

HISTORIC BRIGHTON NEWS

Volume 12

Fall 2011

Number 4

Celebrating our town's history and educating our community about Brighton's past.

Sunday, September 18th, 2011 3PM
Brighton Town Hall Auditorium
2300 Elmwood Avenue Rochester NY 14618

Introduction by Elizabeth Teall

CFP, Centra Financial Group
Landmark Society of Western New York Board Member

Guest Speaker:
Wayne Goodman

Executive Director, Landmark Society of Western New York

“Reclaiming Community Through Preservation”

Wayne Goodman is the Executive Director of The Landmark Society of Western New York. Wayne graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree from Ball State University and a Master of Arts degree from the University of Wyoming. He works with communities, local organizations and individuals to preserve historic resources of all varieties and routinely collaborates with real estate professionals, developers, architects and elected officials.

Wayne worked as a regional director for Indiana Landmarks, the nation's largest statewide preservation organization, until January 2011. As part of his lobbying efforts, he worked to propose and advocate for legislation that would assist in preserving Indiana's historic courthouses, leading to Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels in 2008, creating the Courthouse Preservation Advisory Commission.

In addition to local and state legislative efforts, Wayne serves on the Board of Directors of Preservation Action, the nationwide grassroots lobbying organization for preservation's voice in Congress. He co-chaired Governor Mitch Daniels' committee to raise funds and reconstruct the Moscow Covered Bridge, which was destroyed by a devastating tornado.

Wayne has been actively involved in many local heritage organizations across Indiana, serving on numerous nonprofit boards and was a member of the Graduate Faculty at Ball State University's College of Architecture and Planning since 2006, where he instructed architecture and preservation courses. Wayne and his wife Angie, have three daughters, Carrie, Rebekah and Avery.

The Brighton Disaster

By Mary Jo Lanphear

Town of Brighton Historian

About 1:00 P.M. on Friday, September 21, 1951, three of Brighton's neighborhoods, Bel-Air, Meadowbrook, and Roselawn, were the site of a series of disastrous explosions and fires. Three people died, thirty were injured, nineteen houses were destroyed, and twenty-five houses were damaged seriously. (Loss of life was mitigated by warm, summer weather that found most people out of doors, at work, or at school.) Most of the destruction occurred within the first hour and a half. By 4:00 p.m., the worst was over; the explosions had ceased and the fires were under control.

According to the report of the National Board of Fire Underwriters, "In simplest terms, the explosions were the result of uncontrolled fuel gas accidentally released into a distribution system at a pressure far in excess of that which could be safely accommodated by the service accessories and domestic appliances." Traced to an explosion that caused the roof of a regulator vault at the corner of Monroe Avenue and Winton Road to dislodge pressure-regulator arms, the cause of the initial explosion was never determined.

Sixty years later, it is appropriate to commemorate those who died and the public safety workers and volunteers who acted to mitigate additional loss of life.

Following are images from September 21 and 22, 1951.

2



Aerial view of the Monroe Avenue-Winton Road intersection showing Brighton firefighters with hoses and the vault near the Chateau Restaurant.

3



Street view of Monroe Avenue and Winton Road with Brighton firefighters dealing with the fire in the vault. Twelve Corners Plaza on the right.



View of intersection of Monroe Avenue and Antlers Drive showing traffic halted by Civil Defense workers in an attempt to keep out sight-seers.

4



Crowd in front of the Brighton Fire Hall #2 on Elmwood Avenue.



Red Cross workers and emergency personnel in front of Brighton Fire hall #2.

