

## SPECIAL EDITION 2025 MELLUS HOSPITAL HERITAGE DAY

The history of people and buildings written over the years is interesting to read and to research. Dates and facts get changed and misrepresented. With that in mind this edition of Trail Tales is a collection of stories from different sources regarding Dr. Mellus and the Mellus hospital.

### **Story One: from Brighton Area Historical Society's monthly newsletter Trail Tales by Marieanna Bair.**

On a cold February 11, 1931, local residents witness the dedication of the new Mellus Hospital in Brighton (north of the First Presbyterian Church). Prior to that date, area mothers always had their babies at home, and those in need of surgery were treated on the kitchen table or in the doctor's home office. The Argus of February 4, 1931, described in detail the arrangement of various treatment rooms, including the decorating schemes and furniture. "Brighton is very happy to have such a finely equipped building, as the new hospital will be, located here... set back from Grand River Ave., on the crest of the city's predominating hill, where terraced lawns from the street will lead up to the main entrance,...imposing two story structure of Georgian design. The exterior is of red brick with a wrought iron railing over the entrance contributes beauty to the imposing façade."

Dr. Horace P. Mellus and his wife, Charlotte, arrived from Detroit in 1914. They lived in a room in the Weichers Building on the corner of Grand River and Main and opened up his medical office. He soon earned the love and respect of the citizens of the area. Many long-time residents remember him as a person who displayed special kindness to children. Nostalgically Mary Mathias says, "During those years Brighton was like a family. Everyone knew everyone else." At that time his office was located in the first house off Grand River on the north side of E. North Street. This house had a beautiful fireplace and the doctor added rooms to the back. Following the death of his wife, March 3, 1925, Dr. Mellus married again in 1929, to Mildred E. Clark of Hamilton, Ontario. He and his bride lived in their newly built home on Spencer Road (2nd house north of Main on the west side).

Following a severe illness, Dr. Mellus would diagnose and prescribe from his recuperative bed upon the report of a patient's symptoms by another doctor. After sufficiently regaining his strength the doctor had Dewey Douglas, a young man who had studied medicine for several years but lacked adequate funds to complete his medical education, drive the doctor on his rounds. Dewey examined the patient and described the symptoms. From his car the doctor diagnosed the illness and prescribed treatment. By this time other doctors practiced with Dr. Mellus at the hospital; Dr. Duncan Cameron and Dr. Archibald McGregor, among them.

In 1936, he became the founder and first president of the Brighton Rotary Club. Dr. Mellus and Charlotte are buried in Fairview Cemetery on Flint Road. The doctor died April 19, 1939, at the age of 52, from a heart attack.

**A BIG THANK YOU TO**  
Greater Brighton Area Chamber of Commerce  
John O'Malley & Trinity Health  
Dave LewAllen

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## Story Two: from Carol McMacken's book "From Settlement to City Brighton Michigan 1836-1945" available from the Brighton Area Historical Society.

### Dr. Mellus

By 1914, Dr. H.P. Mellus, newly from the Detroit College of Medicine, arrived in town and rented a room in the on the corner of Grand River and Main and open up his medical office, taking over the practice of a physician by the name of Dr. M.H. Coan. He purchased a brand new Ford runabout for making calls to his patients. He eventually, in the summer of 1919 in addition to his practice, opened a drugstore which also contained a soda fountain.

In the spring of 1920, Dr. Mellus purchased Mrs. Crout's place on North Street, just off of Grand River, built a six room bungalow which was a combined office and became the first Mellus Hospital. The next year Dr. Mellus added two rooms to the hospital. All the rooms in the hospital were finished in hospital white with brown battleship linoleum on the floors. There was a large waiting room and a consulting room, an operating room and an electric pump to furnish the hospital with water. Eventually, the waiting room was converted into a ward with hospital beds provided for all patients. Dr. Mellus employed a fulltime nurse, Miss Nangle, who was said, "was patient and cheerful in spite of my swearing." On October 22, 1921, a bright baby boy was born to Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Taylor. Their son Horace, was the first baby born in the modern hospital.

