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G. B. RATZ & SON HARDWARE

C. 1864, Henry Ratz moved his family (three sons and a daughter) from Canada to Michigan coming to Brighton shortly after. Henry, a blacksmith, worked in the Henry Herbst Blacksmith shop. (south side of W. Main, one block east of Hyne St.) In 1874 Henry purchased land from Jacob Euler in Section 14 of Genoa Township: S $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ and the NE $\frac{1}{4}$, a total of 240 acres. The Grand River Trail cuts on a slant through the north edge of the property; the Ratz School is on the north side at the corner of Euler Road. The family fit well into the house Euler built c. 1835. In the 1890s Ratz sold the farm to William Risch and Francis Rhodes and moved into town. There son George B., also worked, as a wagon maker.

William Pipp, carpenter, and John Becker, blacksmith, built a hardware store on the SE corner of Hyne and W. Main soon after Smith & McPerson platted and sold lots west of Ore Creek when the railroad came through Brighton in 1871. The business opened February 14, 1872.

George B. married neighbor Mary Behrens, August 5, 1878. Their first child, George H., b. August 9, 1881, had an eye damaged by a piece of steel when he was three. However, after passing the civil service exam, he worked in the Treasury department in Washington, D.C. After two years he returned to go into business with his father, George B., who had bought the Pipp and Becker hardware store. During a remodeling a verse written by Pipp on the underside of a wide board from the counter was found. Translated from German it read Pipp was just a poor hardworking man who kept his nose out of other peoples' business, enjoyed his food and his liquor, and slept well.

The store was a gathering place for men around the pot-bellied stove, discussing politics, agriculture, weather, taxes and the changes taking place in the area and the country. In the 1930s, probably earlier, youngsters could put on ice skates by the stove prior to skating on the mill pond; or warm up later. Skates were sharpened, straps fixed, skate keys found, etc., at no charge.

WW II veteran stepson Dean Sellman came into the business in 1946. "We modernized it in 1955 but we're still selling the same type of products we did in the old days," he said in an interview in 1972, on the occasion of the store's 100th anniversary. He noted, also, that George H. had the first Ford dealership in Brighton, selling Model Ts like 'hot cakes' in 1917.

In June, 1977, George Schrader assumed ownership. Later a variety of businesses were in the building. When it burned in July, 1999, the 'Music Man' occupied the site. It is being replaced with a larger, two story structure in 2005 and will house CW Interiors. (Compiled by Marieanna Bair from: Census records; and the writings of William Pless, c. 1982. Additions/corrections welcomed. 810/229-6402.)