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AREA FARMS C. 1900

RESEARCH OF LOCAL FARMS AND FARMERS, LISTED IN THE BRIGHTON ARGUS, THEIR BACKGROUND AND LOCATION CONTINUES. WILLIAM WILSON'S CHERRY HILL IS THE SUBJECT OF THIS ISSUE.

WILLIAM'S FATHER, JOHN, WAS BORN IN 1826 IN NORTHERN IRELAND. ALTHO' THE DATE AND REASON FOR HIS IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES IS NOT CERTAIN IT CAN BE ASSUMED THE POTATO BLIGHT IN IRELAND DURING THE 1850s, WHICH DESTROYED ONE OF THE STAPLES OF THE DIET IN THAT COUNTRY, WAS RESPONSIBLE.

WILLIAMS' MOTHER, MARGARET WHORTON, WAS BORN IN 1838 IN LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND AND LIVED IN BETTER CIRCUMSTANCES. SHE WAS WORKING AS A MAID FOR A FAMILY IN FRANKLIN, MICHIGAN WHEN SHE AND JOHN MET. HOW JOHN MADE HIS WAY TO MICHIGAN IS STILL A MATTER OF CONJECTURE. HOWEVER C. 1860 HE AND MARGARET WERE MARRIED.

THEIR FIRST AREA FARM WAS ON THE SITE OF PRESENT DAY GENERAL MOTORS PROVING GROUND. THE VERY HILLY AND GRAVELLY ACREAGE WAS DIFFICULT TO FARM PRODUCTIVELY. BY 1880, 200 ACRES IN SECTIONS 3 AND 4 IN BRIGHTON TOWNSHIP (WEST EDGE OF GMPG, ALONG PLEASANT VALLEY ROAD) WHICH WERE WELL BELOW THE "BLUFFS" OR "BINDERNAGEL HEIGHTS", AS THEY WERE OFTEN DESCRIBED, BECAME THE WILSON HOME.

WILLIAM, BORN 1862, LIVED 11 YEARS ON THIS FARM ACQUIRING SOME EDUCATION AT THE NEARBY ONE ROOM SCHOOL, BIRD SCHOOL. HE AND HIS EIGHT SIBLINGS FELT FORTUNATE TO BE ABLE TO ATTEND AT LEAST 3-4 MONTHS TOTAL IN A YEAR. HE AND HIS BROTHERS, BEN AND FRANK, OFTEN WORKED FOR THE NEIGHBORS, HARVESTING, ETC. HIS SISTERS, NINA, ADA, MINNIE, VINA, LOTTIE AND FANNIE WORKED AS DOMESTICS. ALL THE CHILDREN BROUGHT THEIR EARNINGS TO THE PARENTS. THIS CUSTOM WAS NOT UNUSUAL FOR THE TIMES. ALSO NOT UNUSUAL WAS THE PATTERN OF MARRIAGE AMONG NEIGHBOR CHILDREN; NINA, DAUGHTER OF GILBERT AND HARRIOTT KELLOGG BRADLEY, BECAME WILLIAM'S WIFE C. 1890. MARGARET, HOWARD AND RUTH, WERE BORN TO THEM.

THE 1895 ATLAS BUSINESS DIRECTORY IDENTIFIED WILLIAM AS "FARMER AND STOCK". TO APPLY THE NAME CHERRY HILL TO HIS FARM THERE MUST ALSO HAVE BEEN FRUIT ORCHARDS PLANTED. AT THAT TIME WILLIAM IS FARMING 120 ACRES IN SECTION 33 IN HARTLAND TOWNSHIP (N½ SE AND SW SE) ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF BLAINE RD BETWEEN MAXFIELD LAKE ROAD AND FLINT ROAD (THE MAIN ROAD TO FLINT AT THE TIME). A RESIDENCE ACROSS FROM THE SOUTH END OF LONG LAKE WOULD APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN THEIR HOME. BY 1915 LAND IN SECTIONS 3 AND 4, BRIGHTON TOWNSHIP N½ NW SW AND NE NE RESPECTIVELY, (ALMOST 60 ACRES) IS ALSO IN HIS NAME. AND TODAY? EXPRESSWAY U.S. 23 TRAVERSES WILLIAM AND NINA'S FARM. (COMPILED BY MARIEANNA BAIR FROM ATLASSES, CENSUS RECORDS, WILLIAM PLESS' WRITINGS OF JOHN AND MARGARET WILSON. COMMENTS, CORRECTIONS, ETC., WELCOME. 810/229-6402)