



HISTORIC BRIGHTON

Newsletter and Journal

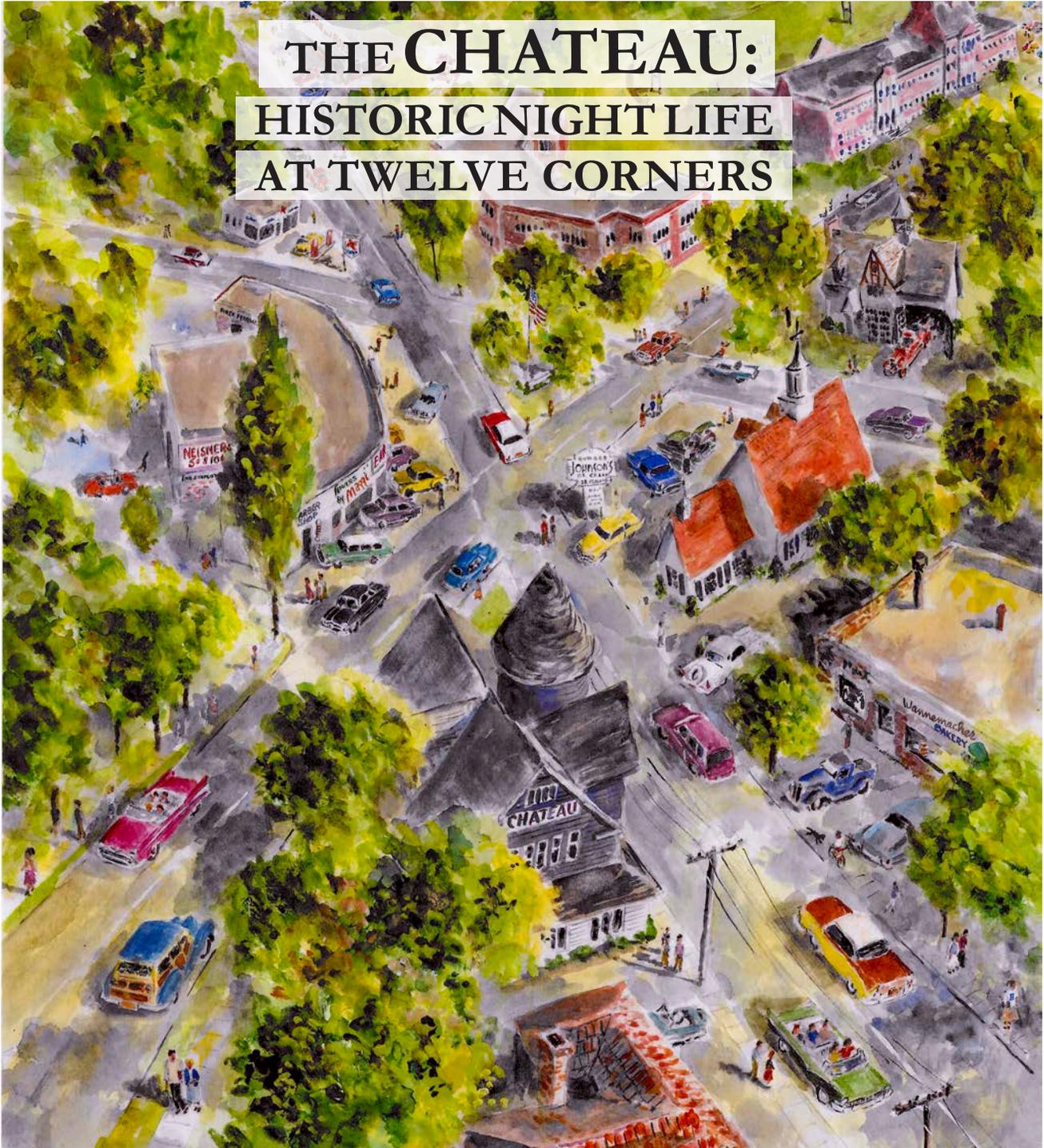
Exploring our Town's history and educating our community about Brighton's past.

Volume 21, No. 1

www.historicbrighton.org

Winter 2021

THE CHATEAU: HISTORIC NIGHT LIFE AT TWELVE CORNERS



This painting, by 1957 Brighton High School graduate Jim Christy, is being used with the enthusiastic permission of the artist. Jim painted it for the program cover of his 50th high school reunion gala in 2007. More about Jim in a future issue. Note the Chateausque style Chateau Restaurant near bottom center.

