

BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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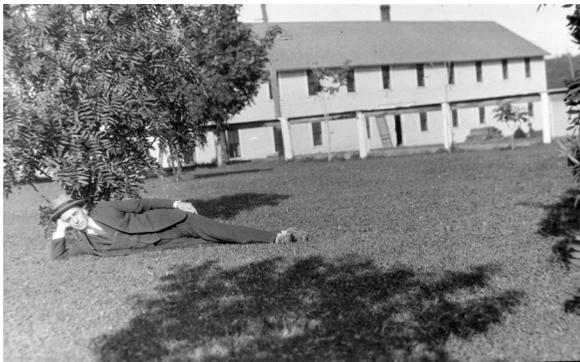
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A Story About Island Lake — Part 7



Dormitory at the Military Academy

The proximity of the State Park, William’s Hillside Bathing Beach and Island Lake Hotel and Tom Leith’s Michigan Military Academy was drawing hundreds of visitors to the south side of Island Lake in 1922. C.W. Burton, aware of competition, placed a large ad announcing the grand opening of his new Island Lake Pavilion across the lake. May 30, 1922, in the Brighton Argus. (The pavilion was on the north-westerly side of the lake.) “Dancing to Fisher’s Orchestra led by Ike Fisher, himself.” Over 350 attended. Fisher would also provide dance classes. Guests at Burton’s Island Lake Pavilion came from Detroit, Ann Arbor, Flint, etc., to enjoy the beautiful and well made dance floor. The parking lot hosted Cadillacs, Dodges, Fords, Hudsons, Jordans, Lincolns, Pierce Arrows, and other well known makes. For dinner many drove to the other side of the lake to William’s Island Lake Hotel. “Lena Bales was the cook and served really good food.”

Burton’s Island Lake Pavilion was built out over the water leaving a large open area below. The white stucco with blue trim dance hall, had half-moon shaped wood shutters and screens on the lake side. Lake people came in their row boats in order to dance. It was a nice lovers’ place to rest after dancing, to look out to the blue water of the lake. There were always a few mischievous boys lighting firecrackers resulting in patrons screaming back up to the dance hall. A large room,

built by Chester Peach, for use by the musicians was also below the hall.

August 4, 1922, Manager Hearn offered the use of the Pavilion to the Federated Church (First Presbyterian) of Brighton which held Sunday services at Island Lake.

April 4, 1923, the Dodge Brothers of Detroit bought the property leased by the state, from Tom Leith, c. 22 acres. Included was the pavilion, athletic field and 1000 feet of lake frontage, and presented it to the state — Dodge Brothers State Park No. 1. Other amusements were also to be added. Leith retained use of the Academy buildings and property for ten years, when not open to the public; also his home and the little island. Leith’s Michigan Military Academy would continue its schedule of programs and curriculum.

In 1925, the Island Lake Pavilion, 7325 Island Lake Drive, was named the Blue Lantern. Over the years big name bands — Hank Biagini’s Casa Loma Band, the Corn Huskers, McKinney’s Cotton Pickers, Red Nichols, Abe Lyman, Benny Goodman, Wayne King, Bob Crosby and the Bobcats, and the Dorsey Brothers performed at the Blue Lantern. Jean Goldkette, an orchestra leader from Detroit, was the booking agent for the bands. The first regular meeting of the Lions Club at the Lincoln Hotel (130 W. Grand River) in Brighton on 1926, was entertained by Goldkettes’ orchestra.

The Blue Lantern was not the only place for dancers to ‘strut their stuff’. George Williams sold his Island Lake Hotel in July 1925, to Roy Downing, the manager.

The competition of the two dance halls resulted in many ads in the local press, the Brighton Argus. Area commercial establishments, real estate agents, builders, etc., all gained as thousands arrived each weekend and all summer. *To be Continued...*

(Compiled by Marieanna Bair from “Yesteryears of Green Oak”; donated photographs and clippings. Additions/corrections requested 810-229-6402.)