

BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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FROM THE WILDERNESS—BRIGHTON Part 5 (Conclusion)

The Detroit, Lansing and Northern Railroad (DLN) brought many major changes to lives of Brighton Village residents. It should also be recognized that major changes also came to area rural residents in the nearby townships.

In Green Oak, the DLN entered the township in Section 13, south of 12 Mile Road near the intersection of Silver Lake Road and Rushton Road, crossing Silver Lake Road in a northwest/southwest direction. Not much time elapsed before a new depot named Green Oak Station was established. The post office, a general store, saw mill, elevator and the Parker House operated by the Parker sisters were soon located at the station site.

In 1917, the Green Oak Inn accommodated employees of the Greenville Company from Ohio, when sand and gravel mining began in the area.

The DLN crossed the Huron River and Dutcher Road, running south of Island Lake. A depot at Academy Drive, made Island Lake a popular destination for vacationers from Detroit to come and enjoy the various recreational amenities found there.

South of Academy Drive a training site for the National Guard was set up and served soldiers since 1882. Following the declaration of war with Spain, April 25, 1898, soldiers embarked from the depot. Michigan sent five regiments from the Island Lake Training Camp. The administration of the camp and individual soldiers improved the local economy during the periods of training.

Crossing the southwest corner of Section 31, Brighton Township, the railroad continued through Brighton Village into Gen-

oa Township. The southeast corner of Section 15 in Genoa (corner of Dorr and Crooked Lake Roads) was the location of a flag station. The train stopped when signaled. Patrick Bogan was the owner of the flag station site. Mail was dropped there for township residents. Passengers could also board or disembark on occasion. (Patrick’s son, James, c. 1880, became post master at the post office near Genoa Station on the Ann Arbor Railroad which ran through Chilson in the southern portion of the township.)

As we have seen, the Iron Horse made an enormous difference in the local economy. Even the manner in which farming was done evolved. Instead of raising cattle, horses or sheep for the drover to drive on the Grand River Trail to a distant market, special breeds were raised for meat, milk, wool and horses. Many farmers began to concentrate on new types of grains or the development of a new variety of fruit trees. Although the railroad cut through a farmer’s acres, it brought new outlets for his produce. The railroad connected small towns with large towns; riding in comfort instead of rough rutted roads; stage coaches and toll roads were no more; towns/hamlets grew up around the crossings.

Early reminiscences compare the wilderness with the changes the DLN railroad brought. One might also include the shrill, loud steam whistle at crossings and the rumble of iron wheels on steel tracks? “...things sure are changing” was a common element found while researching the impact of the railroad on the area.

(Compiled by Marieanna Bair from Bill Pless writings; “Yesteryears of Green Oak 1830-1930”; “From Settlement to City” by Carol McMacken; census records; 1880 History of Livingston County. Additions/corrections requested call 810-229-6402.)