

**BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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**Brighton Area Settlers Valued Education — Part 5**

The 1868 Union School, by early 1920s, was obvious to many, as becoming inadequate to meet the needs of District 5 pupils. By 1926, there was sometimes heated discussion as to where the new school was to be built in District 5. To eliminate the growing contention over the issue, Thomas S. Leith donated the land for the school.

A two-story structure was built at 125 N. Church Street, opening in 1928. Eight students graduated from high school the first year. Through the 1940s the school on Church Street would continue to accommodate rural school graduates in addition to its own elementary and high school students.

During and after the Depression more students had seen the benefits of the broader education found in high school. Again there was an overwhelming need for additional facilities. The rapidly mounting enrollments soon became a major problem.

After 1945, following WW II, the birth rate increased nationally. The G.I. (Government Issue) Bill of Rights enabled returning veterans to go on to college; similar to aspirations in the 1930s to attend high school. The 1940—1960 population growth of Michigan was one of the largest in the nation.

With jobs in Detroit, and improved roads, families moved to the 'country'. It became impossible for rural districts to house 50-60 students in a one-room structure. District 5 School Board found it impossible to accept rural school districts' additional students, without the support of those districts' consolidation with District 5. Much discussion (not always amicable) took place in the 1950s. Parents found it emotionally difficult to 'give up' their local control. Many felt they were being forced to consolidate and a number of unkind letters to the editor appeared. Confronted with no alternative, nearby rural districts

consolidated with District 5. Because of the distances involved, students were transported by bus. Property tax hikes were necessary and more aid needed.

A Michigan Legislative act in 1964, required all school districts to provide K-12 instruction thereby forcing those districts which could not comply to merge with neighboring districts. By 1990 the rural one-room school was virtually non-existent.

Inevitably District 5 School Board found it necessary to construct new elementary school buildings. In 1951, West Elementary school, 1010 State Street, was built. In October, 1976, it was renamed Lindbom School in honor of its long-time principal, Carl H. Lindbom. The School District sold Lindbom School in 2015.

The Burton S. Miller Elementary School, 850 Spencer, was constructed in 1957. It was named for the long time Brighton City police officer who, for many years, had assured the safety of children crossing Grand River, who attended school at 125 N. Church Street, often carrying small children across Grand River. Following construction of later elementary schools, this building became the Miller Early Childhood Center and Senior Citizen Center in 1988.

To be continued...

(Compiled by Marieanna Bair from: Bill Pless writings; "Brighton Schools — Then and Now, 1992" by Jean Petersburg; school office staff. Additions/corrections requested 810-229-6402.)