



# Brighton Area Historical Society Newsletter

P.O. Box 481

Brighton, MI 48116

www.brightonareahistorical.com

# Trail Tales

COMPLEMENTARY COPY

September 2007  
Vol. XXVI No. 9

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

## HISTORIC DISTRICT STUDY COMMISSIONS ESSENTIAL

### EXECUTIVE BOARD

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### Questers #236

Lyon School  
Open House Hosts  
810/231-3067

### Education Liaison

Judith Coebly  
810/229-4608

Sue Skwarski  
810/225-0908

The Western House, 500 W. Main, can be said to have been spared the wrecking ball, for the present. However, as long as it is not in a designated historic district in the City of Brighton, there are no guarantees. The several other early structures remaining – the Old Township Hall, the St. Paul Episcopal Church, the Appleton House, the Old Village Cemetery, etc. – are also without safeguards in place to preserve them.

Others, over 50 years old, include the Mellus Hospital, the Leith (Canopy) Building, Lu & Carl's, Champs Pub, the Home Builders Association and more, are all eligible for inclusion in an historical district.

The formation of an Historic District Study Commission in the City of Brighton, the Townships of Brighton, Genoa and Hamburg should not be delayed. (Green Oak Township has its historic district study commission well in place.) In fact, a Livingston County Historic District Study Commission would be very appropriate.

An historic study commission is created by the governing body of a civic entity; city, township, county.

The main purpose of an historic district study commission seeks to preserve and protect the integrity of historic neighborhoods.

One needs only to look at nearby communities (Plymouth, Northville) to see that an historic preservation ordinance results in increased property values, retail sales, foot traffic, tourism and a vital downtown business district, among other benefits.

Restoration is more than just preserving and restoring buildings; it's an attitude toward living.



### Dates to Remember

#### September

- \* 6, 13, 20, 27: 9-noon. Work in Society Archives. You can help. 810/229-6402 to confirm.
- 8: 8:00 a.m. Society booth at Farmers' Market.
- \* 9: 1-4 p.m. Lyon School Open House and quilt show.
- \* 15: 6:30 p.m. Society Board meeting. You are welcome

\*Lyon School, 11455 Buno Rd., Brighton Twp.  
A Michigan Registered Historic Site

## MEMBERSHIPS

LIFE MEMBERS: Bob & Betsy Herbst.

COUPLES/INDIV: \*Mary Ann Ciolfi; \*Diane Weaks Follis; \*Brian & Becky Martin; Paul Zurawski.

\*Welcome to new members, Mary Ann, Diane and Brian & Becky. Thanks to renewing members. Membership total for 2007 is nearing the 150 mark. It should be noted, one doesn't have to live in the area – only care enough to support the Society's mission of preserving and disseminating the area's history.

Trail Tales is mailed under the non-profit bulk mail rate. It is not forwarded. Changes of address cost the Society .41¢ if the Post Office provides the change.

## THANKS THANKS THANKS

..... Ida Bair, Judy Coebly and John & Janice Field for help to mail the August newsletter.

..... Lucille Weaire for arranging for the booth at the Art Fair and scheduling people. She, Jim Vichich and Jim DeJohn set up and took down the booth.

..... All the above noted, plus Sue Garcia, Mindy Kinsey, Kay Michaels, Jim Siford, Sue Walters-Steinacker and Hank Winegar for tending the booth. This, and other Society booths, are for the promotion of the Society. That funds were raised is a plus.

..... Linda Bruder, of New York, for information she sent on the Conely family genealogy. Information, such as this, is vital to develop a more complete knowledge of the people who were here before us.

..... George and Lois Winegar for their genealogical records and pictures of the Lindsley/Carter families. A fine addition to the Society's records.

SIGNATURE QUILT: This quilt has dozens of names embroidered on it. Sending your signature is an easy way to make a donation. From early tax rolls, school and government contracts, etc., copies of early residents' signatures are in Society files, i.e. Moon, Galloway, Loch, Van Amburg, etc. The completed quilt will remain in Society archives for occasional display.

The Society is a 501(c)3 Income Tax deductible organization. Help out the Society and yourself with a contribution.

## PRESERVATION / RESTORATION

ARCHIVES: Housed at the Lyon School, the proper filing and documenting of photos, records of businesses, organizations, cemeteries, neighborhoods, etc., is a vital task. It can be accomplished with help from any who care. Archival techniques are demonstrated each Thursday, 9-noon. Call to confirm.

BARN: How best to provide a barn at the Lyon School site for display of early farm equipment is being researched. The area was originally a strictly agricultural economy. The many tools used must not all end in a landfill. This barn can be a fine teaching tool. You can help make it real.

