

# HISTORIC BRIGHTON NEWS

VOLUME 8

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NUMBER 2

## 'THE LANDSCAPES OF ALLING DEFOREST'

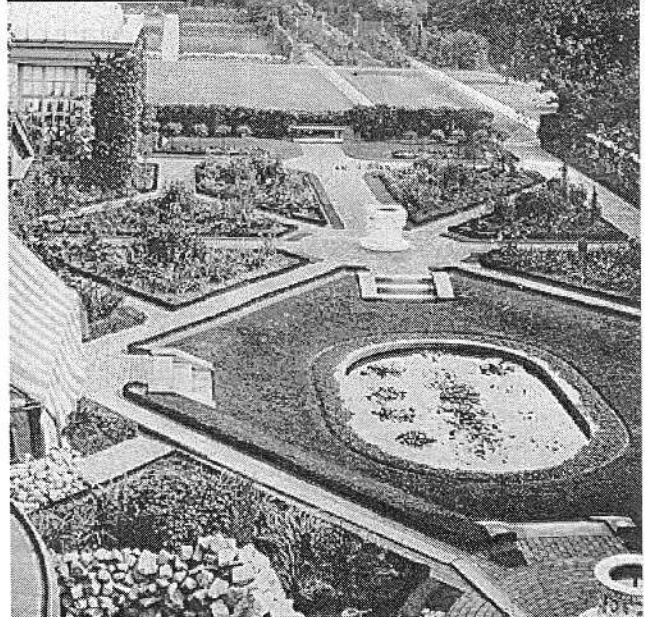
**J**EAN CZERKAS, LANDSCAPE HISTORIAN will present a slide lecture on the life and 50 year career of Alling DeForest at the spring meeting of Historic Brighton, **Tuesday May 1, 7:30 PM at the Brighton Town Hall auditorium.**

Alling Stephen DeForest, FASLA, was a Rochester landscape architect who contributed to the design of landscapes, both public and private, in northeastern United States during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. DeForest's most notable projects, according to Czerkas, were the original landscape at the George Eastman House and the gardens of Harbel Manor, the Akron, Ohio home of Harvey Firestone. Her slides include views of designs for Eastman, Lomb, Bausch, Firestone and other estates, parks, and cemeteries in Rochester and throughout the northeast.

Czerkas is the author of a biography of DeForest included in *Pioneers of American Landscape Design* published by McGraw Hill. She has been a trustee of the Landmark Society of Western New York for many years, is now an honorary trustee and serves on the society's Preservation Issues and Awards committees. Czerkas established the society's Historic Landscape Award that is presented annually for the restoration, preservation, and stewardship of historic landscapes.

Czerkas has extensive knowledge of historic landscapes and the landscape architects who designed them and serves as consultant on the restoration and rehabilitation of DeForest-designed landscapes in the greater Rochester area. The projects include the restoration of the Sunken Garden at Historic Warner Castle in Highland Park. She is a member of the Landscape Committee of the Susan B. Anthony House which is currently coordinating the rehabilitation of the landscape at the Susan B. Anthony House and Visitor and Education Center.

SAVE THE DATES JUNE 29-30 FOR  
GIDEON COBB DAYS!  
SEE PAGE 8 FOR MORE DETAILS

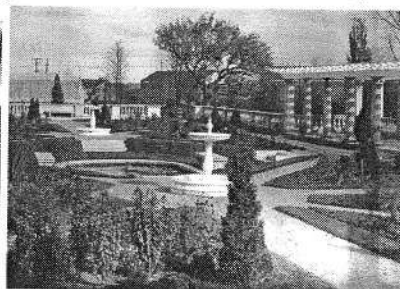
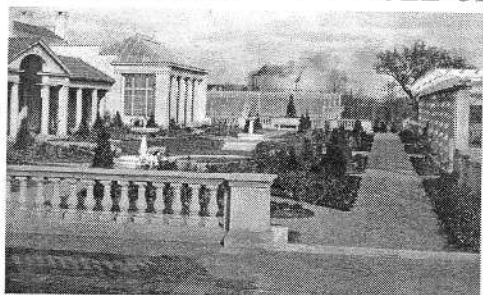