MERCHANTS OF MONROE: THE CHATEAU RESTAURANT AND NIGHT CLUB

By Raymond Tierney III

Twelve Corners has a colorful history deeply etched in town lore. From its proximity to the brick manufacturing of the 1880s to the commercial hub that it is today, its past is rich in merchants and memories. This installment of the Merchants of Monroe will explore a time when the Chateau Restaurant, formerly the Sheehan Hotel, livened up a rapidly developing sleepy town.

Albert and Harold Michaels purchased the Sheehan Hotel that was located on the northwest corner of Monroe Avenue and Winton Road in 1925. The purchase price of \$34,000 equates to approximately \$508,200 in 2021 dollars.

Their vision included turning the hotel into a fine restaurant and nightclub. It wasn't long before the Chateau was one of the most prominent clubs in the area. The bar area was home to an expanding collection of signed photographs of entertainers. By the early 1930s celebrities and future stars graced the walls. The future Mr. Television, Milton Berle, was added in 1931. One of Kate Smith's first live performances was at the Chateau in 1932. According to Al Michaels' niece, Bunny Goldstein, Sammy Davis Jr. appeared as a child with his father and his uncle as part of their act. Bill Robinson of tap dancing fame graced the stage in 1933.

According to Ms. Goldstein, Al's family was the cornerstone of his business. His brother, Harold, was his partner and the manager while his other brother, Joe, was the bartender. A tender example of Al's commitment to his family was the way he handled his aging father's wish not to continue living in the Jewish home then located in the City of Rochester. Bunny relates the story like this: "so where do you want to live" Al asked his father and his father was direct in his answer - "I want to live at the Chateau!" Al then moved his father to a room above the club where he would live out his years getting dressed to the "nines" each night and joining the guests for dinner and a show.



Exterior photograph of the Chateausque style Chateau Restaurant

April 15th., 1927.

Daniel F. Sheehan and Anna Sheehan, his wife,

- to -

HAROLD MICHAELS.

Premises on northwest corner of Monroe Avenue and Winton Road, Town of Brighton, together with certain furniture, a list of which was attached to the contract of sale.

Cash deposit-----\$250.00
Additional cash deposit 750.00
Mortgage back-----\$26000.00
\$27000.00

Purchase price-----\$34000.00
27000.00
Bal. paid to Sheehans 7000.00

Mortgage:

Daniel F. Sheehan and Anna Sheehan, his wife, \$26000.00, payable \$500.00 and interest at 6% upon all unpaid sums, October 15th., and April 15th., of each year; whole amount due in ten (10) years, or April 15th., 1937, with privilege larger sums or the whole amount at any time sooner.

Purchase receipt from Sheehans to Michaels, 15 April 1927



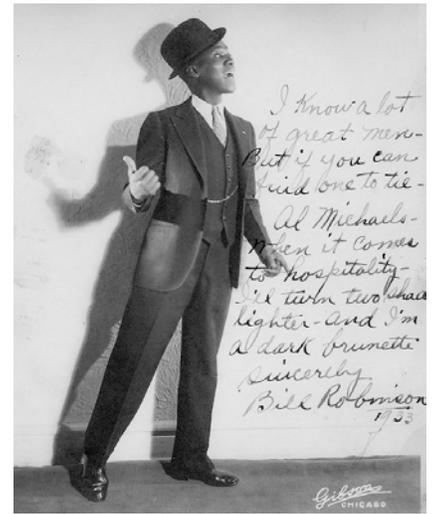
Louis (Pa) Michaels and Eleanor Michaels, c. 1946



Signed photograph of Milton Berle, c. 1931



Signed Photograph of Kate Smith, 1932



Signed photograph of Bill Robinson, 1933



Program cover reverse stamp for printing reproductions



Program cover for an event at The Chateau

Editor's note: this historical image clearly portrays a societal inequality in our community which remains to this day. It is a factual part of our history that the editor has decided to include. Although the Chateau was known for its diversity of both staff and entertainment, such caricature art, during this time, likely perpetuated ongoing individual and institutional racism.



CONTRACT

AGREEMENT, made this 2nd day of March, 1937

between, The Chateau Club Manager,
and The Florios Artist.