5

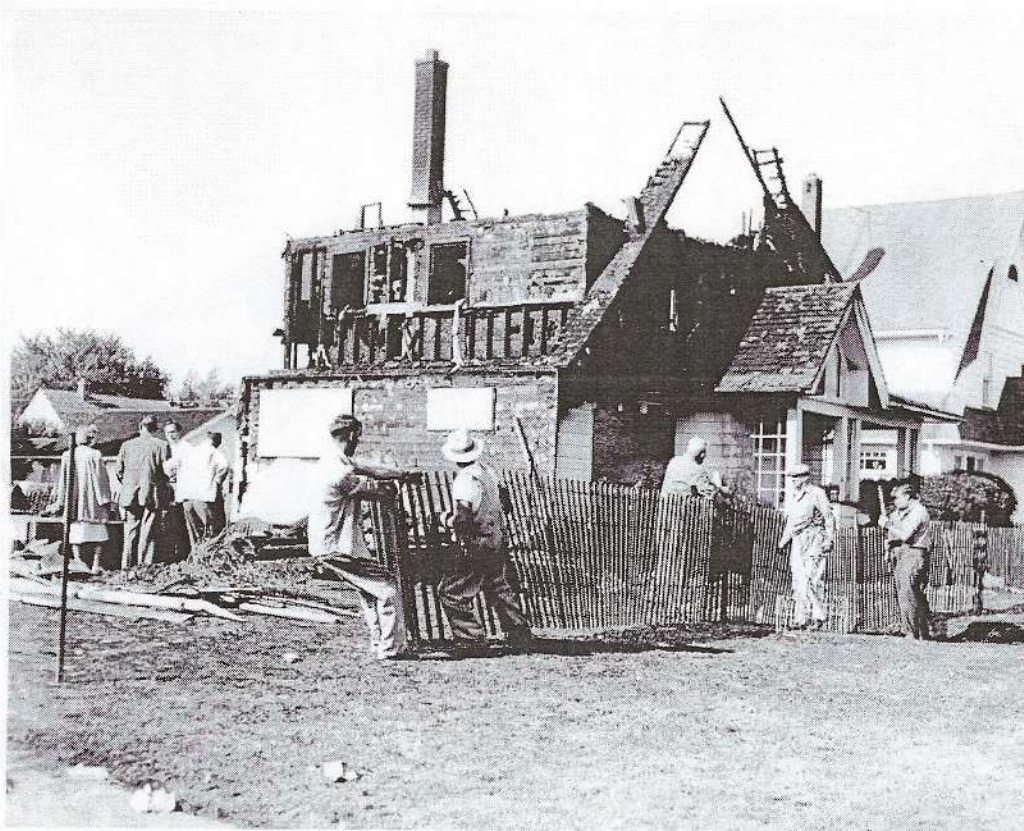


Firefighters, police, and Civil Defense workers at 155 Buckland Avenue in Meadowbrook where Mary Ann and Billy Maas died.



Sylvan Road in Roselawn where one house was destroyed and the house next door badly damaged by fire.

6



Antlers Drive house, with its heavily damaged second floor, on the day after the explosions. Workers are installing snow fencing to contain debris and keep unauthorized people away.



Rochester Gas & Electric crew delivering new gas meters to houses in Roselawn, Meadowbrook, and Bel-Air.



Brighton Police patrolled the affected neighborhoods to protect uninhabited houses from looters.

B-G EQUIPMENT CO.
 GENESEE 5900
 1180 SCOTTSVILLE ROAD
 ROCHESTER 11, NEW YORK
 NIGHTS & HOLIDAYS - MONROE 8666

82 Antlers on ~~off~~
 76 Antlers ^{burned} off X
 70 Antlers off X
 76 Fair oaks Ave off X
 81 Fair oaks Ave off X
 88 Syl²⁰⁸ (368) ^{gama} off ~~X~~
 85 Fair oaks off 93?
 72 Fair Oaks X off X
 39 Fair Oaks X off X

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240 Bonnie Brae off X
 155 Vanna
 Buddland & Newton off X
 300 Elmwood off X
 177 Syl¹⁷⁷ off Antlers (off)
 169 Syl³⁶⁸ (368) ^{Watts} off
 67 Antlers X off ^{Xish}
 61 Antlers X off X 823
 73 Antlers X off X 634
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Rescue worker's checklist showing addresses and condition of gas meters . □

Clay Yard to Brick Yard...*by Rail*

By Leo Dodd



Leo Dodd at the dig site on Westfall Road.