*De Forest's Terrace Garden for George Eastman House is a notable example of the landscape architect's dynamic use of the diagonal in designing a garden.*

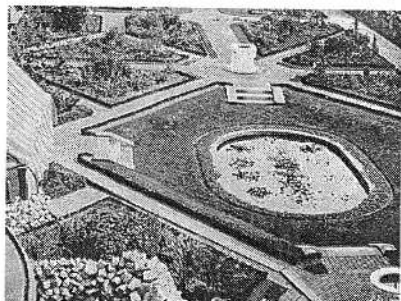
She is a trustee of the Friends of Mt. Hope Cemetery and serves as its archivist. A member of the Town of Irondequoit's Historic Preservation Commission, she was appointed by the mayor and county executive to the Rochester-Monroe County Freedom Trail Commission.

SAVE THE DATE!  
HISTORIC BRIGHTON MEETING  
TUESDAY, MAY 1 AT 7:30 P.M.  
BRIGHTON TOWN HALL AUDITORIUM  
2300 ELMWOOD AVENUE  
"The Landscapes of Alling Deforest"  
Presented by Jean Czerkas, landscape historian

## WHAT ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE LANDSCAPE CLIENT, GEORGE EASTMAN?



*Eastman soon changed DeForest's paths from gravel to brick and his bird baths to well heads*



### THE EASTMAN HOUSE GARDENS *Simplicity and Tranquility*

By Elizabeth Brayer

GEORGE EASTMAN told friends that the chief attributes of his gardens were simplicity and tranquility. The man who had simplified photography for the masses, and the man who sought tranquility from the tumult of business in the great outdoors, insisted that his gardens provide him with both. He wanted gardens for strolling—mornings, before leaving for his office at the Eastman Kodak Company, he could be seen plucking a blossom for a boutonniere or conversing with the chauffeur's children along the paths. He wanted cut flowers, potted plants, and vegetables for the household. And perhaps most important, he wanted a picture-perfect view from key rooms within the house.

In the summer of 1902 Eastman summoned architect J. Foster Warner (1859-1937) and landscape architect Alling Stephen DeForest (1875-1957), handing them his own preliminary sketches locating a house and gardens on the plat of the 8½-acre property he had purchased. As the estate evolved, the gardens would be visible from the bay window of the large living room, from the conservatory (an indoor garden in itself), and, interestingly, from his mother's up stairs bed and sitting rooms. A garden which could be seen from his own second-floor suite and from the billiard room, his favorite first-floor retreat, would not be designed until 1917. George Eastman had inherited his love of gardens from his parents.

In the mid-1840s George Washington Eastman brought his bride Maria Kilbourn to Rochester where he had earlier opened a school of penmanship and bookkeeping. "I find residence in Rochester very pleasant/ Maria wrote, "but I still love the country and

#### THE EASTMAN HOUSE GARDENS:

##### *Simplicity and Tranquility*

BY ELIZABETH BRAYER

GEORGE EASTMAN told friends that the chief attributes of his gardens were simplicity and tranquility. The man who had simplified photography for the masses, and the man who sought tranquility from the tumult of business in the great outdoors, insisted that his gardens provide him with both. He wanted gardens for strolling—mornings, before leaving for his office at the Eastman Kodak Company, he could be seen plucking a blossom for a boutonniere or conversing with the chauffeur's children along the paths. He wanted cut flowers, potted plants, and vegetables for the household. And perhaps most important, he wanted a picture-perfect view from key rooms within the house.