After purchasing Mrs. Ida Merchant's property on Grand River in 1924, Dr. Mellus moved his office out of the hospital and into the Merchant building. The hospital was filled to capacity and at this time three-graduate-trained nurses were on duty constantly. The next year, Dr. Mellus and his wife became very ill with typhoid fever. He was hospitalized in Detroit. Dr. Mellus, was ill for four months and lost over one hundred pounds. Mrs. Mellus succumbed to the illness. It was reported that hundreds of mourners gathered in and about the Federated Church and then silently and solemnly followed the body of Mrs. Mellus to the grave at the Fairview Cemetery. By 1930, Dr. Mellus had remarried to Miss Mildred Clark of Hamilton, Ontario.

### Mellus Hospital

In February, 1931, the new Mellus Hospital on Grand River had been completed and opened its doors for public inspection. It was a two-story-Georgian structure on the east crest of the city's predominating hill. Dr. and Mrs. Mellus, Miss Nangle, and the entire hospital staff were on hand to receive the visitors. The hospital was essentially a modern marvel for the city of Brighton. There were in addition to offices and a waiting room, an operating room, examining rooms, a sunroom, a nursery, a ward, a private room, nurses apartment, and in the basement, a kitchen, dining room, a developing room, a laundry and a boiler room. All the windows in the structure had the new-vita glass which permitted health-giving rays of the sun to enter the rooms. A large American flag was displayed on the flagpole above the hospital. Wreaths and large baskets of flowers arrived continuously from friends and well wishers. Shortly after the opening a new x-ray machine was installed in the basement of the hospital.

Horace Cole was among the first babies born at the modern medical establishment. Horace was born at the Mellus hospital in 1932. He was named in honor of Dr. Horace P. Mellus.



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## Story Three: from The PATCH Brighton August 4, 2011 by Jacob Kanclerz

### Mellus Hospital Holds Rich History, Stories of Ghosts

The new home for the Brighton Chamber of Commerce has its fair share of ghost stories told by longtime residents. The Brighton Chamber recently completed its move to 218 E. Grand River, the site of the former Mellus Hospital. However, they may not be the only ones occupying the building.

For as many tenants that the building has had, as well as the number of residents who can say they were born there, there could be just as many, if not more, ghost stories associated with the building.

"It's a former hospital, so whether people were born or whether they died, I'm sure some of the people are caught in between," Marianne McCreary said, who worked for Premiere Mortgage when the company bought the building. Premiere was one of the last businesses to occupy Mellus before the Chamber bought the building earlier this year.

The two-story Georgian-designed building perched on the hill north of town was constructed by Dr. Horace Mellus in 1931 as the first official hospital in Brighton. The hospital had its own morgue in the basement, which some believe is the source of the spirits residing there.

"I think that's why you feel so much down in the basement," said Brighton resident and massage therapist Sandra Clapper. "My experience with it though, is when you walk down the steps into the basement, it's almost like it's hard to walk down the steps because something is blocking you from moving and once you get down there, you definitely feel the presence of a spiritual being of some sort, meaning they brush up against you. You can feel them touch you." Clapper considers herself somewhat of an expert with the paranormal. She often blesses people's homes and says she can feel spirits, so her experience at Mellus wasn't her first. However, people who haven't sensed the paranormal before have also been subject to strange happenings at Mellus, including former Mayor Kate Lawrence. "I was getting a tour from former (Chamber President) Pam McConeghy right after they purchased the building, and I went into the morgue, and I felt this eerie feeling and this pressure on my chest," she said. "And when I stepped back out of the morgue, the feeling was gone." Many people who have worked in the building have reported odd happenings over the years. Tales of lights turning on randomly, files un-filing themselves from cabinets and mysterious, unexplained figures patrolling the grounds are just a few. McCreary has heard a few of these and experienced them when she worked at the building with Premiere Mortgage. "I was there one time upstairs by myself, and I could feel the presence of something around me, and I just didn't know how to describe it other than it felt like someone was following me when in fact I knew nobody was," McCreary said. Even after she left the building in her car, McCreary said she felt something sitting right behind her as she was driving. However, she and Clapper didn't feel threatened by these spirits, and said they weren't malicious in their ways. "It's not bad spirits though, it's not like they're out to hurt you," Clapper said. "I think it's just spirits who decided to come live there."

