

HISTORIC BRIGHTON NEWS

VOLUME 5

FALL 2004

NUMBER 3

HISTORIC BRIGHTON MEETS OCTOBER 19

The fall meeting of Historic Brighton will be held on Tuesday, October 19 at 7:30 PM in the Hubbell Auditorium of the First Baptist Church, Clover Street at Allens Creek Road.

Lea Kemp, librarian/archivist at the Rochester Museum and Science Center, will discuss the Albert R. Stone [photographic] Collection. She welcomes audience assistance in identifying persons.

LEA KEMP TO PRESENT 'STONEY'S ROCHESTER'



1

The Albert R. Stone Collection of the Rochester Museum and Science Center comprises almost 14,000 images, of which about 9000 are on the Rochester Images data base.

Albert R. Stone was the first full-time newspaper photographer in Rochester, working for the Rochester "Herald", from 1904 until 1927, and when it became the *Democrat and Chronicle*. "Stoney," as he was universally known, continued with that paper until his death in 1934. He was never trained in professional photography and that makes his images even more remarkable. His son, Daniel, took over the practice after Albert's death; but died in 1936.

Stoney captured the entire history of the first quarter of 20th century Rochester. He saw his work as more than just a newspaper assignment to "take a picture" and was able to capture the character of his subjects. He gave people dignity, whatever their social class, race or economic status. Stoney took the first aerial photographs in Rochester and perhaps in New York state as this photograph shows.

The Albert R. Stone Collection came to the RMSC in 1940, as glass plate negatives. Prints were finally made in the late 1970's. Volunteers sorted and identified each photo (a total of about 14,000 images). They have now been digitized, and can be viewed on a web site.

See the back page for more about our speaker

HARP LAMPS DESIGNATED LANDMARKS

By Betsy Brayer

At its August meeting, the Brighton Historic Preservation Commission designated the "Harp Lamps/Luminaires within the Town of Brighton as local landmarks. Jerry Ludwig, chairman of the commission, noted, "One subtle, though significant, feature of our town is the 'harp' lamp. These graceful fixtures which light many neighborhoods are as much a part of Brighton's past and present as the Twelve Corners, Corbetts Glen, and the examples of period architecture that grace our streets.

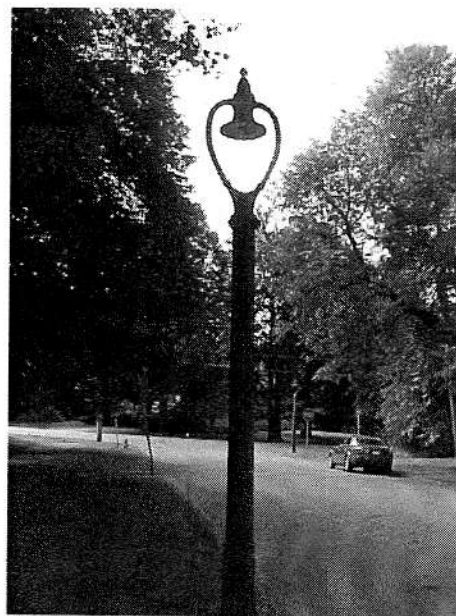
"Not only are the harp lamps indigenous and unique to the Rochester area, they are synonymous with Brighton and an integral part of its development and growth as a suburb."

2 The town board and supervisor expressed support for the designation. ""These unique streetlights add to the historic aspect, beauty and character of many of our neighborhoods and districts," Sandra Frankel wrote.

Today, at least 883 harp lamps can be found in the Brighton districts of Bel-Air, Council Rock Estates, Dunn & Paul, East Avenue, Houston Barnard, Ferndale Manor, Home Acres, Malvern, Meadowbrook, Penfield-Landing Road, Roselawn, Struckmar, and Sunnymede. At least 60 streets in these districts still have harp lamps.

At one time, there were thousands of harp lamps in the area but unfortunately many have been removed from Rochester city streets. The Commission seeks to avoid this fate for Brighton's harp lamps.

In 1962, for example, RG&E had about 30,000 light poles of which 11,000 were



concrete poles with harp fixtures and 12,000 were the even older wooden poles with metal fixtures. At that time, 7,000 taller metal standards had already replaced the concrete poles and that number has continued to grow as harp fixtures are replaced. Replacements are usually black fiberglass poles with high-pressure sodium bulbs.

