Why Did The Pioneers Come To Michigan?

Among the acts of legislation by the new United States government in 1787, was that which formed the Northwest Territory (Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois and Wisconsin). By 1805, the Territory of Michigan was separated from the Northwest Territory as Ohio, Indiana and Illinois had been earlier. When General Lewis Cass became governor of the Michigan Territory, he resolved to disprove the reports that the land was all swamp and sterile sand, with malaria,ague, chills and fever awaiting the first settlers. He was successful in his endeavor and soon hordes of eager and determined people from the New England and other eastern states made their way into the area we know as Livingston County.

Surprisingly, very few of the original pioneer purchasers of the newly surveyed government land had any previous experience as farmers. Besides those wanting to acquire virgin land for homesteading were many land speculators, Groups of artisans and guilds of various professions pooled finances and sent representatives to purchase thousands of acres to be divided when they would arrive in the early 1830s. One such trusted representative was Richard Lyon who came to Brighton Township.

Besides the lure of profit from the land, a cholera epidemic in the east gave an extra-added impetus to the rush to Michigan. Traveling in flat boats by way of the Erie Canal, over land by wagon train, on horseback and on foot many were anxious to leave the plague behind.

Besides those newly arrived from the Old World, among the settlers were those whose ancestors had been in the New World prior to the American Revolution. Some were descendants of passengers on the Mayflower, landing in Massachusetts in 1620. Those who originally helped build New Amsterdam (New York City) also had descendants who migrated to the Michigan Territory. Included in the trek were artisans, businessmen, professionals, skilled tradesmen, the clergy, bringing civilization and Christianity to the wilderness. Making a home for their families, land was cleared and fenced, roads and bridges built, schools and churches erected, pain and sorrow endured, separation borne and joys shared. Many present Livingston County residents are descendants of these brave, eager, resourceful, hardworking, determined (stubborn?) pioneers.

Compiled and edited by Marianne Bair from writings by the late William Fless, a descendant of those early pioneers. Additions/connections requested. 810/229-6402.

Congratulations

Following are winners of the Ice Harvesting Coloring Contest:

- Kindergarten: Sarah Wright
- 1st Grade: Calleigh Hurley
- 2nd Grade: Carson Plum
- 3rd Grade: Ellie Larson
- 4th Grade: Dakota Hanson-Meier

CoBACH Exhibit

"The Bridal Gowns of An Earlier Day", a collection of vintage bridal gowns and accessories will be on display now through May 15 at CoBACH Center in Downtown Brighton near the Millpond.

Plank Roads

From 1844 until about 1900, Michigan was home to many private plank roads connecting distant cities, including Detroit to Lansing. They were built from planks set side-by-side in dirt or gravel to form a kind of boardwalk. The planks were also known for not enduring well. Mark Twain, when asked how he liked traveling the Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids Plank Road, replied, "It would have been good if some uncoincidental scoundrel had not now and then dropped a plank across it."

Written by Dave Ball, sourced from DNR web site.

Old Village Cemetery: Your Help Is Needed on May 7

The Brighton Area Historical Society is honored to sponsor the 20th Annual Spring Clean-up of the historic Old Village Cemetery located next to the Millpond. Brighton's many veterans from the U.S. armed services and many of the early community settlers are buried here in Brighton's earliest cemetery that dates from 1838.

The civic pride that is found in quality, family-centered communities is found in our quaint community of Brighton and the surrounding townships. Individuals recognize their civic duty to assist in the common good of a community especially when presented with the need to respect our military heroes.

This spring clean-up will provide a fresh face to these beautiful grounds. Areas around headstones will be cleared of debris and encroaching sod. Weed trees and brush will be removed around the perimeter. This will present a respectful setting for the Memorial Day holiday, where we remember servicemen who died in battle to protect our freedoms.

Please dedicate five hours of your time to this important community civic-pride event. Bring your work gloves and garden tools. Work details will be planned, so please contact me if you can attend. Thank you for your help!

Jim Vichich

Volunteers Needed!

When: Sat, May 7, 9am-2pm
Where: Old Village Cemetery, in Downtown Brighton behind St. Paul Episcopal Church near the Millpond.

Park next to the cemetery behind the church and on W. St. Paul Street.

What: Bring tools and work gloves. Extra tools will be available. Chainsaws are needed.

Cemetery Tours

At 11:00am on the fourth Saturday of every month, from May through October, there will be one-hour guided tours of the Old Village Cemetery. Tours will start at the new cemetery entrance gate and walkway that is located behind the millpond gazebo.

You will learn about many early Brighton area community settlers and military veterans that are buried here. This will also give you a good opportunity to take in the beautiful cemetery grounds.

Tours of the cemetery will also be given before the Sunday evening concerts at 5:45 PM on several select dates. Dates for the Sunday tours will be presented in the near future. Tours are open to all and there is no cost. Registration is not required. Please join Tammie Seaton as she presents an enjoyable tour to learn about early Brighton and those unique stories from the past.