



HISTORIC BRIGHTON

Newsletter and Journal

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

Volume 19, No. 4

www.historicbrighton.org

Fall 2018

EARLY EPIDEMICS: STORIES OF HOPE & SURVIVAL



Two nurses pose outside of Rochester General Hospital wearing ankle-length, long-sleeved, tightly wrapped gowns designed to reduce the spread of infection amidst the 1918 influenza epidemic.

Call for submissions:

Historic Brighton is dedicated to bringing stories and images about the history of our town to you! If you have an image you would like to share or a story you would like us to help you tell, please email info@historicbrighton.org for more information.

HISTORIC BRIGHTON FALL PROGRAM: **TERESA LEHR on THE SPANISH INFLUENZA in ROCHESTER**

Sunday, October 21, 2018 | 2:00 pm

Brighton Town Hall Auditorium
2300 Elmwood Avenue, Rochester, NY 14618

All Historic Brighton quarterly meetings are
free and open to the community.

THE VAN INGEN FAMILY TRAGEDY

By Peggy Weston Byrd

My Dear Friend,

I have heard that you have lost all your children. It would be terrible if this should be true and I write to you at once to know the truth. Please let me know what the calamity is and oblige.

Your Friend,

N. C. Beckery

N. C. Beckery, Chicago Syrup Company

22 November 1875

The news received by Mr. N.C. Beckery of the Chicago Syrup Company was partially correct. My father, Arthur Blount Weston, frequently mentioned the demise of his great uncle Bernard Scipio Van Ingen's family; in a single dark week in September of 1875, four of the six Van Ingen children passed away. Bernard's pain reverberated through our family through the years. With each visit to their graves at Mount Hope Cemetery, I still feel the loss.

Bernard, his wife Mary Ann Stroup Van Ingen Hall, his sister Drika Van Ingen, and five children led a peaceful, contented life in Rochester. In April 1875, Drika died following a strep infection of the skin (erysipelas). On April 21, a sixth child Fanny Lois was born. I knew her well because she was like a grandmother to me and my sister. Summer arrived with all its dangers lurking in the heat: unpasteurized milk, coughs, sneezes, and ignorance of communicable diseases.

In late August of 1875, disaster struck. Mary ("Minnie") Augusta Gergian, John ("Bertie") Bernard, Elizabeth ("Josey") Josephine, and Jennie Grace all became ill. Within one week of each other in September 1875, they

died from diphtheria and membranous croup. Bessie ("Bess") Dirk and Fanny ("Fan") Lois, were mercifully spared and survived to live long productive lives as teachers in the Rochester City School District.

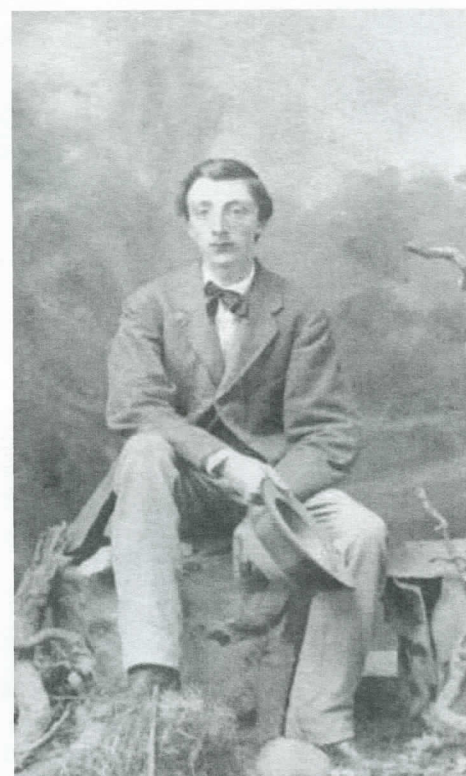
At 8:00 in the morning on Thanksgiving of 1867, Bernard also died. By all accounts from his family and co-workers at Monroe County Savings Bank, he never recovered from his grief. Though he died of a broken heart, he was yet another victim of the scourge that robbed the life of four of his children.

