



Historic Brighton

Presents...

Trails, Tolls, and Twelve Corners:

The Roads of Brighton

A Talk by Brighton Town Historian

Mary Jo Lanphear

Free Admission

-

Reception to follow

Wednesday, April 29th, 2009 starting at 7:00PM

===== *AND* =====

Salon I: Brighton's Country Homes & their Architects

A Photo Exhibit Celebrating Brighton's Notable Architects & Their Work

April 6th – 30th, 2009

Free Admission

-

Open to the public during store hours

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Both the lecture & the exhibit will be held in the:

Barnes & Noble Bookstore

2nd floor Gallery/Community Room
3349 Monroe Avenue in Pittsford Plaza

Historic Brighton is a Not-for-Profit Organization

Historic Brighton | PO Box 18525 | Rochester, New York 14618 | www.HistoricBrighton.org

Brighton's Highways and Byways

By Mary Jo Lanphear

Brighton Town Historian

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Map of trails dating from 1771, from the collection of Julia Boyer Reinstein.

The opening up of land for settlement in western New York State occurred after the Revolutionary War. Two treaties, one in 1786 with Massachusetts and the other in 1788 with the Seneca Nation, enabled Oliver Phelps and Nathaniel Gorham to survey and prepare for sale two and a half million acres on the east side of the Genesee River.

One of the first priorities was the development of roads to spur the growth of settlement and trade. This began in 1788 with a surveying party working west to the Genesee River from Canandaigua, the governmental seat of the Phelps & Gorham Purchase, and another group working east toward Geneva. The roads were little more than widened Seneca trails but they were sufficient for a horse and wagon to pass. The next task was connecting Geneva to Fort Stanwix near Rome. An act of the New York State Legislature in 1789 gave permission to build this 100-mile Genesee Turnpike, if the developers were willing to pay for the road themselves. Road construction and maintenance were not the responsibility of the state government at this time.

By 1802, a four-rod road (66 feet wide) was laid from Salina, near Syracuse, to Northfield, the predecessor town of Brighton. Merchants' Road, leading from Canandaigua to the Irondequoit Landing and later to the mouth of the Genesee River, was constructed by businessmen who wanted better access to Great Lakes shipping. It followed the modern day roads of Route 96 through Bushnell's Basin then proceeded along Marsh Road and Pittsford-Palmyra Road into Pittsford Village, then ran along East Avenue to Allyn's Creek, then north on the Landing Road to the Irondequoit Landing in what is now Ellison Park. After U.S. Customs officials established the port of Genesee in 1805, the Merchants Road was completed from the landing to the River. A remnant of the old road still exists, running from Browncroft Blvd. to Culver Road.

As the population grew and new towns were erected, the number of roads increased. Legally, their location and maintenance were the responsibility of the local government. Each town recorded its road minutes along with its annual town meeting records and its register of livestock ear



A view of East Avenue in Rochester. From the Albert R. Stone photographic collection, Rochester Museum and Science Center.

marks. The road minutes detailed the laying out of each thoroughfare that passed through the town. Here's the description of Highland Avenue in 1816:

“A Public Highway Beginning at the southeast corner of Orange Stone's farm thence runs west on the south line of said farm one hundred and fifty-six rods then continued west on the line of lots one hundred and fifty-eight rods and intersecting a Highway at the northeast Corner of Joshua Cadle's land said Highway to be four rods in width two rods each way from said line. Brighton 25 January 1816 (Surveyed by) John Scott, Philip Moon, and Walter Case.”

When the town of Brighton was separated from the Town of Pittsford in 1814, the road minutes from the parent town of Northfield were copied into the first town meeting records, establishing the town's jurisdiction over the roads within its boundaries. The Overseer of Highways appointed Path masters for the road districts in

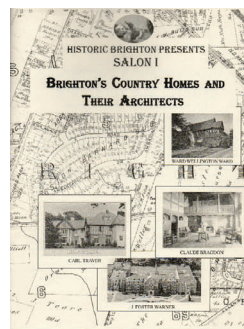
the town. Their duties were to make sure that "the community's roads were being constructed and ready access afforded to the mills and villages."

