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THE CUSHING FAMILY COMES TO STAY

Altho' many who invested in land in the area in the early 1830s 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. (Some Mt. Brighton property and a portion of Worden 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 coopers were busy. General stores, harness makers and professionals set up their businesses along the Indian Grand 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 two years of Ore Creek's (Brighton) existence seems a frenzy of buying and selling.

William Cushing and Truman Worden, carpenters and joiners, built a house for brother Benjamin. He had married Lovisa 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 1878 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, 1886 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. Verandas along the front and side provided cover and shade for the benches placed there. Benjamin died in 1860. In 1892 the hotel was sold to the Stuhrberg brothers. The hotel burned in 1926. (Compiled by Marieanna Bair from census records, atlases, 'From Settlement to City' by Carol McMacken; 'First Landowners', 'Early Landowners and Settlers' and obituaries compiled by Milton Charboneau. Additions/corrections welcome. 810/229-6402.)