DAVID THOMPSON INITIATES BRIGHTON'S FIRST HEAVY INDUSTRY

Born July 22, 1819, in Scotland, David Thompson came to America at age 16. He had previously been employed as a Foundry man. Upon settling in Brighton in 1840, he established one of the first industries in the village. He built a foundry at 300 E. Grand River. Census records state his occupation as a moulder - one who pours molten iron into a sand form. With Olypump Spencer he replaced it with a brick building on the SE corner of Grand River and North Streets in 1843.

After three years he was the sole owner for the next 35 years. The foundry produced plow shares, plow points and other farm implements for more than 50 years. A vital, indispensable business of the time; named Globe Iron Works it boasted a ten horse power engine. In the 1959 Business Directory one finds: "O. Thompson, Furnace and Machine Shop." After his death in 1900 the building was removed.

Other newcomers to the area were Lewis Curry and his young wife, Sarah, b. 1819, in New York. Their son, Lewis, b. 1837, is reputed to be the first white child born in what was to become the village; sister Sarah Ann was born in 1842. Not long after her birth her father died.

Neighbor David Thompson and the widow Curry married in 1845. Their home was on a nearby farm on Spencer Road, 3 miles east. He assumed the responsibilities of fatherhood of Sarah’s children, raising them as his own. The family grew with the birth of George, 1846 and Ira, 1848. (Both became Foundry men also. Sarah's son, Lewis became a merchant and Sarah Ann married George W. Runion, living in Brighton until her death.)

In the genre of the obituaries of the time David is "...a unique and central figure in town. He was a man of strong individuality having ideas belonging strictly to himself...He had a mirthful nature which made him a pleasing acquaintance to all who knew him. Sarah’s obituary included":"A pioneer in the true sense of the word."

Lewis Curry, Sarah and David Thompson are all buried in the same lot in the Old Village Cemetery as is son Ira. Sarah Runion is buried in Calvary Cemetery; her brother, Lewis, died in Penzion. Compiled by Marianne Bair from Old Village Cemetery Supplement by Bill Pleas and the transcription by John and Janice Field; the transcription of Calvary Cemetery and obituaries compiled by Milom Charboneau; census records; From Settlement to City - Brighton, Michigan - 1830-1945 by Carol McEachen. Corrections/ additions most welcome. 810/229-6400.)

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

OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN

Each first Sunday of the month, 1-4 pm., the Lyon School Open House takes place. The 120 year old one room schoolhouse can be visited. One can try out a period desk, peruse a McGuffy reader, even ring the school bell. Photos of early area scenes can be viewed. The new history book and other Society Fund raisers can be purchased.

The Archives Room is open for research.

Only because members of the Society and members of Plank Road Quilters serve as docents can this program of visits to the school be undertaken. Old and young enjoy these visits.

Another opportunity to learn about the Society comes each second Saturday at the Brighton Farmers’ Market. Visit the Society booth and become aware of local history and its preservation.

VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY BICENTENNIAL

June 2, 1805. Upon reaching a fork in the Missouri River into which another river empties, Lewis writes "...what astonishes us a little is that the Indians who appear to be so well acquainted with the geography of this country should not have mentioned this river on the map...if it not be the Missouri."

The men of the Corps were certain the river on the right was the Missouri. Which river to follow? The captains, with 5-6 men, explored in both directions. The characteristics of the water, the Missouri, fast and clear (as one filled with mountain snow melt) and the other, also fast but turbid - an indication it flowed not from the mountains, convinced them the Missouri was to the left.

(cont. p.3)

Dates to Remember:
June 8-16, 23, 30: 1-3 pm. Archives filling. Welcome. 810/229-6400 to confirm.
11: 8-1 pm. Brighton Farmers Market.
July 3: 1-4 Open House at Lyon School.
(continued)