The manager hereby engages the artist as Ballroom Team with option for a period of One weeks or more, commencing on or about Mar. 2, 1937

In consideration of which the manager agrees to pay to said artist the sum of Sixty-dollars. Dollars (\$60.00) per week, less Ten (10) per cent, to be paid each and every week of the above engagement to NORTON & KRAMER, managers.

When Room and Board is prevalent, it shall be equivalent to \$10.00 and usual Ten per cent shall be paid this office.

The artist agrees to be prompt at rehearsals, to pay strict regard to make-up and dress, to perform his or her services in a competent and painstaking manner, to abide by all reasonable rules and regulations, and to render services exclusively to the above manager, and shall not render services to any other person, firm or corporation without the consent of manager, in the event of any engagement, or employment arising directly or indirectly, as a result of the engagement herein above specified, the said artist agrees that NORTON & KRAMER shall be further considered as the artists' representative on this new employment and shall be entitled to commissions occurring as herein above specified. The artist hereby further agreeing to notify said representatives at any and all times of such re-employment.

This contract cannot be modified or abrogated without the written consent of both parties.
All verbal agreements contrary to the terms herein stated are void.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have hereunto set our hands and seals the day and year first above written.

House policy MANAGER The Chateau Club
ARTIST The Florios by Jack O'Meara
NORTON & KRAMER
Artists Representatives

Norton Attractions Entertainment Contract, March 2, 1937

Thanks to Al's grandson, Derek Warshof, there are not just photos but also interesting artifacts from the restaurant that help to tell the story. At left, the program cover stamp, in the reverse, was used to update and reproduce the adjacent program cover (lower left). The entertainment contract above from Al Norton Attractions illustrates the going rate of the day and included a provision for room, board and the agency fee of 10%.

At first glance, the menu looks quite reasonably priced even for the day. Have a little fun and assume that \$1.00 at the time = \$15.00 today to convert the prices. What would your meal cost today at the Chateau? Another interesting item was the card used to reserve tables. One side appears to show a line of men and I don't think they are fishing. Oh, what an interesting place it must have been.

The late '20s and early '30s was a tumultuous time in America with Prohibition, Black Friday and the onset of the Great Depression. The Chateau had its "Untouchable" times beginning with a raid by federal agents in late 1929. The front page of the D&C on 5/11/30 announced the trial of Harold and Al Michaels. They were charged with operating a liquor dispensing place without paying the required government tax. That was followed by a raid on November 12, 1932 that included the destruction in the parking lot of thousands of dollars of bootleg liquor. Also confiscated

... MENU ...

RELISHES

Russian Caviar	1.00	Caviar Canape	1.00	Sardines . . . . .	.40
Celery . . . . .	.25	Stuffed Olives . . . . .	.25	Sweet Pickles . . . . .	.15
Stuffed Celery . . . . .	.60	Ripe Olives . . . . .	.30	Dill Pickles . . . . .	.15
Anchovies Canape . . . . .	.75	Queen Olives . . . . .	.25		

COCKTAILS

Oyster . . . . .	.40	Lobster	1.00	Shrimp . . . . .	.60
Clam . . . . .	.40	Crabmeat . . . . .	.75	Sea Food Cocktail	1.00
Steamed Clams . . . . .	.75	Clam Casino . . . . .	.75	Tomato Juice Cocktail . . . . .	.20

SOUPS

Consomme . . . . .	.25	Cream of Tomato . . . . .	.25	Clam Broth . . . . .	.25
Pea . . . . .	.25	Onion au Gratin . . . . .	.50	Beef Broth . . . . .	.25
Chicken Okra . . . . .	.25	Chicken Broth . . . . .	.25		

SEA FOODS

Jumbo Frog Leg Plate Garni \$1.50

Broiled Lobster	1.25 up	Lobster a la Newburgh	1.25	Crabmeat a la Newburgh	1.25
		Fried Scallops, Tartar Sauce . . . . .	.75		

Special Sea Food Plate Maitre d'Hotel \$1.50

STEAKS, CHOPS, ETC.

Sirloin Steak	1.25	Steak Minute Garne	1.35	Broiled Fresh Mushrooms on Toast	1.00
Tenderloin Steak	1.25	Lamb Chops (2) on Toast . . . . .	.90	Planked Sirloin Steak	2.50
Steak Minute	1.00	Pork Chops (2) . . . . .	.75	Club Sirloin for 2 Planked	4.50
Filet Mignon Casserole	1.50	Broiled Bacon . . . . .	.60		
		Club Sirloin for 4 Planked	8.50		

Special Steak Plate \$1.50

POULTRY

Roast Chicken Casserole for 2	1.50 2.50	Half Broiled Chicken	1.00	Chicken a la King	1.00
				Fried Chicken Maryland	1.50

The Chateau Special Chicken Plate \$1.25

EGG DISHES

Ham and Eggs . . . . .	.65	Spanish Omelette . . . . .	.60	Fried Eggs . . . . .	.30
Bacon and Eggs . . . . .	.65			Scrambled Eggs . . . . .	.40

Main course page from the extensive Chateau menu



Front and rear of reservation cards



The Chateau main dining room

were certain fixtures including slot machines. It was noted that all the cash proceeds from the raid were turned over to the Town of Brighton poor fund. It is said that a picture is often better than a thousand words. The one below taken in February 1932 may exceed that old adage. It certainly looks like business as usual as evidenced by the ample liquor displayed even though the repeal of the Volstead Act would not occur until a year later.

All the while the above was unfolding there was pressure from the town government and from the neighbors about the impact the club was having on the community. As early as 1929

Michaels gave an option to purchase the property to the town. The D&C reported on 11/30/29 that the option for \$50,000 (\$750,000. today) was rejected by the voters.

The neighbors during that period were advocating for a gas station but that wouldn't come to fruition for many more years. In 1935, an application to expand the restaurant operation was pulled from the town zoning board by Al Michaels due to continuing pressure from the community. A newspaper ad from that time period read "When in the mood for fun and food try the Chateau Nite club - Sunday dinners \$1.00." I guess you might say that the

show must go on!

And on it went! Pictured are photos of the kitchen, bar and night club during the '30s. It seems like a great deal was packed into a relatively small restaurant and hotel. Despite the modest footprint of the building, the Chateau was one of the top clubs in Rochester. In addition to club acts, it hosted hundreds of weddings, birthdays, anniversaries and company parties.

It seems that the community was indeed important to Al Michaels. The D&C in 1963 in announcing his passing included: "Mr Michaels had the reputation of seldom, if



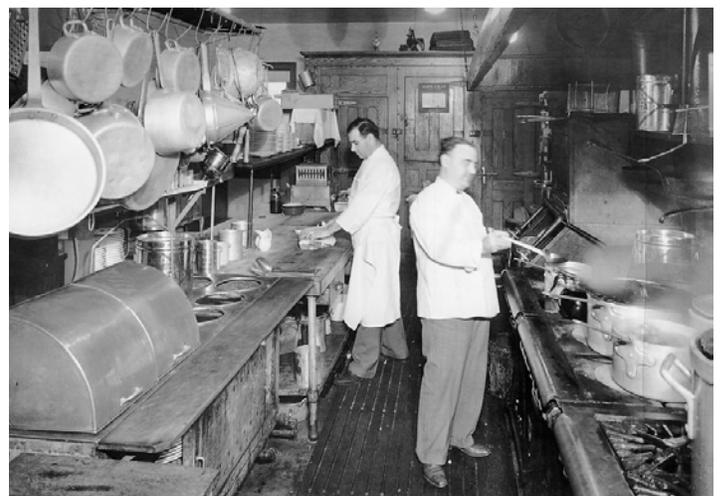
Signed photograph of cowboy star Buck Jones, 1932



A group at the bar, with Buck Jones at far left, c. 1932



The fully stocked Chateau bar, c. 1930s



Chateau kitchen staff at work

ever, turning anyone away who was down on their luck. He provided many families with food and clothing during the holiday season and he was especially helpful to the victims of the Brighton gas explosions several years ago.”

By the 1950s many pressures, beyond the town government and the rapidly growing residential community, were taking a toll on the Chateau. In an article written by Kitty Hayes of the Brighton Pittsford Post, Al Michaels relates that it’s nothing new as he’s been trying to get away from the business, away from the amusement tax and those persons

who have knocked his business. As he puts it, “In the days before the 20% tax, television and bowling, this was a flourishing business.”

That end came in 1957 when the restaurant was demolished for a recently approved service station. Scotty’s Shell Gas Station would occupy a majority of the property while Al Michaels built a diner type restaurant replacing the Belmar Drive-In on the west end of the property. The station remains while

Brownstein’s Deli and Ken’s Pizza Corner in Brighton occupies the

restaurant site. I guess that is the hidden beauty in all these tales - a merchant is gone, long live the Merchants of Monroe

I would like to acknowledge Todd Warshof, Al and Eleanor’s grandson, in whose memory this article has been written. He was instrumental in saving many of the photos used in the article. Thanks also to his brother Derek and his father Rich for their memories. Bunny Goldstein provided contemporaneous accounts and Bill Clymer helped reproduce the photos. Finally, Mary Jo Lanpbear, Town Historian, graciously shared her files. Thanks to all!

—————HB—————



The Michaels’ children, Melanie and Louis



Right: The Chateau pictured during the crisis of a 1951 gas explosion at Twelve Corners that demolished a number of homes; It was said that Chateau owner Al Michaels did his best to help community members who needed food and shelter following the catastrophe



Chateau dining room c. 1930



Chateau owners Al and Eleanor Michaels

TRIBUTE TO ARTHUR M. HOLTZMAN, 1921-2020

By Arlene Wright Vanderlinde

The community recently lost a dear friend and ardent supporter of preservation and local history. Arthur Morlock Holtzman, 99, passed away peacefully on November 3, 2020, just three months shy of his hundredth birthday.

Art's passion for community service led him to serve actively on many local boards throughout his lifetime. He served as a trustee of the Landmark Society of Western New York for 17 years and was its President from 1990-1992. He spent 6 years on the Pittsford School Board, ending as President; 17 years on the Board of Directors of GEVA Theater Center and several years with the former Rochester Community Players.

His passion for history led him to become one of the founding fathers and charter members of Historic Brighton, serving on the task force that shaped its beginning in 1999.

Together with his wife, Maureen, they have supported and participated in the many activities of Historic Brighton. Maureen served as its Program Chair and Vice-President during its early years.

Historic Brighton salutes this gentleman and generous supporter. He will be missed.

—————HB—————



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Red Sun

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*for their generous support and sponsorship
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Historic Brighton also thanks the following individuals and organizations for their generous support of programs and special projects:

*Dana and Bruce Gianniny for the Ed Crone Historic Marker
Dan Burns for the Ed Crone Historic Marker
The Rochester Community Foundation for a grant for improved publications*

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GORDON HARRIS: BRIGHTON FREEDOM RIDER

By Marjorie Searl

If you watched the “Oprah” show on May 4, 2011, chances are you did not realize that a former Brighton resident, Gordon Lau Harris, was being honored by Oprah Winfrey along with almost 200 surviving Freedom Riders, including the late Representative John L. Lewis. These men and women, Black and White, had fought with their lives for changes in Civil Rights policies in America. In the program, Gordon Harris, who lived on Summit Drive in his teens and early 20s, was seated in a wheelchair near the front of the group on the stage¹. By then, the curse of Huntington’s Disease had severely afflicted him, the same disease that crippled his father and his brother. He died a year later.

On December 5, 1961, Harris spoke with a group of University of Rochester students to recount the summer’s harrowing experience: “I came back with the idea that there is a personal revolution going on in the South... This revolution, this movement, cannot be stopped. However, the forces at work cannot be solidified; much depends on continuous Northern support for the movement to remain nonviolent.”² The previous June, Harris had answered the call of James Farmer, founder of CORE (Congress of Racial Equality), for volunteers to travel through the

South and take action to advance racial equality. The Freedom Rider concept was Farmer’s; he envisioned Blacks and Whites traveling throughout the South, deliberately but nonviolently challenging segregationist laws on buses, trains, and in waiting rooms and depots. Harris, who had been raised in an activist home on a very quiet dead end street, belonged to a Junior NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) chapter in high school and a chapter of CORE at the University of Rochester. He was ready to effect change in his country.³

Harris, a self-described “pacifist and a believer in non-violent methods of ending segregation,” was assigned to ride the train from New Orleans to Jackson, Mississippi with a small group of 20 people.⁴ Upon arriving at its destination on June 25, the integrated group went into the White waiting room, thereby breaking the (unconstitutional) law that declared it illegal for Blacks to enter a White waiting room. He was given a four month sentence and fined \$200.⁵ When the Jackson City Prison could no longer hold any more people, Harris and others were moved to the notorious Parchman State Prison. At the previously mentioned University of Rochester talk in Gannett Lounge,

he described his prison experience: he was jailed, he was not allowed books, papers, and physical exercise. He was kept in a 6 x 9 foot cell along with one or two other prisoners. There were no windows or fresh air. He added, “At times, the prison guards would twist the Freedom Riders’ arms or shock them with an electric device ‘just for the pleasure of it.’”⁶

Later that summer, on August 19, 1961, he took part in a demonstration against the Rochester Police Bureau to protest use of police dogs in heavily Black neighborhoods and events. A group of Black and White protesters, led by the Youth Chapter of the NAACP, walked from the Police Bureau to the Roller Palace on Chestnut Street carrying signs and chanting “Freedom, Freedom.”⁷ On September 10, he was invited to speak at James Farmer’s presentation at downtown Rochester’s Central Presbyterian Church to a crowd of 200 people.

He continued his work in the South with CORE and the NAACP in Mississippi, Tennessee, Alabama, and Louisiana, helping Blacks to register to vote and gain access to other rights.

In February, 1963, he appeared at the Zoning Board of Appeals in Brighton

1) Harris is in a wheelchair on the left side of the stage, wearing a light blue shirt and a sport coat. The 2011 Oprah program is a very moving tribute to the work of the Freedom Riders and remains equally relevant today. Minute 6:28, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3N2oQ2s8uuE>, accessed January 20, 2021.

2) Mark Mohr, “Riders Discuss Revolution of Southern Thought, Action,” *Campus Times* (December 08, 1961), *Campus times* (University of Rochester), LD4747.C197, Rare Books, Special Collections, and Preservation, River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester, page 1.

3) In 1961, his mother, Flora Lau Harris, was the second vice president of the local chapter of the NAACP and wrote a history of the NAACP in Rochester. She was also the chair of the Rochester chapter of CORE. His father was a research scientist at Distillation Industries, Inc., a division of Kodak. The Harrises lived at 147 Summit Drive in Brighton in the 1950s and 1960s. The author has not yet discovered where he graduated from high school. Between high school and college, he worked on a tugboat on the Erie Canal! Harris appears not to have been a matriculated undergraduate at the University, but took courses in the University School between 1957 and 1962. Much of the biographical material about Gordon Harris is from the Memorial Minutes, 2014, New England Yearly Meeting of Friends. Thanks to Jeffrey Fitts, Clerk of Meeting in the Rochester Society of Friends, for resources about Harris’s affiliation with the Society of Friends.

to oppose an application for a sign for a proposed pancake house on Monroe Avenue that would feature the figure of Aunt Jemima. Harris, then secretary of the Rochester CORE chapter, said "...we are convinced that [people's attitudes toward Negroes] are reinforced and perpetuated for adults and taught to children by the existence of any stereotyped situation, and that "approval of the sign 'would make CORE's work more difficult and painful.'" His mother, Flora Lau Harris, asserted that the "use of a 'bandanna-garbed mammy character...would make community integration more difficult. Pointing to the preponderance of non-White races in the world, she declared that 'this condescension will make for ... continued racial tension.'"⁸ Fifty-seven years later, in 2020, Quaker Oats announced that it would be removing the 130 year old Aunt Jemima figure as a brand.

On May 16, 1963, Harris was again arrested near Attalia, Alabama, as the integrated group he was with attempted to follow in the footsteps of William L. Moore, a White civil rights activist who had been shot to death in April as he was marching to Jackson, Mississippi to deliver an anti-segregation letter to Governor Ross Barnett. Harris was part of the group that had assembled for a memorial service near the site where Moore was shot.

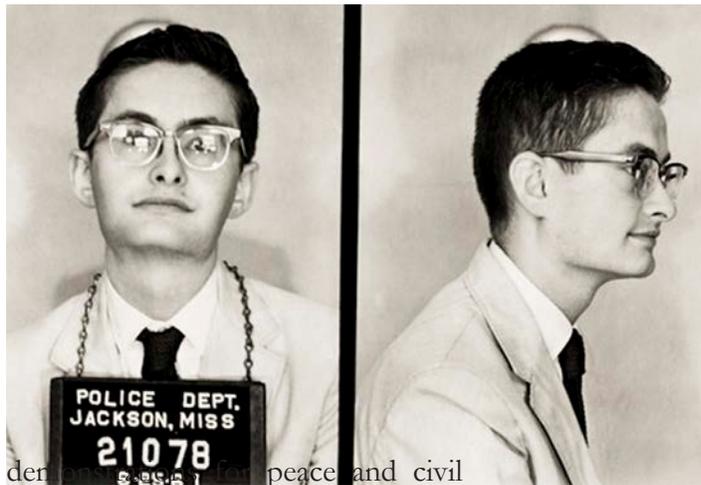
Harris completed his undergraduate education in 1967 at Wilmington College in North Carolina, his family having left Brighton by then for Washington DC. Harris had been a member of the Rochester Friends Meeting when the family lived in Brighton, and he continued his Quaker affiliation in a variety of locations. He pursued pastoral training at Earlham College in Indiana, where he received a Master of Ministry degree in 1974.⁹ Harris's activism continued: he witnessed the trial of Native American activist Russell Means after Wounded Knee and he went to Northern Ireland to work in the peace movement.¹⁰

Sadly, his health deteriorated due to his neurological illness, although his commitment to doing what he could to help his fellow human beings remained central. He volunteered with Big Brothers, he and his dog sat in classrooms listening to children read, and he continued to attend vigils and

rights. After his death in Maine on September 12, 2012, his courageous life was memorialized in a service at the Unitarian Church in Auburn, which had been his most recent spiritual home and his support during his final days.

It's a mystery that a Freedom Rider, someone who marched with Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama in 1965, is barely remembered in our own community. We are hopeful that someone reading this article may have more information to share. Does anyone remember him or his family? Does anyone know more about the activities of the junior chapters of CORE or NAACP in Rochester? If you have additional information about Harris or about other Brightonians who were active in the Civil Rights movement, please contact us at info@historicbrighton.org.¹¹

—HB—



Mugshot of Gordon Harris, 25 June 1961 after being arrested for participating in a demonstration where an integrated group of protestors sat in a "White-only" waiting room in Jackson, Mississippi⁹

4) "Brighton Freedom Rider Jailed in Mississippi Test," Democrat & Chronicle (June 26, 1961), page 1.
 5) "CORE Fund Raisers List National Director," Democrat & Chronicle (September 10, 1961), page 5B.
 6) Mohr, Campus Times, page 6. Thanks to John M. And Barbara Keil University of Rochester archivist Melissa Mead for locating this article
 7) "Crowd of 200 Protests Use of Police Dogs," Democrat & Chronicle (August 20, 1961), page 4.
 8) Mitchell Kaidy, "NAACP, CORE Oppose Propose Restaurant," Democrat & Chronicle (February 12, 1963), page 15.
 9) <https://www.oprah.com/oprahshow/freedom-riders-portraits/all>, accessed January 25, 2021
 10) <http://www.auburnuu.org/wp-content/uploads/Jan-Feb-2019-newsletter-web.pdf>, accessed 01/25/21.
 11) Thanks to Judith Stewart Gohringer, Dave Hedges, and Maryjane Link for their help.

BRIGHTON CEMETERY BECOMES CITY OF ROCHESTER LANDMARK

By Arlene Wright Vanderlinde

On December 14th, 2020, the 1821 Brighton Cemetery completed its final hurdle to become a designated landmark of the City of Rochester.

This 2-acre historic site, where many of Brighton's early pioneers are buried, is located near what was the Old Brighton Village, at the corner of Winton Road and East Avenue. The people buried in this site represent the earliest history of our community before Brighton and Rochester existed. They each have a story and much can be learned by becoming aware of how they lived and what they believed.

In 1905, the growing City of Rochester annexed this part of Brighton, taking in Brighton's post office, town meeting hall, police headquarters, as well as several businesses located there. This area is now part of Rochester's 21st Ward, located on Hoyt Place, off Winton Road South.

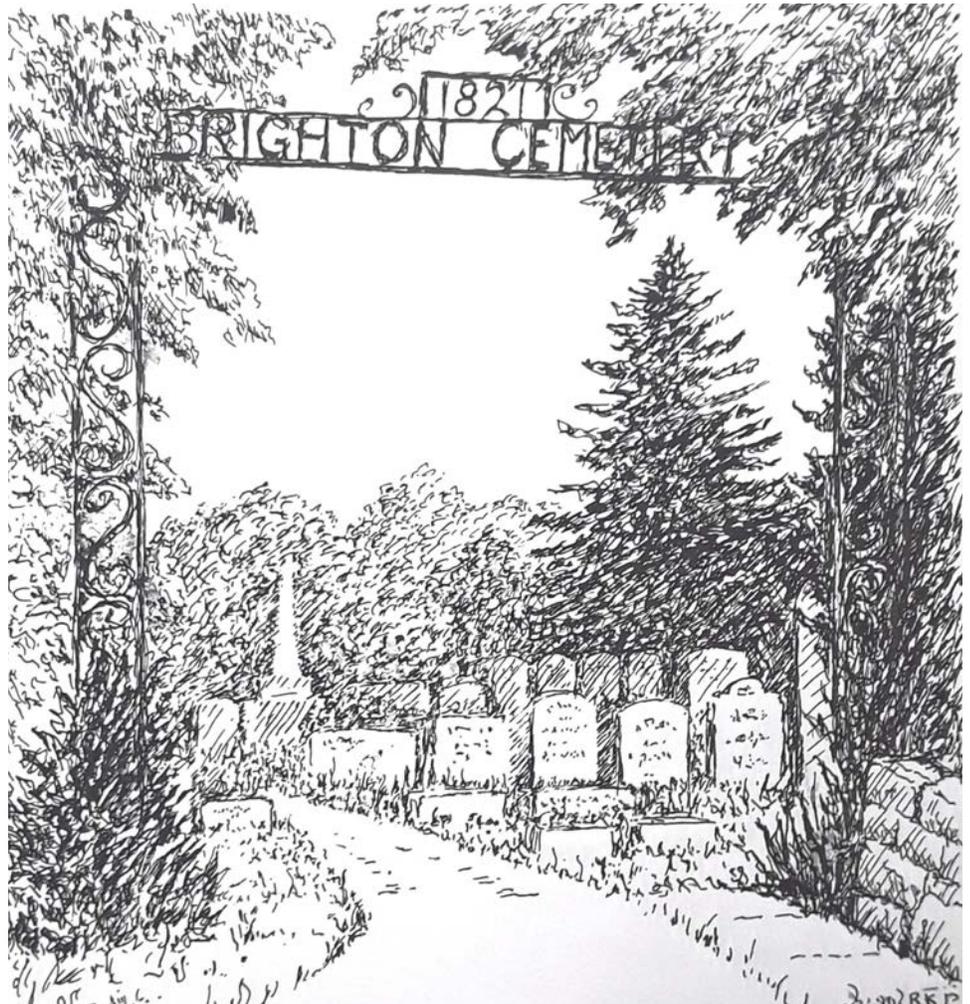
Historic Brighton was the official applicant for the designation, paying the fee from its Leo Dodd Fund. The Brighton Cemetery Association endorsed the application. Members of the Rochester Preservation and Planning Boards unanimously approved the application and were excited to learn more about this important site.

Historic Brighton plans to celebrate the designation with a 200-Year Anniversary Luncheon Lecture and cemetery tours to be held sometime in 2021. At this event, the 2021 Leo Dodd Heritage Preservation Award will be presented to Mr. Richard Miller, a volunteer caretaker and researcher of the cemetery. Mr. Miller has been the leader in re-establishing the lost records of the cemetery, as well as generously giving his time to keep the grounds and monuments in good condition. More details to come.

Brief History of the Brighton Cemetery: "When the Erie Canal was completed in 1825, it flowed quietly past the Brighton Cemetery on the eastern and northern sides. Today, that quiet flow of water has been replaced by a never-ending flow of thousands of noisy vehicles as they speed through the interchange of Expressways I-490 and I-590, which were built on the bed of the old canal. Most of the early pioneers of Brighton were devout Congregationalists from New England who soon organized a church which met in members' homes for several years. In the early 1820s they built a small church (40' x 55'), using locally-made bricks, on the high ground adjacent to the cemetery at the cost of \$4000. In pleasant weather, the members would stroll through the cemetery reading the inscriptions and finding a shady place to enjoy the nearby lock. In 1867, a flaming shingle blown by the wind from a burning Village tavern landed

on the steeple of the church and soon reduced it to ashes. Many valuable items were saved by quick-acting church members, but the cemetery records, which were stored in the church, were completely destroyed. Therefore, the records of the Brighton Cemetery are far from complete. A larger and more beautiful church was built in 1868 on East Avenue in the Village, and the church and cemetery were now separated by the canal. For years, the church continued to be responsible for the cemetery. However, in 1892 the Brighton Cemetery Association was formed to manage the cemetery culminating in a complete separation of the church and the cemetery."

Excerpted from articles by the late Ruth Blossom Kingston Porter. Find the full articles by visiting www.historicbrighton.org; Historic Brighton News, Volume 1, Number 2, Fall 2000, and Volume 9, number 4, Fall 2008



1821 Brighton Cemetery Entrance Gate sketch by the late Ruth Blossom Kingston Porter

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