

The first schoolhouse in Brighton was built on the Grand River Trail in 1837. This building was used for about ten years and during that time the Brighton-Genoa Fractional District No. 5 was formed. The village grew, the citizens became dissatisfied with the old building and it was sold. A house on what is now E. Main Street was rented for use as a school until 1850, when a new schoolhouse was built on the northeast corner of Spencer and East Streets. This building served through the Civil War years.

A triangular site located west of what was then Ann Arbor Road (now Rickett) just south of the Grand River Trail, was purchased from Ira W. and Spaulding N. Case in 1867, for the sum of \$487.50. Property tax millage and state authorized bonds allowed the construction of the Union School which was occupied in December, 1868.

By 1879 there were 267 children in the district between 5 and 20 years of age. The number of teachers increased from one or two to five in 1879. By the late 1800's the school became graded and provided for a 10th grade education. As enrollment increased and grades 1-12 were taught it became necessary to rent vacant stores in the downtown area for grades 1-4. The buildings were not in good repair; some had been saloons, wool storage and grocery stores. The parents were not satisfied but times were not good and the children were educated, even under those conditions, to succeed in institutions of higher education.

Around 1900 surrounding townships were paying tuition for students from their districts to attend the high school. By 1907, an elementary schoolhouse for grades 1-4 was built just north of the Union School. Its most recent use has been as the Brighton Senior Citizen's Center. It is now known as Rickett School.

In 1928, a new high school was built on Church Street at E. Main. In 1947, St. Patrick's Church bought the Union School and in 1952 it was torn down to provide a playground on the parochial school site. During the 1950's the area's country schools consolidated into the Brighton Area Schools. Since then seven elementary school buildings and a new high school on Brighton Road just west of town have been built, and enlarged. A recent decline in enrollment has caused the closing of one elementary school.

As the story goes, the 'old high school' (Union School) bell was rescued from a scrap heap by Richard Clark and it now hangs in the St. Paul Episcopal Church bell tower. (Above condensed from "A Scrapbook of Michigan Memorabilia" by William Pless.)

BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
 P.O. BOX 481
 BRIGHTON, MI. 48116