LYON SCHOOL: Maintenance is ongoing at this historic site. To present a spic and span appearance to visitors, cleaning is necessary. Exterior security cameras have been installed.

OPEN HOUSE, Sunday, September 9, 1-4 P.M. A quilt show is on the docket. Photos of early Brighton, notebooks of early township barns, records of local businesses, etc., will be available. Also learn the role these early one-room schools played.

FARMERS' MARKET, September 8. Lucille Weaire has arranged for a Society booth. Many of the Society's sales items will be available. Your support is needed. Consider serving in order to better promote the Society's mission.

ANNUAL MEETING PLANS: The Society's 26<sup>th</sup> annual meeting is being drafted for November. Included in the agenda will be the selection of those who will conduct the Society's business for 2008. Isn't it time for you to determine how you can best help administrate and promote the mission of this historical society? The number of hours you want to commit is up to you

Contact a board member for information on any of the above.

## NEEDED NEEDED NEEDED

..... Letterhead for Society business correspondence (or funds to have printing done).

..... Funds for archival preservation material to prevent deterioration.

..... Those willing to help with the administration of the Society's reason for being. One can serve on the board or a chairperson of a project.

..... Those willing to work on the maintenance and preservation of the Lyon School.

..... The Society's annual meeting will be held in November. Board members will be elected and projects needing a chairperson announced. Consider how you can improve the Society's efforts. (It's not necessary for you to wait 'til November.)

HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY: Research in early issues of the Brighton Argus brings the history of local business sites to light. Help in reviewing these issues would be welcome.

BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP / DONATION FORM

P.O. BOX 481, BRIGHTON MI 48116-0481

www.brightonareahistorical.com

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

(Include Zip and 4 digit)

New ( ) Renew ( ) Send Membership Card yes ( ) no ( )

Dues: ( ) \$500.00 Life ( ) \$25.00 Couple ( ) \$50.00 Bus/Professional
( ) \$ 50.00 Patron ( ) \$15.00 Individual ( ) \$ 2.00 Student

Friend of Lyon School: ( ) \$10.00 ( ) \$20.00 ( ) \$25.00 ( ) Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Donation to Society Project Needs : ( ) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

The Society is a 501(c)3 Income Tax Deductible Organization

\$\$\$ FUND RAISING PROJECTS \$\$\$

BOOK: 'From Settlement to City - Brighton MI 1832-1945' by Carol McMacken, Brighton's own history. Almost 500 pages, over 300 pictures. Members, \$60.00, non-members \$65.00, plus shipping. Second edition at Parent-Teacher Tech, 117 E. Grand River, Brighton.

TILES: 6" sq. ceramic tiles, black/white. 13 local scenes. \$8, 2 for \$21.

LYON SCHOOL T-SHIRTS: S / XL - \$12.

TOWNSHIP PLAT MAPS: \$1.00 - 1875 maps of Brighton, Conway, Genoa, Green Oak, Hamburg, Hartland, Iosco, Howell and Oceola. 1915 city maps of Brighton and Howell.

For more information, call 810/229-6402

NOTE PAPER: \$2.50/pkg. TOTE BAG: \$15.00
PEWTER PLATE: \$35. All designed with the Old Town Hall and millpond.

WOVEN AFGHAN: \$49 - red, green, blue with nine local sites. Washable.

TAPESTRY PILLOW: \$14 - shows Pere Marquette depot and engine, ca. 1910.

SIGNATURE QUILT: \$10 - Your signature, or another's, to be embroidered on the quilt to remain in Society archives.

2004 CALENDAR: \$4 with local scenes.

WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

September 6, 7 p.m. - Livingston County Genealogical Society. Dave Finney - Photographic Images of Famous Americans, 1840-60. LDS, 1041 W. Grand river, Howell. www.rootsweb.com/milegs

September 8, 10-4. - Depot Day, South Lyon Area Historical Society. Crafts, games, caboose, Bubble Man. southlyonhistory.SK.com

September 8-9, 10-5. - Waterloo Farm Museum. Antique Tractor and Farm Equipment Event - 517/851-8745.

September 15 - Hamburg Festival Railroad Day. Train rides, arts/crafts, flea market, and car show. Proceeds to Hamburg Historical Museum - 810/986-0190.

September 15, 6 p.m. - Brighton Area Schools Alumni Association dinner, P.O. Box 1163, Brighton 48116. \$30, September 1 deadline.

September 15-16 - Northville Historical Society Victorian Festival. 248/348-1845.

