

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



The following is a research tip submitted by Tim Bennett one of our members. Tim is the sixth generation owner of the Warner Homestead farm, located on Buno Road. Tim has published a number of articles and presented on his research to various groups around the state. The Warner Homestead has been recognized as a Michigan historic site with the installation of the Michigan Historical Marker in the front yard.

RESEARCH TIPS

GAZETTERS AND BUSINESS DIRECTORIES

Gazetteers provide an amazing amount of facts and figures on locales around the state. These works are essentially dictionaries of place-names describing locations in existence at the time of publication. While directories note businesses in operation at the time, they also often include lists of residents that can be helpful in tracking the movements of ancestors. Gazetteers and directories were often published together as a single volume and typically provided increasing levels of detail over time.

State gazetteers and business directories were published intermittently in the early to mid 19th century. While the first gazetteer of Michigan Territory was published in 1830 by John Farmer, one of the earliest in the state mentioning Brighton Township, *The Gazetteer of the State of Michigan*, dates to 1839 by John T. Blois. It notes the county population as 5,029 and also lists four villages of Howell, Benton, Livingston, and Unadilla. *The State of Michigan Gazetteer and Business Directory* for 1856-1857 includes the village of Brighton and a list of two dozen businesses with the owner's names. A brief description is also provided: "A post village in the township of Brighton and Livingston county, 53 miles east by south of Lansing, and 40 miles north west from Detroit. Population of village and town 1125." An 1863 edition notes that the fare by stage was \$2.00 for the 40 mile trip from Detroit to Brighton on the Howell and Lansing Plank Road.

Directories later in the 19th century became increasingly detailed

with coverage of smaller locations. Besides providing a brief background on the formation of Brighton Township, the 1873 *Livingston County Directory* by John Keating also lists residents living in the village of Brighton. In addition, it also contains a directory of landowners in the township listing the number of acres and which sections it was located in. The data appears to have been taken from tax records with a few discrepancies noted regarding actual ownership.

By the late 19th century, city specific directories became common with the R. L. Polk company, founded in 1870, dominating these types of publications. By 1960, it had published 1000 directories. Polk city directories provide details on residents including a name, occupation, and address that is very helpful in pinpointing the location of ancestors. Some city directories are available online and many are accessible at area libraries.

References:

https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Michigan_Gazetteers
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/R.L._Polk_%26amp;_Company
History of Detroit and Michigan by Silas Farmer, 1884

(Thank you Tim for sharing your research with our members.)