For the most part, the establishment of new roads and the direction in which they ran had to do with three main factors: (1) they were once Seneca trails, (2) they ran along the surveyed lot lines (to avoid bisecting an owner's land), and (3) they were market-directed. Brighton pioneer Or-ringh Stone, for example, situated his 1792 tavern at the convergence of two Seneca trails, reasoning that settlers coming into the area would use the old pathways and would need food and overnight accommodations. That one of the trails was the so-called "road to the river" that later became East Avenue shows how his careful planning paid off. The road to the river led to the markets in the first village of Brighton on the east bank of the Genesee River and access to river trade. Without a place to sell farm products and purchase necessities, the settlers would not prosper.

Landowners along the public highways were responsible for the maintenance of the stretch of road that passed their land. They could do the work themselves or pay a road tax. This system was uneven at best. Roads were rutted, poorly-drained and, in the spring and fall, so muddy that they were often impassable. By the end of the nineteenth century, criticism about the condition of country roads spurred the creation by bicyclists of the Good Roads Movement. In 1898 New York State made available road repair funds and sought recommendations from local communities for their use. Brighton Supervisor A. Emerson Babcock successfully accrued funds for East Avenue, making it the first improved road in Monroe County. □

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The First Ten Years of Historic Brighton News

By Betsy Brayer



It all began back in the last century. I had been helping Maureen Holtzman with a newsletter for the Eastman House Council when

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she asked if I would like to take on another newsletter. She was the vice president of a year-old group called Historic Brighton whose newsletter editor had been sitting on his hands for that whole year. Before I could say “No thanks,” I had a phone call and follow-up visit from the charming president of Historic Brighton, Leo Dodd. He arrived on my doorstep with lots of ideas and pictures. By the time he left, Volume 1, Number 1 of the *Historic Brighton News* was underway.

That first issue contained an article by Arlene Wright, founder of Historic Brighton explaining its goals and visions; another by Leo about Oliver Culver, the town’s colorful first supervisor; and still another by Monica Gilligan entitled “The Home Archivist.” I suggested we adopt (with permission) George Herdle’s painting of “The Canal Lock” as newsletter logo and so included an article about Herdle that I had written earlier for the *Brighton-Pittsford Post*. Leo had lots of historical material with him about John J. Audubon’s visit to this region; about Amasa Drake, the aqueduct and lock construction superintendent; and about the 1850 plans for Monroe Avenue between Cobb’s Hill and Allyn’s Creek. So we adapted those as articles and fillers.

The same contributors continued and we soon added new ones. “The Home Archivist” developed into a series. In the second and third issue we serialized “A Brighton Treasure,” Ruth K. Porter’s history of the Brighton Cemetery. Town historian Mary Jo Lanphear wrote about a pro-

posed archeological dig at the Buckland-Gonsenhauser house in 2001 and another project was underway. Leo discovered a SIG (Special Interest Group) within Historic Brighton and began writing about Brighton bricks and brickyards that would eventually lead to a separate publication (the shape and size of a brick of course). Leo occasionally veered off the bricks/Buckland archeology and history course to produce “Frisbee’s Flight from the Brighton Aerodome” and “The Pinnacle Range: The Berm that saved Brighton.”

My articles throughout the decade centered on Brighton’s eclectic architecture as found in Houston Barnard’s tracts or in Browncroft or Roselawn and the houses of Ward Wellington Ward, J. Foster Warner, Claude Bragdon, and Leon Stern, as well as harp lamps and the gardens of landscape architect Alling Deforest. I wrote articles on the Friendly Home, the fabulous Brighton golfer named Walter Hagen, “Benito from Wahoo” (Howard Hanson), “A Father of Social Security” (Marion Folsom), “He founded the Kodak Research Laboratory” (Dr. Charles Edward Kenneth Mees), and Winston Churchill’s relatives who owned property in Brighton. For Halloween 2008, Mary Jo wrote about the “Folklore of Mourning” so I produced a pictorial sidebar featuring the area’s primary nineteenth century hearse manufacturer: James Cunningham and Son. (Latter-day Cunninghams lived in Brighton.)

