THE CUSHING FAMILY COMES TO STAY

Alths many who invested in land in the area in the early 1800s bought it sight unseen, John Cushing, a farmer (b. 1783, Nova Scotia) and wife Elizabeth (b. 1787 MA) arrived in Brighton Township c. 1835. With them came sons Benjamin (b. 1814 Canada), William (b. 1819 Canada) and Alonzo (b. 1825 N.Y.). Elizabeth recorded the purchase of 75 acres on May 9, 1835. By February 18, 1840, another 40 acres are hers; land north of Main Street, from Seventh to East Street, and north to Cross Street are in her name. They built a home east of N. First Street, in the area of the city hall.

John meanwhile bought 40 acres in Section 25 in Genoa. (Same Mt. Brighton property and a portion of Warden Lake are located there.) By then the Maltby brothers had the saw mill providing lumber for construction of homes and businesses. Orson Quackenbush's flouring and grist mill was grinding grains for human and animal feed and several blacksmiths and cooperers were busy. General stores, harness makers and professionals set up their businesses along the Indian River Trail and Fitch Street. Purchasing land on the Trail made a sound investment. (As is the case today.)

Much land dealing was going on. At $1.25 an acre those in the east with funds bought thousands of acres on speculation. Within a few years, when taxes weren't paid by far-off original investors, Cushing, Noble, Fitch, Maltby, Quackenbush, etc., were in there with the money; and then they also sold to those still coming. The first ten years of Ore Creek's (Brighton) existence seems a frenzy of buying and selling.

William Cushing and Truman Warden, carpenters and joiners, built a house for brother Benjamin. He had married Louisa and had four children: William B., married and moved to Nebraska; Frances died at 15; Charles F., a Civil War veteran, married Sarah Case; George W. married Addie Cavell, and opened a successful grocery store in 1870 which he later sold to George Conrad in April, 1910.

John's son, Alonzo worked on his father's farm. He fought in the Civil War and died September 11, 1866 in the Soldiers' Home in Grand Rapids.

By 1850 Benjamin owned a hotel-tavern-stage stop on the NE corner of the Trail and Fitch Street. (Fitch, another early settler had property south of Main which ran from Seventh Street to East Street.) Mitchell C. Case was the proprietor. The State Capitol had been moved to Lansing. The Trail is surfaced with wood planks and stagecoaches made daily trips between Detroit and Lansing in 12 hours. The many travelers needed accommodations on that arduous ride. However the hotel served local guests also. The second floor was specially constructed for dancing; the rafters were placed to give the floor a spring. Verandahs along the front and side provided cover and shade for the benchas placed there. Benjamin died in 1860. In 1865 the hotel was sold to the Stuhlbarg brothers. The hotel burned in 1826. (Compiled by Marleanna Bair from census records, atlases, "From Settlement to City" by Carol McAllen; "First Landowners", "Early Landowners and Settlers", and obituaries compiled by Milton Cheracone, Additions/Corrections welcome. 810/229-6402.)

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

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

AREA RESIDENTS' RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE PAST

It's not news - the Brighton area (SE Livingston County) is a desirable place in which to live for many reasons, not the least of which is the need for individuals and families to put down roots. The area is a special place that is being threatened with too little opportunity for input into development and restoration decisions. A development in one place does have an effect on the surrounding urban fabric. Destruction, not only of agricultural land and open space but of existing buildings, is often the result of lack of respect for the people that helped build the area in the first place.

A sense of social responsibility often loses out to the ultimate objective of profit. "...for special places to survive, those in control must make concessions to posterity." (James Conway, Editor-In-Chief of Preservation Magazine.)

VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY BICENTENNIAL

August 1, 1803, desperate to find the Shoshones and their horses, Merriweather Lewis, several men and Sacagawes sought ahead of William Clark to determine which stream to follow. He then sent a man to Clark, several days behind, to change course. In the process one canoe overturned and two others flooded. Supplies were lost including gun powder, and everything in the medicine box was wet. The arduous task of pulling the canoes along the narrow rapid, rock and shall filled passage, the cold of the river, injuries sustained, and lack of meat resulted in very low morale in the Corps of Discovery. Pvt. Shannon, sent to hunt, didn't return for several days, and then without meat but the news they were on the right river. Sacagawes recognizes a prominent rock formation which helps boost morale. That was how Clark observed his 35th birthday.

(cont. p.3)

Dates to Remember:
Aug. 7: 1-4 p.m. Lyon School Open House.
11, 18, 25: 1-3 p.m. Archives Filing. Welcome.
810/236-6402 to confirm.
13, 14: 10-5. Booth at Art Fair, Main Street.
17, 24, 31: 7 p.m. Lyon School maintenance.
You can help.
Sept. 4: 1-4 p.m. Lyon School Open House.
4 Lyon School. 11455 Buda Rd., Brighton.