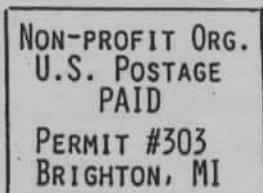


BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
P O BOX 481  
BRIGHTON MI 48116-0481



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Research of farms listed in a Brighton Argus clipping c. 1900 has been completed. Your editor is offering research of WALNUT RIDGE FARM. The 80 acres are located in two sections in Brighton Township. The forty in Section 15, NW SW, consists of hills of sandy loam. The 40 acres across Van Amburg Road in Section 16, NE SE, were also sandy, with Woodruff Creek at the west end. Close to 10 acres are swamp. Charles Prosser bought the 40 in Section 16, November 5, 1841. (Also several 100 more in the township.) Prosser had come into the area c. 1840. Those in Section 15 were originally purchased from the Federal government by William S. Conely (and wife Eliza) from New York. However they did not move to the area until 1837.

William and his brother, Samuel, were members of a guild in New York. This organization might be considered a union of specialized tradesmen; gilders, artisans, carvers, furniture makers, upholsterers, workers of gold and other ores. They were not farmers. In 1832, a cholera epidemic in New York convinced many members they should move to Michigan Territory for the sake of their families. One of their most incorruptible members, Richard Lyons, was entrusted with nearly \$30,000.00 (this would most likely have been in the form of gold) to go to Livingston County to select and purchase land in their names. Lyons selected over 20,000 acres in Brighton Township for his fellow guild members. Much of this land was bought for speculation. In 1837 six of these investors became permanent residents. Those who moved here lived in log houses until frame structures could be built. Often several new families were housed by those who had been here for a year or two, until trees were felled and log cabins built.

Both Prosser and Conely's pieces were owned by J. Stanfield in 1851. Ellen Wesley, in 1867 and 1868, purchased the two 40 acre chunks. John and Lavina Humphrey are the owners in 1885. On the 1859 atlas a house is indicated in Section 16; a simplified Italianate style, two story with a cupola, set well back from the road. Twin Norway pines grew on the south side of the house with a large black locust about 50' west. To the south and west of the house an orchard of 5-6 acres was planted, the majority of which was a variety of apples and pears. To the north and along the road, black walnut trees stood in stately rows. By 1900, a two story barn was built on the east side of the road.

The 80 acres were purchased by Karl and Anna Seitz, German immigrants, in 1933 (well into the Depression years). Following WW II, small plots were sold to young couples who also wanted the benefits of raising their families in this area. Karl and Anna's children acquired various sized pieces. In 1940 the Seitz's began planting pine and spruce on the sandy loam which resulted in fine stands harkening to the days when the Prossers, Conelys and others came to the area. Residents of an upscale subdivision now receive the benefits of those plantings. (Compiled by Marieanna Bair from memories; early atlases; census records; 1880 History of Livingston County; and "First Landowners of Livingston County" and "Early Landowners and Settlers of Livingston County" by Milton Charboneau. Requests for future research are invited. 810/229-6402.)