Jacoby Road) Before long the Beach Cemetery becomes the Pleasant Valley Cemetery. In 1890 Willard's tax bill was $54.05.

Willard died in 1907 and son, Wilbur, in 1916. Willard's obituary reads "He was a man of sterling integrity and unquestionable morality." Father and son rest in the same cemetery as their ancestors.

It has been some time since Willard's Lake View Farm has been under cultivation. By 1995 it is owned by the Dunn Realty Co. Before 1979 a dam has been constructed on Mann Creek and Lake Moraine Dam is well underway. Beach Lake is now the site of many fine homes of those who have an appreciation for the 'country' atmosphere.

(Compiled by Marianna Bair from: First Settlers of Livingston County, First Landowners of Livingston County and copies of obituaries compiled by Milton Chabrowa. Also from census records, plat maps and Pleasant Valley Cemetery listings. Corrections/additions welcome. 810/229-6402.)