Gideon Cobb, I believe, would be extremely pleased with the proposal before the Brighton Town Board. I speak of the Farash Corp., Wegmans, and Town of Brighton discussion to develop the approximately eighty acre site located between Elmwood Avenue and Westfall Road. These eighty acres, combining with Buckland Park and the Town Hall complex of library, recreation area, and Town Hall, could provide the elements for the development of a Brighton Center. It would

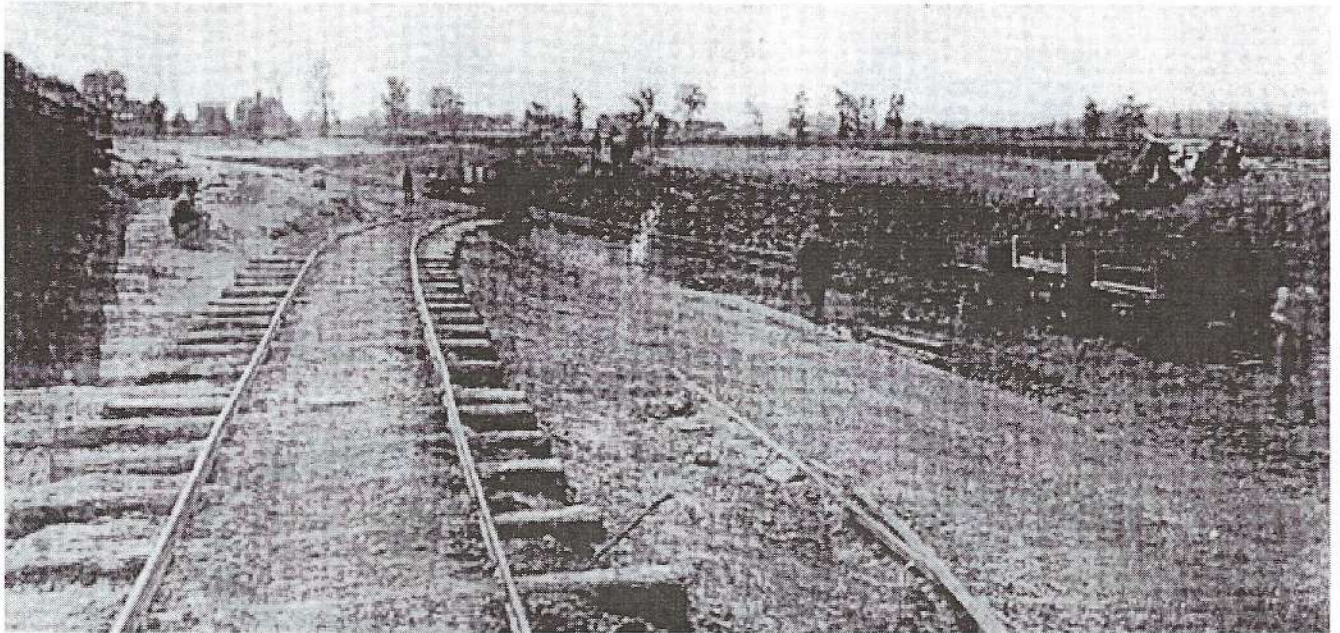
create a true center for a town that has been severally annexed over the past two hundred years by its aggressive neighbor ...*the wicked City of Rochester.*

When Gideon arrived in the early 1800's, Brighton was bounded by a lake, a river and a bay, eventually developing two major centers, Brighton Village and West Brighton. Today Brighton land is a very narrow strip, limited by river, bay and a glacial hill called Pinnacle. (Note: the two centers now belong to the City.) This proposed development, on land opposite Town Hall on Elmwood and the Buckland History House on Westfall, could establish a new focus for our Town.

How neat is that!give a cheer one and all!

You recall the story of Gideon Cobb. Yes!... everybody knows Gideon purchased part of Pinnacle Range, dug a trench allowing Monroe Avenue to pass, discovered **CLAY** in Brighton, then started a brickyard. That yard morphed to the Rochester Brick and Tile Company which, after exhausting clay yards immediately adjacent to the Pinnacle Range, started a clay yard south of Elmwood Avenue. Thus the connection: Gideon and his brick factory started it all, this connection with the clay of Brighton. This clay land could become the foundation to a centrally located area to help unite the Town activity and history.

