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LYONS SCHOOL AND ITS HISTORY

RICHARD J. LYON WAS APPARENTLY ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE TRUSTED BY MANY. A CARVER AND GUILDER IN NEW YORK CITY HE WAS A MEMBER OF A GUILD MADE UP OF OTHER PROFESSIONAL ARTISTS. A CHOLERA EPIDEMIC HAD DESCENDED ON THE CITY IN 1832 AND MANY MADE PLANS TO LEAVE THE AREA. RICHARD WAS ENTRUSTED WITH FUNDS (\$8000.00 +) TO PURCHASE HUNDREDS OF ACRES IN MICHIGAN FOR OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GUILD.

WITH WIFE MARTHA, AND A TWO YEAR OLD DAUGHTER, CAROLINE, HE MOVED HIS FAMILY TO LIVINGSTON COUNTY. IT IS LIKELY THEY CAME BY WAY OF THE ERIE CANAL, STEAMER OVER LAKE ERIE AND LANDED IN DETROIT. RICHARD PURCHASED OVER 1000 ACRES IN BRIGHTON TOWNSHIP FOR OTHER GUILD MEMBERS. WHEN ONE TRAVELED WEST OF DETROIT IT WAS BY FOOT OR HORSEBACK INTO A WOODED WILDERNESS LIBERALLY SPRINKLED WITH MARSHES AND LAKES. THE ONLY TRAIL WAS THE INDIANS' GRAND RIVER TRAIL BRUSHED OUT BARELY ENOUGH FOR A PERSON ON FOOT. WITH THEIR HOUSEHOLD GOODS IN TWO WAGONS PULLED BY OXEN AND THREE MILK COWS, RICHARD AND HIS FAMILY TRAVELED THREE DAYS TO COME FROM DETROIT.

FOLLOWING THEIR ARRIVAL THE FAMILY NAMES OF ARMS, WOULD, YOUNG, PROSSER, ROGERS, IRA AND TIM WARNER, BEACH, MORGAN, CONELY, McDONALD IN THE EARLY RECORDS OF BRIGHTON TOWNSHIP. THE FIRST ONES ON THE SCENE OFTEN HOUSED OTHER NEWCOMERS IN THEIR OWN ONE ROOM LOG CABINS AND HELPED BUILD THEIR CABIN. MOST OF THESE PIONEERS ALSO HAD THEIR FAMILIES WITH THEM.

AFTER SHELTER WAS PROVIDED AND CROPS PLANTED THESE SETTLERS BEGAN TO REPAIR THE LACK OF EDUCATION WHICH HAD BEEN LEFT FAR TO THE EAST. THEY HAD COME SEARCHING FOR NEW LIVES AND HOMES AND REALIZED THEIR CHILDRENS' EDUCATION WAS NEXT ON THE PRIORITY LIST. AS WAS OFTEN THE CASE, A RESPONSIBLE PIONEER DEDICATED AN ACRE FOR THE LOCATION OF A SCHOOL, LOG OF COURSE. RICHARD AND MARTHA WERE NO EXCEPTION. IN 1842 THE LOG SCHOOL FOR DISTRICT #8 WAS ERECTED. THE CHILDREN OF THE SETTLERS WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE BEGAN ATTENDING 'LYONS' SCHOOL. IN 1885 THE SCHOOL BOARD DECIDED A FRAME BUILDING NEEDED TO BE ERECTED. AFTER MORE THAN 40 YEARS THE LOG STRUCTURE HAD SERVED ITS PURPOSE WELL. THE WELL PROVIDED WATER, THE SUN AND OIL LAMPS PROVIDED LIGHTING, A WOOD STOVE, WARMTH, TWO OUT HOUSES AS SANITARY FACILITIES AND VERY YOUNG TEACHERS TAUGHT. NOW THERE WERE MORE DESKS, CHAIRS, A RECITATION BENCH, ROLL UP WALL MAPS AND PICTURES OF PRESIDENTS WASHINGTON AND LINCOLN HELPED PROVIDE INSPIRATION FOR ABOUT 20 STUDENTS.

ABOUT 55 YEARS LATER AN ADDITION WAS BUILT, TOILETS BROUGHT INDOORS, ELECTRICITY INSTALLED AND A LARGER STOVE. HOWEVER LUNCH CAME IN THEIR TIN BUCKET, BASEBALL, ANNIE-I-OVER, MUSICAL CHAIRS, ETC., WERE STILL PLAYED AT RECESS. THE LAST DAY OF SCHOOL PICNIC, THE CHRISTMAS PROGRAM AND SPELLING BEES OFTEN WERE COMMUNITY EVENTS.

AFTER WW II, AND IMPROVED HIGHWAYS SHORTENED THE TRAVEL TIME FROM DETROIT TO AN HOUR MANY FAMILIES MIMICKED THE LYONS OF 1833 AND MIGRATED TO THE BRIGHTON AREA. THEY, TOO, SOON REALIZED THE NEED FOR THE EDUCATION OF THEIR CHILDREN. UNABLE TO CONTAIN AND EDUCATE THE GROWING NUMBERS OF STUDENTS RURAL SCHOOLS CONSOLIDATED AND THE OLD SCHOOLS WERE EMPTY. FEW REMAIN. FOLLOWING THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW TOWN HALL, THE TOWNSHIP BOARD OFFERED THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY THE BUILDING FOR RESTORATION. WITH COMPLETE LOCAL SUPPORT THE LYONS SCHOOL IS AGAIN A VIABLE STRUCTURE. (MARIEANNA BAIR, EDITOR.)