

BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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Brighton Country Club

The Brighton Area Historical Society is always thankful for the generous donations of artifacts received from various sources. Recently, we were delighted to receive a donation from John and Linda Rawcliffe in the form of a couple of stock certificates. These certificates are Certificate #12 Brighton Country Club Holding Company and Certificate #15 Brighton Country Club Holding Company Annex 1. They were issued in October of 1926 by Thomas S. Leith.

Thomas S. Leith had ambitious plans to establish a grand country club and real estate project in Brighton that would rival clubs in Bloomfield and Birmingham. However, his vision was disrupted by the Great Depression of the 1930s. The proposed location for the Brighton Country Club was to be in Brighton Township near the intersection of Grand River and US 23, encompassing the north half of Section 32.

But who was Thomas S. Leith? Well, he was a remarkable individual with a very diverse background. A standout athlete at Michigan State Normal College, he excelled in various sports and even earned a scholarship to Syracuse University in 1909, where he was a member of the football, baseball, and track and field teams. After college he was head football coach at Adrian College in Adrian, Michigan for the 1911 and 1912 seasons and head basketball coach for the 1911, 1912 and 1913 teams. Thomas married Ethel Duncan (1890-1982) in 1909, while they were students at Michigan State Normal College. They eloped and only told their families five months later. They had two daughters, Dorothy Louise (1910-1973) and Clara Jean (1911-1982).

Thomas later became very involved in real estate in the Brighton area, both as a property developer and builder. In 1925, Thomas built and owned the Hotel Lincoln on Grand River and St. Paul Street, followed by building the Washington Theater in 1926. He was deeply involved with the Brighton school system while developing a platted subdivision on East Main called Brighton Heights. He donated 5 acres to the school system in 1927 to build a new school on the hill and athletic fields.

Thomas S. Leith's civic engagement extended to serving three terms as the mayor of Brighton and made two unsuccessful bids to the governorship of Michigan. His legacy lives on, he passed away on August 24, 1960, leaving behind a lasting impact on the Brighton Community.

We would like to thank John and Linda Rawcliffe for donating the stock certificates for our archives.

(This story compiled by Jerry Damon from various on-line sources and the BAHS archives.)