“I don’t remember clay being dug off Elmwood, or the rail cars that carried the clay, or the Railroad line crossing Elmwood,” you say.... Well, you’re right and probably under ninety years of age. But we have proof of the existence. We have access to a photograph taken about 1900 that shows brick laborers digging clay within the lot. See below.

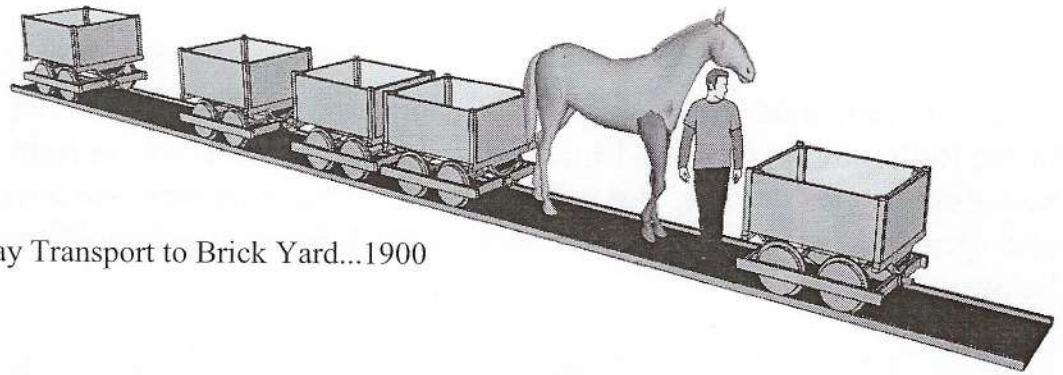


Photograph looking north toward Elmwood Avenue with Pinnacle Range in far background.

The following description, written in 1902, describes the clay field and transport system.

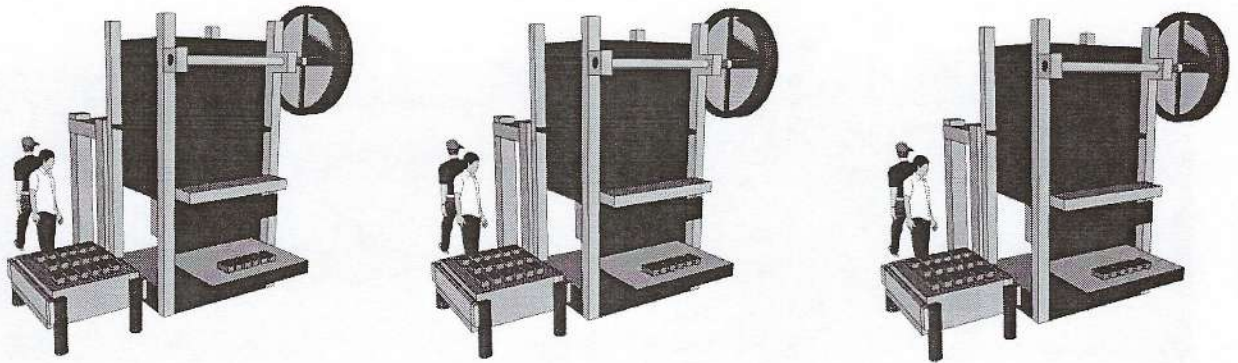
“The Rochester Brick and Tile Co. in Brighton on Monroe Avenue; The clay bank of this company is one-half mile south of the works and is of a red color with a little sand loam. The clay at the present point of working is twelve feet deep. The material is plowed down as wanted and shoveled into cars, which are drawn by horses to the works where it is dumped on a platform in front of machines. There are three of these soft mud machines. (Six bricks per press.) Thirty five thousand bricks can be manufactured by a machine per day”