### Mellus Hospital through the years : A Timeline Years of Function 1913—1959

Mellus Hospital opened in 1931 as the first official hospital in Brighton. After Dr. Mellus died in 1939, Dr. Archibald McGregor took over ownership, and sold it to Dr. Anne Vann in 1958. Circa 1965 after a few years of vacancy, the church next door purchased the hospital and used it for church offices and educational facilities 1977–1979. The building was known as the Brighton Back Door Drop-In, which was a teen center that included Ping—Pong and Foosball tables. Marieanna Bair of the Brighton Area Historical Society believes the First Presbyterian Church still owned the building when it was converted into a teen center. In 1979—1989 the building served as a branch of the now-defunct Michigan National Bank. In 1994-1997 Scott Griffith sold the vacant building to Aarn Rosen of Gold Confectioners, who turned it into a working chocolate factory for people to come watch chocolate being made. In 1997—2009 Premiere Mortgage Company bought the building in 1997, which McCreary said later became Envoy Mortgage. The company she works for currently, moved into the building in 2008. In 2011 The Greater Brighton Area Chamber of Commerce, looking for an expansion from their offices on Hyne St., bought the hospital in July.

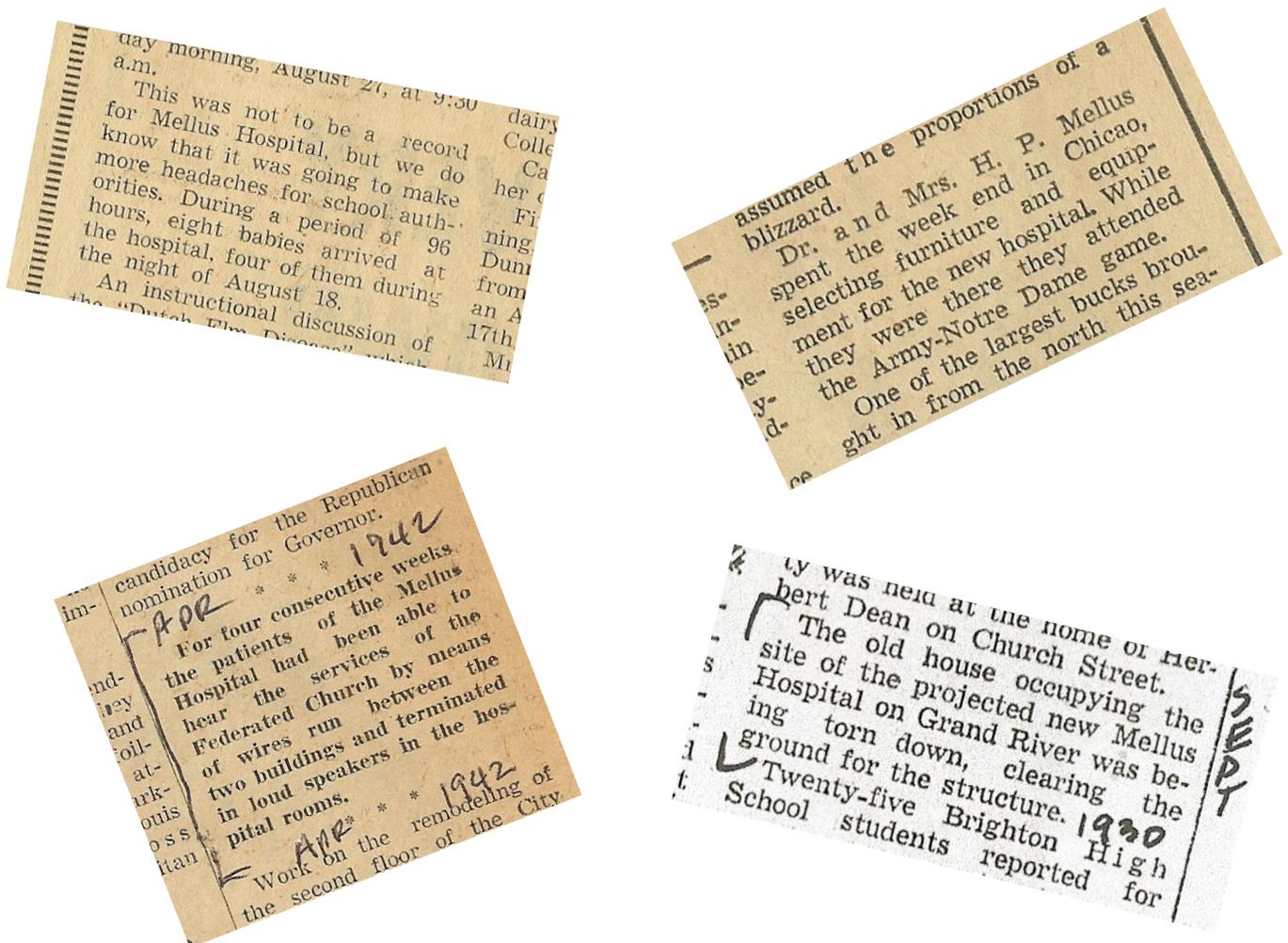
Pam McConeghy said she's not worried about spirits haunting her and rest of the Chamber. She said she'll believe it when she sees it. In fact, she seems to really embrace the building's history.

