

# Brighton Area Historical Society Newsletter

P.O. Box 481

Brighton, MI 48116

[www.brightonareahistorical.com](http://www.brightonareahistorical.com)

# Trail Tales

February 2009  
Vol. XXVIII No. 2

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

## BRIGHTON'S MAIN STREET PROGRAM—KEEPING THE DREAM ALIVE

Brighton is a great family town!

Have you ever attended the Millpond concert on Sunday evening during the summer? If you have not done this, you are missing a fine experience of our inviting, quaint downtown. One will see the faces of our community as toes tap to the music from the gazebo. Children dance to the tunes as the adults remember their younger days. One can experience similar smiles, laughs and sheer facial exuberance if you pass by Imagination Station, and watch the children dash about the awesome playground adjacent to the Millpond.

Have you ever walked along the side of the Millpond from downtown to Grand River Avenue? This is a delightful walk as you feel the breeze off the water and hear the whispering of the leaves as they twist and turn. You might pause and reflect as you walk past the cemetery. Children love to look over the protective railing and watch the fish as they move among the lily pads below the wooden deck of the walkway. The inviting aromas of nearby restaurants attract our senses to dine.

More improvements are in progress and the dream of a more vibrant downtown grows!

Have you heard about Brighton's new Main Street Program? This national program that has evolved from historic preservation, seeks to utilize the downtown assets to draw the public into the business area. Community developers have access to proven resources within this program. One component is to improve the visual image. Another is to expand businesses through recruitment and promotion. The visual image involves the physical appearance of building facades and downtown landmarks. The Society is very excited because this includes maintaining and improving the faces of cherished landmarks already present. Historic preservation and its prominence in a vibrant downtown is center stage.

The Society hopes the Old Village Cemetery will be a high priority.

Thank you to the City of Brighton for keeping the dream alive!

Jim Vichich

### EXECUTIVE BOARD

#### President/Editor

Jim Vichich  
810/227-4840  
[jvichich@comcast.net](mailto:jvichich@comcast.net)

#### Vice President

Susan Walters-  
Steinacker  
810/229-4483

#### Secretary

Thomas Reinke  
313/295-9326

#### Treasurer

Mindy Kinsey  
248/684-0340

### DIRECTORS

Dave Ball  
248/894-6057  
[dball@brightonareahistorical.com](mailto:dball@brightonareahistorical.com)

John Fillicaro  
810/231-6521

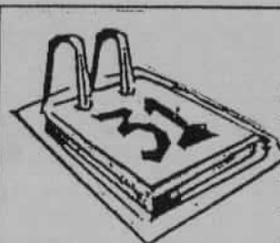
### IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT / EDITOR

Marieanna Bair  
810/229-6402

### Education Liaison

Judith Coebly  
810/229-4608

Sue Skwarski  
810/225-0908



### Dates to Remember

#### February

*5, 12, 19, 26	9-noon	Archives at Lyon School. You can help. Call 229-6402 to confirm
*5, 19	1-4 pm	Scanning of Society holdings
*10, 24	9-noon	Scanning of Society holdings
*25	6:00 pm	Society Board Meeting

You are welcome at any of the above.

Please call 810/229-6402 for more information.

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

## MEMBERSHIPS

**PATRON:** Bernie & Bonnie Corrigan and Douglas & Carol Rearick

**COUPLES/INDIV:** Janet Baldinger, Erv & Dot Bandkau, Bradley Beal (2010), Joanne Bellmard, Dan & Karen Bierer, Elaine Blight, Marianne Comiskey, Gene & Judy Dahlin, Sandra Everett, Phil & Peggy Gage (S. St. Marie), Merrill Herbst, Jack & Bev LaBelle, John & Ruth LePatourel, Steve & Kate Lowry, Cleo Moran (Novi), Sue Newman, Ralph & Elizabeth Romano, David & Janet Schoewe, Connie Sherman, Peg Siford, Doris Singer (Gr. Rap.), Jim & Joanne Swonk, Alice Wyland and Deloris Yackley.

'Complementary Copy' in the address label area of this issue indicates 2009 dues have not been received. The recorder of memberships is not infallible. Call 810/229-6402 if an error has been made.