New York State Museum 22nd Report of the State Geologist 1902, p. 83



Clay Transport to Brick Yard...1900

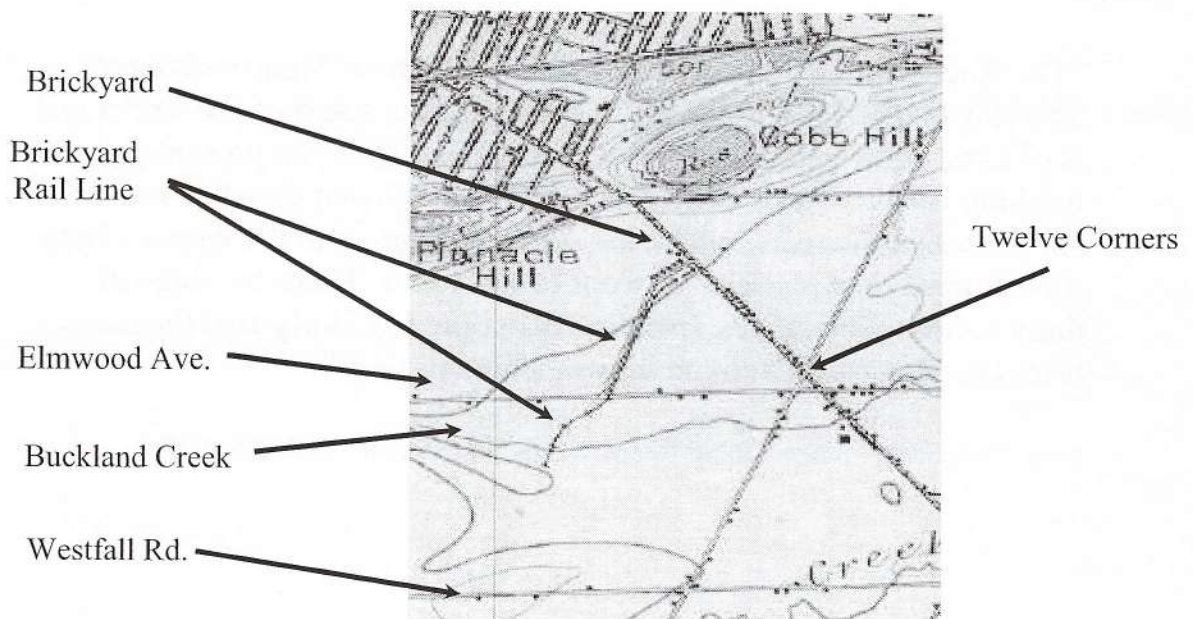
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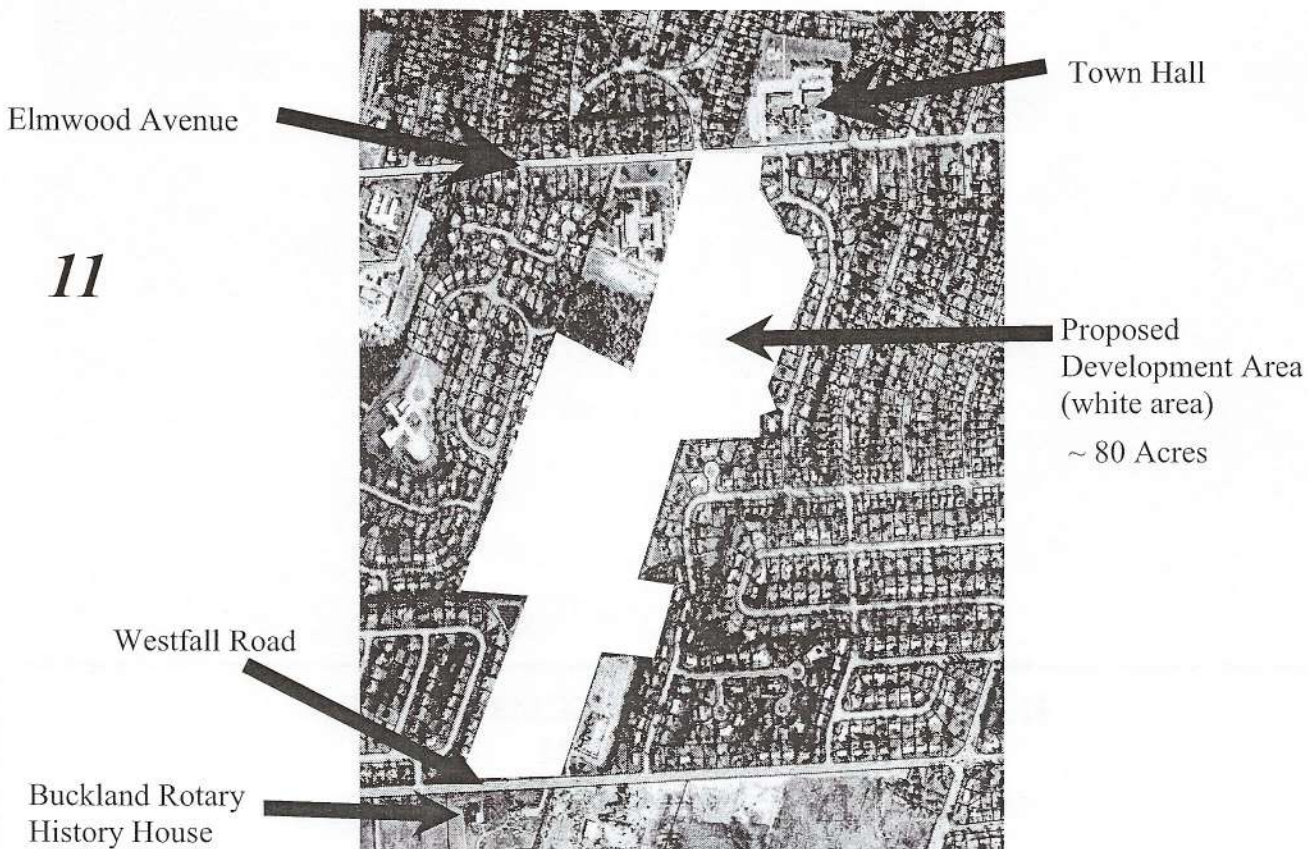
3 Brick Machines producing 35,000 bricks / day / machine