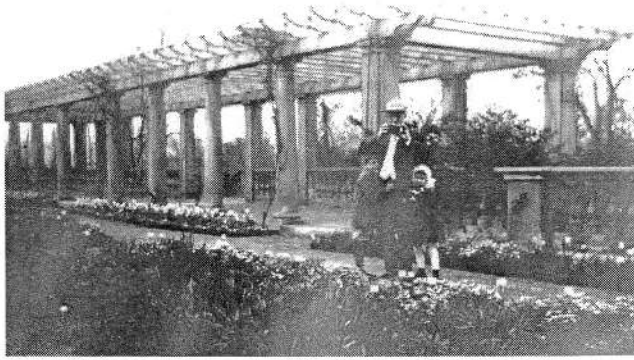
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[1]

*In 1990, the restored Terrace Garden of George Eastman House was dedicated. Excerpts are printed here from one of the two historical commentaries privately printed then for friends, guests, and patrons*



*The original dedication of the Terrace Garden was celebrated in October 1905*



*The Kodak King poses with his Kodak camera and great niece and nephew in the Terrace Garden, 1908*

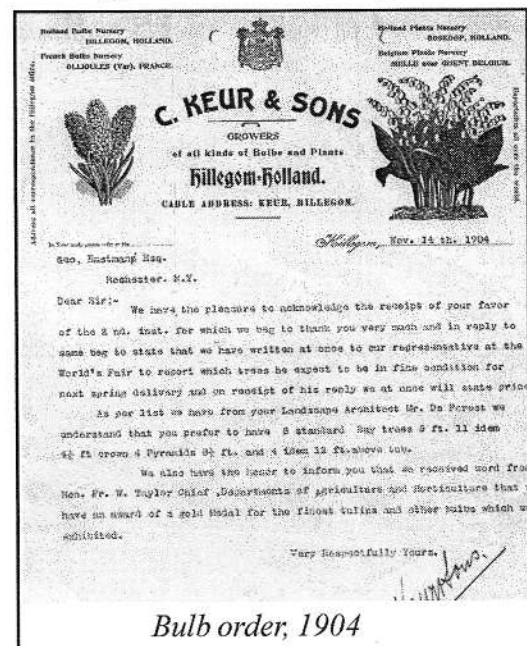
if it were as favorable for my husband's business should prefer living there." The young couple spent their first winter at the Blossom House, "a new and elegant Hotel," but G.W., upon hearing from his country wife that "it would be pleasanter to live more retired," located an English cottage about three quarters of a mile from the centre of the city and purchased a cow. The house sat in the middle of a garden, with flowers and shrubbery on all sides; in the back grew a vegetable garden and fruit trees. Maria planted her favorite flowers—heliotrope and fuchsia—and a slip from a rose bush that had grown on the Kilbourn homestead on Paris Hill, Oneida County.

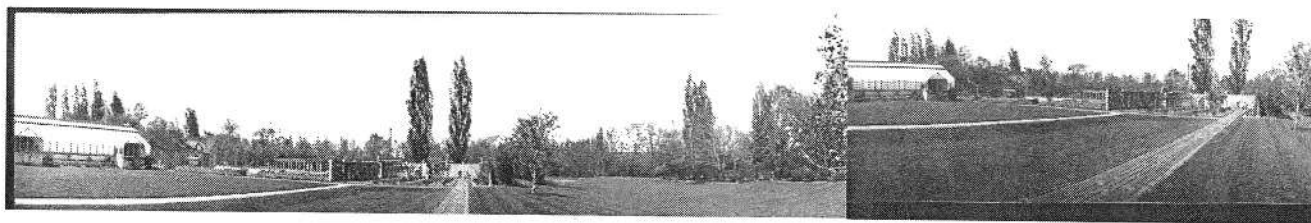
This beloved rose moved with Maria Eastman to each of her next eight homes, many of them modest rented properties, until the bush ended up at 900 East Avenue. It was joined in 1906 by a cutting from a rose bush of ancestor Ebenezer Eastman's which was set out in 1773 in Manchester, New Hampshire, and sent to George Eastman by a distant cousin, Mr. Arthur Colgate. Then in June 1923 a hybrid tea rose named "George Eastman" was developed by the Rochester Parks Department by crossing "Earl of Warwick" with "Constance." Registered with the American Rose Society in 1924, several "George Eastman" bushes also entered the 600-specimen Rose Garden on DeForest's plans. And in 1931, after George Eastman had built a new auditorium for the Waterville Central School in memory of his parents, the editor of the Waterville Times sent him some *Daphne Cneorum* and other shrubs from "your father's old Waterville farm."