An ongoing feature was Lost Brighton. The series included articles on Mount Hope Cemetery, the Brighton Cemetery, Claude Bragdon’s Tudor Country Club of Rochester clubhouse, Leon Stern’s Tudor firehouse, the century-old George Eastman House gardens and Brighton Village. The first two and last two are still with us but no longer in Brighton. Jeff Vincent’s photographs of the old village enlivened the village articles and his family’s photos illustrated the issue on our summer celebration in Corbett’s Glen. Deb Bower provided the glen’s history from the point of view of a long-time resident. The irrepressible Leo celebrated the glen’s past as the site of gunpowder factories by writing an article entitled “Brighton’s Death Valley.”

I started a page about Brighton history for

younger readers but the series lagged after four articles. The first concerned the glacier rumbling by 100,000 years ago; the second was about our first residents—the peaceful Algonkins who wandered through and the warlike Senecas who replaced them. The third article starred the French in Brighton 400 years ago; LaSalle’s stop here while searching for a water route to China (!) had always fascinated me. The 200-year-war between Great Britain and France was summarized as a one-page “The Game of Empire Begins.” The next chapter on “The Lost City of Tryon” got a wonderful boost from Ron Richardson when he organized the summer celebration of Tryon in June 2008. Some day we may have a publication about Tryon worthy of Ron’s program. If I ever write a fifth article, it will star the Erie Canal. And then on to the “Burned Over District,” Frederick Douglass, and Susan B. Anthony

We published “A Walking Tour of Edgewood Avenue” and a “Driving Tour of Brighton.” Catherine Zukoski wrote a history of the Brighton schools and Annette Satloff, curator of the Temple B’rith Kodesh museum, wrote about Pietro Beluschi, the temple’s famous architect. Robyn Schaefer contributed “98 acres — the Story of Meadowbrook,” “Why is it [Meadowbrook’s newsletter] called the Dandelion,” and “Black Friday,” the 1950s gas explosions that rocked the Meadowbrook neighborhood. Robyn took the photos that illustrated our Roselawn article. Mary Jo Lanphear wrote articles about the history of the Drescher house and Mercy High School.

“Getting around in Brighton” with the kicker “From Shank’s Mare to Superhighway” by Leo Dodd featured transportation by subway, train, canal, and automobile with touches of stage coach, steam railway, horse-drawn trolley, bicycle, inter-urban electric trolley, plank road, and automobile transportation thrown in. Leo’s wonderful poster of Brighton Village that was tied to one of our summer celebrations is still available. Arlene Vanderlinde contributed a lavishly illustrated story on the architecture of Carl Traver. She did a program and article about the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair and the story of the Carey–Harper house, one of the seventeen “Bricks of Brighton.” Other

“Bricks” such as the Bloss Seminary were written up from time to time.

Each quarterly newsletter featured our quarterly program on its first page. Adding the four programs for the year before the newsletter began publication, Historic Brighton has sponsored 44 outstanding programs. Leo continues to keep everyone up-to-date on the Buckland farm artifacts he uncovers and the light those artifacts shed on Brighton history. Give Leo a worthless 1888 Indian Head penny! (See HBN winter 2006.)

The Bicentennial of East Avenue program and articles in 2005 would lead to our limited edition book, *East Avenue Memories* that sold out quickly by word of mouth. To appreciate the number of Brighton topics, personalities, buildings, and stories we have touched on in ten years, take a look at the lengthy Newsletter Index compiled by Patricia Aslin at www.historicbrighton.org. And now a new team is in place to continue bringing you historic and up-to-date news from Historic Brighton. Stay tuned. □

Historic Brighton thanks Betsy Brayer for her many years of service as editor of our newsletter. Preparation of our newsletter continues with the following people:

Managing Editor	Nancy Uffindell
Copy Editors	Ellen Adams Monica Gilligan
Layout Editors	Britton and Janet Hopkin

Historic Brighton welcomes the following new board members elected at our annual meeting: Monica Gilligan, Frank Grasso, Janet Hopkin, Nancy Uffendell, and David Whitaker.