So, we have a rather complete story, pictures and prose, defining the clay lands between Elmwood Avenue. and Westfall Road established in 1900, and we have a map, a 1920 map, delineating the location of the Rail Line.

The 1920 Monroe County Contour map detailing the extent of the Rail Line that connected Brickyard with the Clay Yards is shown below.



I probably should have shown you this first so you could see what land area I have been ranting about. The eighty acres needs to be defined using a present-day aerial view. That view is provided below. Notice the development land axis is tilted in relation to the parallel streets of Elmwood and Westfall. That tilt (approximately 23°) was provided by the original surveyors who tried to accommodate the land division and the meandering flow of the Genesee River. Winton Road, originally called the North-South Road, is 23° from north...but you knew that!

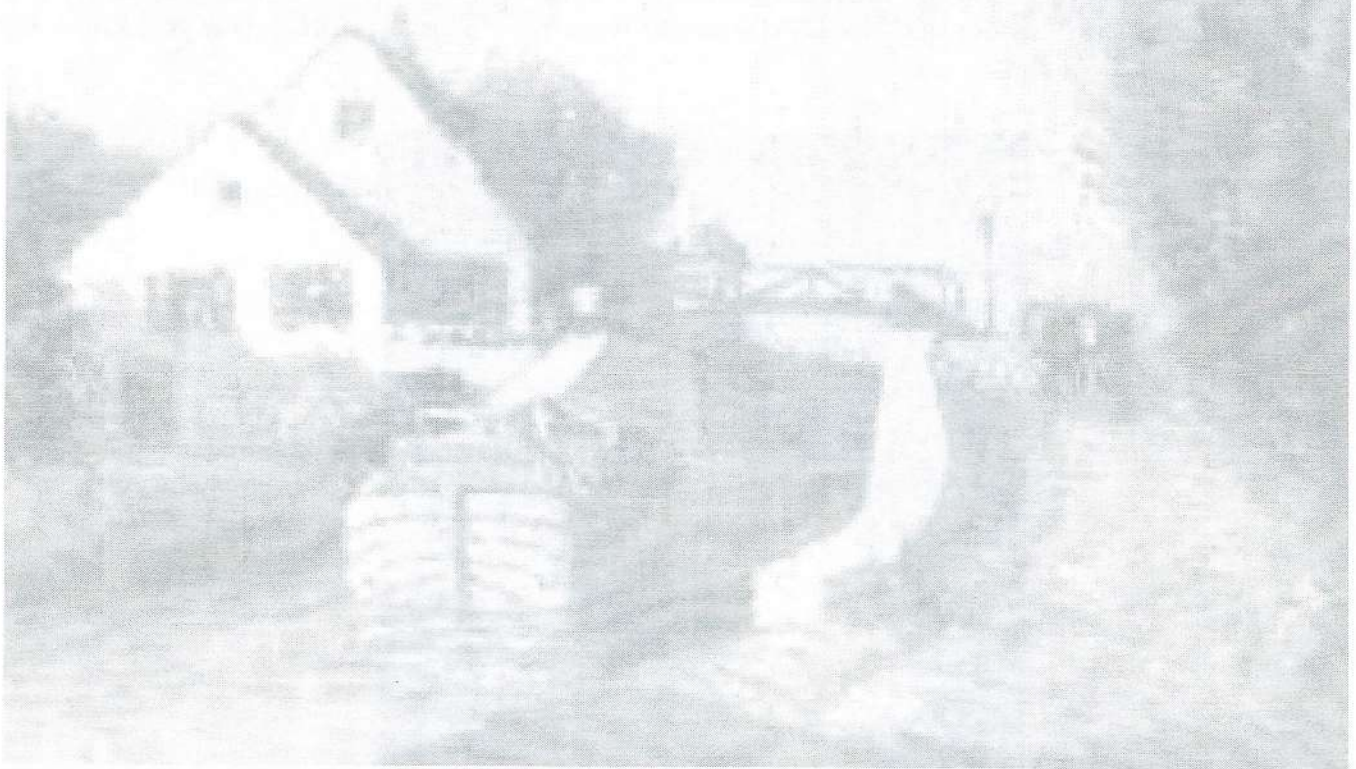


What treasures await us beyond clay land? Is it possible the original 1800 rail tracks can be located, an abandoned rail car found, or even a branded brick from the Rochester Brick and Tile Company be located. 'Tis exciting to think what may be uncovered on this land should the proposal move forward. The most important possibility for those in our community is that this land could allow for a remembrance of our historical past, clay deposits that provided the basic material to our town's largest enterprise, plus a centralized property uniting by walkways, Town Hall and Buckland History House.

Brighton History Note: The Buckland brothers, Abner, Amos, Curtis, Warren and Leonard were all brickmakers operating at the time of Gideon Cobb and friends of Gideon. So uniting this property with the established Buckland History House, a vision in the original Rotary plan, could be a great addition to our overall Town history.