## THANKS THANKS THANKS

..... Judy Coebly and Sue Garcia for their help with the January issue of the newsletter.

..... Merrill Herbst, Cleo Moran, David & Janet Schoewe, and Doris Singer for their donations with their dues to Society projects.

..... Dot & Erv Bandkau, Bernie & Bonnie Corrigan, Sandra Everett, Cleo Moran, Ralph & Elizabeth Romano, Doris Singer, David & Janet Schoewe, and Jim & Joanne Swonk for including membership in Friends of Lyon School 2009 with their dues..

..... Archer-Huntley Financial Services for continued support in the recording of the Society archives.

..... Phil & Peggy Gage for sending two books written by Phil's Aunt Elinor Gage Babcock: 'Many Daughters' and 'The Autobiography of a Neighborhood'. These provide an insight into life in this area in earlier days.

..... Norma Jean Pless for her help in filing archives.

..... Larry Lawrence for donation of local telephone directories: July 1954, July 1959 and August 1964 for use in research.

Society members have always been very generous in their support. The board continually works to confirm the belief the Society's mission has value.

## SOCIETY PROJECTS

**ARCHIVES:** Clippings, photos, deeds, etc., are filed on a regular basis. Come to Lyon School Thursday morning to help.

**HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY:** As more information is acquired and researched, the business/commercial files become more refined. Your help in preparing clippings, identifying and/or preparing clippings is needed. Join us at Lyon School, Thursday mornings.

### **THE SOCIETY NEEDS....**

..... those with a collection of historical interest to share with others at the Lyon School Open House.

..... people to help host Lyon School Open House.

.....people to conduct Oral Histories with long-time residents. 'How-to' available.

.....help with review of early Argus issues, researching local people, government issues, transportation changes, obits, businesses, etc.

..... members to serve on the board or a committee; these could include Farmers' Market booth, photographing the local scene as it changes, archiving, etc.

.....people to help scan collections into the computer.

Call Jim Vichich, 810/227-4840 to volunteer.

### **NEW PROJECT SCHEDULED**

The Society has determined the Lyon School should be available on a regular basis. To that end – the school will be open each Thursday, April/November 10-4. Member or not, those who agree this is a natural extension of the Society's mission are welcome to help host. 810/227-4840.

The Society expresses sympathy to

the family of

**PAT WHITE**

A long-time member, whose widow, Marge,  
served as Society treasurer.

### **2009 BUSINESS / PROFESSIONAL MEMBERS**

Advance Craft Home Builders, Inc., Lawrence Autobody; Patrick Financial Group, LLS; and Promess, Inc.; all Life Members. Their support is deeply appreciated. You are encouraged to patronize these local, independent sustainers of the Society.

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

BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP / DONATION FORM

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

www.brightonareahistorical.com

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

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_ E-MAIL ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

(Include Zip and 4 digit)

New ( ) Renew ( )

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, 3 for \$21.

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

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

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 -- Size 48" x 60".

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.

For more information, call 810/229-6402

WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

February 12: 7:30 p.m.

Plymouth Historical Museum. Weldon Petz speaks about Lincoln - 'That Great Face'. The museum is a treasure trove of Lincoln memorabilia. 734/453-8940. www.plymouthhistory.org

February 18: 7 p.m.

Saline Historical Society. Scott Kunst of Old House Gardens. 734/944-0442. www.salinehistory.org

March 16: 7 p.m.

Wixom Historical Society. 'Detroit-Windsor Tunnel.' 248/624-4557

March 19:

Milford Historical Society. Moving Historic Homes. 248/685-7308 www.milfordhistory.org

Listed below are more expressions that were in use in the 18th century and are still commonly used. In some cases, the meanings have changed entirely since their inception - in others, they have withstood the test of time (Reprinted from The Essay Spring 2001)

To make ends meet

To a 19th century American, this would not mean that one is able to pay the bills - it would have meant to have sexual relations!

On the go

The use of this expression to mean that one is on the move or busy didn't come about until 1840. Prior to that time, it meant that someone was on the verge of ruin or destruction.

