

**BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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Mills of Brighton is our current display at the CoBACH Center in downtown Brighton, next to the Millpond. Special **Free Presentations** about the mills will also be given at the CoBACH Center. We hope you enjoy this story and will visit CoBACH to see the display. Dates and times for the presentations are listed on Page 1.

**Early Gristmills of the Brighton Area**

The village of Brighton was centered in 1840, on the hill where Spencer Road and Rickett Road intersect the Grand River Trail, "Upper Town." Orson Quackenbush selected vacant land in "Lower Town" to build the Brighton Flouring and Gristmill. The site was located on the north side of W. North Street; a strip about two blocks wide extending north (on the west side of S. West Street). The parcel included the area to be flooded by the millpond, and the high ground now occupied by the Old Town Hall, St. Paul's Episcopal Church and the village cemetery. After securing the plot, water rights also had to be obtained before building the dam. In those days this mill saved farmers a long trip to Woodruff's Mill on Pleasant Valley Road.

The location was low and marshy ground. Moving dirt with a small slip scraper with one h.p. to construct the dam and spillway and form the raceway ponds of the mill required considerable time. (It seems likely the lumber for the mill was cut by the Maltby Sawmill just a few hundred feet down stream.) During the years of the mill's operation there were two bridges on W. North Street; one over the stream from the water that turned the water wheel, the other over the water from the spillway. The dam was built on the south side of Main Street.

Quackenbush operated his mill for a few months and then sold the mill, including all the property and rights to Rev. Wm. A. Clark. He died in September 1841, and his heirs sold the mill back to Quackenbush. However, the Clarks donated the high ground east of the mill pond as a future site for the Episcopal Church and the Village received the land where the cemetery and the Old Town Hall are now located.

In 1847, Quackenbush sold the mill to Evert Woodruff who, in 1849, sold the Brighton Mill to Lyman Judson, who owned a large farm on Grand River Road, just east of the village limits. Judson enlarged the mill, removed the old breast water wheel and installed a French turbine type of water wheel.

In 1856, he sold the mill to Egbert F. Albright and Chester Thomson. Under their operation, for the next 25 years, the turbine water wheel was replaced by three others of improved style and two sets of stones were employed. It is thought they were also the builders of a brick addition, complete with a tall chimney, to house a steam boiler to provide power in the dry summer months when Ore Creek's water flow was reduced to a trickle. During those times the pond dried to such a level the rotting pond lilies and marsh grass caused an objectionable odor in the downtown and adjacent areas.

In the mid 1870's ownership changed to Charles T. Hyne and sons Will, Fred and Frank. All had large farms in the area and other business interests, including a grain elevator and a coal and lumber yard. "HYNE BROS" was just visible on the sign on the mill's last day.

By 1907, the Galbraith family was advertising 25# sacks of their "Ideal" wheat flour for 55 cents and a like amount of "Gold Seal" flour for 60 cents. Those prices included free delivery "to any part of the village."

Following the Galbraiths, Brighton Mills was operated by a partnership of two unrelated men named Thompson. Will, an experienced miller worked in the mill full time. His partner, John, was an ambitious man following many different pursuits. He was a rural mail carrier by profession, but he also kept and milked a herd of cows in a barn on the northeast corner of Grand River and Main Street. He also helped his partner install an electric motor to supplement water power.

(The above was an excerpt from stories compiled by Marieanna Bair. To find out more about these mills and their history, please visit the current CoBACH Display or plan to take in one of our **FREE Presentations** about the mills. See Page 1 of this newsletter for dates and times.)