

BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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THE LANNINGS AND THE RAILROAD HOTEL

Although not among the very first settlers in the area, Richard L. and Eliza Lanning built and operated the Lanning Railroad Hotel, 520 Cedar Street, by 1873. Richard had built the hotel just east of the depot in Brighton to host travelers. A long, c. 35'x20', two-story frame building with a gable roof abutting a perpendicular, c. 20'x20', portion on the north end. The south and east sides had a covered porch. The office was on the side by the tracks, the lobby in the center, with the dining room at the rear.

Richard and Eliza were both born in New York, he in 1812 and she in 1814. (His father in Ireland, hers in England.) Their four children, Andrew R. 1842, Arthur W. 1845, Lora and Alice were all born in Michigan, likely in Washtenaw County.

Andrew R. was in the U.S. Navy during the Civil War and was lost at sea April 7, 1865. A memorial marker is at his parents' sites in Calvary Cemetery.

Arthur W., 18, was also a seaman in 1863, on the USS Mississippi for a year during the war. Then from August 24, 1864, to June 1865, he served on the USS Champion. Five years later, he married Alice Cecelia Wilkinson on November 7, 1870. Five children were born to them in the next 17 years. Daughter Lela, who married I.R. Sexton and had four sons. One child died an infant. Harry A. died in 1907 of rheumatism and kidney disease at 24, and 11 year old Volney died in 1908 of an infection after an appendectomy. Son, Roy Andrew, married Lucy Margaret Cobb. They had seven children of whom some descendants still live in the area.

The 1880 county census records show Arthur W. as a blacksmith as was his father, Richard L. Arthur's obituary, 1921, reveals an entrepreneur – he was a carriage maker, an agent for a gasoline engine maker (one of which was purchased by the Argus publishers in 1901), and in the lumber business with F. T. Hyne & Son. The October 1898 Argus advertises "A.W. Lanning has decided to close out his buggy business, so now is a splendid opportunity to get a buggy cheap." Arthur W. was also a hotel operator, acquiring the Lanning Railroad Hotel from his aging father, soon selling it to his sister Alice's husband, H.B. Ross. The last owner was Peter G. Hartman. It was their family home by the mid 1880s, Mrs. Hartman living there until her death in 1939. Unoccupied and appearing rather forsaken, it was razed after WWII.

By 1911, a number of locals owned automobiles, which often resulted in conflict with horse-drawn buggy owners. McMacken writes of an incident in which Floyd Sawyer's car caught a wheel of Wirt Beurmann's surrey, badly startling Wirt's team. Although parked at 334 W. Main with reins in hand, Wirt was thrown out and the panic-stricken horses took flight. Arthur W. finally caught them near the tracks sans the demolished surrey.

Other Lannings can be found in county census records in other locations. Their connection to the Brighton Lannings needs to be determined. Richard L., Eliza, Arthur W., Harry and Volney are interred in Calvary Cemetery.

(Compiled by Marieanna Bair from 1880 History of Livingston County; county census records; obituaries and cemetery transcriptions compiled by Milton Charboneau; and 'From Settlement to City – Brighton, Michigan' by Carol McMacken. Additions/corrections welcomed. 810/229-6402)