

BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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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 Olympus 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 horsepower engine. In the 1859 Business Directory one finds: "D. 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. 1818, 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, ¼ mile 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 strickly 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 Fenton. Compiled by Marieanna Bair from Old Village Cemetery Supplement by Bill Pless and the transcription by John and Janice Field; the transcription of Calvary Cemetery and obituaries compiled by Milton Charboneau; census records; From Settlement to City - Brighton, Michigan - 1832-1945 by Carol McMacken. Corrections/ additions most welcome. 810/229-6402.)