Mary Ann wrote a quote in her journal, "Tears driven back into the heart are apt to turn into prayers" (citing an as-yet unverified Honor Bright as the source).

Despite the enormity of losing her sister-in-law, having a baby, and losing four children in the space of six months, and then her husband two years later, Mary Ann remarried and lived a long life. She and Mr. Hall raised her two little girls who were to become a huge part of my childhood and our family. She is one of my heroines and she is, to me, a model of hope and persistence in the face of deep sorrow and calamity.

—HB—

Peggy Weston Byrd and her sister, Kathy Weston Grinnell, grew up on Chelmsford Road in Brighton. Along with the death of her paternal great-grandfather at the Battle of Antietam in September 1862, family history conversations included the story of the deaths of the Van Ingen children. Her Mom, Kay Weston Hickey, saved a trove of letters, newspaper clippings, and photos. She told her, "Take good care of these things!" Thanks, Mom! I did.



Bernard Scipio Van Ingen



Bessie & Fanny Van Ingen

Rochester, N. Y. 187

B. Van Ingen
To ADELBERT W. MUDGE, Jr.
FURNISHING UNDERTAKER.
 No. 121 WEST MAIN STREET, in the Odd Fellows' Temple.

Van Ingen funeral
 expenses invoice at
 right detailing:
 4 cases (\$230),
 4 graves (\$13),
 3 hearses (\$30),
 15 hacks (\$45),
 and 48 chairs (\$4),
 among other items

Sept 17	4 Cases	230.00
24	3 Hearses	30.00
15	Hacks	45.00
4	Graves	13.00
	Casket Case Burial	2.00
	8 Pp. Groes	3.00
	Flowers	10.00
4	3 Chairs	4.00
4	2 Bells	1.00
		338.00

Recd Payment
Oct 4 *Adelbert W. Mudge, Jr.*



Minnie Van Ingen



Bertie Van Ingen



Jennie Van Ingen



Josey Van Ingen



Fanny Van Ingen surrounded by students in her classroom

HEARTBREAK, HEALING & HOPE:

ROCHESTER FAMILIES DEVASTATED BY EARLY EPIDEMICS

By Patricia Corcoran

How optimistic were the handsome young Harriet and Cogswell Bentley in the summer of 1918. In July the family had moved into a lovely new home, a gift from Harriet's parents, on Newcastle Road in the prestigious Browncroft development. Surrounded by woods, this home was paradise to Harriet and Cogswell, with ample room for the three Bentley girls, Harriet, age 8, Barbara, age 6, and Dorothea, age 4, the Bentley family servants, and the new baby expected in December.

The Montessori School (also called the "Children's University School of Rochester"), which Harriet and a group of mothers had started, had passed a successful first year.

However, in September of 1918, life changed abruptly for the entire community as the dreaded Spanish Influenza Epidemic hit Rochester. For four months people lived in fear as local newspapers recorded daily lists of the dead—names, ages, and addresses. Also printed were "rules" to follow to prevent the spread of the disease, as well as lists of closings - schools, churches, bars - people needed to stay away from crowds.

Toward the end of November, as the number of deaths started to diminish, the rules for congregating started to relax. Crowds attended rallies downtown to celebrate the end of World War I, schools reopened, and flu deaths began to increase accordingly.

So it was that in late November, eight year old Harriet was sent home from School 23 with the flu. Mrs. Harriet

Bentley immediately isolated her other two children and nursed little Harriet herself. Tragically on November 29th Harriet herself became ill with the flu, and on December 4th her fourth daughter, Martha, was born. Harriet developed pneumonia and died three days later on December 7th, a day before her thirty-third birthday.

Eighty-five years later Harriet's two older daughters shared memories of their mother's sudden death. Her oldest daughter remembered feeling guilty that she had come down with the flu and blamed herself for her mother's death. Second daughter Barbara recalled the shock of being six years old, returning from her grandparents' home, and finding out that her dear mother had died. She vividly recalled her mother being laid out in the parlor of their home, and the cortege processing to the chapel at Mount Hope Cemetery.

