



HISTORIC BRIGHTON NEWS

Volume 11

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Number 4

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

Cruise the Erie Canal Aboard the Mary Jemison With Historic Brighton October 2nd, 2010 2-5PM (Boarding at 1:30PM) Sailing from Corn Hill Landing

Exchange Blvd at Plymouth Avenue South

*Victoria Schmitt will speak on the Past History and Present Development of the
Erie/Barge Canal and its Genesee Arm*

*Brett Costello will present 'Rochester's Mile of the Erie Canal: Public and
Private Interests Spark Economic Development'*

- Reservations Required by September 27th, 2010 -

Cruise - \$15 members/\$20 guests/\$5 children under 16

Ploughman's Lunch - \$5

Come sail the historic Erie Canal and experience travel from a bygone era. A relaxing ride on smooth water is promised as you float along on this extended voyage from Corn Hill Landing in downtown Rochester to the Edgewood Avenue Lock 33 and back. Experience the Rochester skyline, the University of Rochester campus, Genesee Valley Park, Monroe Community Hospital and other sights in Rochester and Brighton from the water.

Available for pre-order is the Ploughman's Lunch, a 19th C. simple farm lunch that could be brought to the fields and remain fresh and unspoiled throughout the day. Served by the Landmark Society at the Stone-Tolan Fair for many years, the Ploughman's Lunch is mentioned in 18th C. British literature, so it goes back much earlier than our region even existed.

The Ploughman's Lunch consists of a brown lunch bag containing:

- 4 one-ounce cubes of (Muenster, Swiss, Sharp Cheddar or Havarti) cheese
- A large beautiful local apple
- A thick slice of fresh crusty bread in plastic wrap.
- Napkin

Legal beverages, cider, and soda will be available for purchase.

Dress for the weather, and bring a jacket - as it may be cooler on the water!

The Erie Canal: Its History and Importance to the Town of Brighton

By Mary Jo Lanphear — Brighton Town Historian

Perhaps author Herman Melville wrote the best description: "For three hundred and sixty miles, through the entire breadth of the state of New York; through numerous populous cities and most thriving villages; through long, dismal, uninhabited swamps, and affluent, cultivated fields, unrivaled for fertility; by billiard-room and bar-room; through the holy-of-holies of great forests; on Roman arches over Indian rivers; through sun and shade; by happy hearts and broken; through all the wide contrasting scenery of those noble Mohawk counties; and especially, by rows of snow-white chapels whose spires stand almost like milestones, flows one continual stream of Venetian...life."

The dream of a canal across New York State did not begin with DeWitt Clinton in the early nineteenth century. As early as 1724 a survey was begun to determine a possible water route from Albany to Lake Ontario, and in 1766 a water passage was constructed between the

2 Mohawk River and Wood Creek utilizing the primitive method of sluicing to raise and lower boats from one level to another.

After the Revolutionary War, in 1783, President Washington assigned Christopher Colles to execute a complete survey of a possible water route. In 1791 Governor George Clinton ordered more surveys and in 1806 the first Canal Law was passed by the State Legislature. As a result of this law, the State appealed to the federal government for funding, but President Jefferson considered the plan a physical impossibility and its advocates a hundred years ahead of their time.

With the exception of a "government lock" at each end of the canal and some Works Progress Administration maintenance in the 1930s, the canal has remained a New York State-funded project.

Geneva businessman, Jesse Hawley, in debtors' prison in Canandaigua in 1807, wrote fourteen essays later published in the *Genesee Messenger* in which he advocated for the building of a statewide canal and laid out detailed plans for its route. He envisioned a water route from New York City to Buffalo and from Buffalo to Chicago, a distance of 1660 miles.

Delayed by the War of 1812, Governor DeWitt Clinton could not appoint canal commissioners until 1816. The legislative bill that authorized the project and the funds to build it became law on April 15, 1817. Construction began at Rome on July 4, 1817 with the roar of artillery and a great crowd of people. Rome was selected because the area was flat and afforded the easiest site for digging. Substantial progress made in the easy sections would make it more difficult for bureaucrats to come along and halt the project.

Because mules couldn't pull packet boats against river currents, the canal did not make use of natural waterways and was entirely hand-dug. It also used Lake Erie as its water source instead of Lake Ontario because the latter was in British control at the time the plans were made.