**Story Four: is taken from a Novel by Paul W. Weber titled: Con Weber's Brighton a Portrait of Family, Church and Nation 1832-1942.**

Veterinarians may have been hard to find in the 1930's but Brighton always had good physicians to deal with emergencies. Dr. McHench, Willard Brown, Hodges, J.D. singer all of them set high medical standards, benchmarks in treatment that Horace Mellus refused to abandon when he came to town following M.H. Coan's departure in 1914. Dr. Mellus opened Brighton's first hospital in a house on North Street, soon adding to it because he had run out of room. In the early years of the depression he replaced it with a stately Georgian brick building next to the Federated Church atop Mrs. Merchant's hill. The hospital had state-of-the-art facilities and Mellus pledged to provide even better medical care for the community for which he had so much affection.

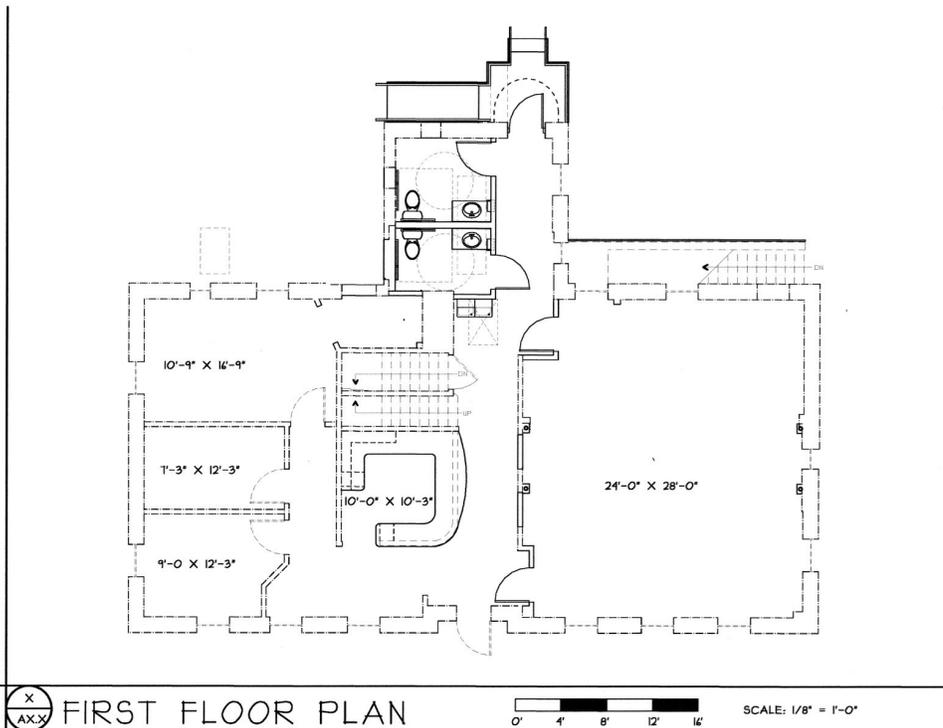
Two outstanding doctors joined Dr. Mellus practice by his untimely death in 1939. Duncan Cameron was a popular young up-start, good looking and just out of medical school. Not long after arriving in the early part of the decade, he started his own practice on Main Street, specializing in gynecology and obstetrics. Cameron delivered scores of depression babies at McPherson Hospital in Howell. Archibald McGregor succeeded Cameron and carried on the Mellus' legacy at the hospital. He looked more like a Princeton academic in his rimless glasses, his prematurely graying hair and mustache trimmed short. McGregor took his medical oath seriously and was the perfect match for Brighton. Like McHench, he could often be seen speeding down country roads to make house calls, setting the broken arm of a child who had fallen off a swing or bandaging some farmer's leg who had been too careless around machinery.