The Edmunds Diaries

By Leo Dodd



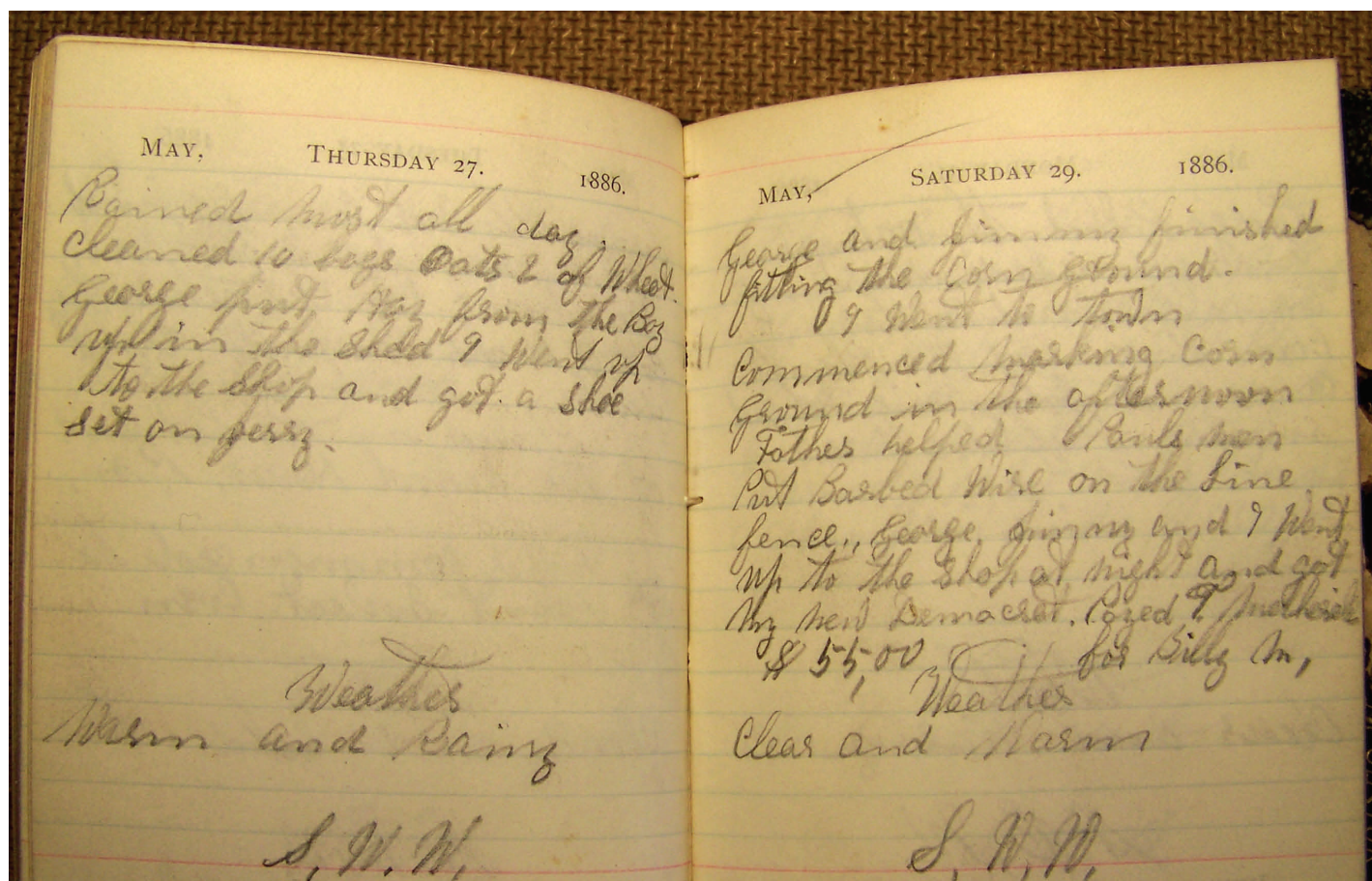
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A generous and rich historical gift was presented recently to Mary Jo Lanphear, the Brighton Town Historian. The gift consisted of a collection of forty (40) hand written yearly diaries (pictured above), authored by members of the Edmunds family.