October 6-7 - Heritage Hill Assoc., Grand Rapids. Weekend tour of homes, 11. www.heritagehillweb.org

October 14 - Fall Harvest at Cobblestone Farm, Ann Arbor. www.cobblestonefarm.org

2007 BUSINESS / PROFESSIONAL MEMBERS
Advance Craft Home Builders; \*\*Lawrence Autobody; \*\*Patrick Financial Group, LLS; \*\*Promess, Inc. You are encouraged to patronize these local, independent sustainers of the Society
\*\* Life Member

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P.O. Box 481  
Brighton, MI 48116-0481

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### OF THREE SETTLERS NAMED GAY

Washington Gay, b. 1805, New York; Edward F. Gay, b. 1800, Connecticut; and Ralph Gay, b. 1785, Connecticut. (The possibility exists they were brothers or cousins.) All were residents of the area by the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. They brought talents to the wilderness - ranging from merchandising to masonry, to political acumen, to audacious entrepreneurship.

In 1850, **Washington Gay** was living in the newly built Brighton House (S.W. corner of Main Street and the Grand River Trail). He was a mason. An Erastus Gay, born 1831 in New York, was at that same location at the time. The family connection has not been determined. The 1859 atlas of Brighton Township shows a V.W. Gay as owner of the N½ of the NW¼, 80 acres in Section 22 (east of Van Amberg and Skeman Roads), with what appears to be a structure on the property. By 1895, Thomas Graham, husband of Alida Gay, daughter of Ralph Gay, is owner of those 80 acres.

**Edward F. Gay** settled in Ann Arbor in 1831, where he was a merchant. He married Clarissa L., b. 1798 in Connecticut. They had seven children; three girls and four boys. Three of the boys and one of the girls died as children. By April 1837, he'd moved his mercantile business to Howell. Son, Mylo Lee Gay, b. June 20, 1825, in Connecticut became a dealer in land in Livingston County. As an attorney, he was very active in politics and the community. He served as State Representative in 1869 and as Senator in 1870. He was a charter member of the Livingston County Pioneer Association, as was his father who helped draft its constitution, July 4, 1871. In an address to that Society in 1872, Edward told of settling in Ann Arbor and of coming to Livingston Center (Howell) on horseback in 1836. After getting lost on the way to Ore Creek Settlement (Brighton), he finally arrived at Ben Cushing's log tavern (s.e. corner Grand River Trail and Spencer Road). The next morning, he passed 'Uncle' Robert Bigham's log tavern, located about a mile north of town (just south of Challis Road). A few miles farther, he came upon Thomas Pinckney's log house (near Euler Road, the first house in Genoa Township). A bit farther west was Lucious Peet's log tavern (near Kellogg Road). Edward was still seven miles from Livingston Center and felt he was "doomed to wander on the trail, through and among brush and trees and didn't see another building until finally seeing a light in Moses Thompson's log house near the lake that bears his name." This description gives a vivid portrayal of the migrant's struggle of that time. It appears his efforts were worthwhile; he again followed the merchandising trade and did well. By 1845, he built the Temperance House Hotel in 'Livingston Center'.

**Ralph Gay** and wife, Rachael, b. 1798 in Massachusetts, settled in Brighton Township by 1848, recording in Section 19, SE¼ of the NE¼, NE¼ of the NW¼; and the W½ of the SE¼. In Section 20, the SW¼ of the NW¼, and in Section 22 the NE¼ and NW¼. Most of this property is under Woodland Lake at the present. Their home was on the north side of Hilton Road, just east of Flint Road (demolished in recent years). All four of their children were born in New York, coming with their parents over the Erie Canal. Their oldest son, Victory Richard, b. 1820, married Amanda Eliza c. 1847. V. Richard's son, Victory Steven, was born in 1859. Although handicapped, he operated a butter, egg and veal calf business at W. O. Lee's building on Main Street in Brighton. V. Steven's baby sister, Myrta, was 14 years his junior. Myrta married Clayton A. Grinnell on June 6, 1904, of Grinnell Piano builder fame. Her older sister, Nancy, b. November 1, 1849, was living in town in August 1921, when a news release included "Miss Nancy Gay's house, both interior and exterior is being repaired and improved ... a modern home with a neat new fireplace." Nancy appears to have been quite close to Myrta. In February 1909, she "... went to Detroit to look after Mr. & Mrs. C. A. Grinnell's home during their absence on an extended tour through South America." She occasionally spent winters in Detroit, perhaps with Myrta. Myrta owned the Western House Hotel at the time of her death, July 2, 1929, in Chicago. Her will donates the structure and site to the people of Brighton "for park purposes or for the erection of a Community House to be held and used in the memory of the Gay family." (Compiled by Marieanna Bair from William Pless' writings; census records; 1929 History of Livingston County; Land Owners and Settlers in Livingston County, and obituaries compiled by Milton Charboneau. Additions/corrections requested. 810/229-6402.)