Construction was done one section at a time. As they were completed, unconnected sections were flooded with water and opened for use. Thus the canal was in use through the towns of Brighton and Pittsford three years before its completion. Forty feet wide and four feet deep, the canal stretched 363 miles across the State with 83 single locks. The total cost of

construction was \$7,143,789.00. It is said that the men of New York State built, "The longest canal in the world, in the least time, with the least experience, for the least money, and to the greatest public benefit."

The grand opening celebration in October of 1825 was highlighted by Governor DeWitt Clinton's ten-day trip from Buffalo to New York City on the packet boat "Seneca Chief," carrying a keg of Lake Erie water that he poured into the Atlantic Ocean upon arrival.

When construction of the canal began, ninety per cent of the land along its route was undeveloped. Land sales increased dramatically during the building of the canal. Residents found prosperity in the demand for labor, teamsters, horses and oxen, animal feed, blacksmithing services, and human provisions. More important than this short-term boon was the lasting improvement in the economic position of the area.

The cost of shipping freight from Buffalo to New York City dropped from \$100 per ton to \$12.00 when the canal was completed. Flour mills in Rochester along the Genesee produced 240,000 barrels of flour in 1831, not including the product of mills in nearby towns. This flour earned the premium price of thirty-seven and one-half cents a barrel at New York City.

3 Brighton's proximity to the canal provided easy access to markets for its agricultural products. Wheat and other grain products (in milled or distilled form), gypsum (refined into a plaster fertilizer), lumber, wool, and bricks were shipped from Brighton farmers and manufacturers. Brighton Village thrived as a stopover for canalers, providing travelers, boat crews, and horses with food and liquid refreshment. Taverns were located on all four corners of the village intersection.

Repair facilities such as Thomas Caley's blacksmith shop shod the horses that pulled the boats, mended boat fittings, and made anchors. Ironically, the same canal that brought prosperity to the village in the 1830s was responsible for the decline of the village in the 1890s, resulting in the annexation of the village by the city of Rochester.

The Erie Canal was improved from 1835 to 1862, widened and deepened to accommodate larger boats. This necessitated the demolition of almost all the original structures. One of the locks located near Brighton village was a product of the reconstruction period and is still visible as one travels west on Interstate 490 between Winton and Culver Roads.

The New York State Barge Canal System, constructed between 1905 and 1918, is the third incarnation of the old Erie and includes the Seneca-Cayuga, Oswego, and Champlain canals. Although the reconfiguring of the Erie Canal from its original pathway through Brighton and the city of Rochester to its present site to the south resulted in increased width and depth, it did not change the name. The Erie Canal is part of the Barge Canal System, and retains its original identity within that system.

Its commercial functions usurped by trains, trucks, and planes, the canal system can now serve the state as its European counterparts do by providing recreational opportunities for residents and tourists. Although Brighton has lost its connection to the old Erie Canal, its location along the newer section will enable the Town to participate in the new life envisioned for this 185-year-old linear landmark. □

George Herdle Loved to Paint the Canal

By Betsy Brayer

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The Canal Boat, ca. 1915



George Leonard Herdle

George Herdle was a Rochester artist who loved to paint the Erie Canal as it wended its way through Brighton. His working method was to sketch a scene on the spot, then do a finished painting in the studio.

Herdle was for years the president of the Rochester Art Club, a group founded in 1875 that engaged in outdoor sketching and painting excursions. From 1915 until his untimely death in 1922, Herdle was the founding director of the Memorial Art Gallery.

The elliptical logo Historic Brighton uses for its newsletter, stationery, and website is a detail of one of Herdle's canal paintings and is used with the permission of the Memorial Art Gallery. *The Canal Boat* was painted ca. 1915 and is believed to represent a scene along the Erie Canal.

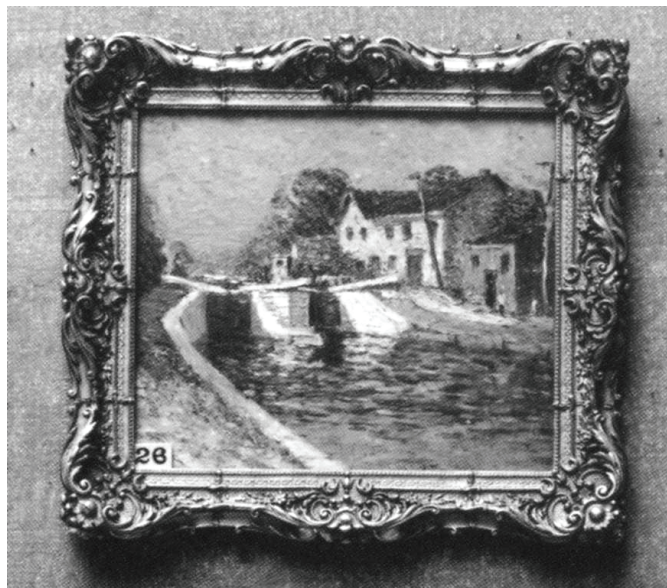
The Erie Canal was dug through Brighton in the early 1820s. Brighton Village was a