The senior Harriet's father, overwhelmed with grief, wrote a four-page tribute to his beloved daughter. It began: "In the full, rich June of her womanhood, the personification of health, buoyant vitality, good cheer, and friendship, our daughter was taken away, and the grief and confusion left in the household was indescribable." Writing this for his only child was a daunting task, because "she was so near to me, for no closer attachment ever was known between father and daughter than there was betwixt us." The last paragraph of this touching eulogy concludes: "And so after all is said and done, it is a very happy life which has closed so suddenly,



Harriet Bentley (date unknown)



Cogswell Bentley with his four daughters several months after Harriet's death.

and a rarely beautiful and attractive personality which has gone from us, and though we are overwhelmed by sorrow, and especially by the suddenness of our loss, yet we comfort ourselves by reflecting that this happy life was ours for nearly a third of a century, enriching our experience and leaving as a heritage a memory fragrant with cheerfulness,



Harriet, Cogswell, and 4 year old Dorothea in October of 1918; this is the last known photograph of Harriet Bentley



The Bentley family home on Newcastle Road

friendship, kindness, and just every-day goodness. Few there are who have their sorrow tempered by such rich memories. — Charles E. Benton”

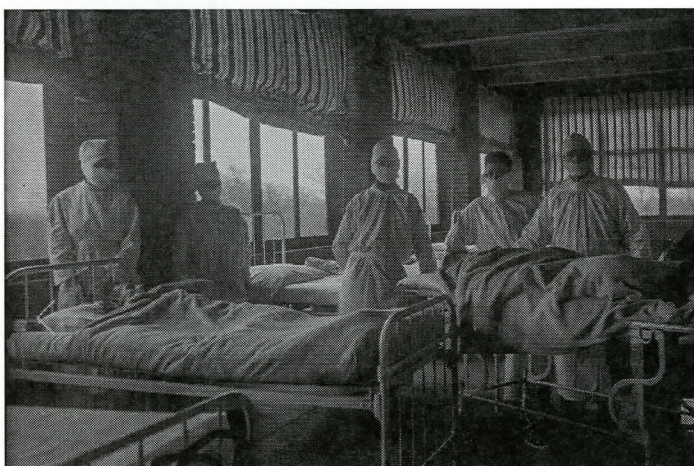
In 1924, the Children’s University School of Rochester was incorporated by the State of New York under the name Harley — combining the first three letters and the last three letters of Harriet Bentley’s name and commemorating her as the school’s founder. It was her

dedication and inspiration, as well as her executive abilities and vision, which gave permanence to the school.

The motto of the Harley School is “Become what thou art.” While Harriet Bentley’s life was cut short by the terrible influenza epidemic of 1918, her legacy continues in the lives of her descendants as well as the school that bears her name and dreams her dreams.

—————HB—————

Patricia Corcoran, a retired teacher, is active in the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery, where she gives tours and writes stories of women at Mount Hope. Her full length article on Harriet Bentley and the Spanish Influenza Epidemic was published in the Epitaph in 2003. She adds, “The highlight of my research was being able to interview two of Harriet’s daughters, Harriet and Barbara. Another invaluable informant was Miss Phyllis Bentley of Brighton, who regaled me with stories of her childhood growing up with Harriet’s four daughters—her big sisters— and her own sister on Newcastle Road. Such amazing women! It was an honor to meet them.”



A scene from Rochester General Hospital, which had to repurpose spaces in order to accomodate the large number of flu patients



In an effort to protect the citizenry and reduce disease transmission, trolley and subway cars were thoroughly cleaned and disinfected regularly

BRIGHTON WOMEN BATTLE THE WAR AND THE EPIDEMIC

By Matthew Bashore

When the Rochester Women's Motor Corps began in April 1918, the thought was that women might be trained in the hitherto unladylike task of driving trucks and ambulances to compensate for the absence of the men who were overseas fighting in the First World War. However, given that each recruit had to pledge sixteen hours per week, provide her own vehicle, and defray all expenses in operating that vehicle, this left a very limited pool of drivers. Wealthy socialites, with both the necessary time and money, ended up being the majority of those involved in this venture. Among the approximately fifty recruits, who were referred to as "men" to emphasize their customarily masculine military roles, were several Brightonians including Mrs. Arthur Stern, Mrs. Ray Finucane and Miss Julia French.