Maria Eastman did not get over her early homesickness and about 1849 she and daughter Ellen moved back to Oneida County to a house in the village of

Waterville situated on thirty acres of roses and fruit trees. Thus when George Eastman was born in 1854, his ambitious father was living in Rochester as the president of the fledgling Eastman's Commercial College and commuting weekends and summers to Waterville, 120 miles east, to tend his nursery business. George Eastman's most vivid childhood memories were of incidents involving the gardeners or involving a rake his father brought him from Rochester. The Waterville Times featured articles about "the choice budding plants from the nursery grounds of Mr. George W. Eastman. . . . We never witnessed so large a collection of prize winners. . . . His success in the cultivation of ever-blooming flowers is a matter of surprise to some, who do not know the secret. . . . Mr. Eastman will be able to throw into market this fall about 40,000 fruit trees." At the agriculture fair started by George Eastman's grandfather, Harvey Eastman of Marshall, Eastman's father took prizes for the best display of flowers, the best bouquet of roses, and the best pears. And when G.W. Eastman advertised, he waxed poetic: "Every family should cultivate flowers, if only to gratify children, and watch their joyous faces as they gaze with unfeigned delight upon these beautiful creations of Nature."

In 1860 the Eastmans, now a family of five, sold the Waterville house and nursery and returned to Rochester to live. Then on 27 April 1862, George Washington Eastman died; son George was only seven but his father had already passed along his love of and rapport with flowers and gardens.





Thirty years later, in October 1890, ground was broken for “a boulevard plant” to make film on Lake Avenue. The M.I.T. engineer in charge of construction also received these landscaping instructions from his employer:

*AMPELOPSIS VEITCHII: Obtain quotations from the principal florists for planting this ivy around our buildings and fence. Bring a plan up to my office and I will mark in blue pencil where the plants are to go. It will require a good many hundred plants and the contractor is to place them in holes of suitable size which you must determine beforehand, filled with good rich earth and manure. . . .*

Surveying the finished factory, Mr. Eastman was quite pleased. “It looks very neat and clean. The buildings sit in the center of a field of grass and flowers of about fourteen acres.” Three years later the Boulevard Plant was officially renamed Kodak Park, one of the first such industrial “parks.”

Kodak Park was not the only park that Eastman provided for Rochesterians. He was acutely sensitive to the proliferation of greenery in this city of many nurseries. At the time he took up photography, 1877, he lived near Jones Park, an urban showpiece with its annual display of spring bulbs and dazzling annuals. That same year, as a bank clerk who painted as a hobby, he exulted over the sylvan glade called Grove Street (near where the Eastman Theatre would one day stand) as a subject for his new hobby—photography.

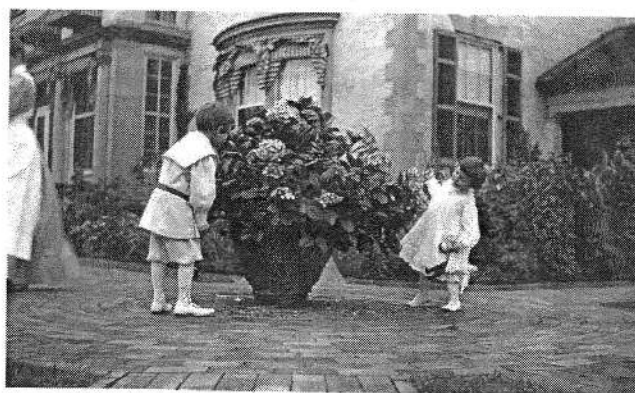
In 1905, Bishop Bernard McQuaid, whose diocesan residence abutted Kodak Office, persuaded Eastman to buy and donate land which would enlarge Maplewood Park. In 1906, Eastman contracted with another friend, Dr. Henry Strong Durand, to provide the city with a new park on Lake Ontario. Durand donated 250 acres of his own land and Eastman contributed \$50,000 to purchase 200 acres of adjoining land. In 1908, Alice Peck Curtis prevailed upon him

to buy property (again for \$50,000) between the city’s new reservoir atop Cobbs Hill and the Widewaters of the Erie Canal, thus making a single tract known as Cobbs Hill Park.

