

**BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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**BRIGHTON LAKE**

Following the introduction of the automobile, c. 1920, the newly paved two-lane Grand River Road (M-24), enabled many from the Detroit area to make regular weekend visits to the Brighton area.

With many natural lakes — Island, Briggs, Fonda, Crooked Lake, etc., it became the place to spend vacation days. Promotion by local businesses and real estate firms, confirmed that Brighton was the place to visit and consider building a summer place. The multitude of new residents anticipated was encouraging to local merchants and craftsman. The Brighton Argus editor, in 1921 noted the “Need of Houses Growing Acute.”

Ore Creek, on which Orson Quackenbush constructed a dam, 1838, on the south side and perpendicular to Main Street, to power his grain mill, resulted with the mill pond in the middle of town. A bit down stream from the mill, Maynard and Almon Maltby installed a dam, near Third Street, north of Brighton Lake Road to operate a saw mill.

Downstream, Ore Creek flows diagonally through the southeast corner of Genoa Township’s Ore Lake.

D.C. Cooper, a developer, noted in the Brighton Argus November 17, 1926 issue, the profit to be made in the sale of lake front property in the Brighton area.

Cooper also had plans for another lake by building a dam on Ore Creek southwest of Brighton City in Hamburg Township. “... according to the plans now being perfected, it will be the biggest lake proposition in this section of the country... flooding of somewhere between three hundred and four hundred acres of land.” The dam was to be placed at the Campbelltown Mills in Hamburg Township. As occasionally happens — well laid plans...

Charles Howell, a boy scout and troop leader owned c. 420 acres in Section 36 of Genoa Township by 1935. It was his donation of

this property to the Detroit Council of the Boy Scouts in 1937, which brought to fruition a dam on Ore Creek, which formed Brighton Lake. Even tho’ the Great Depression was ongoing, sites were sold for cottages and their building commenced.

The Scouts’ dam occasionally needed repair, and residents down stream on Ore Lake often had concerns about its safety. In 1979, when two logs gave way, it became an absolute necessity to consider an alternative.

Repairs were made to the dam, but the Detroit Council of the Boy Scouts now found themselves at a decision point. The number of boy scouts attending camp was declining. The Detroit Council was supporting two large camps in the Detroit area: the Charles Howell in Brighton and the D-Bar-A in Metamora. It was determined one camp could accommodate all the campers. The estimated cost of rebuilding the Brighton Lake dam was a million dollars or more. Ultimately, it was decided to sell the camp.

In 1986, the Detroit Area Scout Council sold the property, which had grown to over 700 acres, to Bingham Farms based developer, Burton-Katzman (River Place/Abbey Homes) who purchased other adjacent properties and created the Pine Creek Ridge subdivision of luxury home sites. A top priority of Burton-Katzman was the replacement of the deteriorated dam with a fine concrete structure retaining the water of Ore Creek at the base of Brighton Lake. Again the water of Ore Creek had been found to be of great value to area developers.

(Compiled by Marieanna Bair from Society archives; plat maps; “From Settlement to City—Brighton—1983-1945” by Carol McMacken; Frank & Lorraine Bacala; and John Rawcliffe. Additions /corrections requested: 810-229-6402.)