Julia Breed French, Jr. was the daughter of food mogul George French who in 1884, with his late brother Robert, founded the R.T. French Company. George was the one who developed the hugely popular creamy yellow mustard that debuted at the 1904 World's Fair. "Julie" lived with her parents on an estate known as "Sideways" off Elmwood Avenue near the Rochester Country Club. The 1920 census lists her occupation as "artist." Julia's maternal

uncle, Ensign Francis R. Breed had been injured during his wartime naval service and was languishing in a Rochester hospital where he would succumb to his injuries in October of 1918 (see Fall 2017, p.5). Perhaps her uncle's sacrifice inspired Julia to "do her bit" for the war effort by becoming "Private French" in the Women's Motor Corps.

Many of the initial duties of the Motor Corps seem rather frivolous: driving visiting soldiers and sailors around town, participating in War Bond rallies and 4th of July parades, and conducting military drills in the Armory twice weekly to the amusement of the misogynist press, who commented on the "diamonds and rubies sparkling on the fingers" of the ladies "shown to their advantage against their khaki skirts." But late in 1918 they became affiliated with the American Red Cross, and their role became more serious with the outbreak of the Spanish Flu Epidemic that autumn. They delivered food and medicine to families affected by the virus. The Democrat & Chronicle reported, "During the ten days in October when conditions were most serious in the city approximately fifty cars were in service daily, working with all agencies that were combatting the disease. The ambulance was operated from 9 in the morning until midnight,

and when the staffs of the city hospitals were reduced, the young women of the Motor Corps took their places as interns on the ambulances."

The Corps was demobilized in May 1919 at a gala banquet at the Genesee Valley Club with flowers and musical performances by several of the Corps members. The festivities were capped by a speech by one of the Corps' greatest supporters, George Eastman, who quipped, "When the corps was first suggested there was some feeling in the community that it might be more ornamental than useful. Naturally, I am not going to take the stand it was not ornamental. But the amount of work you have really accomplished could not have been foreseen."

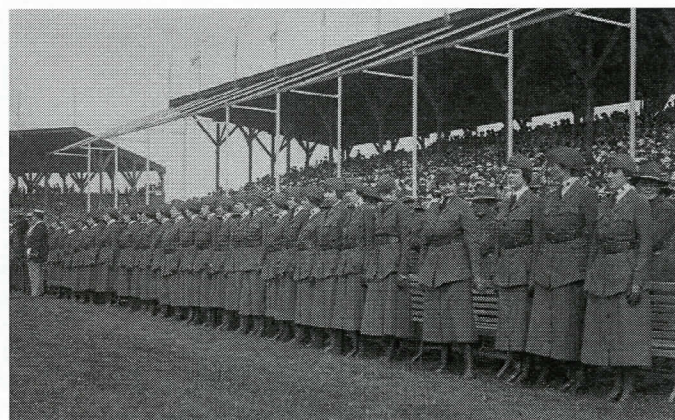
HB



Miss Julia Breed French, Jr.



Women's Motor Corps and Rochester Federation of Women's Clubs



Rochester Women's Motor Corps public debut, Exposition Park

ASHBEL W. RILEY AND THE 1832 CHOLERA EPIDEMIC

By Mary Jo Lanphear

Early settlers to Brighton were an intrepid lot. Leaving the comfort and security of their New England communities, they set out for the new lands in the west with hopeful determination that all would be well, and yet they knew this would entail confrontation with predatory animals, weather disasters, crop failure, sickness, and death. Nevertheless they built their houses and barns and dealt with what the frontier gave them, and in 1832 it gave them cholera.

Now known to be spread by contaminated water, cholera is a bacterial disease that causes severe diarrhea and dehydration. It struck quickly and was often fatal in a matter of hours. The proximity of privies and wells in the crowded village of Rochester (whose fourth and fifth wards comprised the former village of Brighton) is thought to have been the source of the illness, although blame was placed at the time on an itinerant peddler who arrived on a canal boat. By September of 1832, four hundred cases of cholera were

reported with a total of 115 deaths. One thousand people left the area; others locked themselves in their homes until the danger passed. Both doctors and caregivers were fearful of contracting the disease.

