

**BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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**Grand River Trail to Grand River Avenue**

Census records indicate members of the Taylor family arrived in mid Michigan before the mid 1850s although ancestors were born in New York before the end of the 18th century.

John Lorenzo Taylor, Sr., and wife Mahala bought 80 acres in Brighton Township November 8, 1856, in Section 10 along Hyne Road. There they raised five boys and five girls on their stock and produce farm and John’s work as a thresher. The boys usually became local farmers and the girls often married local farmers.

The 1915 map of the township records 40 acres (Section 9) in the name of John L. Taylor, Jr., north of Brighton where Hilton Road (1875) ends at the well-traveled Grand River Road. Taylors were witness to Grand River as Plank Road, then gravel, before paving in the 1920s. It was variously titled M-16, then U.S. 16, when paved, on its way to the Capitol in Lansing.

John L. Jr., is owner of 80 acres on the south side of Hilton Road traversed by Ore Creek on its way to Brighton Village. His neighbor Charles Jacobs, father of wife, Flora Estelle, owns the 80 acres just west. John’s name is also on another 40 acres on both sides of the Grand River Road also south of Hilton Road. When tractors became available c. 1918, the Taylors were among the first to make use of them. John and Flora are parents of four children, Clarence, Lillian, Ruth and Mildred. All marry neighbors’ children. Many of the Taylor children were educated in the area “...Continuing their well known and respected reputation of working diligently and being forward looking.”

The 1959 map sports dash marks across the southern half of Brighton Township including, diagonally, through Clarence and wife, Ernestine Hicks’ 370 acres which are under cultivation

dedicated to various grains and potatoes. By 1930, Clarence also has a trucking business. These dash marks are the route of the proposed I-96 highway. Their only child, Horace, is very involved in the farm and soon assumes responsibility of Taylor Moving and Storage; still accessible from Hilton Road. Horace also has the distinction of being the first child born, October 22, 1921, in the new Mellus Hospital at 121 E. North Street, remodeled from a large home on the site.

By 1965, the intersection of I-96 and Grand River involves much of Clarence Taylor’s farm home site and acreage as well as others’ cultivated land. Can we imagine driving through their barns and yard?

Local governing bodies soon were reviewing various developers’ proposals for that suddenly prime real estate. Ground was broken for the Brighton Mall, east of Grand River, south of I-96, in 1970; construction of the theater to the east of the mall began November 23, 1971.

Undeveloped land on the west side of Grand River soon was transformed into another mall with home improvement stores, clothing, furniture stores, restaurants, theater and a medical center (November 1997) etc., etc. In 1990 two lane gravel Challis Road has become a five lane paved thoroughfare and gas stations, banks, the Post Office, etc., spring up in its proximity.

(Compiled by Marieanna Bair from township maps; census records; “Early Landowners and Settlers” by Milton Charboneau; “From Settlement to City—Brighton, Michigan 1832-1945” by Carol McMacken; interview with Clarence’s granddaughter, Jane Jarvis Tomlinson. Additions/corrections requested 810-229-6402.)