Ø

Like his mother, George Eastman yearned to be surrounded by greenery and flowers. Returning once from a trip to the Grand Canyon and the Painted Desert, and having surveyed Death Valley from Mount Whitney, he wrote: “There is a feeling of awesomeness about the desert which is repelling to me. I like better the country where things grow.”

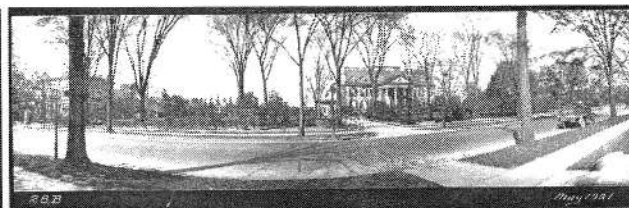
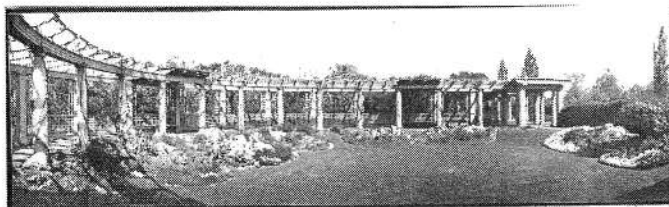
Although architectural plans for a house for Eastman were drawn in the 1890s, he was unable to find a lot large enough for his gardening ambitions and so bought an existing East Avenue property, the Soule house.



*Grandnephew George Eastman Dryden and “Sister” Ellen Maria cavort around the hydrangeas while Uncle George snaps the shutter*

Here was room for flowers, vegetables, and the thousands of bulbs he imported annually after cycling through Holland one spring. And, “there is a barn for three cows. I mention these,” he wrote, “because they fill a long felt want. The only thing it lacks is a greenhouse and when we pay big dividends again I will build one.” Now the local florist no longer needed to supply fresh cut flowers twice each week to the Eastmans’ rented houses; instead he planted and tended the flower boxes which ringed the sweeping veranda of the Soule house.

“To help my landscape gardener [from Kodak



Panoramic views of the Eastman gardens were possible after the introduction of the Panoram Kodak camera in 1904.

Park] lay out the East Avenue grounds," Eastman contacted the superintendent of Central Park in New York City. He took the day off from work when Samuel Parsons came on 4 November 1894; Parsons subsequently agreed to "make a plan for planting out my homestead grounds." Pleased by the result, Eastman asked Parsons to "save half a day to rearrange [the now 16 ½-acre grounds at] Kodak Park."

Plant stock came from Rochester's justly famous Ellwanger & Barry nursery, which specialized in rare and exotic plantings as well as shade trees, especially elms, a particular favorite of East Avenue residents since the 1850s. "I grow principally roses, carnations, chrysanthemums, sweet peas, the usual run of spring bulbs, and a few orchids," Eastman told candidates for the position of head gardener.

Kodak dividends were big again in 1898 and so the primary deficiency of the Soule estate was alleviated by J. Foster Warner who drew plans for five greenhouses designated for plants, roses, fruit, forcing, and propagation. A "winter room" was also added for Eastman's new hobby—orchids.

Ø

"I had to have more room for my cows," the gentleman farmer explained in 1902 when asked why he had purchased "the last remnant of a farm within city limits" at 350 (now 900) East Avenue. From the bay of the living room, from Maria Eastman's bedroom, or standing in the Terrace Garden itself, the spectator's eye was led down a long vista criss-crossed with gravel paths. Triangular flower beds between the paths were planted with a brilliant show of bulbs—"Just now the garden is ablaze with Darwin tulips," Eastman wrote early one June—followed by a summer show of perennials

The Terrace Garden, a formal outdoor court, is enclosed on two sides by the L-shaped house and on the other two by a colonnaded pergola and stone balustrade. The central feature was a sunken oval pool which could be approached by descending granite steps on each of its four sides. The pool was not vis-

ible from the living room; indeed that north-south view was intercepted originally by two fountains resembling traditional birdbaths. Originally stocked with goldfish sent by William Hall Walker, Eastman's photographic partner since 1884, the temperature of the pool was kept equable by steam pipes. This "permits," *Town & Country* magazine noted in 1914, "night and day blooming water lilies of various colors, including one, a magnificent blue."

