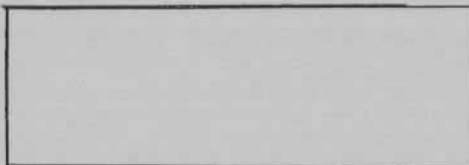


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BENJAMIN BLAINE AND HIS BROTHER MAKE THE MOVE TO MICHIGAN

One of the many who crossed the mountains on the Erie Canal and sailed across Lake Erie, Benjamin, age 26, arrived in 1833. From Detroit he found his way to the cabin of his older brother, Ammon, October 21. Ammon (27) and wife Lucy had arrived a year earlier, and had taken up land in what would later be Green Oak Township, Section 15, August 23, 1832. (The following year, 50 acres on the north side of Silver Lake.) Benjamin was one of eleven children of Joseph and Sarah of Orleans County, New York.

Several years before Livingston County was organized, March 24, 1836, the lower two tiers of townships (of four tiers) were part of Washtenaw County. Benjamin bought 80 acres each in Sections 5 and 6 of what was to be Brighton Township, a total of 160 acres, November 11, 1833. (North side of McClements Road.) Three years later, January 16, 1836, one mile north, he bought 40 more acres in Section 5.

That first winter Benjamin lived with his brother in his log cabin. In 1834, with his friend Seth Bidwell, a small log cabin with a dirt floor, in which they lived for a year or two in Brighton Township was built. Ben, who enjoyed hunting and fishing (a trapper and hunter all his life), kept the food supply in good shape. That first year he's reputed to have bagged 80 deer. (These could be sold/traded to other settlers.) During that period he also worked for Kinsley Bingham and Robert Warden of Green Oak for 1½ years.

In 1838 he returned east, married Emily Watrous, and brought her to the cabin in Michigan. Seven children were born to them in the wilderness. (A daughter, Mary, married a son of friend Seth Bidwell, George Alfred.) A c. 1900 photo shows Ben and Emily's son, James, driving a wagon drawn by oxen on the Grand River Trail. When Brighton Township was organized he served the board as assessor in 1838. November 15, 1854, 80 acres of Hartland Township Section 32 were purchased from the U.S. government. The south c. 20 acres contained a lake now know as Blaine Lake. A cabin was built on the west side of the lake. To arrive at the cabin a two-track lane over the neighbor's property was followed. The story goes that Emily always washed dishes in the lake, the many fish cleaning up the debris. Retrieving a silver fork Emily was bitten by a pike, wounding her hand badly.

Ben is reputed to have been a peculiar fellow known for always going without shoes. When helping put hay in a farmer's barn the snakes, which often were caught up in the hay, would be kicked out by Ben with his bare feet. Late local historian, Bill Pless, suggests that because of Benjamin's extensive travels while trapping, he ascertained the route of the creek with its origins in the very northern edge of Brighton Township; and noticed its high iron content. Pless therefore credits him with naming Ore Creek which flows through Brighton City, exits into Hamburg township, into Ore Lake and finally the Huron River.

A photo c. 1860, includes Thomas, Willmont, Ammon, Benjamin and Joseph Blaine, all of Orleans County, New York. One concludes that at some time these five of seven brothers reunited at least for a photo. Ben 84, Emily 47 and son Truman 29, are buried at Hartland Village Cemetery. (Compiled by Marieanna Bair from 1880 History of Livingston County; Bill Pless writings; censuses; Early Land Owners and Settlers and obituaries compiled by Milton Charboneau. Additions/corrections welcomed. 810/229-6402.)