Since original replacements of the harp fixtures may be difficult to obtain, the town board "supports the use of quality reproductions when replacements are required."

* * *

Poured concrete poles were developed about 1915 to replace wooden poles and designed so that wires could for the first time be laid underground. The elimination of the wires was a major design feature in the creation of such subdivisions as Home Acres and Browncroft.

(Browncroft was developed by Charles Brown as a residential setting for his nursery grounds as one of the earliest planned residential subdivisions in the country and probably the first in Monroe County. It is

HARP LAMPS DESIGNATED LANDMARKS



partly in Brighton and mostly in the city. Browncroft harp lamps, “many still entwined with the wisteria the Brown Brothers planted, lend to the overall character of these streets because they are architecturally contemporary to the homes,” a 1984 newsletter stated.)

Several different metal fixtures were placed atop the concrete poles, the most attractive of which was shaped like a lyre or harp. The poles themselves were originally square but later became octagonal. The octagonal concrete poles were then fluted to create ribs that evoked the bark of trees.

The globe style luminaire atop a concrete pole, of the same vintage as Colonial Revival architecture, was geographically widespread.

The fluted concrete pole topped by a harp fixture is believed by historians to be unique to this area, commissioned in the early decades of the 20th century at the height of the City Beautiful movement.

The City Beautiful movement was named and given focus by Charles Mulford Robinson, for whom Robinson Drive run-

ning through Highland Park is named. The movement began with the Columbian Exposition of 1893 and its handsome and beautifully planned “White City.” The movement that emerged from that World’s Fair extolled excellence in city planning and the splendors of ancient Greece, Rome and Renaissance Italy in architecture.

Robinson was secretary of the Municipal Arts Commission, which sponsored a new city plan in 1911 and selected the harp fixture for street lights in 1916. Although some famous architects have used lamp posts as vehicles for their talents—Antonio Gaudi designed some for his native Barcelona in Spain and Stanford White created a set to stand before the home of the New York mayor—the designer of Brighton’s harp lamps remains anonymous. Many residents see the concrete lights erected with their houses in the 1920s as in proper scale and keeping with period architecture.

HISTORIC BRIGHTON

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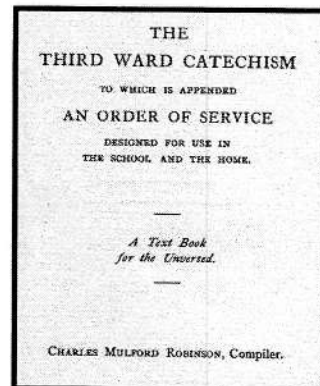
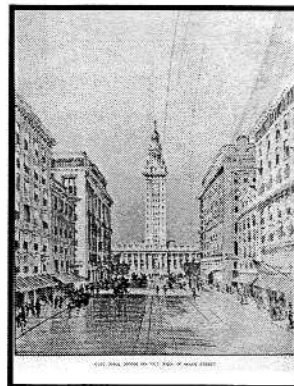
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CHARLES MULFORD ROBINSON

In addition to being the father of "The City Beautiful" movement, Charles Mulford Robinson (1868-1917) was the first professor of civic design in the country. According to art historians, Robinson "emerged from obscurity in upstate [sic] New York, where he had graduated from the University of Rochester with a liberal arts degree and then worked for a local newspaper." In 1899, Robinson wrote three articles for Atlantic Monthly entitled "Improvements in City Life" that popularized and staked out his territory in civic art. This was followed by several books, including *The Improvement of Towns and Cities: The Practical Basis of Civic Aesthetics* (1901); *Modern Civic Art: The City made Beautiful* (1903); and over 100 articles.



Sketch of City Hall Tower on Main St. in the 1911 City Plan and Robinson's "Third Ward Catechism."

The lovely Robinson Drive that wends its way through Highland Park has a plaque dedicated to "Charles Mulford Robinson—in his honor, pioneer city planner, loyal citizen, and Christian gentleman. He inspired the city to acquire this park and planned the drive."

4

A BRIEF HISTORY OF AREA STREET LIGHTING

1834: Citizens venturing out at night carried pine torches to ward off thieves; the well-to-do had porters carry the torches. Carriages had lanterns and houses, gatepost and porch lights, either closed candles or kerosene.

1847: Whale oil and kerosene lamps mounted on sparsely spaced wooden posts provided dim illumination at a cost of \$12.50 each a year.