One man, however, saw the crisis as an opportunity to help. Ashbel Wells Riley came to Brighton in 1816 with his mother, Lovina Wells Riley, and his brother, Justin. Born in Connecticut in 1795, he was two years old when his father died. His mother remained single until 1820 when she married widower Orringh Stone. In his later life Ashbel Riley attributed to his mother the motto "Dare to Do Right." Temperance, abolition of slavery, penal reform, and care for the mentally ill were his lifetime concerns.

Trained as a carpenter, his real interest was in education and he obtained his New York State teaching credentials in 1813. He was also a real estate investor, a village officer, and a member of the New York State militia. Colonel Riley

was the youngest member of the Board of Health when the cholera epidemic struck and he took it upon himself to nurse the sick and bury the dead, often preparing the corpses for burial, loading them on wagons, and carrying them to graves he dug in the municipal cemetery.

At his death in 1888, Reverend Charles P. Colt eulogized him by saying "He was a man of gentle sympathies...His sweet spirit and large benevolent heart became particularly apparent when the cholera plague broke out in 1832. He administered to the sick and suffering, cheered the people and helped to keep them from a general panic. Often all alone he buried the dead. Of the 115 persons who died, he placed eighty in their coffins, doing that service for eleven in one day. He could be seen at night with a lantern in his hand seeking the homes of the sufferers, and the dead." (Rochester Democrat & Chronicle, 9 April 1888)

—HB—

Known Sources and Credits for Photos and Historical Materials:

- Rare Books Special Collections and Preservation, University of Rochester Rush Rhees Library:
<http://www.lib.rochester.edu/IN/RBSCP/Databases/IMAGES/MtHope/disc1/00000733.pdf>
- Julia B. French papers, D.192, Rare Books, Special Collections, and Preservation, River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester
- <https://13wham.com/news/special-reports/gallery/a-look-back-at-the-rochester-flu-epidemic-of-1918#photo-2>
- <http://photo.libraryweb.org/rochimag/rochpublib/rpf/rpf00/rpf00179.jpg>
- RMSC "Alfred Stone Negatives Collection" online database
<http://libcat.rmsc.org/aquabrowser/?q=%22collection:Albert%20R.%20Stone%20Negative%22>

The Historic Brighton Newsletter & Journal is edited and assembled by Michael B. Lempert

FRIENDLY HOME CELEBRATES 100 YEARS AT EAST AVENUE ADDRESS IN 2018!

By Amy Flinn (with research by Betsy Brayer)

Over one hundred years ago on February 11, 1918, approximately 50 Members and staff moved into the new Friendly Home building at 3156 East Avenue in Brighton. "The day was a beautiful winter's day in between two stormy ones," recorded Mrs. Florence Snow Lee, who served as matron of the Home from 1917-1937.

Many issues factored into the decision to move from the Home's location on the corner of East Avenue and Alexander Street in Rochester to what was then known as the Peake property in Brighton. The property was bounded by East Avenue, Linden Avenue, Allen's Creek and a trolley line – which is now Interstate 490. First, the Home had outgrown the space, with a waiting list of close to 50 women, and no room to expand. Fire was a constant worry as well; the Home was not fireproof, and despite rope ladders, fire gongs and fire pails, the inadequacies of

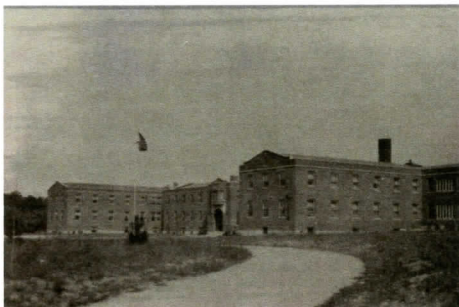
protecting Members in the event of a fire were obvious. The Peake property was selected because it consisted of "thirteen acres of high land – well planted and pleasing, with a restful outlook," according to then Board President Alexander M. Lindsay (for whom the Lindsay Place neighborhood at the Friendly Home is named).