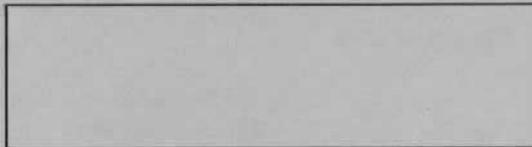
Half and half

If a milk product comes to mind, think again. In the early 17th century half and half meant either a drink of ale and beer or ale and porter.

BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
P.O. Box 481  
Brighton, MI 48116-0481

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit #303  
Brighton, MI

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



### GERMAN SETTLERS MAKE GENOA TOWNSHIP THEIR HOME

Richard Behrens, Sr., was born in Hanover, Germany, July 3, 1812. Following in the footsteps of many before him, he immigrated to Canada in 1838 and to Genoa Township in 1844. Whether by design or not, many of Germany birth, i.e. Conrad, Dorr, Hartman, Westphal, arrived in Genoa about the same time. They were not alone in their struggles to make a home.

Within a few years, 1846, Richard married Magdalena Conrad, daughter of neighbor Charles, Sr. and Maria. By 1859, Behrens owned over 320 acres in Sections 14, 23 and 24 of Genoa Township. Much of Conrad's land was located around Crooked Lake in Sections 22 and 27.

The Behrens and their neighbors shared, besides their nationality, the experience of crossing the ocean in a sailing vessel. They, individually and collectively, cleared land, lived in log homes, built frame barns and finally had sufficient means, c. 1870 to build fine, large homes. Basements were dug, the plots graded, stone, gravel and lumber hauled to the several sites. Five of these homes were built of bricks from their own clay and baked on the spot. Experienced workmen were boarded during the construction.

Richard and Magdalena had ten children: Henry 1846, Mary 1848, Theresa 1850, Philip 1853, Charles 1855, Caroline 1857, Albert 1858, Amelia 1860, Richard, Jr. 1863 and Leonard 1867. These children and their neighbors attended Ratz School on Grand River and Kellogg Roads.

Charles and Henry succumbed to the lure of the Wild West and the silver and gold to be mined in Colorado. Charles married; a 1910 clipping sent thanks for condolences from a daughter, Mrs. J. D. Wilson of Kansas. Whether Henry married has not been determined nor where he is buried. All of their brothers remained single. Albert also spent some time in Colorado, but came back to Genoa to live with his sister, Caroline, in the old homestead. Caroline remained single, cared for her mother and kept house for brothers Phillip, Richard, Leonard and Albert in the big brick house.

Of the Behrens other daughters: Mary married neighbor George B. Ratz and had three children, Clara, Mayme and George W.; Theresa married Henry Herbst, becoming parents of Richard, John, Charles, Fred, Louis, Albert and Anna; Amelia married Albert Bauer, but they were childless. However, the Ratz and Herbst families assured there were enough cousins, many still in the area, to go around.

Bill Pless' father, <sup>CHRIS</sup>George, often told his son of the many fun times at the brick house. A for-instance - a springboard was mounted on the barn floor at the back of the basement barn. Running on the barn floor to the end of the board, one sprang up then head-over-heals into the remains of an old straw stack below. The girls were as good as the boys even though hampered by having to hold onto long skirts. Fields and woodlots were roamed, muskrats trapped and squirrels and ducks hunted. It was always fun to go to Crooked Lake for swimming. Phillip Behrens taught many boys to swim and dive when they were very young. Magdalena usually had a peppermint in the pocket of her black dress or a small toy to give a visiting child and always a smile. These small items she accepted for unpaid rent on a store she owned in town, The Racket Store, 428 W. Main.

A great, great, granddaughter and family now call the house Richard and Magdalena built home. That house was built to last. Her father, Merrill Herbst, lives in a single story home he built in 1975, just west. Richard, Sr. and Magdalena sleep with most of their children and several grand children in the St. George Lutheran Cemetery situated in a small corner of their original property. (Compiled by Marieanna Bair from writings of Bill Pless; census records; Ellis' 1880 History of Livingston County; St. George Cemetery records and an interview with Merrill Herbst. Additions, corrections requested. 810/229-6402.)