1848: Rochester Gas Light Company organized with capital of \$100,000. "In a well-lighted city fewer scenes of depravity and crime will occur," said Mayor Joseph Field. The gas company put up 50 to 60 posts for gas lamps, lit and put then out daily at a cost of \$25 each a year. Ye olde lamplighter became a picturesque and romantic figure.

1881: The area, especially the city, went electric, and for a time folks rushed to the windows to see whether the nightly miracle would repeat. The new lighting, noisy, sputtery arc lights, was more

brilliant than gas but required carbons that burned out in 10 to 12 hours and had to be trimmed and replaced daily. The arc lamp was improved to burn 120 hours but gave way to the incandescent lamp with a capacity of 500 to 600 hours

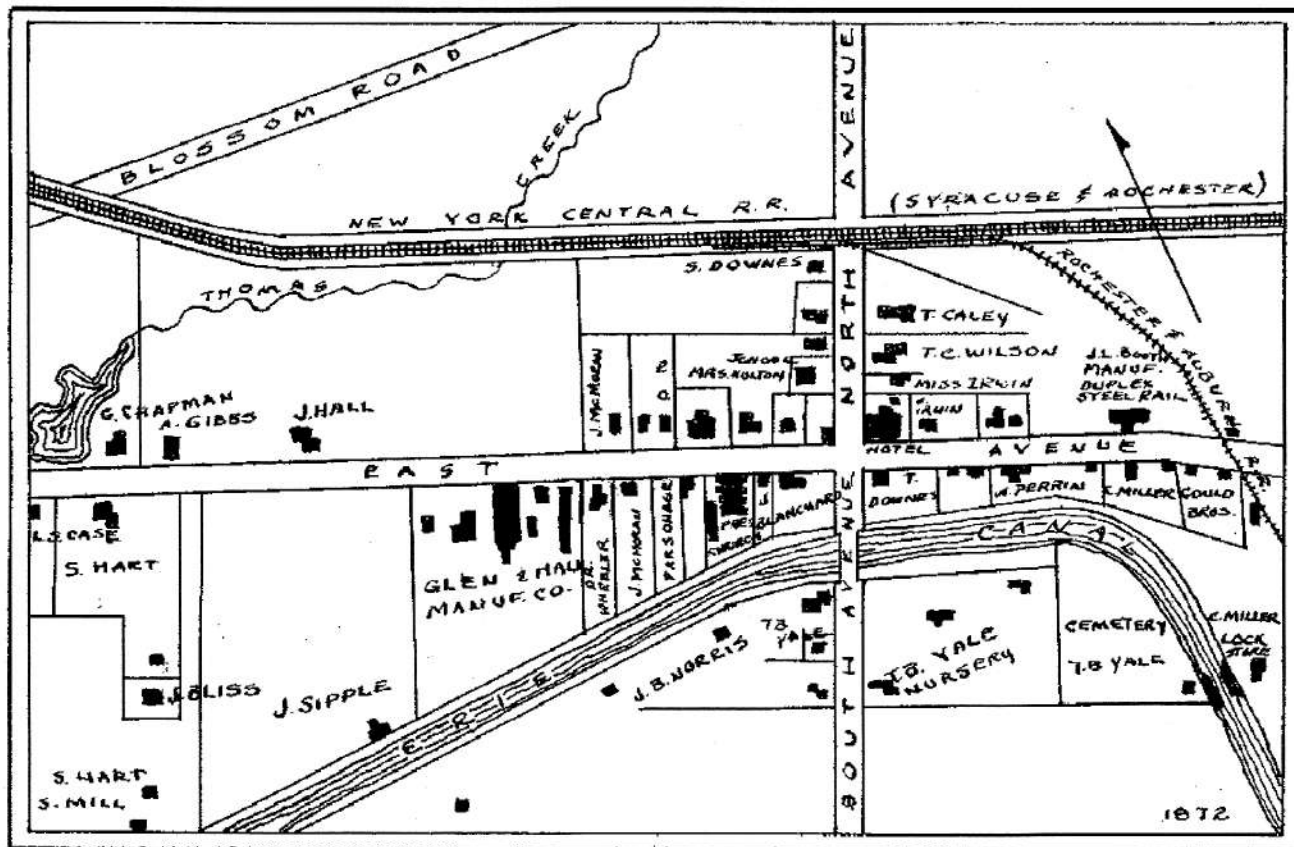
1912: The Municipal Art Commission composed of prominent Rochesterians including George Eastman and Charles Mulford Robinson helped city planners design artistic lampposts. Three results were the double-globed beauties that lined Main Street until 1963, the harp-shaped fixtures on fluted concrete poles, and harp-shaped fixtures clamped to utility poles holding trolley car cables.