major port on the Erie Canal and within walking distance there were five locks. The canal came in from Pittsford to the south and ran parallel to Monroe Ave. (behind the Spring House Inn, whose present back faced the canal). The bed of the canal then turned north where route 590 now exists, then west at Brighton Village (East Avenue and Winton Road) to follow what is now route 490 into Rochesterville, where it crossed the Genesee River by an aqueduct constructed between 1820 and 1825, just north of the present Broad Street Bridge. Originally the locks were wooden, then brick, and finally stone.

On old maps there are two canal locks in Brighton, according to Mary Jo Lanphear, Brighton town historian. One was just west of Brighton Village, along today's 490; the remnants of its stone walls still stand. (As far west as Culver Rd. was part of Brighton until 1905.) The other lock was south and east, along today's 590, just at the corner of the old Brighton cemetery.



The Lock at Brighton



The Lock at Brighton in the George Herdle Memorial Exhibition of 1922.

5 There were two bridges over the canal in Brighton, according to the *Centennial History of Rochester*, published in 1954 by the Rochester Historical Society. An “overhead” bridge described as “lattice pony truss” was at Highland Avenue and a hydraulic lift bridge of heavy cast iron at Winton Rd. There was no lock at Highland, and there appears to be no lock in *The Canal Boat*, ca. 1915.



George Herdle, painter

The present canal, which bypasses downtown Rochester and has locks at Clover St. and Edgewood Ave. in Brighton, did not open until 1919. One of these locks may have been the subject of the

Herdle painting named *The Lock at Brighton*. Isabel Herdle remembers her father rushing home one day, but instead of staying for lunch, he grabbed his paints and went off with the words: “I’ve just heard they are going to tear down the picturesque buildings by the canal. I have to paint them first!” And so he did.

Born in Rochester in 1868, George Herdle grew up in Rochester’s German-American community which occupied an area roughly bounded by Lake Avenue to the west, Bay Road to the east, Atlantic Avenue, Main Street to the south, and Lake Ontario to the north. It was a tight little world of sausage shops, bakeries, singing clubs, marching bands, and Catholic parochial schools or instruction in German in Lutheran schools.

When Herdle was twelve, a larger boy pounced upon him, so injuring his back that he spent the next year in the Homeopathic (later Genesee) Hospital. His physician brought him paints and paper to ward off boredom, and by the end of that long year, George was turning out charming portraits of his doctors and nurses. From that time on, he never wanted to be anything but a painter.

Married to Elizabeth Bachman in 1890, Herdle turned to commercial art for a local shoe factory during the Panic of 1893, a major nationwide depression. But his wife urged him to return to painting and the family subsisted thereafter by barter—paintings by George Herdle for oriental rugs and the care of his children's teeth and tonsils.

In 1899 Herdle, fellow Rochester artist Charles Gruppe, and their families left for two years in Europe. Herdle studied in Paris, Amsterdam, and Düsseldorf and painted in the fishing village of Katwijk aan Zee. In Holland, Herdle painted cows to exchange with farmers for milk for his daughter Gertrude, born in 1896. Gertrude would become the Memorial Art Gallery's second director, from 1922 to 1962.



George Herdle at his director's desk in the Memorial Art Gallery

(outdoors). Later they also had studio space on the third or top floor of the Rochester Savings Bank, corner of Fitzhugh and Main Streets. In the early twentieth century the club was looking for a permanent home and the founding of the Memorial Art Gallery with Herdle as director was like manna from heaven. Each year thereafter the Rochester Art Club had a juried exhibition at the gallery that evolved in the Rochester Finger Lakes Exhibition in the 1940s.)



The Rochester Art Club

Returning home, Herdle taught at the Rochester Athenaeum and Mechanics Institute (now RIT) and exhibited his impressionistic landscapes at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D. C., the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia, the National Academy of Design in New York, and the New York Watercolor Society. In 1902 he became president of the art club, a position he held until his death. (The Rochester Art Club, founded in 1872, was at first an informal group of artists who painted *en plein aire*



A Herdle canal painting.