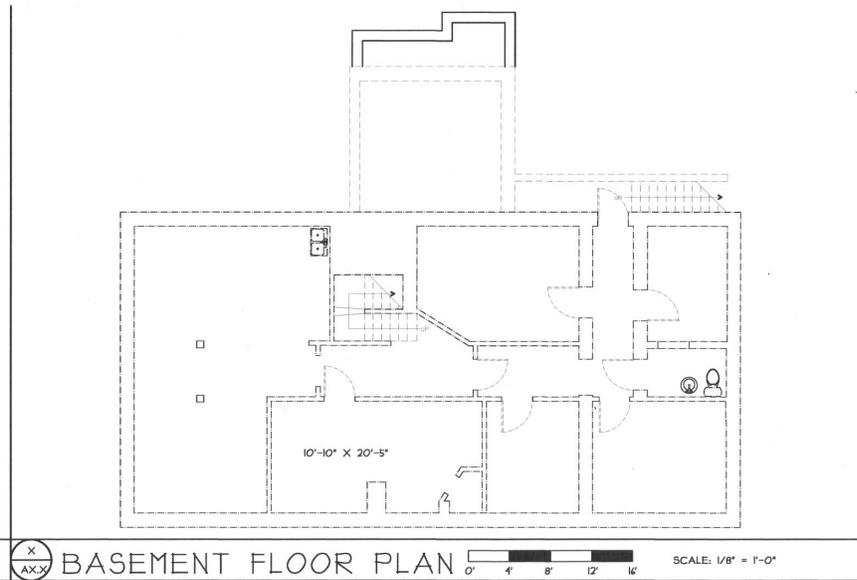
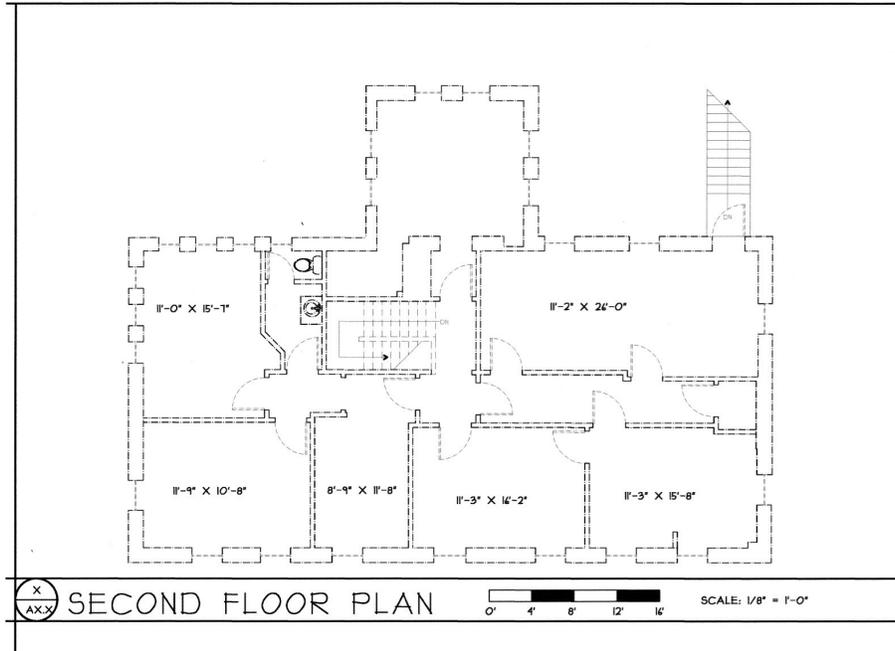
**This is a series of cuts from the Brighton Argus.**



