

**BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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**A Story About Island Lake — Part 9**

At Superior Drive stands two stone pillars. These are remnants of an early indicator to the traveler on Grand River where one should turn to reach the Blue Lantern. These pillars had blue lanterns at the peak and the words "Blue Lantern". (This researcher has not been able to determine an exact date of their construction.

The seeming proliferation of roller skating rinks of the 1920/30s was noted by Bill Pless. In the late 1880s "...a roller skating craze swept the country...every small town had a rink in the 1880/90s, including Brighton." The Opera House (c. 125 E. Grand River), owned by Solomon Gould in the 1880s, had a maple floor for skating and dancing. A very popular place.

During WW II dancing and/or roller skating at the Blue Lantern was suspended. Buddy Bruce and orchestra were among the performers at resumption of entertainment September 9, 1946. In 1947, Mr. & Mrs. Phil Parlove bought the Blue Lantern, including the restaurant and bar. Their six children helped with the many chores involved. Parlove had a 16 piece orchestra, directed by one of his sons. With Parlove, Henry Francisco parked cars and served as security officer. If things got out of hand he would call the sheriff; but this seldom happened. Because of the expense involved with large bands, smaller three-piece bands were engaged c. 1950. During the early 1950s, the ballroom was renovated for weddings, etc. The Parloves held teen dances each Wednesday during the summer.

John and Delores Thiel moved from Ludington in 1957 where they had conducted teen dances. Thiel worked at WHMI at the time, and by 1963, the Blue Lantern Teen Club held dances every Friday and Saturday.

In May, 1950, Mr. & Mrs. Ed Baprowski bought the Island Lake Resort, 6269 Academy Drive, with beaches on both Island and Briggs Lakes. For the safety of their patrons, the Baprowskis in-

stalled a pedestrian underpass, 40 feet long, seven feet eight inches high and six feet wide from Briggs Lake in 1959.

"John, Kate and George!" invited all for the grand opening of the Academy Inn, 6631 Academy Drive, April 28, 1954. One found modern facilities, a dance floor and the Stan Rutter Trio providing dance music.

May 18, 1964, the Blue Lantern dance hall burned, signaling the end of an era that began with the opening of the 20th century. The availability of better and easier transportation by rail, later by automobiles over improved roads, created the opportunity for far-from-the-big-city recreation. Entrepreneurs, sensing the opportunity to provide lakeside living, soon sold lake lots for cottages which later transformed into year round homes.

In January, 1974, the state announced new proposed changes for Island Lake State Park under the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Included are an entrance to the park from Kensington Road; a nature center; a living farm; trail development for biking and hiking; a canoe landing, etc. Not all of these have come to fruition as in the original proposal. The park is now Island Lake Recreation Area. A volunteer organization, Friends of Island Lake meets monthly to "Build opportunities for families and youth of all ages to get outdoors." [www.islandlakefriends.org](http://www.islandlakefriends.org)

*To be continued...*

(Compiled by Marieanna Bair from clippings; "Yesteryears of Green Oak" by the Green Oak Historical Society; "From Settlement to City, Brighton" by Carol McMacken; Andrew Haapala, Island Lake Recreation Area Manager. Additions/corrections requested 810-229-6402.)

**Correction:** At the beginning of the third paragraph in Part 8, Island Lake Story, "In the 1920s," etc. should be have been "In the 1930s".