Henry W. Morgan, president of Morgan Machine Company and namesake of the Friendly Home's Morgan Place neighborhood, was appointed in November of 1914 as head of the new Home's Building Committee. Over the course of construction of the building, many interesting changes occurred. The name of the organization was changed from "Home for the Friendless" to "Rochester Friendly Home." The Home's residents became known as Members rather than the previously used and harsh term 'Inmate', and the Home's mission was extended to

care for men as well as for women. Kodak founder and President George Eastman was instrumental in funding the new building, but didn't want any "holler" made about it. Though Eastman had no official interest in the Home, he often sent plants for the residents to enjoy, and his mother had sponsored a number of women seeking admission.

When the Home opened at its new location in 1918, Mrs. Lee wrote, "I have been told, and I do not doubt it, that there is no Home of its kind so beautiful in all the world." Building Committee head Morgan said, "We have tried to make the Home as much like a home as possible and as little like an institution." Special features of the new Home included fireplaces, a library, hot and cold running water in all the rooms, lounge areas and verandahs. Consisting of two wings, the brick Home had 98 bedrooms and accommodated 108 individuals.

—HB—



The Friendly Home after construction c. 1918

CONSTITUTION OF THE SOCIETY FOR THE RELIEF OF HOMELESS AND FRIENDLESS FEMALES.

Art. 1st. This Society shall be called the **Homeless Association for the Relief of Homeless and Friendless Females**.
 Art. 2d. The object of this Society shall be to provide a temporary home for friendless, homeless and virtuous females.
 Art. 3d. That this Institution may be, as far as practicable, a self-supporting one, there shall be employment provided for the inmates in the various departments of domestic economy; so far as the percentage of the public shall be extended to house-keeping, sewing and needle-work to compose a part of the same.
 Art. 4th. The officers of this Society shall consist of a President, Secretary and Treasurer, together with twelve Directors.
 Art. 5th. The payment of 25 cents a year shall constitute an individual a member of this Society.
 Art. 6th. The President shall preside at all meetings of the Society – but absent the 1st Director.
 Art. 7th. The Secretary shall conduct the correspondence of the Society, notify all its meetings, keep records of the same, and present an annual report.
 Art. 8th. The Treasurer shall present written and audited accounts to accompany the annual report. She shall also submit her accounts to the Board whenever required, and her annual report, with the Auditor's certificate, to the Executive Committee at least one week before the annual meeting.
 Art. 9th. The Annual Meeting shall be held on the 1st Wednesday of April. There shall be a Monthly Meeting of the Executive Committee.
 Art. 10th. It shall be the duty of the Directors to receive applications and make inquiries as to the character of individuals, their description of friends, home, their moral character, etc. No Director shall give a permit for a consecutive residence at any one time beyond two weeks, subject, however, to renewal if the case demands it.
 Art. 11th. The Artium shall be visited twice a week, one Director visiting by itself.
 Art. 12th. This Constitution may be amended at any Annual or Semi-Annual Meeting of the Society, by a vote of two-thirds of the members present.
 OFFICERS FOR THE YEAR 1910:
 Mrs. R. L. SELDEN, President;
 Mrs. C. GILSON, Treasurer. Mrs. S. D. FORTY, Secretary.
 Mrs. R. MERRILL, 1st Director.
 " BALDWIN, "
 " E. MULLIN, "
 " LEBRON, "
 " DE. MATHIAS, "
 " CHAMBER, "
 Mrs. M. FORTY, "
 Mrs. HART, "
 " DE. BAUER, "

Constitution of the Friendly Home



Friendly Home Members having a picnic c. 1950

Historic Brighton acknowledges with gratitude:



FRIENDLY HOME

nursing care & rehabilitation

*for their generous support and sponsorship
of this issue of the Historic Brighton Journal*



Aerial photograph of the completed Friendly Home at its new location with grown landscaping, circa 1970 (photo by Martin Wahl)