**Story Five : from The Livingston Post , September 30, 2011 By Marth Stuart.**

I've always loved the stately building on Grand River Avenue that the Greater Brighton Area Chamber of Commerce now calls home. Years ago, after a midnight shift waitressing at the Nugget Restaurant further east on Grand River Avenue, I'd often head to "Lil Chef for breakfast, driving past the beautiful building that harkens back to a gracious era of design. I don't remember what was housed there when I was driving past: I was simply enchanted by the building's beauty and grace. Originally the Mellus Hospital, in more recent memory, the building was also home to Leah Gold chocolate, which is on longer in business. Things change, and the more they change, the more they stay the same. But no matter the changes in occupants and use of the new chamber building, its structure has always remained architecturally and classically elegant, a graceful and significant Grand River Avenue landmark, a gift passed down from one owner to the next. The Chamber purchasing the building for its home is wonderful on several levels, not the least of which is the nod to the value of historic preservation, of bridging the chasm between old and new with a focus firmly fixed on the future. It's also recognition of the staying power of lovingly designed structures. That the Brighton Chamber chose to use a venerable; building speaks volumes about its respect for all that has gone before. It's about growing new branches from a tree with deep, deep roots. It's also about honoring the past while driving headlong into the future.

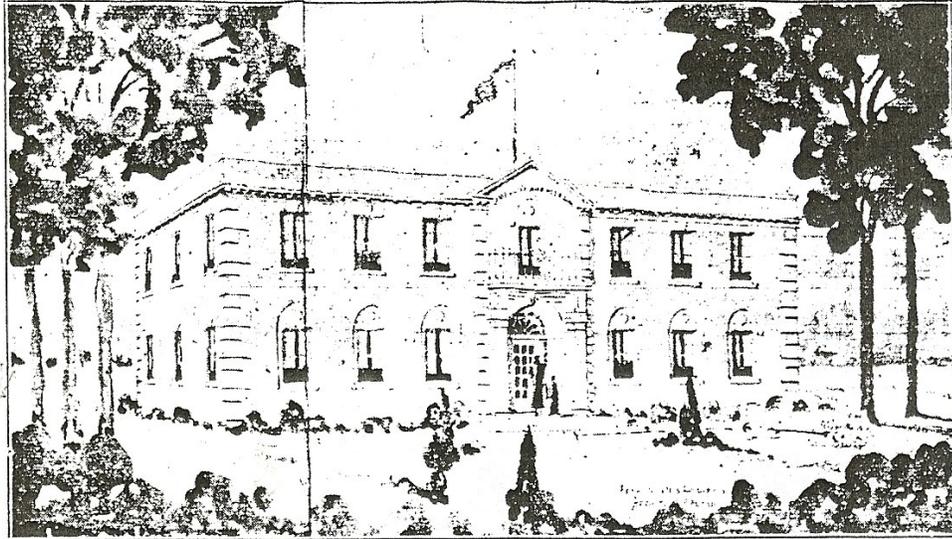




The two floor plans on this page and the previous page were supplied by John Eckstein President of Lindhout Associates architects, Brighton Michigan. They did the planning of the conversion from Envoy Mortgage for the Greater Brighton Area Chamber of commerce in 2011.