1932: A third of streetlights (6,000 out of 18,000) were turned off for three years of the Great Depression.

1950s: Overhead, high-arc mercury vapor lights were installed on expressways and major arterials.

1980s: Rochester Gas and Electric Corp. embarked on a streetlight replacement program.

1872 MAP OF BRIGHTON VILLAGE



Note that Winton Road was called "South Avenue" and "North Avenue" in 1872. It would be renamed later after the Winton automobile. Note too that the Erie Canal bed continues today at Route 490 and 590.

By Betsy Brayer

In 1872, Brighton Village was part of the Town of Brighton. In 2004, Brighton Village in part of the City of Rochester.

Brighton was first a town and then a roaring canal village long before it became a sedate automobile suburb. When an act of the New York State Legislature created the towns of Brighton and Pittsford in 1814, Rochesterville was not much more than Hamlet Scrantom's log cabin, built two years earlier on the site of the present Powers Building. Rochester was a mere 100 acres while the Brighton town boundaries were the Genesee River, Lake Ontario, Penfield to the east, and Henrietta to the south. (In 1839 Irondequoit was set apart from Brighton.)

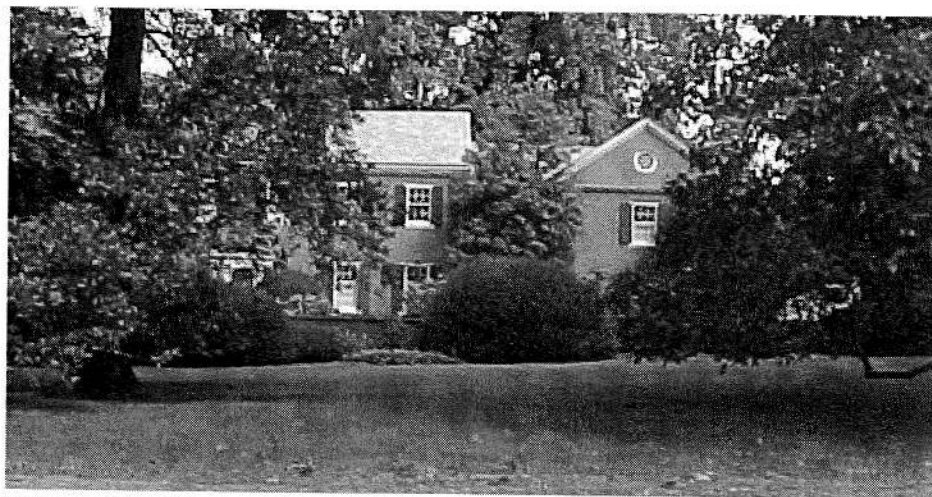
But when, in the 1820s, the Erie Canal bypassed the established settlements of Tryon,

Canandaigua, and Carthage to cross the Genesee at Rochesterville, the future of the area was sealed. As Rochester expanded to the east, it gobbled up parts of Brighton; first, 257 acres adjacent to the Genesee River in 1823, and finally in 1905, Brighton Village.

Because of its nearness to the canal and its accessibility by road to Canandaigua, Brighton Village (incorporated at 640 acres in 1885 and centered at what is today Winton Road and East Avenue) became the hub of Brighton life. While boats were raised or lowered through the three locks, "canawlers" celebrated at the taverns that stood on three of the four corners at the East Avenue-Winton Road intersection.

Residents and businesses in Brighton Village voted in 1905 to become part of Rochester in order to receive city services such as water and sewers.

KEATING HOUSE IS BRIGHTON LANDMARK



Kenneth B. Keating (1900-1975) and his Elmwood Ave. house designed by Brightonian Walter Wiard.

By Betsy Brayer

Ken Keating's mother wrote in his 1900 baby book that his given name was "Scottish—meaning strong, leader of men." A few days before Keating—then U. S. ambassador to Israel—died of a heart ailment in 1975, Henry A. Kissinger, secretary of state, wired him: "Please make haste slowly. I need you in the long run..." Keating's baby book and Kissinger's final telegram are among the thousands upon thousands items of Keating memorabilia at the University of Rochester library.