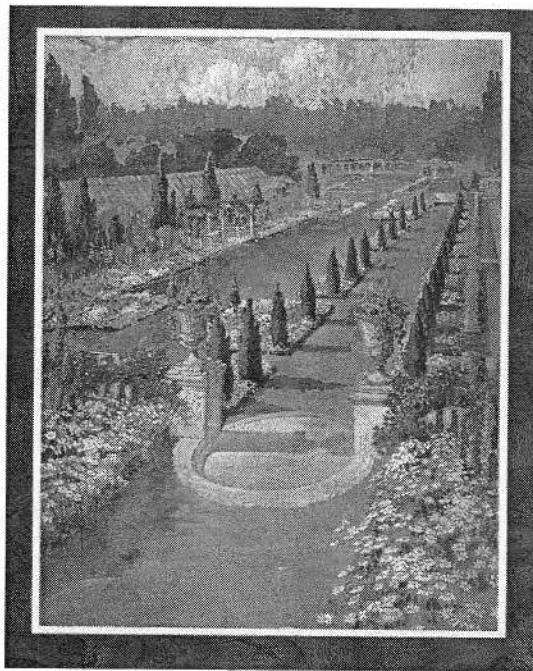
That was how DeForest had planned it and, by 1905, planted it. But almost immediately Eastman began tinkering with house and garden. He soon replaced the gravel paths with more formal brick walks, because, he explained, the gravel had to be constantly raked when disturbed by footsteps. New fountains were made of two antique well-heads from an unknown Venetian palace. With these changes there is a more massive ambience to the Eastman gardens than DeForest had envisioned. And what is the modern commentator to make of planting plans that highlight red, yellow, and white blooms? Is the featuring of Kodak colors deliberate?

The east-west axis across the lily pool coincides with a bay in the latticed walkway that connects the dining room to the palm house (today called the solarium) and greenhouses that lay beyond. In that bay Eastman liked to stage intimate summer dinners, the gardens softly lit with Roman torches and a string quartet sequestered out of sight. East of the pool on the same axis is a colonnaded pergola to which a larger dinner party might expand. (University president Alan Valentine, whose family lived in the house from 1935 to 1947, used this detached pergola for commencement luncheons.) "The covered walk that connects house with greenhouses is open to the garden in summer and enclosed by glass in winter, Eastman told *Town & Country*, "thus protecting the [rare forms of] English ivy which cover the walls and ceiling." The magazine writer saw in Eastman's residence and gardens an engaging quality of old world grace. Furthermore, "the plan of the property has been so contrived as to



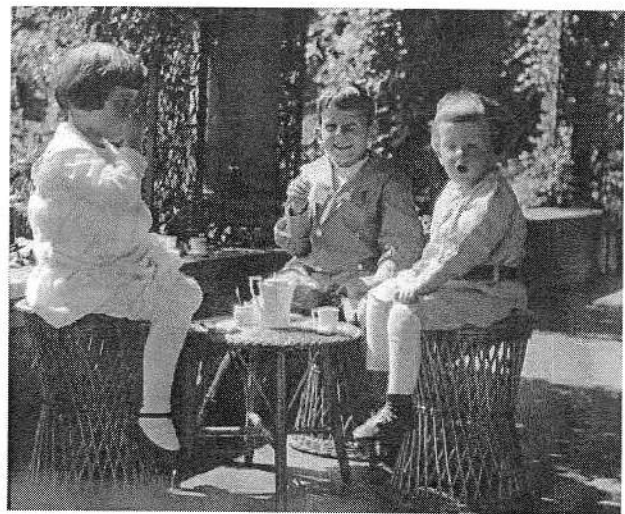
*Claude Bragdon's sunken garden was replanted by DeForest in 1921*

6 make the most of the site" in that the house was situated to one side allowing all of the land east of the formal gardens to remain an undisturbed vista of open lawn bordered by shrubs from East to University Avenues. It was here, perhaps, that the legendary croquet games of certain memories were staged, and it was here, Kodak snapshots attest, that grand nieces and nephews and their friends and nannies cavorted from carriage days on.