Emily Sibley Watson

In 1908 Herdle brought an exhibition of French Impressionists—Monet, Pissaro, Renoir, Sisley, and others—to provincial Rochester. People left clucking in bewilderment. Herdle was about to lose his shirt when art collector Emily Sibley Watson, daughter of Western Union mogul Hiram Sibley, heard of his

7 plight, and bailed him out by paying the transportation costs. She further asked to be notified of other avant-garde shows Herdle might organize. When, in 1912, Mrs. Watson decided to establish the Memorial Art Gallery, Herdle was her logical choice for director.

In his nine years as director, Herdle and his staff of four organized an incredible 160 exhibitions for the Memorial Art Gallery and the citizens of Rochester and beyond. His own paintings include landscapes and seascapes from his three-year sojourn in Holland.

“He especially loved the shape of windmills,” said Isabel Herdle, who served as the gallery’s assistant and associate director from 1932 to 1972 and as curator emeritus for the rest of her life.

He also obviously loved the canals of Holland and Brighton. □

This article was adapted from one that appeared in the first issue of Historic Brighton News, published during the summer of 2000.



Gertrude Herdle Moore was director of the Memorial Art Gallery for 40 years, her sister Isabelle C. Herdle served in various curatorial roles during the same period, and Susan Eisenhart (Schilling) who lived in a landmark house in Brighton was director of education.



The new South Avenue Bridge over the Erie Canal in Brighton. It replaced an earlier, wooden one. South Avenue was later renamed Winton Road. Picture caption: South Ave. Bridge, Brighton. Chap. 618, Laws of 1898. Source: Photographs, Rochester scenes, c 1897-1906, v. 5.



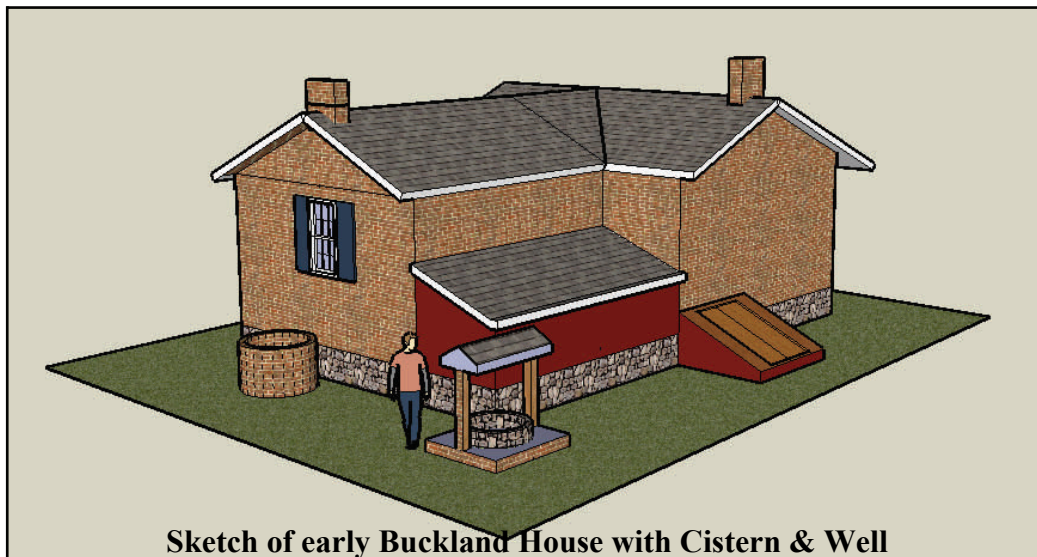
Brighton Farms Water Collection Methods

By Leo Dodd



Establishing a useable water supply on the Brighton farms of Westfall Road is documented in the Diaries of James Edmunds (1871-1899) and in the land excavations of the properties of Buckland (1314 Westfall Road) and Blaker-Hartley (1149 Westfall Road). Fresh, clean, uncontaminated water required for family cooking, washing and personal hygiene was a constant concern on the farm. Wells dried up or became contaminated with salts and contained minerals that made it difficult to wash with the water.

8



Clean water coming from Hemlock Lake to the Highland Reservoir passed in steel riveted pipe ten feet below the surface of Pinnacle Road or Clinton Avenue as it was later named. Water was piped across Westfall Road in front of the Edmunds farm but not available to the farms of Westfall in the 1800's of Brighton.