In his nearly 75 years, Keating became the youngest (at 14) high school student to win a Regents scholarship; the youngest (at 15) student at UR; the youngest (at 19) teacher of Latin and Greek in a Rochester public school (old East High); a prominent Rochester attorney; a colonel in World War II; and later a brigadier general; a congressman for 12 years; a United States senator; an associate justice of the state's highest court; ambassador to India, and, at the end, ambassador to Israel.

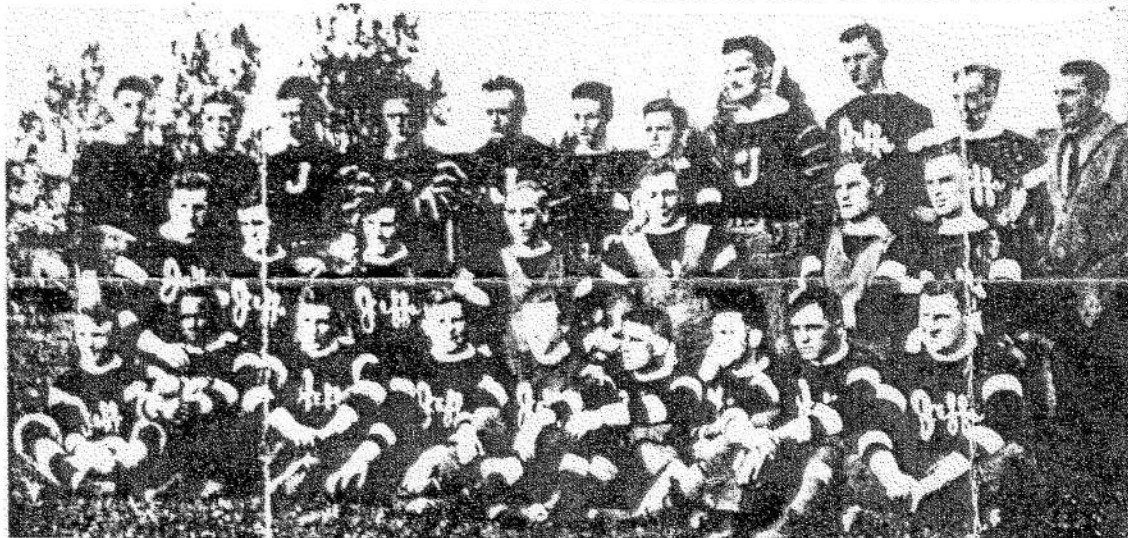
In 1962, Keating played a prominent role in alerting America to the Soviet offensive

missile buildup in Cuba. That buildup later became known as the "Cuban Missile Crisis" and was resolved when the missile bases were dismantled under an agreement reached between President John F. Kennedy and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev.

Keating grew up in East Avon and when he and his wife, the former Louise De Puy, decided to build a house (their second Brighton home), they naturally asked architect Walter Vars Wiard to draw up the plans. Wiard had also grown up in East Avon. Years later, Wiard, who lived on Trevor Court Road in Brighton, recalled that designing the Keating house became the reason he never again accepted a domestic commission. The Keatings could not agree on anything and the plans constantly changed back and forth, depending on who was with the architect. Another Brighton structure that Wiard and partners designed is the First Baptist Church, Clover St. and Allens Creek Rd.

Earlier this year the Brighton Historic Preservation Commission designated the Keating house, based on the prominence of both the senator and the local architect.

PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL WAS PLAYED AT TWELVE CORNERS



The Rochester Jeffs in 1914 at the Twelve Corners field which was next to the family home of Judge James Sheehan. The former football field is now occupied by Rite Aid Pharmacy.

By Betsy Brayer

Ever heard of Sheehan's Field?

How about the Rochester Jeffs?

Or the Pottsville Maroons?

"No" to all of the above? Well, how about the Chicago Bears? Or the Green Bay Packers, Jim Thorpe and the Canton Bulldogs? The Chicago Cardinals? Oh, you've heard of them.

Back before World War I the Sheehan family lived at Twelve Corners, where Rite Aid Pharmacy stands now. Next to the homestead was a muddy and windswept field—Sheehan's Field—home of the Jefferson Football Club. Fans came from miles around, paying 25 cents admission, to watch the legendary Rochester Jeffs play these clubs of the nascent National Football League.