New Mellus Hospital to be Dedicated February 11th

1931



## New Mellus Hospital To Open Doors To Public Next Week

Painters and Decorators Now Putting on Finishing Touches--Building and Equipment Modern in Every Respect---H. G. Meredith Has Equipped and Will Maintain a Ward in Memory of His Son

The new Mellus Hospital on Grand River is to be open for the inspection of the public next Wednesday, February 11th. The doors will be opened for that purpose at 10:00 A. M. and during the rest of the day and the evening, the entire hospital staff, so far as that is possible, will be at the building to receive visitors who undoubtedly will be numerous, since everybody in Brighton and surrounding territory is deeply interested in the institution and will wish to see it at its completion. The building is over fresh from the hands of the decorators and builders. The furniture is now being installed, the decorating and other interior finishing is fast nearing completion and everything is expected to be in readiness for the announced occasion.

Brighton is very happy to have such a finely equipped building as the new hospital will be, located here. As stated in a former announcement made in the Argus, the building, which is set well back from Grand River Ave., on the crest of the city's



DR. H. P. MELLUS

predominating hill, where terraced lawns from the street will lead up to the main entrance, is an imposing two story structure of Georgian design. The exterior is of red face brick with stone cornice and entrance motif. A wrought iron railing over the entrance contributes beauty to the imposing facade.

The interior is perfectly arranged for taking care of the varied medical and surgical needs of the community. On the first floor is Dr. Mellus' own office which is finished in knotted pine and has built-in book cases, the spacious waiting room, adjoining the office, the examination room across the corridor from the office and the physiotherapy and treatment rooms adjoining. The X-ray and emergency rooms are also on the first floor close to the ambulance entrance at the rear. In the opposite end of the lower floor corridor are the nurses' apartments, etc., equipped in every modern particular.

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# May Become Church School

14 Nov 1962



**NEW CHURCH SCHOOL?**—The congregation of the First United Presbyterian Church of Brighton, at a special congregational meeting held Sunday, approved the purchase of the Mellus hospital property (known recently as the Vann Hospital) next to the church. It is planned to use the building for

church school and office space after some remodeling is done. The property will also provide additional parking space. The congregation also approved entering into a fund drive for \$50,000 to pay for the property, the needed improvements, and retire the debt on the new manse purchased recently.

COMMUNITY

# Brighton chamber getting makeover

By Jim Totten

DAILY PRESS & ARGUS

Pam McConeghy said crews will soon start giving the interior of the former Mellus Hospital a makeover.

The building at 218 E. Grand River Ave. in Brighton will become the new home of the Greater Brighton Area Chamber of Commerce this summer. The chamber purchased the place for \$310,000.

"It's going to look totally different when people walk into that building," said McConeghy, chamber president and CEO.

While the exterior will remain stately and grand, McConeghy said, "The inside will have more of a high-tech look."

She said the chamber will finalize bids this week, and renovations will take about eight weeks. She said she hopes to be in the new building in June or early July.

"I'm very excited," McConeghy said.

The new site will provide much-needed space for the chamber, including two meeting rooms, one with a capacity for 75 people.

The vacant building used to be Mellus Hospital, which was built in 1931 by Dr. Horace P. Mellus. After being used as Mellus Hospital, the Grand River Avenue building was later used



**The building at 218 E. Grand River Ave. in Brighton will become the new home of the Greater Brighton Area Chamber of Commerce this summer. The chamber purchased the place for \$310,000.**

as a church youth center, Michigan National Bank branch, Leah Gold Confections and most recently as Premier Mortgage. It's been vacant for several years.

The chamber will be selling

its existing building, 131 Hyne St. in downtown Brighton, to the Brighton Downtown Development Authority. The authority will pay \$450,000 for the current chamber building.

Authority members has stated

they eventually would like to sell the chamber property for development.

Contact Daily Press & Argus reporter Jim Totten at (517) 548-7088 or at [jtotten@gannett.com](mailto:jtotten@gannett.com).

