

**BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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**Early Roads in Genoa Township**

Challis Road, west of Grand River, is intersected by railroad tracks at 3/4 miles, Bauer Road at one mile, with Baetcke School, 1844, on the southwest corner, Dorr Road at two miles, ending at Conrad Road, a total of 2-1/4 miles.

But from where does that name come from? It is not prominent in local histories and references. Instead one finds the names: Baetcke, Benedict, Hartman, Romer, Westphall, etc., who were among the earliest settlers of Genoa Township purchasing property along that road.

A relatively late arrival in the township, Phillip Challis (b. October 29, 1862, Eng.) purchased 102 acres at the northwest corner of Grand River and Challis Road from Conrad and Elizabeth Romer c. 1900. The Romers had bought that acreage in 1863 from her parents, Jacob and Elizabeth Conrad. (The Conrads arrived in 1844 and by 1870 owned 320 acres in the township.)

Traveling along two lane Challis Road in the year of our country's centennial one passed by farm homes, barns and the other outbuildings necessary for agriculture. One observed small ponds; a railroad crossing; and farms of 40-200 acres in size.

The 1915 plat indicates a house where Phillip and wife Julia Butchrite, (b. 1877, d. 1929) lived with their children. As one drives west on Challis Road there is still a small pond to the right. This small pond (just west of the UM Medical Center) is where three year old Ernest Challis, their son, drowned while playing on thin ice March 30, 1916. Phillip and Julia were heart broken. They did have four children who lived into adulthood. Phillip died February 2, 1923, at 61. He is buried with little Ernest in Calvary Cemetery.

(Scanty census records suggest Emma J. Challis (b. 1860) and Allise Challis (b. 1865), both in London, England may be sisters of Phillip.)

Hundreds of vehicles drive Challis Road each day. On the south side are located a restaurant (Big Boy), a bank (First National), hotel

(Homewood Suites), facilities for rehabilitation (Willow Brook), long-term care (Ashley Court) and a recreation facility (Mt. Brighton).

On the north side is the Brighton Towne Square with a number of big box stores, various businesses, a hotel (Holiday Inn), medical facilities (UM Medical offices). Also in the area are apartments (Independence Village) and a theater (MJR Cinemas 20). The Square has its own street layout.

During the 1950/60s, on the north side of Challis, the Iron Mustang Motorcycle Club had a clubhouse and recreation site.



It was not until electric power was extended to rural area in the early 1930s, that county roads were assigned names and the structures given numbers. The Detroit Edison Company needed proper addresses to which bills could be sent. Perhaps the proximity of the Challis home to Grand River at that time suggested the name.

August 16, 2016, the Livingston Daily notes heavy traffic on Challis Road calls for the construction of "... a roundabout at Challis and Bauer Roads."

(Compiled by Marieanna Bair from: census records; Early Settlers and Land Owners" and obituaries by Milton Charboneau; interview with Jean Ledford of Genoa Township Board. Additions/corrections requested 810-229-6402.)