

**BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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**A Story About Island Lake — Part 4**

The Michigan Military Academy was established and founded by Tom Leith of Detroit in 1918. He purchased a site on Island Lake, with beach access, from Adam G. Brown in 1920. The property extended from the railroad tracks north along Academy Drive. There he located the Michigan Military Academy campus, housed in the Swastika Inn near the railroad the first year. That first summer, 17 boys received "...general tutoring, military training, nature study and sports." Due to expanding student enrollment, a 40' x 80' two-story building, equipped with running water and electricity, to house 60 boys and ten instructors (one of which at one time was his brother, Donald) was erected in 1921. A large athletic field north of the railroad was developed to provide an area for military drills and physical fitness exercises for the boys besides those on the lake, which included learning how to rescue drowning swimmers. Shortly a basketball court was included. The college preparatory curriculum was offered from September 1, 1921/June 15, 1922. The Academy boys' baseball team regularly played local teams at no dishonor to themselves. Mr. Leith soon built his own home at Island Lake.

In addition to the launching of the Military Academy, the spring of 1921, found George Williams completing the construction of a pavilion, located on the west side of the ridge between Island and Briggs Lakes (Academy Drive), the highlight of his summer resort center. Three stories tall, the pavilion would have dancing on the top floor which is level with the road. Part of the pavilion is built over the water. Refreshments and private rooms and an office will be on the second level. At water level, the first floor will have bathing booths constructed in a manner which allows bathers direct access to the water and beach. "They are providing first class wool bathing suits for rent."

Williams also announced the Arcadia people of Detroit have leased his pavilion; the Arcadia Hillside Pavilion Company representative, L. W. Scutt, a professional dancer, will be in charge of

the company's policy to "...keep the place clean and respectable in every way." Scutt is planning dancing classes soon.

The Arcadia people would also be responsible for the road between Island and Briggs Lakes to be built to a width of 50 feet. By August 17, 1921, Williams' Hillside Bathing Beach was getting water slides built and there was a need for more parking space. It should be noted that two grocery and general stores were open along Academy Drive for the convenience of visitors and campers.

Even more exciting news broke early that April, 1921. Not only was Williams building his Hillside Bathing Beach and Tom Leith's Michigan Military Academy was settling in, but now the scoop was that C.W. Burton & Company was also working on a \$30,000 dancing pavilion on the north shore of Island Lake! Burton had purchased from A.G. Brown in May, 1920, the earlier site of the Spiritualists' campground.

The Brighton Argus reporter noted that most supplies for construction and equipment for the amazing addition to the area's economic base had been purchased from Brighton merchants, for which residents should be appreciative. *(To be Continued)*

(Compiled by Marieanna Bair from "From Settlement to City, Brighton, Michigan, 1832-1945" by Carol McMacken and "Yesteryears of Green Oak, 1830-1930"; donated photographs and clippings. Additions/corrections requested 810-229-6402.)

**SEASON'S GREETINGS TO ALL  
OUR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS**