

HISTORIC BRIGHTON NEWS

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"FROM SHANK'S MARE TO SUPERHIGHWAY: GETTING AROUND IN BRIGHTON"

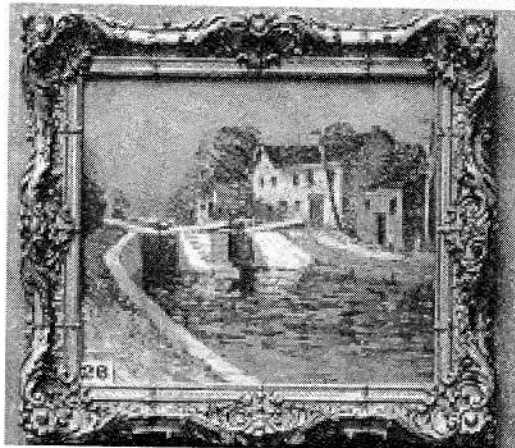
Monday, April 28

7 pm

Auditorium

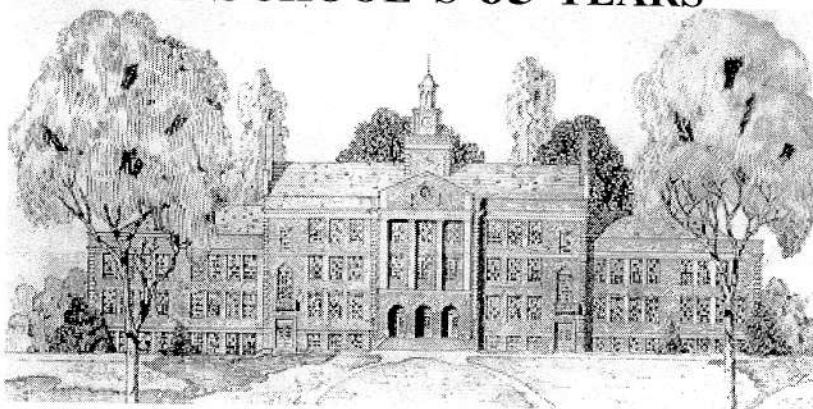
Brighton Town Hall

An entertaining overview of the transportation delights available to the residents of Brighton, 1800-2003. A complicated, intricate and interesting tale related by **Mary Jo Lanphear** and **Leo Dodd**. Brighton was a unique transportation hub for Monroe County with access to multiple systems. Where else would you find a Foot Path morphed to a Canal, then an Electric Subway and now is City Outer Loop? Come and be informed on Brighton history.



*The Lock at Brighton—a painting by George Herdle of the Erie Canal as it wended through Brighton on what is now Routes 590 and 490. The logo for *Historic Brighton News* is another Herdle painting entitled *The Canal Boat*.*

BRIGHTON HIGH SCHOOL'S 65 YEARS



"The school of tomorrow" was under construction, when the 1939 yearbook published this rendering.

By Catherine Zukosky

Today's Brighton High School at 1150 Winton Road South had its beginning 65 years ago in a dramatic last-minute rush to advance it from concept to realization. On Dec. 29, 1938, in an 11th hour, 15-minute ceremony, school board member Letitia Miles and Robert Van Order braved icy winds to break frozen ground at the site where the building would rise. They were working against a deadline imposed by the Public Works Administration to begin construction by the end of the year. The PWA, an agency established in the Great De-

pression as part of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal was winding down at this time and its commitment to provide \$270,000 (about 45%) of the \$600,000 cost of the school-building project was a prize too precious to forfeit. School board president Allen B. Gates had stated that the plan called for "comparatively little increase in school taxes," an important factor in those difficult times. A bond issue to the district for the balance of the funds would be retired in 1957.

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BRIGHTON HIGH SCHOOL'S 65 YEARS (CONTINUED)



The one-room "Little Red Schoolhouse" at Monroe and Highland Avenues was an early Brighton school.

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The first act of the drama proceeded on the night of Dec. 27, when a delegation consisting of the school district's attorney, Archibald Webster, and the project's architect, Charles Carpenter of Carpenter and Barrows, traveled by train to New York City carrying low bids for the building's construction. Earlier that day, 31 bids had been received and studied, and contracts had been let to general contractor Frank Maggio and Brothers for \$355,000. This firm had already received the \$7300 contract for a garage to house four buses and construction on that had begun. Low bids for heating, ventilation, plumbing and electrical contracts were also presented. The PWA regional director approved the bids for the general contract and sent a confirming telegram to school officials on December 29. The race had been won and there were smiles all around during the 15-minute ceremony observed by school and town officials, a PWA representative, the architect, and the contractors who were preparing to move machinery to the tract the next day. They foresaw completion of the job by June, 1940.

These heroic efforts in the dead of winter were in response to a clear need. Brighton had grown rapidly for two decades as migration to the suburbs was facilitated by the automobile and by public transport. Census figures showed a 1920 population of 3027; by 1930 it was 9065. The early Common School Districts (there were seven in 1920) were authorized to provide elementary education through 6th or 8th grade. Older students sought further education elsewhere. In 1925, amendments to

New York State's Central School Law had provided financial incentives for the consolidation of districts. In that year, Brighton's Common District No. 1 with a school at Clover St. and Elmwood Ave. and District No. 8 were melded into Union Free School District No. 1. District No. 8 school was on Monroe Ave. near Cobb's Hill and that district had been annexed into Rochester. The consolidated district built an eight-room school at the Twelve Corners, now the town's hub. Abner M. Buckland, member of a Brighton pioneer family, previously owned the expanse of land accommodating today's Brighton campus at the Twelve Corners. Clay was dug and bricks formed there from 1830 until the 1920s.

Secondary education had become an expectation and a necessity for the growing community. A ninth grade class was opened in 1928 and the high school program was expanded each year. In 1931, the district received its four-year charter from the state and in June 1932 graduated its first four-year class of 22 students. The school was free to residents of District No. 1 and the residents of the five other Brighton Common School districts on a tuition basis. Additions were made to the Twelve Corners building in 1928, 1930 and 1933, but it was overcrowded even before 1940 when the town's population had grown to 13,132.

The new high school was nearly complete in June, 1940, enabling the graduating class of that year to conduct ceremonies in its auditorium/gymnasium. This group included some who were the first to go all the way from kindergarten through senior high school at the Twelve Corners. One of these is Roselle Goldstein Fine. Her small kindergarten group met first in the auditorium of the elementary school in 1927, and the class grew year by year to a number she recalls to be about 90 at graduation. The new high school that could accommodate 850 students opened for instruction in September, 1940 with 550.

The class of 1941, numbering 112, was the first to attend and be graduated from the new building. District superintendent was Aubrey Donley; vice-principal for the high school was Gordon Harris,

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A WALKING TOUR OF EDGEWOOD AVENUE

By Arlene A. Wright

When looking at Edgewood Avenue, one notices many split level, colonial and ranch style homes along the way. Well-kept neighborhoods—Evans Farm, Warren Ave., Willowbend, Birmingham and Stonybrook—represent the massive population shifts from the city to country in the mid-20th century. From the 1920s on, there were bursts of development as people pushed farther and farther from the nation's cities. The automobile was the chief reason for this phenomenal suburban growth. Edgewood's development reflects economic booms from the 1930s to the 1970s.

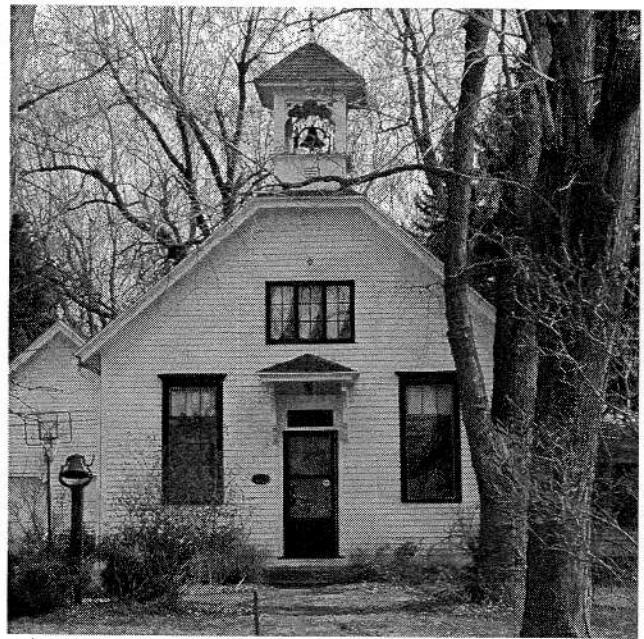
Edgewood's history is as long as Brighton's itself. Walking with a keen eye will allow you to discover many clues to the history of the avenue.

Before the white man arrived in the 18th century, Indians hunted geese, ducks, and beaver in the marshy land located where the French Road School now stands. The little water geysers that sprout from the ground with every good rain remind us of this early marsh. The area was a wilderness "with here and there a clearing and the City of Rochester had not even reached the distinction of a village."¹ "They were settled in Brighton while yet the presence of the gray wolf, endangering the flock, called for a bounty of ten dollars for the scalp."²

The earliest settlers were farmers. The rich soil was ideal for growing fruit, vegetables, and flowers. The name Edgewood comes remind us of earlier dense woods.

Our tour begins at French Rd. and concludes at Westfall Rd., concentrating on pre-1900 structures. This section of French Rd. (to Clover St.) was called Hillside Ave. when it was dedicated in 1812. It went straight through to South Ave., now called Winton Road South. Edgewood Ave. was once lined with cherry trees. We can only imagine the beauty of these blossoms on a spring day. Fields of corn, hay, wheat and flowers were plentiful and apple orchards were here and there.

No. 485 French Rd. (corner of Edgewood, is



Brighton District No. 9 schoolhouse, 1906

the former Brighton District No. 9 schoolhouse, built 1906 and the second structure on the site.. A smaller clapboard schoolhouse facing Hillside Ave. originally stood here. District No.9 was established in 1819. The schoolhouse became a residence in 1949 after being vacant for ten years. The first owners found the desks still nailed to the floor and the pot-bellied stove in the rear. Several additions have been made but the bell tower remains a charming reminder of the building's original use.

No. 940 Edgewood Ave., ca. 1870, is a New England style farmhouse. The farm's original owners were Jervis and Bethany Adams who sold the 30 acres of land that extended south to the school property to William Miller. Joseph Weiss (sometimes spelled Weis) purchased the land in 1870 and built the home. He owned livestock and found that the marshy land surrounding was perfect for growing potatoes. He may have been a winemaker as a wine press was found to be part of the inventory of this farm. According to a 1937 plat map, the Rochester Gun Club once owned this land, now occupied by the Briar Manor Apartments. There were acres of shooting ranges. No other information was found.

No. 752 Edgewood Ave., corner of Hibiscus, is the William D. Landon House, built ca. 1890. The original structure has been extensively changed to appear as contemporary to the surrounding mid-

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A WALKING TOUR OF EDGEWOOD AVENUE



The oldest structure: part of 704 Edgewood, 1814.

No. 648 Edgewood Ave. is the Daniel Edgar Rowland II Home—a simple New England Style clapboard farmhouse, built ca. 1850. At least five Rowland family homes were once in the area: The original section of the Monroe Cherry House is one. Two others, no longer extant, were on the Sherwin Williams site and the C. J. Stevens site on Monroe Ave. The fifth is a New England style farmhouse at No. 138 Rowland Parkway.

The Rowlands—a large, close family—emigrated from England in the 1830s. They collectively owned hundreds of acres of Brighton land and still have descendants living in the area. Mrs. Gladys Rowland Lewis lives at No. 394 Edgewood.

Interesting note: Warren Avenue and Branch Avenue were once known as Warren Estates or Warren Park. The area was subdivided in the 1930s but the lots were too small to meet a Town regulation and the developers had financial problems. The area was finally developed in the 1960s and 1970s.

No. 448 Edgewood Ave. was a tenant house for the Hill Farm, ca. 1890. The stucco probably covers wooden clapboards, and the rough-coursed ashlar foundation stones help date the house.

No. 407 Edgewood Ave. is a brick New England style farmhouse with some Greek Revival details such as longer first story windows; stone lintels and sills on windows. Brick could have come from the brickyard of Gideon Cobb. Original section of the home built in 1814, making it the oldest structure on Edgewood. It consists of the small rear

section and the lean-to roofed kitchen. The larger front section was built around 1825. The foundation stones are said to have come from Meadow Ditch that was dug out to make the Erie Canal. The pointed window in the front gable is unusual for the home's early date. The kitchen has remained nearly unchanged with its large open-hearth fireplace. Simple, beautifully detailed moldings surround the large windows. The thick brick walls act as perfect insulation from summer's heat and winter's cold.

The earliest owners of record were George and Edward Wilson. We assume they built the house. William and Mary Hill purchased it and about 120 acres in 1877. William Hill came to Monroe County from England at age 16; his wife was from Pittsford. They had five children. The youngest son, William T. Hill and wife, Naomi, stayed on the farm as did their son, Luther W. Hill and his family. Luther's second wife lived at No. 397 Edgewood, built for her when the Harry Davis family purchased the farm in the 1950s. The present owners are carefully renovating this designated Brighton Landmark.

No. 394 Edgewood Ave.: Hill Farm tenant house, built ca. 1840, enlarged in 1895. Home of Rowland and Evans descendant, Gladys Rowland Lewis. Roof was raised and addition put on. The original roof is still visible in the attic. The style is the simple New England farmhouse with Queen Anne and Eastlake details added to the porch. Each spring, hyacinths under the trees on the north side of the house, planted by Mrs. Hill in about 1895, still bloom.

Warren and Gladys Rowland Lewis bought the house from Luther Hill in 1953. Mrs. Lewis is the granddaughter of Daniel Rowland II and Joseph, Jr. and Susan Evans. Her mother, Harriette Evans Rowland, taught in the little one-room school where our tour began.

No. 377 Edgewood Avenue: This early 20th-century bungalow with Colonial Revival details was moved from Allen's Creek Road near the Rt. 590 overpass. Note the foundation of concrete block where it meets the brick chimney.

No. 15 Southwood (originally No. 333

A WALKING TOUR OF EDGEWOOD AVENUE

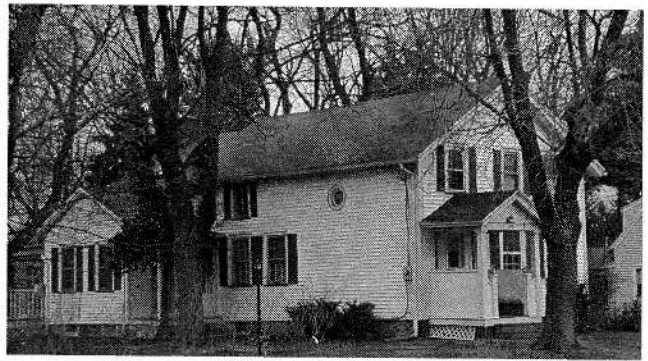
Edgewood) and

No.281 Edgewood Avenue—the original Evans farmhouse—was initially on the site where No.15 Southwood now stands. The Evans Farm Tract was formerly the property of the Joseph Evans family and was sold to developers in 1954 by Teresa Evans Burke who owned and occupied the former Evershed homestead at 2005 Westfall Rd. No.15 Southwood and No.281 Edgewood are the actual Evans farmhouses.

No.15 Southwood was built ca.1875 using the foundation of the original farmhouse. Ann Evans felt that the little white house was too small. She wanted a bigger more “modern” home. The little house was moved to the north side of the property (No.281). Joseph built his wife the simplified Gothic Revival home that stands today. Its pointed windows have an Eastlake feeling. The front porch and side porch are additions by the current owners, reflecting the style of the house.

Joseph Edward Evans and his wife, Ann Evans, were born in Cheddar, England in 1824 and 1821 respectively. Joseph came to Brighton prior to his marriage and was indentured to Joseph Abbey of 245 Edgewood Ave. Joseph and Ann married in 1850; he brought her to America for their honeymoon. They lived with the Teare family on Allyn’s Creek Rd. (former spelling of Allens Creek) until they purchased their farm in 1851. It is not known if the little farmhouse was already there or if he built it for Ann. The house appears to be older than 1851 with its simplified Federal/Greek Revival style. No records of previous owners were found. Joseph and Ann’s one child, Joseph, Jr., was born in 1854.

Joseph Jr. married Susan Ann Studley in 1878. Joseph and Ann gave the newlyweds 1.5 acres of land and the little house that had been moved to its present site. They had seven children. Joseph Jr. died in 1894 leaving Susan to raise the children. They ranged in age from 15 years to a few months. Susan managed to keep the family together and lived to age 95. Different members of the family continued to live in one or both of the homes until 1957 when the last part of the farm was sold.



Farmhouse at 245 Edgewood Ave.

The little white house has had several additions since its move, making it a fine family home. The owners have been very sensitive in keeping the original character.

No. 245 Edgewood Ave. is the Abbey/Taylor Home, ca. 1820. In 1814, Joseph Abbey made his way through the New York woods from New England to settle on 105 acres he bought from Elijah Northrup. Cutting his own lumber, he built a log cabin to house his wife, Experience Callender, and their seven children. Joseph died soon after his arrival, seven months after the Town of Brighton was established. Some of the land was sold at this time.

In 1820, other family members completed a typical early farmhouse with two rooms and a kitchen with dirt floor and living space above. This became the core for later additions. Note the difference in the roof heights at the rear of the house. In 1831 Joseph Abbey, Jr. purchased the farm from his family. When he died in 1879, his wife, Nancy Ann, rented some of the land to nurserymen and hired men to farm the remainder.

Abraham Taylor, a nephew of Joseph Abbey, Jr., and his wife Caroline Minnamon of Pittsford, and their children gained ownership in 1917. Abraham had lived with the Abbeys for many years. One of their children, Clarence, was the chief lock operator at Lock No.33 of the Canal. He married Ruby Everts of Corning and had one son, Robert. They lived with Abraham until his death in 1958 at the age of 93. They never really farmed the land extensively but enjoyed the woods and fields surrounding their home. The home remained in the family

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A WALKING TOUR OF EDGEWOOD AVENUE (CONTINUED)

1870s. The home sits on a one-acre site with a huge barn at the rear—designated a Brighton Landmark in 1998.. All the other land had been sold over the years to developers: in the 1930s to create Birmingham Dr.; in the 1940s to make Carverdale; and in the 1960s to build the Free Methodist Church.

No. 182 Edgewood Ave. is in the New England farmhouse style, built 1840-1860. Note the garage that was once used as a surveyor's shed near the Erie Canal, moved to this site when no longer needed.

In 1937, owner Teddy Quant sold much of his farm to developers. Monroe Avenue Estates with Modelane, Pickford Dr. and Willowbend Rd. resulted. These charming streets helped create the look of Edgewood today.

Arlene A. Wright is the founder of Historic Brighton.

¹ Stephen Luce *History of Monroe County 1788-1877*: Everts, Ensign & Everts, p. 244

²*Ibid.*: page 244

Sources:

- 1852, 1872, 1902. and 1937 plat maps of Brighton
- History of Monroe County 1788-1877
- The History of Brighton – Keople
- The Brighton-Pittsford Post – June 1, 1978
- Rochester *Democrat & Chronicle* – July 17, 1962
- Mary Jo Lanphear – Brighton Town Historian
- A special thank you to Gladys Lewis for her time and generosity in lending her family treasures and information.



BRIGHTON HIGH SCHOOL'S 65 YEARS (CONTINUED)

assisted by 24 faculty. The *Democrat & Chronicle* of Dec. 28, 1938 commented:

"The elaborately planned new school...is expected to be one of the finest in this end of the state. Besides relieving overcrowded conditions, it will provide science laboratories, a modern and increased space for gymnasium, auditorium and shop departments."

When the original plans for the high school building were drawn, the school board anticipated the need for an additional wing. During the war years, Brighton's school population stabilized, then burgeoned so that by 1949, expansion was a necessity. The high school building containing grades 8 through 12 accommodated 745 students. At the time, it was expected that enrollment would rise steadily until 1963. Instead, enrollment peaked in 1966.

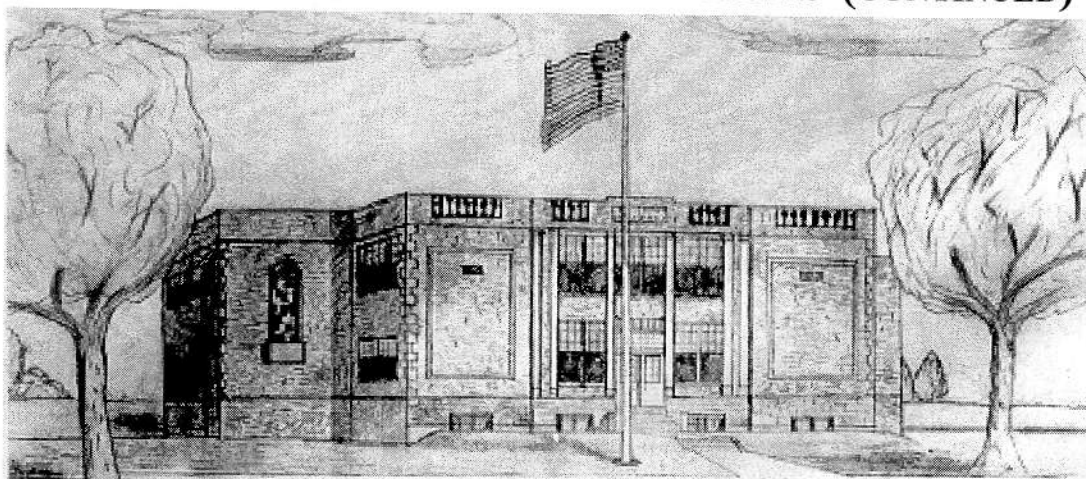
After the addition of the north wing, the school could accommodate 7th graders, relieving overcrowding of the elementary school group when a new primary school was erected on Monroe Ave. near the Twelve Corners. Carpenter and Barrows designed a north wing that extended the original neo-classical design. The new facility included 20 classrooms, a swimming pool, and an auditorium. Additional garage facilities were also required. The total cost was estimated at \$1,695,000. Construction was accomplished in 1950.

About this time, the state recommended a centralized school district for the entire town of Brighton. Increasing population pressures and lack of classroom space brought residents to a vote on the issue in May of 1955. The proposal was defeated by a large margin.

Residents outside of District No. 1 then formed a new Union Free District No. 2 and opened several new schools. However, by 1966 the situation was critical. New York State was urging centralization and made it clear that financial aid would be much more generous to a centralized district.. After much debate, Brightonians concluded that this course would be most beneficial to all of the town's

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BRIGHTON HIGH SCHOOL'S 65 YEARS (CONTINUED)



The building that is now the Twelve Corners Middle School served as grammar and high school from 1926 until 1940

children. The merging of Districts No. 1 and No. 2 into Brighton Central Schools was effected July 1, 1967. Large administrative changes took plans and schools were rearranged to accommodate different age groups. The high school became available to all of Brighton's secondary population and housed only grades 9 through 12.

In response to enhancements to the curriculum and growth in the size and diversity of the school community, the school building underwent a second major addition in 1972 when the senior class numbered 350. A south wing was created to house new cafeterias, a large group room, a media center, and science rooms. Another large group room and shop and music rooms were added to the north wing.

By the early 1980s there were growing concerns about deterioration and the inadequacy of the high school building. Space limitations cramped educational programs, mechanical and electrical systems were antiquated, and asbestos-containing materials required removal. A study group presented several options for the future of the high school, the two main choices being the creation of a new building in a new location or a major renovation of the existing school building and improvements at the Twelve Corners Middle School. The wishes of the community were sought and after an extensive series of discussions the school board in 1985 decided for renovation. This was accomplished during the 1986-87 school year during which high school classes were relocated to the middle school

building. Redesign outdoors created a bus loop, added parking space and relocation of the bus garage. Within the building, heating, ventilating, electrical and plumbing systems were replaced, new ceiling and thermal windows were installed. Space was rearranged to promote smoother interior traffic. A three-story addition was created from the central courtyard. Existing materials were preserved and refinished wherever possible. The chief architect was Ted Butcher of SWBR Architects. In the fall of 1987, 358 twelfth-year students reclaimed their *new* Brighton High School.

Since then, the school population has remained relatively stable. The class of 2002 contained 279 young men and women, 93% of whom went on to college. Standardized test scores exceeded mean scores state and nationwide and these scores increase yearly. This year's 12th-graders number 289. High school principal Dr. Peter Knapp heads a faculty and staff of 162.

Our brief history of Brighton High School serves as a testament to the community's continuing commitment and involvement in a school system considered to be the town's most important asset. It has long been acknowledged as one of the best in the state and the nation and is a source of pride for all of us.

Many thanks to Norma Press, the district's Communications Director for sharing her knowledge of Brighton's schools, past and present.

THE GAME OF EMPIRE BEGINS

By Betsy Brayer

The Game Of Empire between France and England began in 1066 when William of Normandy conquered England. In the 16th century, it moved to the New World and for the next 200-plus years the Game played out in the Genesee Valley.

For 229 years—longer than Brighton has been part of the United States—the French considered the southern shore of Lake Ontario a part of New France. But many historians have given our area and this period short shrift.

Why is this important?

It is one reason that we speak English today and not French. It is the reason that our legal system is based upon English common law and not the Napoleonic Code. And it is the reason that the New York State Constitution and indeed the United States Constitution are based upon the Royal Charter that the English King bestowed upon his brother, the Duke of York, who like the French claimed the territory that is now New York State.

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In 1534, a fateful wind delivers Jacques Cartier's ships to the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Cartier and his 50 shipmates disembark, kiss the land and give thanks to God on the feast day of St. Lawrence. The French method is to claim all the waterways in North America that they "discover" and the land touching those waterways and their tributaries.

By swift and silent couriers, this news reaches the Iroquois tribes south of Lake Ontario and forever modifies the Genesee Country and what will become Brighton.

WEB SITES WE HAVE VISITED

The following are a few of Leo Dodd's favorites. Feel free to send us your own favorites.

1. Rochester History Site: <http://www.vintageviews.org/vv-tl/index.htm>
2. Rochester maps: <http://www.vintageviews.org/vv-tl/maps/maps.htm>
3. 1924 map of Brighton: <http://www.rochester.lib.ny.us:2080/cgi-bin/cw.cgi?fullRecord+6203+716+8547+87+3>
4. Cornell Library site: http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/moa_browse.html



In 1750, most of North America including the land surrounding Lake Ontario was claimed by France.



Next issue: LaSalle comes to the Indian Landing.

HISTORIC BRIGHTON

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