

Recollections

About 1801-1802, Captain William Helms brought **Austin Steward** and other enslaved persons from Virginia to Sodus. Austin Steward later achieved his freedom and built a grocery business in Brighton. Here is his account of leaving Virginia: *"We were about to leave the land of our birth, the home of our childhood...We were slaves, it is true, but we had heart-felt emotions to suppress when we thought of leaving all that was so familiar to us...After the sale of the plantation [by Captain Helms]...the preparation for leaving the old plantation for a home in the wilds of New York went on under his direction and at last we bade a final adieu to our friends and all we held dear in the State of Virginia."* (Austin Steward, *Twenty-two Years a Slave and Forty Years a Freeman*, 1857).

Harwood Dryer, architect, lived on East Avenue near Penfield Road. His friend was A. Emerson Babcock of Clover Street, elected town supervisor of Brighton for several terms beginning in 1893. Later Babcock would be the town historian for Brighton. Laura Holton was the town's first historian.

"Emerson Babcock and I often followed the Indian trail along the north bank of Allyn's Creek... We hunted woodchucks on those hillsides and tried to swim in the not too shallow pool not far above the Big Arch, that is the New York Central Railroad culvert. I remember with what abruptness we ceased sunning ourselves on the bank one morning when Laura Holton suddenly appeared on the trail nearby. We covered our confusion as best we could in the shallow pool." (Harwood Brownell Dryer, *Early Families and Architecture of the Allyn's Creek Region*, 1938).

At a meeting of the Brighton Historical Society in 1945, **Emerson Babcock** was asked about his high wheel bike. He replied that *"I had a 56 inch high front wheel bike...it was a Columbia and cost about \$150. I belonged to a cycle club and wore a uniform of black tights, a striped blazer, and a peaked cap...One day I was riding out East Avenue and saw Rose Lord sitting on the porch...Just then a woman walking out the Avenue stepped in front of me. I rang my bell to warn her but she screamed and didn't get out of my way. It was a case of running her down or hitting the stone wall. I chose the latter and when my wheel hit, I kept on going, landing in the field."* **Rose Lord** remembered the incident differently: *"Jane and I were driving to the village when along came Emerson on his high bike, black tights and all the trimmings. Seeing us he swept off his cap and tried to bow. Just at that moment his front wheel hit a rock and Emerson completed his bow by flying over the handle bar and landing flat in the dust. I'm afraid Jane and I giggled as we drove to Brighton."*

Michael Murray of Council Rock Avenue remembered when his neighborhood got together and built a baseball field on empty land across the street in 1940. His father was a contractor and had the equipment necessary for clearing rocks and trees and grading the surface. *"Grading work was done in the Fall...backstop...too. Opening was the next year and the Red Wing baseball team manager and some players came...Arpeako Hots and Genesee Beer had booths...First couple of winters there was an ice rink but the war came and use of the field declined so that ended. Only us kids were left – all those older had gone off to serve... When the war ended Don Cohen bought the property and built the house which stands there today."* Arpeako Hots was owned by a friend of Michael's father, Fred Tobin, of Rochester Packing Company. Louis Wehle of Genesee Brewing lived on Pelham Road.

Dennis Kitzman's father built a house on Sonora Parkway in Roselawn in 1930. When Dennis was a boy, he and some of his friends would go to Mr. Twamley's house on Elmwood Avenue. Dennis related that *"Twamley raised horses and grew hay for them. We kids would*

spend a whole afternoon harvesting hay. Mr. Twamley gave us each a nickel at the end of the day which we thought was great because a nickel bought an ice cream treat."

The 9-acre Twamley property on Elmwood became the site of the Brighton Town Hall in 1950.

Memoir writing has become a meaningful occupation with classes and groups gathering at libraries and community centers. Incidents that seem trivial can flesh out the document-and-picture-album history that most families preserve.

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13 May 2025