Photos of Mellus Hospital through the years



Mellus Hospital early 1930's



Mellus Hospital mid 1940's



Premiere Mortgage 1997—2009



Premiere Mortgage 1997—2009



Michigan National Bank



The Greater Brighton Area Chamber of Commerce today

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**While searching the history of the Mellus Hospital, ever present was how and when did the Hospital up the road a few miles begin?**

**McPherson Hospital**

McPherson Hospital in Howell, Michigan, has a rich history dating back to 1928. Originally established as McPherson Memorial Hospital, it operated out of a converted mansion donated by the McPherson family, located at North Michigan Avenue and Clinton Street. In 1958, the hospital moved to a new facility at 620 Byron Road, becoming the McPherson Community Health Center. This site was notable for being the first hospital in Michigan to staff both medical and osteopathic physicians, and it pioneered “progressive patient care,” offering a full spectrum of services from intensive care to home care.

In 1990, McPherson Hospital merged with Catherine McAuley Health Center in Ann Arbor, later known as St. Joseph Mercy Ann Arbor. The facility continued to serve the community under various names, most recently at Trinity Health Livingston Hospital. In 2024, Trinity Health announced plans to relocate services to Brighton in 2026 and entered into a purchase agreement with Catholic Healthcare International (CHI) for the Howell facility.

CHI has proposed transforming the site into the St. Padre Pio Home for the Relief of Suffering Medical Center, which may include a low-risk birthing center, a medical school, and a home for brain-injured patients. This initiative aims to continue the hospital’s legacy of comprehensive and compassionate care in the Howell community.



McPherson Mansion under construction 1912

**THANK YOU TO THE HERITAGE DAY COMMITTEE:**

**John O’Malley ( Trinity Hospital Livingston), Dave LewAllen, Gavin Johnson, (Greater Brighton Area Chamber of Commerce), Karen Storey ( Greater Brighton Area Chamber of Commerce), Jerry and Carole Damon, Jim Vichich, Mindy Kinsey, Lynn Strong, Tony Ferreyra, Ron Cyr, Nancy Fredenburg, John (Jack) Peters, Engrave it all USA.**

## Support BAHS: Become a Sponsor, Member or Donate

The BAHS relies on participation of its members and the generosity of its patrons. If you would like to make a donation, become a member or a sponsor, please mail your check to the address provided on the form below.

### Mail check or money order payable to:

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P. O. Box 481  
Brighton, MI 48116-0481

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City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

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                   \$30 Family       \$500 Life

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The BAHS sponsorship program has the following levels with the associated annual funding gifts. Sponsors will receive recognition through the Trail Tales newsletter and through the sponsorship placard located at the City of Brighton Arts, Culture and History (CoBACH) Center (aka Old Town Hall).

Platinum — \$1,000+       Gold — \$500+  
 Silver — \$250+       Bronze — \$100+

### Additional Donation to — Check as Desired:

Pleasant Valley Cemetery Restoration  
 Larry Lawrence Scholarship Fund  
 Friend of Lyon School  
 BAHS CoBACH Events  
 Friend of Old Village Cemetery

### Amount of Additional Donation:

\$10       \$100  
 \$25       \$250  
 \$50       Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

The Brighton Area Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) Non-Profit AND a 509(a)2 Public Charity Organization . All donations are tax deductible.

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**Jerry Damon**

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info@brightonareahistorical.com

**Phone:**

(517) 304-5044

**US Mail:**

Brighton Area Historical Society  
P. O. Box 481  
Brighton, MI 48116-0481

### Lyon School

11455 Buno Road, west of Pleasant Valley Road. The 1885 Lyon School is a fully restored, barrier-free one-room schoolhouse and serves as our organization headquarters.

### CoBACH Center

202 W. Main Street, in downtown Brighton next to the Millpond. CoBACH is formally known as the City of Brighton, Arts, Culture and History Center. It is located in the historic 1879 two story brick building, also known as the Old Town Hall.

The BAHS is a 501(c)(3) non-profit AND a 509(a)2 public charity organization. Please help us fund our mission while also helping yourself with a tax-deductible contribution.

The BAHS accepts monetary support and donations of historical artifacts. Please consider supporting us with your generosity.