So a variety of sources were engineered to supply water needs. For washing clothes in the winter months the Edmunds family collected and melted snow in large kettles. a task for several men every Monday. A common diary entry read as follows:

Jan. 21, 1885... *"Melted snow and helped the women wash."*

Rain water was collected from roof tops and stored in a large hand constructed container called a cistern. The Edmunds notes relate a 1874 cistern construction of stone walls plastered inside for water storage. Water was moved by a hand pump placed by the kitchen sink from cistern storage in the basement to sink in the kitchen.

Diary Entry:

May 3, 1893,... *"I finished plastering the sides of the Cistern."*

June 22, 1893... *"Got a Cistern Pump."*

The Buckland house has a cistern today in the basement of the third addition on the west side of the house, under the meeting room. Evidence of several wells lined with stone wall were unearthed during the Buckland Park development. There was a well by the house and two wells by the barns.

The Edmunds diaries state that "The Well ran dry" in an entry on April 8, 1888.

Diary Entry about Well construction:

1875 Dec. 24, "Finished digging and commenced to stone well"

1875 Dec. 27, "Monday..Helped stone Well. drew stone. Billy helped tend windlass"

1875 Dec. 28, "Tuesday..Finished stoning well"

9

The well on the Stone-Tolan property shown below is an example of typical water supply construction. A hand dug well, lined with field stone capped with a cement-stone platform supporting a wood cover to maintain cleanliness and a water bucket lift post.



These hand dug wells were difficult and dangerous to construct. The clay soil was dug within a five foot diameter hole to a depth of twenty or thirty feet in the Westfall soil. Clay is difficult to dig but has some rewarding features in that it will hold a shape and present a smooth surface for stone lining.

The difficulty of digging and removing the soil, maintaining the stability of the well dirt wall, and stoning the wall was an artful undertaking. Some members of our history group are unearthing the details of an existing well on the Blaker-Hartley farm at 1149 Westfall Road this summer. The inner wall of the well is not clearly evident as yet but metal plates, wooden planks and concrete slabs have been unearthed to document the various techniques and

materials used in well construction. Yes, even a very attractive brick walkway that led from farm house to well was unearthed. You have to be an important element of farm structures to have a walkway built for access. Yes!... WATER was very important.



10

The wind mills which existed on most every farm off Westfall Road relived some of the pumping labor requirements which were demanding in the feeding of farm livestock. The Edmunds Farm and the Hartley farm both contained wind mills which operated farm wells.

So reflecting on Historic Brighton's accomplishments of digging, observing, photographing, documenting and studying the Farms of Westfall we have accumulated many details to create an interesting picture of Brighton farm Life in the 1800's, on Westfall Road. □

Visit the Historic Brighton display at the 2010 World Canals Conference on September 19th, 2010 1-5PM at the Blue Cross Arena.


The 2010 World Canals Conference kicks off on **Sunday, September 19**, with a boat parade and cycling event culminating at Corn Hill Landing, followed by a Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra concert on the Genesee River. Performances, museum displays, children's activities, and author presentations will be held at the Blue Cross Arena. Wine and beer samplings and a Farmers' Market will also be featured.

The Flotilla

More than 100 boats are expected to participate in a flotilla of historic and recreational vessels converging on Rochester to celebrate the conference.

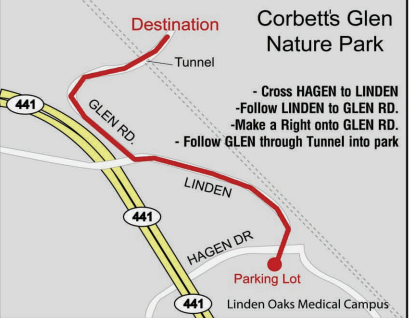
Cycling Event

Cyclists will be riding from multiple starting points along the Erie Canalway Trail and converging at the Genesee Valley Park, where they will join the flotilla of boats heading to Corn Hill Landing to kick off the conference. Starting points for cyclists from the west will include Holley, Brockport, Spencerport, and Greece. Starting points to the east will include Palmyra, Macedon, Fairport, Pittsford, and Brighton. Cyclists will depart Genesee Valley Park at 12:30 pm.