*The Cutting Garden off of the Terrace Garden was painted in gouache in 1921 by Rochester's premier architectural artist and delineator, John C. Wenrich*

*Right: an old apple tree of the Marvin Culver farm formed the corner anchor of the Terrace Garden*



*Watson Newhall joins George Eastman Dryden and Ellen Maria Dryden for a picnic lunch*

### **Historic Brighton address**

P.O. Box 18525

Website: [www.historicbrighton.org](http://www.historicbrighton.org)

### **Historic Brighton officers and board**

Founded 1999

*Sheldon Brayer, President*

*Janet Hopkin, Secretary*

*Rome Celli, Treasurer*

*Arlene A. Wright, Nominating chair*

*Elizabeth Brayer*

*Leo Dodd*

*Richard Dollinger*

*Suzanne Donahue*

*Monica Gilligan*

*Sally Harper*

*Hannelore Heyer*

*Beth Keigher*

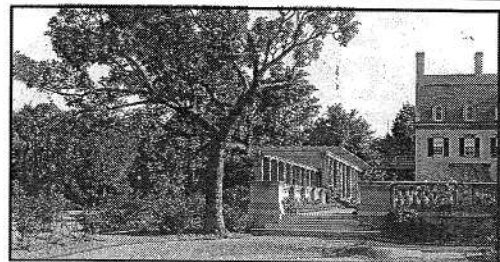
*Josie Leyens*

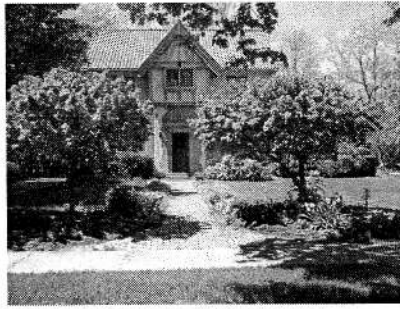
*Ron Richardson*

*Dee Dee Teegarden*

*Call Betsy Brayer at 244-0402 to contribute articles or letters*

*Mary Jo Lanphear, Town of Brighton Historian*





## LANDMARK SOCIETY HOUSE AND GARDEN TOUR OF *Brighton's First Subdivision, June 2 & 3*

MARK THE CALENDAR FOR THE 2007 LANDMARK SOCIETY TOUR of one of Brighton's most charming historic neighborhoods. Visitors will enjoy meandering down the broad, curving streets of Brighton's first subdivision – a compact neighborhood featuring an unusual variety of architectural styles unified by handsome stone posts and street markers, huge shade trees, and period street lighting. Home Acres is a tight-knit, family-oriented neighborhood

