STEPHEN LEE, GREEN OAK TOWNSHIP'S FIRST SETTLER

In 1830, Stephen Lee, wife Lydia (Emmons), and nine children arrived in Green Oak Township, at that time still a part of Washtenaw County, from New York State. They purchased the 55 1/2 acres of Section 20, recorded October 6, 1830. (West side of U.S. 23, from Winona Lake Road north to the Huron River.)

The three sons, Hannah, Solomon, and Charles, 1823, and the female contingent of the family, also, put up a log house and cleared several acres which were planted to winter wheat to assure sustenance the next year. (Planners brought various supplies with them to tide them over until the crop was harvested.) Game was plentiful as were fish in the nearby Huron.

The following year Lee hosted the Lewis B. Fonda family until they got their built, north of the Grand River Trail, east of U.S. 23 (the Ann Arbor Road at that time).

Many firsts can be attributed to the Lees: the first log house in the county and wheat sowed; the first worship service was held in the Lee cabin when an itinerant preacher visited (three families in attendance). Daughter Hannah conducted the first school in a house built by an uncle, a brother of her mother, on the bank of the Huron north of the Lee Farm. In 1837, School District 4 was organized and Stephen was hired to build a school on Winona Lake Road and 23; the following year, it was to be a frame, not log, building, 22 x 25, with ten 12-light windows, he built the students' desks and the teacher's which was on a raised platform. The school was to have a brick chimney and a portico at the front entrance. All this for $250.00. Sadly, the first death occurred in the township when daughter, Eliza, who had married Albert Norton, died March 3, 1833 at age 23; a son was born to her. She was buried on family property but at some time was transferred to the Plains (Holden) Cemetery on Main Street.

A year later son Hannah married Mary Hubbard, daughter of a neighbor, a few miles north. The double wedding also united her brother with one of Hannah's sisters. Which sister: perhaps Hannah, Catherine or Elizabeth? Of the other daughters, Sarah Lydia married Carrol Woods and Lucy, a Mr. Brown.

Stephen Lee died December 6, 1868. He is buried in the Plains Cemetery beside Lydia. There is no information as to when she was born or died, only that she was 31 years old. The sons stayed in the area and farmed. Solomon and Charles are with their parents and sister as are sister Sally and husband, Carrol Wood. Hannah and Mary are buried in Fairview Cemetery. The other three daughters seem to have left the area.

Many Lees are recorded in county census records. Stephen's connection to their needs research. However his arrival was the earliest. Perhaps that prompted the other Lees to also head west to Michigan Territory. (Compiled by Marieanne Bair from Ellis' 1880 History of Livingston County; McCallum's From Settlement to City; Yesteryears in Green Oak; census records; obituaries and cemetery transcriptions by Milton Charbonneau and John G Janice Field. Additions/corrections welcomed. 810/229-6402.)

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LEAVING OUR 'MARK'

As the writers of the Declaration of Independence left their mark on all of us, the mark celebrated this month, one must realize we all leave our 'mark'. Perhaps unaware, but marking nevertheless. These marks create our sense of place.

The easing of the old, the destruction of a meadow, a wetland or grove of trees, to be replaced with super stores and acres of paved lots, leave marks also. The reuse, rehabilitation of old structures brings along their 'sense of place' that's been acquired by their existence through the years. Neglect of existing structures by us mark-seekers will increase the proliferation of 'For Lease' signs in the very place which holds our 'mark'.

VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY BICENTENNIAL

Before leaving Pittsburg August 31, 1803, Capt. Meriwether Lewis had designed a collapsible boat consisting of an iron frame, which was to have been covered with animal skins. This would have made a light weight vessel riding high on the water. It was designed to carry the bulky items into Shoshone country. Not yet having reached pine country in early July, 1805, from which pitch to seal the seams would have been obtained, he experimented with an exciting sealant made from charcoal, beeswax and buffalo tallow. After bringing the frame all this distance, and spending a week on its construction, it was a monumental disappointment to have the sealant fail in very rough water. However failure was accepted and the iron frame cached (but not retrieved on the return trip). To make up for this loss, two more large canoes were made from cottonwoods eight miles up the river.

(cont. p.3)

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Dates to Remember:
July 3: 3-4 p.m. Lyon School Open House.
July 4: Independence Day.
9: 8-10 p.m. Booth at Brighton Farmers' Market.