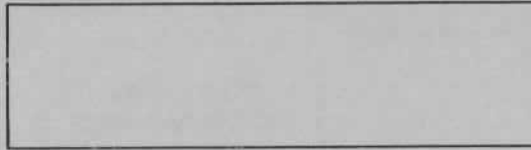


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### BRIGHTON'S OWN CARNIVAL MAN

New York was the state from which large numbers of the Brighton area's settlers came. However, members of the Tanner family also called Massachusetts, Vermont and Rhode Island home. Among the earliest in the county were John b. 1800, Lucretia b. 1791, and Sylvester and Albert b. 1824. However, these Tanners settled in Tyrone, Conway and Handy Townships, 1850.

Abigail (b. 1785 MA) Tanner's son John W., b. 1811 N.Y., married Harriet Case (daughter of Samuel) c. 1826 in N.Y. Harriet's birthday was July 22, 1806. They had four sons. No later record has been found of John W. nor of son Russell, b. 1843.

With sons George C., b. November 1836, John J., b. August 27, 1838, and Charles F., b. August 1844, Harriet moved to Michigan in the early 1860s. (Perhaps she wanted to be with her many Case relatives already settled here in Michigan.)

These three established themselves in the Brighton area. George was active politically; he was Brighton Village's first Street Commissioner (Village organized March, 1867). George's wife, another Harriet Case, lived only a few years after their marriage, dying December 21, 1883. She, with George's second wife Clarissa Hause, is buried in Chilson Cemetery. George's burial site has not been established. Of their two sons, Lewis and Egbert, there is no further record. A daughter, Edna, who married a Weston, d. at 26. Her obituary indicates burial in the Village Cemetery, but this is not verified.

Son Charles F. married Amelia Campbell February 6, 1867, and appears to have been a dentist in Brighton post Civil War. Local historian, Bill Pless, describes Harriet's son John J. as "One of Brighton's unforgettable characters." He writes "John had toured with a carnival, owning and operating a merry-go-round, a ride called the 'Ocean Wave' and a small, four-seat wood Ferris wheel." In that day, horses powered the rides, doing double duty by pulling the wagons loaded with the rides, to the next carnival site. Probably the most eccentric part of his show was a side show where he exhibited his long beard. A rather short man, he'd stand on a box displaying a beard longer than he was tall. Between shows the beard was stored in a long cloth sack under his clothes, extending down one pant leg. Between seasons, the carnival equipment was stored in a barn near his house.

When not on the road, John J. met the train with an enclosed coach, to take travelers to the local hotels. The coach was stored in the barn when the carnival rides were on the road. Let us imagine "Old John wearing a beaver hat, long-tailed coat, sitting high up on the front of the hack, whip in hand, driving his old pair of horses." Brass buckles, ivory rings and jingling chains added to the scene.

When Henry Ford first began developing Greenfield Village, the countryside was searched for items depicting life of an earlier day. He purchased the coach from John J. By then John J. had married Emma Elton of Hamburg, years earlier, c. 1870. This couple, their lifestyle, appearance and individuality fascinated Mr. Ford. He had concerns because of their age and arranged for them to have a complete checkup at his hospital in Detroit, inviting them to stay until they were well and strong and ready to return to their home in Brighton. The hospital's top floor was where prominent persons recuperated. Amenities included afternoon tea. Pless relates Emma enjoyed living like a queen and was in no hurry to get home; becoming so demanding of the staff they were at wits end. But one didn't complain to Mr. Ford. John J. finally got homesick.

On the northwest corner of Beaver and East Streets in Brighton, John J. Tanner's house still stands. A 15 acre strip extending east for 1/4 mile, about 1/8 mile wide had been purchased from brother George C. in 1869. Children enjoyed playing in 'Tanner's Woods'. (Compiled by Marieanna Bair from census records; Milton Charboneau's First Settlers and Land Owners of Livingston County; Stephen Leith's genealogy; Bill Pless' Supplement to the Old Village Cemetery records. Additions/corrections requested. 810/229-6402)