

BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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G. (George) Eric Singer

G. (George) Eric Singer was born in Freeport, Pennsylvania on October 29, 1893, the youngest of three children, to Dr. J.D. and Carrie Singer. The family moved to Wyandotte, MI for the doctor’s practice, then settled in Brighton in 1909. Their first home was at 210 E. Main St., which is now the McGivney law offices (Mike McGivney says the original log walls of that home still stand behind the current siding fascia). The doctor had an office between approximately 111 and 139 W. Main St. (just East of today’s The Pound eatery).

Eric attended Brighton High School and had a keen interest in art and music. He earned pocket money making pillow tops and felt pennants, for which he cut out the letters. He worked for a time for The Brighton Argus, then founded The Singer Press in 1914 with a small hand-fed tabletop press and wood type he personally carved from “furniture” he likely obtained from The Argus (“furniture” refers to pieces of wood used to tighten the blocks of type in their case). He eventually obtained some used foundry type, also possible from The Argus. When his father’s office moved to Fourth St., Eric set up his printing business in the old doctor’s office.

He married in 1915, lost two infants, then his wife in 1921. He enlisted in the army in 1917, but was given a medical discharge due to poor hearing; this physical difficulty as well as emphysema plagued him all of his life. In 1919, Eric and a small group of other young men banded together to form a local chapter of the American Legion. By the 1940s, they wanted to raise funds to construct a building for their meetings. Eric hand cut small maple wood blocks, set up his press, and ran the blocks through twice for a 2-color finished product. Each block sold equaled one building block; eventually the Jesse B. Cooley Post No. 235 Memorial Building was erected. He remained an active lifelong member. He served on the volunteer fire department in 1919-1920.

Eric remarried in 1922, to Elva Anderson; they had 5 children. Eric sang in the musical group that his father founded, The Brighton Singers. He never learned to read music, but could play the piano and organ “by ear.” All 5 of his children participated in the Brighton High School band.

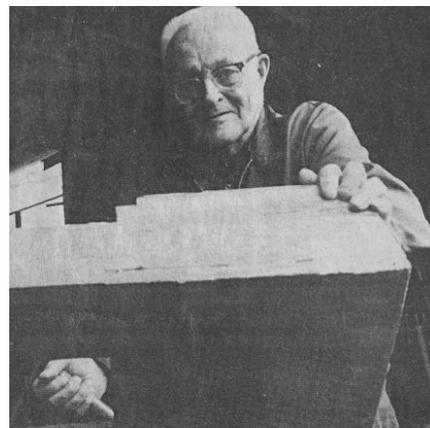
In (about) 1930, he was elected Justice of the Peace in Brighton. Without college education or a law degree, he nonetheless became a very trusted figure as a fair Justice of the Peace, earning the honorary title of Judge Singer. His first office was in the old City Hall (now the COBACH building at 202 W. Main Street). There were nights when he

would receive a knock on his home door: a young couple asking him to perform a marriage ceremony. He would invite them into his dining room, counsel them, and if they were determined to be married, he might wake one of his children to act as a witness. By the 1940s, his Justice of the Peace work was taking more and more of his time.

In 1948, daughter Priscilla (Pat) married Don Lueker, who took an interest in the printing trade; Eric taught him what he knew, and eventually Don took over the business. In 1953, Don built a new cement block building at 139 W. Main St. (currently the site of The Pound Eatery). The bulk of the building held the printing business, while Eric kept an office in the front quarter for his Justice of the Peace practice. Serving 34 years, he was one of the last active Justices of the Peace in Michigan. He actually won re-election by a landslide in 1966, but a new law passed by the Michigan Legislature limited the age of a Justice of the Peace not to exceed 71.

His artistic creativity never waned. He built Elva a wooden fishing boat, and disassembled more than one old piano, using the wood and other parts to construct unique pieces. He built hostess trays, custom furniture and crafted miniature sleds out of popsicle sticks as Christmas tree ornaments.

Eric passed away on April 8, 1983, and is buried in Fairview Cemetery.



(Thanks to Kathy Lueker Pearson for this story along with input from her cousin, Bob Singer.)