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### THE LYON FAMILY BRAVES THE MICHIGAN WILDERNESS

Long before the Industrial Revolution of the mid to late 19th century tailors, silversmiths, gold beaters, carvers, upholsterers, furniture makers, cabinet makers, carpenters, etc., worked with their hands to produce a product. For economic, cultural and social support guilds were formed in large cities in the east, consisting of these artisans. That of New York City included Richard J. Lyon, a goldbeater, even though he came from a farming background in New Jersey.

With the opening of the Erie Canal, from Albany, New York, over the Appalachian Mountains to Buffalo in 1825, the rush for western lands was on. Even before statehood in 1837, Michigan was the goal of many. Large cities were not healthful places to live and were crowded. A cholera epidemic in 1833, added to the desire to head west, even overcoming the white populations' fears of Indians, especially Chief Black Hawk, whose reputation was fearful.

Richard Lyon was highly respected and trusted by his fellow guild members for his sense of responsibility, trustworthiness and honesty. In 1835, while yet in New York he bought 440 acres in Brighton Township. (Still a part of Green Oak Township until 1837.) Of his fellow guild members 25 entrusted him with \$8000.00 to select 100s of acres for them. He came to the area personally in 1836, again with \$8000.00, and purchased 20,000 acres in the county in their stead. A few joined him that year to begin clearing land in order to farm. William Paul, a carver and gilder, found his property consisted mainly of a lake (Hope Lake). This he sold in 1837 and he returned to New York City. Another, William Valentine, did build a log cabin, realized he wasn't cut out to be a farmer and sold his property to Lyon. Valentine's fellow guild members raised sufficient funds to pay his way back. However a few years later, he returns to Brighton Township.

1837, finds Richard Lyon, with a pregnant Martha and two small children, in Detroit, getting ready to walk to Brighton Township over a barely discernible trail. We learn he bought two farm wagons, each pulled by a yoke of oxen, three milk cows with calves and he hired a man to help him clear his land. Joining him were Samuel M. and William S. Conely, Evander D. Fisher, William T. Tunis and Orlando Rogers. They also must have purchased supplies and equipment as did Lyon. June 16, 1837, the group left Detroit and arrived in the township June 19, a distance of 40 miles. October 1, 1837, Martha delivered a son, Richard J., to join his sisters, Sarah and Martha. To be continued. (Compiled by Marieanna Bair from "Early Landowners and Settlers", "First Landowners in Livingston County" and Obituaries compiled by Milton Charboneau. Also census records and Ellis' 1880 History of Livingston County.)