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 overshadowing 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 glider, found his property consisted mainly of a lake (Hepha 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 his clear his land. Joining him were Samuel M. and William S. Conely, Evander O. Fisher, William T. Tursis and Orlando Rogers. They also must have purchased supplies and equipment as did Lyon. June 15, 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 Marileanne Blair from "Early Landowners and Settlers", "First Landowners in Livingston County" and Obituaries compiled by Milton Chardonneau. Also census records and Ellis’ 1880 History of Livingston County.)

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Trail Tales
Preserve, Advance and Disseminate Knowledge of the History of the Brighton Area

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ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF RESTORATION vs DEMOLITION

People are attracted to well preserved historic cities, towns and rural areas. To allow the deterioration of established neighborhoods or the disintegration of downtown residential and business sites, is poor planning. Rehabilitation costs less than new; creates more jobs than new; and conserves materials. It's the ultimate form of recycling while maintaining a cherished part of our past.

Why is it that preservationists are forced to shoulder the burden of proof that the destruction of an older building can result in environmental damage and loss of tax paying citizens? Planners be required to shoulder the burden of proof of demolition is to be desired instead of preservation? Isn't there something transparent here?

Yes, it takes more creativity to preserve but the accompanying community-wide benefits of less environmental damage, the use of existing infrastructure, the returning of life to neighborhoods, must also be evaluated and considered.

Presently various early structures in the area are being razed or so changed all historical, architectural and cultural connections are lost. It is realized not all are of such architectural significance which makes one exclain, "Wow! What a classic." (Not all of today’s construction will rate a "Wow!), 80-100 years from now.)

The economics of preservation make sound financial sense. Preservation is investment in areas where infrastructure and services are in place. Recycled existing buildings improve property values nearby. These are tangible economic rewards. Any other consideration suggests prodigious waste. Tomorrow how will we answer, "But where is your history?"

Dates to Remember:
Apr. 16, 23, 30: 7 p.m. Lyons School restoration/ Maintenance continues. You can help.
Apr. 17, 24: 1-3 p.m. Archives Filing.
Melbourne, 840-326-5403 to confirm.
Apr. 27: 7 p.m. Society board meets.
NOTE DATE CHANGE! Public welcome.

M Lyons School, 11455 Buda Rd., Brighton.