

BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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BRIGHTON HOSPITAL – A PIONEER IN ITS FIELD – PART 1

Today when you stand near the corner of Grand River Avenue and Kensington Road, there sits a little known hospital that is not open for everyone. It is a hospital designed for the treatment of addiction. It is currently called Ascension Brighton Center for Recovery. It has been known as “Brighton Hospital” since opening in October 1953. The hospital is one of the top 3 premier treatment facilities in the nation. It was the 2nd hospital of its kind to be established in the country, after Hazelton. It was a pioneer in the field of treating alcoholism.

In 1951 a commission was formed. Former Governor Kim Sigler appointed Harry Henderson, a successful businessman and a former state liquor control commissioner, along with former Govern G. Mennen Williams and attorney Owen J. Cleary. After research, it was determined that there was no good general hospital that could treat alcoholism. A State Board for Alcoholism was created and “Since the liquor industry profited from the alcohol, they could pay for it,” per Henderson. Through the “Little Brown Jug” (a little canister set out on the counters at bars and liquor stores), \$30,000 was collected and it laid the groundwork for establishing the Brighton Hospital.

Henderson established the non- profit, the Michigan Alcoholic Rehabilitation Foundation and bought 92 acres near the corner of Grand River Avenue and Kensington Road at 12851 Grand River, from William and Francis Ford (Henry Ford’s brother). The farmhouse, owned by James and Eliza Turner, that sat at that location, was added onto and became the Glen Lore Manor, a rest home or sanitarium for women in the 1930’s. That building was the start of Brighton Hospital and is still a functioning part of the main building. The original officers of the Michigan Alcoholic Rehabilitation Foundation were doctors, judges, attorneys and bank vice presidents.

Harry Henderson remained very involved at the Hospital until his death in 1973. He and his wife, Florence, lived on the property and are buried next door at the Kensington Cemetery. He really loved the Brighton area.

When the 1st patient was admitted in 1953, cornfields, a 9-hole golf course and a private lake surrounded the hospital. Medical doctors and nurses, specializing in alcoholism were joined by staff ministers. The excellent staff and the peaceful surroundings helped “clear the minds of the “patients.” There were 25 patients in the beginning. A stay in 1966 was anywhere from 3 weeks to a year and cost about \$30/day. At one point there was a building called the “Swamp ” (a Quonset building below grade in back of the main building) where patients could stay in that could not afford rooms in the early ‘70s. By 1975, a new 32-bed addition was being added at a cost of 1.9 million dollars, known as the Henderson wing. In 1981 there were 64 beds. Other residence buildings were added to house doctors and other supporting personnel. An additional building was built in 1989 to accommodate an adolescent center to address the younger patients coming in. By the 1990’s Brighton Hospital was also treating drug addiction. In 2001 the Adolescent Center was changed into an administrative building. Currently the hospital has 63 beds.

To be continued...

Submitted by Mindy Kinsey (Information from BAHS files, the Brighton Argus, Jacque Fuller, a nurse for 35 years at Brighton, Kelly Rogers and Cory Swann, Resident Historians and hospital support team for 15 years ea. Mark Mullinax of Brighton Library and Lee Gough, local attorney)