Celebrate Corbett's Glen

September 12th, 12-5pm




Destination Corbett's Glen Nature Park

- Cross HAGEN to LINDEN
- Follow LINDEN to GLEN RD.
- Make a Right onto GLEN RD.
- Follow GLEN through Tunnel into park

Park at 10 Hagen Dr. for easy walk into Glen


More details at:
www.corbettsglen.org

Coordinated by:
ACCGPG
Genesee Land Trust
Historic Brighton
Town of Brighton



Featuring:

- Glen Artwork Exhibit
- 1928 Corbett's Glen Film Debut
- Guided Nature & History Tours
- Historic Photos Displayed
- New Glen Cookbook on Sale
- Corbett House Tours & More!



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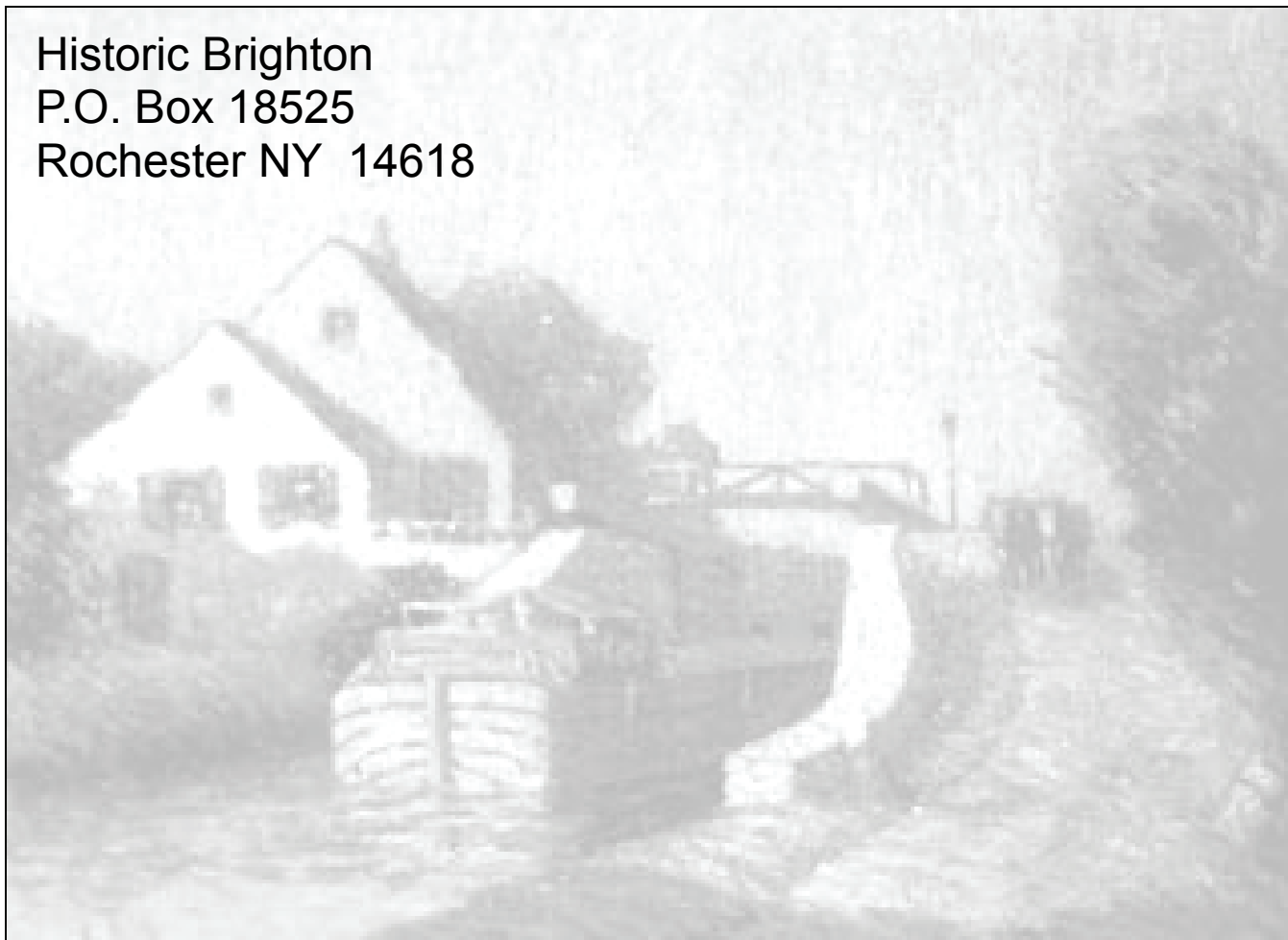
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