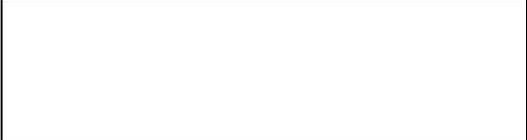


BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Evolution of Area Roads

Until statehood, January 26, 1837, Michigan was a United States Territory. In 1831, Federal surveyors drew the Meridian and Base Lines (NS—EW). From this mark, boundaries for counties, townships, cities and roads were laid out, mapped and recorded. Streams, lakes and rivers were also located.

July 4, 1832, an act of U.S. Congress directed the President to appoint three commissioners to ‘lay out’ a road from Detroit to the headwaters of the Grand River for military purposes. (It was less than 20 years since the end of the War 1812.) It was accordingly laid out and in 1833-34, \$2,500 extended a road ten miles west of Detroit. (We believe this means some trees were cut and stumps removed.) March 3, 1835, \$25,000 was authorized to clear a road 100 feet wide through the timber and the construction of bridges over the Rouge, Huron, Shiawassee and Cedar Rivers. It should be noted that the laying out of roads did not always mean they would happen. However, when Michigan became a state it became responsible for its own roads.

Until March 17, 1835, the south half of Livingston County was still part of Washtenaw County which had earlier been formed from Wayne County. A state act of that date directed that a route be built, among others, from the county seat of Washenaw County to the county seat of Genessee to connect with the Saginaw Turnpike. This road and the Grand River Road intersected in Brighton.

Local research notes that many of the early settlers of the area followed the Indian Grand River Trail west from Detroit. However, many also took the several Indian trails north from Ann Arbor, a small hamlet at the time, around Whitmore Lake into Livingston County.

A review of land records of original settlers holds many recognizable names. Bingham, Brady, Case, Dix, Rumsey, Russell, Smith, Warden and Tuthill were among those living in Ann Arbor when

they registered land in Green Oak Township. Arms, Beach, Bird, Cranston, Fitch, Fonda, Kellogg, Kelly and Maltby headed farther north into Brighton Township.

The settlers found the Huron River drained Green Oak leaving marshes which provided fodder for cattle, and high plains which could be prepared for crops. Ore Creek, Mann Creek and other waterways assured Brighton Township settlers a similar situation.

These early settlers traveled that trail to settle on a piece of virgin land to farm or on one of the many waterways to construct lumber and grain mills. Chippewa and Pottawatomi Indians had long used these lands for agriculture, fishing and hunting. However by 1835, the Indian population had been removed by the United States government via various treaties.

The 1859 map indicates the trail north out of Ann Arbor entered the county on the west side of Whitmore Lake at Eight Mile (the Base Line) Road. Circumnavigating the high hills, the trail turned west at Winans Lake Road, north on Rickett, crossed the Huron, and joined the Grand River Trail north through Brighton. At the north end of town the Ann Arbor/Flint Trail continued north on Flint Road on a circuitous route through Brighton Township and on the west side of School Lake into Hartland Township. It should be noted that not always were the surveyors’ lines followed. Wet marshes and tall hills often determined the route this barely two-track road followed. *To be Continued....*

(Compiled by Marieanna Bair from “From Settlement to City—Brighton”, “Yesteryears of Green Oak”; “1880 History of Livingston County”; “Early Landowners of Livingston County” by Milt Charboneau. Additions/corrections requested. 810-229-6402.)