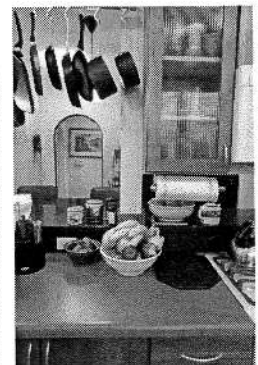
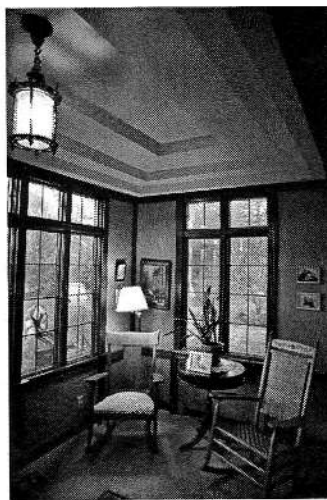
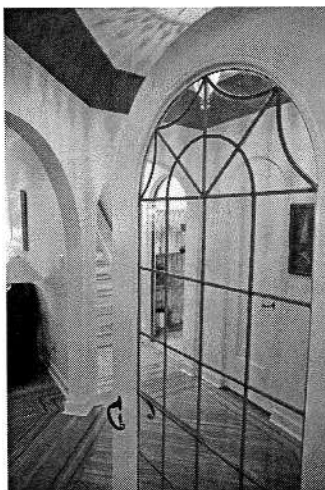
THIS YEAR'S TOUR features at least eight handpicked homes, all fine examples of good stewardship. From handsome Tudor and Colonial revival-style houses to a rare English Regency Revival and a Prairie-style house, every stop on the 2007 tour is unique. Visitors will enjoy historic elements, like dentil molding, stained glass, ornate wood and ceiling carvings, and beautiful hard wood floors and trim.

IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE HOUSE TOUR, a luncheon at Pomodoro Grill and Wine Bar provides an opportunity to relax and refresh. The contemporary restaurant is housed in what was originally built as a blade factory for Huther Brothers, Inc. in 1906. The exposed brick and massive timbers of this attractive interior demonstrate the advantages in adaptive reuse of historic buildings.

BEFORE THE TOUR, on Thursday, May 31 at 7:30 p.m., Architectural Historian Jean France presents a slide show and lecture on the history and styles of house in the Home Acres neighborhood. This free presentation is held at the Memorial Art Gallery, 500 University Avenue.

THE TOUR IS SELF-GUIDED and sites can be visited in any order. The tour ticket is a 40-page booklet with descriptions of each of the stops, a neighborhood history and a map. The booklet allows entrance to all houses and gardens either day.

FOR MORE DETAILS AND TO PURCHASE ADVANCE TICKETS, check the web at [www.landmarksociety.org](http://www.landmarksociety.org) or call 585-546-7029 x 10.



Photos by Jeff Freeland

# **HISTORIC BRIGHTON**

## **GIDEON COBB DAYS 2007**

FRIDAY, JUNE 29<sup>TH</sup>

SATURDAY, JUNE 30<sup>TH</sup>

A CELEBRATION OF THE HISTORIC BUCKLAND HOUSE RECONSTRUCTION  
1341 WESTFALL ROAD, BRIGHTON, NEW YORK

### **FRIDAY NOON JUNE 29<sup>TH</sup>**

#### **HISTORIAN'S LUNCHEON & LECTURE:**

A box lunch will be served at the New Buckland Lodge.  
The "Lodge at Buckland" is located within the Park complex  
1341 Westfall Road.

**SPEAKER: GARY LEHMANN**

Historian, Local Activist, Poet, Teacher, Penfield resident.

Gary Lehmann teaches writing and poetry at the Rochester Institute of Technology and was past president the Penfield Heritage Association. Gary is equipping the shoemakers' shop at the Genesee Country Museum with period equipment. He owned and completely renovated, 1980-1997, the historic mud house at 992 Whalen Road. This 1,824-square-foot, two-story house of 1835 is the only mud house in New York State with its original exterior intact.

*Gary Lehmann will discuss the importance of local history as illustrated by the artifacts found at the Buckland Farmstead (1820-2007)*

### **SATURDAY, JUNE 30<sup>TH</sup> 9:30-3:30**

Explore newly refurbished Buckland Farm House, Buckland Farm Land, and West Brighton area

Buckland Farmstead 1341 Westfall Road

Several events will be in progress during the day on the property: tours of the newly renovated historic farm house will proceed all day; found artifacts will be displayed and explained. Walks to view and explain the farmstead operation and barn structures will be held. An archeological dig will be in progress and participation will be encouraged. Songs and music will fill the air. History to be found in house, barns and land.

A 45-minute bus tour of the Westfall neighborhood will operate on the hour during the day.

*YOUR GREAT CHANCE TO UNDERSTAND THE HISTORY OF THE BUCKLAND FARMSTEAD!*