Many of the Jeffs went on to become stars with the teams out of which present-day professional football grew. Once, the team had seven All-Americans on their roster.

The field was prepared by volunteers for Sunday afternoon games. With the aid of

borrowed post hole diggers, wires, and an old Buick, the goal posts were pulled into position and a wire fence stretched around the gridiron to keep excitable fans from surging onto the field at moments of tension. On more than one occasion these precautions went for naught. When fans got really rowdy, Mrs. Daniel Sheehan would appear with a shotgun and halt the melee.

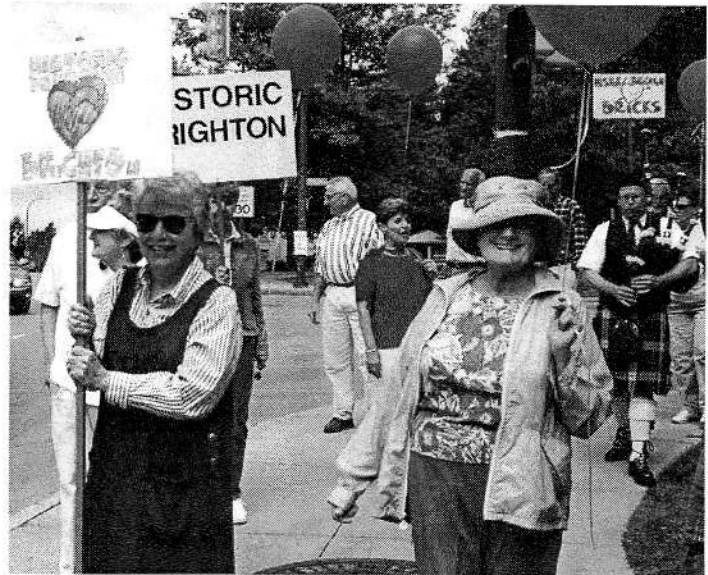
The games as well as the spectators were noted for their ferocity.

Across Monroe Avenue from Sheehan's Field was the Sheehan Hotel which, after changes in ownership, was known to later generations as "The Chateau."

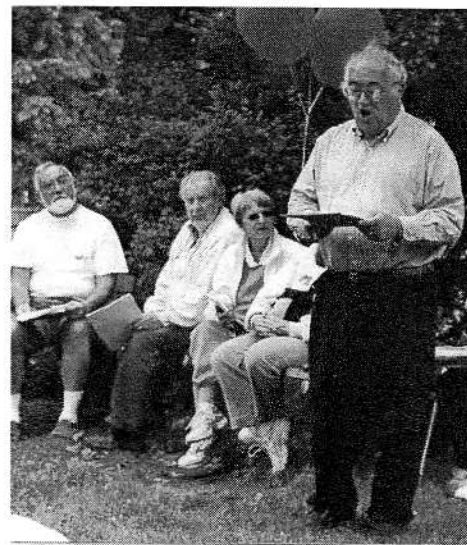
The Jeffs played in Brighton only until 1918, then moved to Exposition Park. In 1924 they were the only team to defeat the Pottsville Maroons. This writer once lived in Pottsville and while the Maroons have gone the ways of the Jeffs, there are old-timers there who still remember the magnificent season of 1925 when Pottsville became national champions. That year, the Jeffs lost.

MEMORIES OF GIDEON COBB DAYS

JUNE 25-27, 2004



8



GIDEON COBB DAYS SUCCESSFUL!

So successful was the three-day celebration known as Gideon Cobb Days that plans are already afoot for a similar celebration next June on the occasion of the pioneer Brightonian's birthday. Next year, 2005, is the centennial of the City of Rochester's annexation of Brighton Village, once the center of the town (see page 7). The focus of the 2005 Gideon Cobb Days will be Brighton Village.

LEA KEMP TO SPEAK OCTOBER 19 AT FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Leatrice (Lea) Kemp has been the librarian/archivist at the Rochester Museum and Science Center for 25 years. Before that, she was a volunteer. She is in charge of all the photos, documents, personal and business archives.

Lea is a graduate of Bryn Mawr College, and holds a Master of Library Science degree from Columbia University. She worked in the library at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and went on to become the reference librarian for a New York City insurance company.