THE BARNARDS FIND THEIR WAY TO MICHIGAN

The return to St. Louis, in 1806, of Lewis and Clark's Voyage of Discovery, confirmed possession the young United States required of the vast territory, the Louisiana Purchase. However, England (in 1812) is reluctant to accept the terms of the treaty following the Revolutionary War, which set the northern border of the U.S. This attitude made it difficult to assure that Michigan Territory was part of the U.S. and that its citizens could safely settle there. The Battle of New Orleans, January 8, 1815, resolved the matter.

The Federal government fully realized it was vital its citizens be encouraged to move west, over the Appalachian Mountains, to validate its sovereignty of the area. To remove that mountainous block to transportation, the Erie Canal was constructed from Albany to Buffalo, opening in 1825. This event, and big-time promotion by the governors of Michigan Territory that this was the land of opportunity, induced 10s of thousands to travel west in search of a possible better future for themselves and their children.

Among those migrating were members of the Barnard family. While still in Madison County, New York, Ely Barnard, b. 1807, bought 200 acres in Sections 7 and 8 in Genoa Township, December 23, 1834. Noted as the first settler in the township, and while still maintaining his large farm, Ely moved to Howell Village and became very active in local government. He was the first Register of Deeds in newly organized Livingston County, receiving 81 votes of 81 ballots cast; serving from 1836 / 1840. In 1843 and 1844, he was a representative to the 8th and 9th Legislatures. The 1850 State Constitutional Convention saw Ely as a delegate from the county. As a commissioner of the Detroit and Shiawassee Railroad Company, the Detroit, Lansing and Northern Railroad and the board of the Detroit and Grand River Plank Road Company, he was involved with the several, rather fruitless, attempts at promoting transportation in Michigan. His interest in improved agricultural practices prompted him to help organize the Livingston County Agricultural Society in 1853, working with the Society as president in 1859 and 1860. ($1 charge to join, 50 cents per year membership; three years later upped to 75 cents.) He exhibited cattle at the first fair of the Society, held in Brighton, October 6, 1853. Ely did take time to marry Aristine P. Curtis, his brother’s sister-in-law, daughter of another early settler, and had eight children. The Barnards and Cutises were acquainted before coming to Michigan. Aristine was a very capable homemaker and farmer in Genoa during Ely’s active political life. Even though he owned lots in Howell, his Genoa farm was his home. Ely died in 1872, but Aristine is noted for her help in composing the history of Genoa Township for Franklin Ellis, author of the 1880 history of the county.

Ellis, his brother, Pardon - b. 1811 – recorded the purchase of 80 acres in Genoa Township, section 17 and 18, June 24, 1835. He had married Eliza Ann Curtis in 1832. Shortly after purchasing his 80 acres, they left Madison County, bringing children William T. and Mary along. Even though settlers were in a wilderness, they felt strongly their children’s education should not be neglected. In 1837 he served as school inspector. His calling as a preacher led to the organization of the Howell Methodist Episcopal Church. The Barnard schoolhouse was the site of Sunday services and classes. The Livingston County Bible Society thrived with his guidance. As a charter member of the county Pioneer Association, 1871, he recorded his recollections of early settlers’ struggles. Pardon died in 1879 and Eliza Ann followed about 10 years later. Several of their children have joined them at Lakeview Cemetery.

James, b. 1785 in Connecticut, bought 80 acres in Iosco Township prior to moving from Orleans County, New York – May 30, 1836. He and wife, Abigail, b. 1798 in Connecticut, were recorded in the early censuses but only Abigail is noted in the 1870 census with her son, James. (He had 11 siblings.) He fought in the war of 1812 as a private in Capt. Hero's N.Y. Militia. Dates of death and places of burial have not been located. Young James was a veteran of the Civil War 50 years later. (Compiled by Maureena Bair from census records; 1870 History of Livingston County; and Early Settlers and Landowners of Livingston County by Milton Charboneau. Additions/corrections requested, 810/229-6402.)

PRESERVING MEMORIES OF BRIGHTON AND OUR FAMILIES

A new project is about to be launched that will preserve all the vital photos of Brighton's past. Today all our visual records are photographs, negatives or newspaper prints. The valuable images that document our early families' travels through life are deteriorating as we move forward in time. Included with our family photos are the many pictures that show our community in the various stages of growth and development.

As a historical society, our goal is to preserve, advance and disseminate knowledge of the history of our community. We will be preserving all existing and future images using a digital format. This will maintain photographic quality of those same original images for future generations to enjoy. Current older photos have already lost the sharpness in picture quality due to the damaging effects of light, humidity and the acid content in the paper. Employing the digital format enables us to freeze the current photo quality before more damage occurs. These new digital pictures of the old photos will look the same in the future as they do today.

I am very excited about this new project. I invite members of our community to bring those old photos of family, friends and community to us to permanently record. While we scan your pictures, they will only be an arm’s reach from you. We can scan your picture while you wait. After scanning, you take your pictures back home with you with no fear of being lost. Your family’s presence in the Brighton area will be recorded for future generations to enjoy.

(More info to follow in the future!)

Jim Vichich