

BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Stephanie Popoff submitted the following story. Stephanie is a descendant of Esther Fisher Briggs and Collins Morgan whose families settled in Brighton in the 1830s. She is a long-time member of the BAHS and resides in Grand Blanc. She has nearly 25 years in ancestry research of both her own family and in local history. Stephanie devotes some of her free time to the cleaning and preservation of headstones in Brighton, as well as Oakland and Genesee Counties. She has hosted nationally known cemetery restorationist, Jonathan Appel for his annual Cemetery Restoration Class for the last 4 years, inspiring others to get involved in the preservation of local family history.

Esther Fisher Story

A hello future Brighton resident, my name is Esther Fisher, Briggs, Morgan. My marriage to Joseph L. Briggs was the first recorded in Brighton Township in 1834. Briggs may sound familiar, as my home/farm was located on the site of Briggs Lake. My husband, Joseph Briggs, purchased the land from the government in 1833 in sections 3 and 4 of Green Oak. This was the place we chose to raise our children Mariah, born 1838, George in 1839 and Emily in 1841.

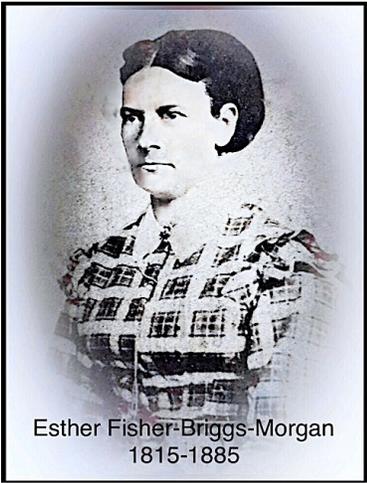
We had some great neighbors, who we thought of as family, Lewis B. Fonda, who lived just down the plank road, you know of as Grand River Avenue today. Lewis built the first framed house in our area! You'll probably recognize the Fonda name as well, as his farm is located on the site of Fonda Lake. Collins Morgan had 200 acres about where the toll road started. The Woodruffs, Abrams and Toncrays all had property in our little area. Colonel Claudius Buchanan Grant bought about 240 acres before the war in section 33 of Brighton Township and was also part of our neighborhood family.

In July of 1841, I buried Joseph. He died in an unfortunate accident from a tree falling on him while clearing some land. He was only 33 years of age. Our Emily was just 3 months old when Joseph died. Joseph is buried in the New Hudson Cemetery with my mother Phoebe, father John and my Fisher family. Joseph left me with 3 children under the age of 3 and a farm to run.

Collins Morgan lost his wife Electa (Toncray) after the birth of their son William in 1843. I married Collins in 1844 and raised his son William Collins as my own. Together, we had 4 children, Elizabeth in 1845, John in 1846, Cyrenius in 1850 and Amelia in 1852. Once again tragedy strikes my family when my second husband, Collins, died one month prior to the birth of our Amelia. He was killed while he was working in the field and was found lying on the ground with his coat over his head with a deep gash in his forehead, presumably from the plow. I buried Collins on the Woodruff property not too far from our home.

I now had 7 children under the age of 14 to feed, cloth, and raise as good Baptist. As a family, we attend the Kensington Baptist Church regularly. I sold Collins land. Lewis Fonda took some of it and the rest was divided between others. Mariah married Peter (Mount), Abrams and they moved on to her 80 acres of the Briggs farm. As a family farm, we did well, using the frozen lake to cut ice for summer cooling, a root cellar dug past the freeze line to keep our vegetables fresh through the winter and trading goods with our neighbors for the things we needed. The next time you drive past our lakes, I hope you will reflect on the families who saw this area as home.

(Thank you to Stephanie for her story. If you are a long-time Brighton resident with a story about your family, please consider submitting it for publication in Trail Tales.)



Esther Fisher-Briggs-Morgan
1815-1885