Written during the years of 1871 to 1902, these diaries document the daily farm activity. This practice that was very common on nineteenth century American farms. The farmer was recording daily activity that would inventory his time, activity, and investment on his one hundred and fifteen acre farm set on the high hill overlooking the Town of Brighton. The location of the property was at the intersection of Westfall Road and Clinton Avenue, then know as “Edmunds Corners.” This written account would allow him to review his farming procedures and compare to the past performance and coming needs. Farming was a very difficult task, with ever changing technology, requiring knowledge of equipment, land development, animal care and horticulture oversight.



This 1875 illustration of the Edmund farm visually describes the dramatic view that was present during the writing of the forty diaries.



The diaries arrived at the Town Historian's office as follows:

Bob Jobe, who worked in a factory in Honeoye Fall, New York, knew that the metal barn behind this factory was filled with "Stuff." (Note: Time period was early 1970's.) And one day when the "Stuff" was being auctioned off Bob and his wife Dorothy, bid on and purchased the diary collection above. Dorothy informed Mary Jo of her purchase and asked for help in understanding the background of this Brighton family.

Dorothy also set about transcribing the diaries and later remarried to a Mr. Mann. Dorothy died a few years ago and Mr. Mann, anxious to get the diaries placed, contacted Mary Jo. Thus we now have access to a great historical treasure: the daily documentation of farm life, in Brighton, in the late 1800's.

This collection of diaries constitutes an 1800's Brighton Farm History Library. A library containing a thirty year detailed account of day to day activity on Westfall Road: what they planted, what the harvested, their means of transportation, manner of games, social activity with neighbors, schooling details, weather conditions, road conditions, travel to Towns, Villages, neighbors, family in other states, sports, leisure activities.....details of life that no census data can supply.

As the transcribing is still in process, an evaluation of the contents is unavailable at this time, but interesting stories are beginning to emerge and these can be related in future issues. But allow me to introduce one entry from the 365 notes of 1886, to give you a feeling for the diary contents.

The writing to the right reads as follows:

May 29, 1886... Saturday:

George and Jimmy finished fitting the Corn ground. I went to Town. Commenced marking Corn ground in the afternoon. Father helped. Paul's man put barbed wire on the line fence. George, Jimmy and I went up to the Shop at night and got my new Democrat. Payed T. Metherell \$55.00 for billing.

Weather: Clear and warm SW W

So let me translate:

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- 1...George is a hired hand. George works very, very closely with James Polk Edmunds all during the day, every day, living on the Edmunds farm, and earning a \$1.50 a day.
- 2... Jimmy is James son, age twelve, that is just being introduced to large scale land farm labor, under George's direction.
- 3...They are preparing the ground by raking and plowing.....thus "fitting the ground."
- 4..."I went to Town".....usually means he drove his wagon to the city farm market located at the Liberty Pole next to Sibley's to sell his farm produce.
- 5..."commenced"...James loved this word...and constantly uses it in the diary entries.
- 6..."marking the ground".....A horse drawn instrument, a marking tool, was drawn over the prepared ground and the driver would mark the position of the corn plantings.
- 7...James Madison Edmunds, the Brighton Town Surveyor, age 77 and father to James Polk helped in the marking process.
- 8...Peter Paul a farm neighbor to the Edmunds allowed his hired hand to assist in the setting of a new fence line between their properties east of Clinton Avenue.
- 9...Barbed wire was just coming in to use on Brighton farms.
- 10..."the Shop"...was the William Hicks Metherell BlackSmith Shop on East Henrietta Road at the junction of South Avenue
- 11...The "Democrat" was the Station Wagon of the 1800's.
note: \$55 was half the total cost.
Not bad, eh? ...\$110 for a station wagon, run on oats!



So there you have an insight into one day on the Edmunds farm...and we now have fourteen thousand six hundred (14,600) like entries. to read, review, ponder and draw historical Brighton history...**what a treasure!** Our thanks to Dorothy and Bob for acquiring and Mary Jo for receiving and sharing. □

Save the date! — Saturday, June 27, 2009

For the Annual Historic Brighton Presentation Day About West Brighton

Historic Brighton P.O. Box 18525, Rochester, NY 14618
www.historicbrighton.org