Farmers all, these first Brighton families, such as Bucklands, Cobbs, Hagamans and Edmunds to name a few, knew and understood the glacial nature of the Brighton soil. As the saying goes "if life deals you lemons, make lemonade"; but in Brighton tis said; "if life deals you clay, make bricks". With luck, through an enlightened development process, and with the wisdom of the Town leadership, history and clay will ferment a plan where all will be proud. □

Historic Brighton
P.O. Box 18525
Rochester NY 14618



HEAR YE, HEAR YE — SPECIAL EVENT
OCTOBER 16, 2011
5:30 PM to 7:00 PM
STONE-TOLAN HOUSE
2370 East Avenue, Rochester NY 14610

Please join Historic Brighton at the Stone-Tolan House for a reception in recognition of the owners of fourteen designated historic properties. Each of these persons will be presented with a plaque for the property. The bronze-like 7 by 9 inch exterior plaques will show the initial date of construction, along with the historic designation.

At a special meeting of Historic Brighton, on October 16th, these first fourteen owners of historic properties will be celebrated for their stewardship.

There are fifty seven properties in Brighton that have been designated as historically significant by the Town of Brighton. Future plaques will be presented to property owners who request them from Historic Brighton. Those designated property owners who desire plaques in the future should contact Historic Brighton board member David Whitaker @ 271-7895. If owners are not sure their properties are so designated, David has the listing and can check it for them.

The event is free, and all members are encouraged to join us at the Stone-Tolan House.