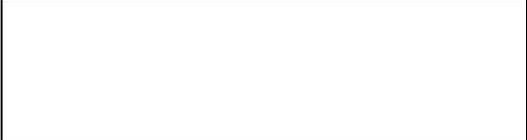


**BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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**Evolution of Area Roads (Part2)**

By 1875, the Ann Arbor-Flint Trail passed over the Huron River on a sturdy bridge north of Winans Lake Road. Instead of taking the Rickett Road route one could continue north to the connection with the Grand River Trail about one mile east of Brighton. It was still necessary to travel into Brighton on the Grand River Trail then to follow Flint Road north to current Old US 23.

By 1895, this road, and other main roads (still dirt) were widened and somewhat improved with the addition of gravel on a fairly regular basis. However, with horse drawn wagons, it was still difficult to move produce and products from the farm to markets and the railroad and to receive merchandise not produced at home.

New mode of travel, trucks and automobiles propelled by gasoline engines, greeted the dawn of the 20th Century. As novel as this mode of travel was, many of the 1904 population still doubted the reliability and durability of this newfangled machine. Could it negotiate the early 1900 roads? Could it climb the hills of southeast Livingston County? A story is told of the necessity of driving one's auto backwards up Seim's hill (Brighton Road west of Bauer Road) in order to keep gas flowing to the engine. And what about breakdowns?

Local historian Bill Pless wrote "I remember seeing a Glidden Tour fleet of cars go through; I think it was 1906. There were about fifty cars in the caravan. They started in Detroit and I think their route was to take them to Grand Haven, then south along Lake Michigan to return to Detroit on the Detroit-to-Chicago Road which is now U.S. 12. The trip took several days, and only half of them made it without breaking down. Many had so little hill climbing ability that we boys ran behind and pushed them up the hill west of the Ratz School." (Northeast corner of Kellogg and Grand River.)

Charles Glidden, an early promoter of the auto industry, had launched the Glidden Tours in 1905, after participating in a 1904

tour. These events, of which the majority of participants were in their own vehicles, had strict rules and record keeping. With the exception of 1912, these tours continued through 1915, stimulating interest across the country in this growing industry.

The documentation compiled by the Glidden Tour participants relayed to manufacturers the kinds of improvements needed in their products, soon. The tours were built-in advertising for manufacturers whose vehicles were included. Glidden might well be credited as running America's first automotive proving ground. (General Motors Proving Ground, commenced in 1924, in Brighton Township is now in its 90th year.)

Impatient with snow-blocked roads in the winter, mud bogs in the spring, and dust during the summer, automobile purchasers made their irritation and dissatisfaction known to national, state and local governments. By the second decade these entities began responding appropriately.

In 1913, the National Trunkline Highway Act authorized the planning and construction of 3000 miles of Trunkline Highway in Michigan. (In 1924, another 6530 miles of Trunkline Highway were authorized in Michigan.)

*To be Continued....*

(Compiled by Marieanna Bair from "From Settlement to City—Brighton"; "Yesteryears of Green Oak"; "writings of Bill Pless; various clippings and articles. Additions/corrections requested. 810-229-6402.)