

BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Spencer Road

William Noble registered his Noble’s Plat (Brighton Township SE 1/4, Section 30 and NW 1/4, Section 31) at the county recorder’s office in 1837. Lot numbers were depicted on each rectangular lot. One also finds streets named: Nelson, Temple, Beaver, Liberty, Cushing, Water, Meadow and Cross Streets, each of which crossed the Grand River Trail north of Fitch Street (Main Street). South of Fitch were North, Dutcher, and Noble Streets all crossing the Trail, notwithstanding Ore Creek meanders through some of them. East and West Streets, crossing Fitch Street (Section line between Sections 30 and 31.) were a block east and west of, and parallel to, the Grand River Trail. (Speculators tried to make their plats look as complete and developed as possible to encourage sales back east.)

Local historian Bill Pless notes that Charles Spencer lived on the Northeast corner of the Grand River Road and Church Street intersection and perhaps had a business office there. Charles Spencer was a partner of David Thompson in the Globe Iron Works, a furnace and foundry in a brick building (c. 1856) they built at the southeast corner of Grand River and North Streets. “Here they manufactured various agricultural implements: plows, drags, cultivators, wheelbarrows, etc. A ten horse-power steam engine supplied the power and they found a ready market for their products in the community and in adjacent counties.” Pless surmises ...”He was credited with contributing to the development of the village. When the name of what had been Noble Street in 1859 was changed, they named it Spencer Road to honor him.” The 1915 map still uses ‘Noble’ for the first two blocks. Charles Spencer was the Village School District Director in 1840. (He and wife Mary had seven children.) He was also a charter member of the Livingston County Agricultural Society and a charter member of the Masonic Lodge #42 in 1851. By 1877 he has moved to Handy Township serving as Clerk and Trustee in Fowlerville, and a member of the local cornet band in 1877.

A possible (‘probably’ per Pless) brother, John also bought property c. 1838, on top of the hill (Noble Street). He is noted as a merchant living with Freeman Fish in a boarding house. Both Charles and John are recorded as buying various parcels of land in the county and within a year or two selling that property. John’s wife Lucy, taught in the Village School in 1856 and 1857. Organized in 1854, the Brighton Methodist Episcopal Church had among its first trustees John Spencer. He was also a charter member of the Brighton Masonic Lodge #42. John died “... during the war of the rebellion” January 11, 1864, and is buried in the Old Village Cemetery. Lucy returned to New York.

When Noble registered his plat in 1837, Noble Street was one block long. By 1854 it was extended east following a trail north about one mile then east one mile to Van Amburg Road, ending at that point. Not until the 1915 plat map does one find it extended three-quarters of a mile to Pleasant Valley Road and then continuing two and a half miles east to Labadie Road in Oakland County. That three-quarter mile was platted through land owned by Cyrenus Morgan, F.J. Lacount (New York land speculator), Samuel M. Conely and William S. Conely. Did these farmers object to giving up a considerable piece of land for the road to continue on to Pleasant Valley Road? One would assume so. Each would lose about 30 feet along three-quarters mile of their farms. That could be considered quite a chunk; and then continue to pay taxes on it also. Landowners are charged taxes to the middle of any road on their border.

(Compiled by Marieanna Bair from Bill Pless writings; 1880 History of Livingston County; census records; Milton Charboneau’s “Early Landowners and Settlers of Livingston County”. Additions/corrections requested 810-229-6402.)