

BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Early Roads in Genoa Township — Beck and Hacker Roads

Up until 1958, Beck Road extended 2-3/4 miles from Lucy Road east to Grand River in Genoa Township. In 1961, construction of I-96 closed access to Grand River. At that time, the C&O and the Ann Arbor Railroads intersected Beck.

Research indicates that no one with the name of Beck resided in Livingston County until the late 19th century. R.F.D. delivery, 1896, likely prompted the inclusion of named roads as one's address. The connection of the name Beck with naming of that road escapes this researcher.

Trails marking borders of townships were among the first surveyed and laid out. These were straight north/south, east/west trails except when natural obstacles (hills, lakes, swamps, etc.) were encountered.

A Brighton Argus clipping of August 8, 1923, describes the paving of the Grand River Road between Detroit and Lansing. The right-of-way would follow the old road; but fill valleys, remove the various small hills and numerous sharp curves would be straightened. "...the greatest departure from the track of the old highway will be to entirely do away with what for the last eighty years has been known as the Benjamin Corners. At the curve north of Bert Francis' farm the road will bear to the left instead of to the right, and continue to bear left until it strikes the east and west road at the top of 'Bunker's Hill'." That is the short stretch now known as Bendix Road.

William and Barbara Hacker, born in Germany, purchased land in Genoa Township, Section 23, October 4, 1837. A year later 40 acres in Oceola Township has the Hacker name. More property was acquired through the years. Two of their sons, Philip b. 1842, and Roloff, b. 1843, enlisted as privates to serve in the Civil War. Philip in Co. I, 5th Michigan Infantry and Roloff, Co.

G, 2nd Michigan Infantry. Both died as Corporals. Philip, February 13, 1863, in Alexandria, Virginia, of wounds received at Fredericksburg. He is buried in the National Cemetery in Alexandria. Brother Roloff, died November 24, 1863, Knoxville, Tennessee, probably of wounds suffered in the Battle of Chattanooga, where it appears he is buried.

Other descendants were skilled in many fields, among them as operators of a large dairy operation. A 1907 clipping reports (grandson) Frank Hacker, with three patented milking machines, milked 31 cows in 1-3/4 hours with one man. Twenty years later he bought three new milking machines and he is increasing his herd to 60 cows. This made him the largest dairyman in the county.

Approximately six miles long, Hacker Road still extends north on the borders of Genoa and Brighton, Oceola and Hartland Townships.

(Compiled by Marieanna Bair from: census records; plat maps; "Early Landowners..." by Milton Charboneau; Argus clippings; and an interview with Judith Coebly. Additions/corrections requested 810-229-6402.)