THE ERIE CANAL IS OPEN — SAMUEL M. CONEY AND FAMILY COME TO MICHIGAN

Samuel a. Coney's ancestors sailed with Lord Baltimore to find new homes in the new world. His father, Jeremiah, was born c. 1766, in Snow Hill, Maryland, and became a seaman. Sam's mother was a Norris, born at the end of Long Island, New York. Born 2-26-1806, Sam had six siblings: Achew b. 1797, William S. b. 1800, and four sisters of which only Eleanor has been identified.

Samuel was apprenticed, at 15, (at his father's death) to learn the cooper/gilder trade on Fulton St., NYC. Until 1837, he worked at this trade. On March 12, 1829, Rebecca Southard became Sam's bride in NYC. Children, George W. b. 12-25-28, William B. b. 1830, Benjamin F. b. 11-08-32 and John A. b. 1835, were all born in New York.

In those days gilders were formed of gold beaters, carvers, tin smiths, silversmiths, etc. Samuel and two dozen other guild members, upon learning of opportunities in the west, now that the Erie Canal was open, entrusted $3000.00 worth into the care of Richard Lyon, a fellow gilder. Lyon set out and collected settlers for them in Livingston County (most specifically Brighton Township).

During, 1834-35, Lyon recorded land purchases in the Township for guild members, including Sam and his brother William. About 20,000 acres were purchased by Lyon for fellow guild members. Some bought for speculation, others to live. Some soon realized they were not cut out for husbandry, sold and returned to New York.

The year of Michigan's statehood found Sam, his family, wife, mother-in-law and sister on a life-altering journey. With many of his fellow guild members their trip began on the Erie Canal. A steamer over Lake Erie then deposited them in Detroit with their belongings. By the very nature of their work, few guild members were farmers. When Sam and Family got ready to travel the Grand River Trail from Detroit, they bought a yoke of cattle, wagon, a cow and a barrel each of flour and pork/familiar with driving yoked cattle very slow progress was made, especially through the many swamps and wet land they encountered. Of course there was no shelter, other than the cabin of William H. Valentine. At one time this cabin held 22 settlers until their cabins were built. (Valentine and wife, Addie, both died in 1843, their two young sons taken in by neighbors.)

After settling in their own cabin Sam found it necessary for three winters to return to New York to earn money to support the family. Thomas J. b. 1842, Henry, b 1847 d. 1873, and Mary E. b. 5-7-1850, married Milo Beach, were born in Michigan. William B. became a portrait painter in Detroit, George M. married Eliza Warner, and Benjamin F. married Maggie E. Platt, local residents. John A. moved to Farm in Illinois. (Compiled by Marleanna Bair from: Ellis' 1830 History of Livingston County; William Pleas' supplement to the Old Village Cemetery records; and First Landowners and Settlers of Liv. County by Mild Orbanneau. Add/corr. welcome. 810/223-6402.)

Brighton Area Historical Society Newsletter
P.O. Box 481
Brighton, MI 48116

November 2005
Vol. XXIV No. 10

THE 'WHY' OF LYON SCHOOL RESTORATION

One of the major purposes of the restoration of the Lyon School is to give school children of all ages the opportunity to learn about education in early, rural Michigan.

To improve on the present system of communication between the historical society, teachers and parents, a liaison, from the society, the school, or the public, is essential. It would be detrimental to not fill this position. There are many very capable people in the society membership (or not) who can see the value of this program and the need to continue/enlarge it. Contact a board member with your desire to help, soon.

VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY BICENTENNIAL

October 7, 1805, the canoes are completed for the run down to the Pacific. Leaving LoLo Pass rapids were run on the Lochsa River. 101 days later the Corps had left their 36 horses with the Nez Perce for safe keeping for the return trip. Poor diet, dried fish and roots, caused no end of intestinal upsets. Dogs are purchased to add to the menu, of which all but one died. The East heated. The presence of Sacajawea smooths meetings with Indians, of which there were many. By October 17, the Columbia River is joined after traveling on the Snake for a week.

They have left American territory. Great Britain, Russia and Spain have all designs on the Pacific Northwest. Attempts are made to convince the Indians they should establish trade with the U.S.

Miles long rapids, passing through a series of chutes and falls, require some portages and letting the canoes down by elk skin ropes. "The water passing with great velocity foaming and boiling in a most horrible manner," Clark.

DATES TO REMEMBER:

Oct. 2: 1-4 p.m. Lyon School Open House.
810/223-6402 to confirm.
15: 8-11 Society booth at Farmers' Market.
9, 26: Lyon School maintenance.
You can help.
24: 6:30 p.m. Society board meets. Welcome.
Nov. 6: 1-4 p.m. Lyon School Open House.

Lyon School, 11405 Buro Road, Brighton