

# Historic Brighton: Self-guided Brighton Tours



## EDGEWOOD AVENUE – A WALKER'S VIEW

When looking down Edgewood Avenue one usually notices the many split level, neo-colonial, and ranch style homes along the way. The well-kept neighborhoods branching off represent the massive population shifts from the cities to the suburbs during the middle of the 20th century. Throughout the United States, from the 1920s on, there were bursts of development as people pushed further and further from our nation's major cities. Urban pollution and the growing popularity of the automobile were chief reasons for this phenomenal suburban growth. The affordable automobile made it possible for much of the population to commute to work from greater distances.

Edgewood Avenue's development reflects economic booms from the 1930s through the 1970s. What is not obvious is that Edgewood Avenue's history is as long as Brighton's. First an Indian Trail, a road was cut through as early as 1814, the same year the town of Brighton was born. There are still many clues to this history remaining along the avenue. Walking with a keen eye will allow you to discover its many treasures.

Before the white man arrived in this area in the late 18th century, Indians hunted geese, ducks and beaver in the marshy land located in the area where the French Road School now stands. With every good rain we are reminded of this historical fact as little water geysers sprout from the ground.

The earliest settlers of the area were farmers. The rich soil was ideal for growing fruit, vegetables and flowers. The name "Edgewood" comes from the dense woods that once covered this area.

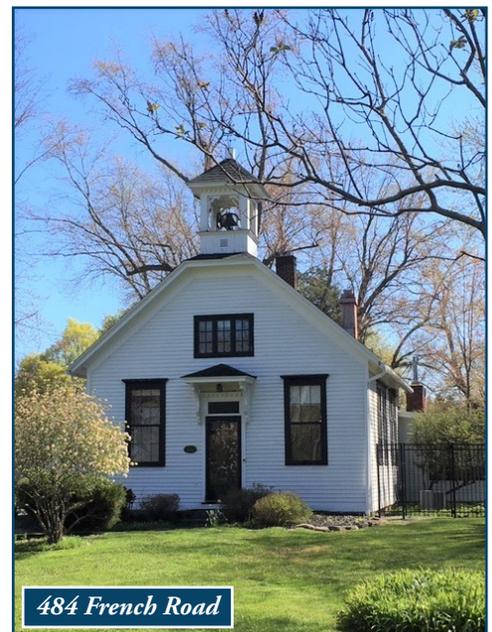
Our tour begins at French Road and concludes at Monroe Avenue. The section of French Road (east to Clover Street) was originally called Hillside Avenue when it was dedicated in 1814. It went straight through to South Avenue, now known as South Winton Road. We will concentrate on Edgewood Avenue prior to 1906 and the structures that existed then and before. Edgewood Avenue was once lined with cherry trees. It must have been a glorious sight in the early spring. One would also see fields of corn, hay, wheat, potatoes and flowers, along with apple orchards here and there.

### TOUR (\*Denotes designated Brighton Landmark)

**\*484 French Road** (corner of Edgewood): Former Brighton District #9 one-room schoolhouse built in 1906. This was the second structure on this site. District #9 was established in 1819. A smaller clapboard schoolhouse had been built previously with its front facing Hillside Avenue (French Road), according to an early plat map. Additions have been made since becoming a residence in 1949.

It closed as a school in 1939 and was left vacant for 10 years. Its first homeowners found the desks still nailed to the floor and the potbellied stove in the rear of the building. The bell tower remains a charming reminder of this building's original use. This home has been carefully restored and maintained by its owners and is one of four designated Brighton landmarks on Edgewood.

**995 Edgewood:** (This now-demolished house stood in front of the French Road School,) This house was a Dutch Colonial Revival-style home built c.1910. What was most important about



484 French Road

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this house was its foundation, which dated back to the early 19th century. One can only speculate on the fate of the original structure; perhaps a fire or maybe it became unsuitable for other reasons. This home sat on the land of one of the area's earliest settlers, Stephen Luce. Born in Martha's Vineyard in 1782, he brought his family to their 49-acre farm site in 1816 from Massachusetts. The area was a wilderness "*with here and there a clearing, and the City of Rochester had not even reached the distinction of a village.*" (Quotation of Stephen Luce, History of Monroe County 1788-1877: Evert, Ensign & Everts, p.244) "*They were settled in Brighton while yet the presence of the grey wolf, endangering the flock, called for a bounty of ten dollars for the scalp.*" History of Monroe County 1788-1877: p.244)

Stephen Luce lived nearby in a home on Hillside Avenue (French Road). His son may have resided in the early home on this site.

**940 Edgewood:** Built c.1870 – New England-style farmhouse. The original owners of this farm were Jervis and Bethany Adams. They sold the 30-acre farm to William Miller. The land extended south to the current school property. Joseph Weiss (sometimes spelled Weis) purchased the land in 1870 and built the home. The Weiss family owed livestock and grew potatoes. The marshy land surrounding was perfect for growing potatoes. There is evidence that Mr. Weiss was a winemaker. A wine press was found to be part of the inventory of this farm.

*Interesting note: The land which is occupied by the Briar Manor Apartments was once owned by the Rochester Gun Club. There were acres of shooting ranges. This was discovered on a 1937 plat map. No further information was found about this enterprise.*

**752 Edgewood:** (Corner of Hibiscus): William D. Landon House – Built c.1890. This home has been extensively changed to appear similar to the surrounding mid-20th-century homes. The original gable roof is visible from the rear of the house. There was once a barn in back where horses were boarded. The land once belonged to Frank Weiss.

**Daniel Edgar Rowland II House:** No longer extant. (Site is approximately where #648 exists today) Built c.1850. Simple New England-style clapboard farmhouse. D.E. Rowland owned 64 acres on Edgewood.

There were at least five Rowland family homes in the area. Others were: the original brick section of the former Monroe Cherry House; three other no longer existing homes on the Sherwin Williams site (corner of Edgewood and Monroe); one on the Men's Room site on Monroe Avenue, next to CharBroil; and one at the corner of Rowland Parkway and Clover Street that was destroyed by fire. A New England-style farmhouse still exists at 138 Rowland Parkway (off Clover Street).

The Rowlands were a large family who came to America from England in the 1830s. They collectively owned hundreds of acres of Brighton land. The late Gladys Rowland Lewis, who lived at 394 Edgewood, generously shared her time and family treasures so this history could be written.

*Interesting Note: Warren and Branch Avenues were once known as Warren Estates or Warren Park. The area subdivided in the 1930s, but the lots were too small to meet a town regulation. Then the developers had financial problems. The neighborhood was finally developed in the 1960s and 1970s.*

**448 Edgewood:** A tenant house for the Hill Farm, built in c.1890. The stucco exterior probably covers the original wooden clapboards. The rough-coursed ashlar foundation stones help date the house.

**\*407 Edgewood:** One of Brighton's designated landmarks, this "Brighton Brick" was built in stages beginning in 1814. (Visit [www.historicbrighton.org](http://www.historicbrighton.org) to learn more about BRIGHTON BRICKS) This red brick New England-style vernacular farmhouse has some Greek Revival details: longer first-story windows with stone lintels and sills. The brick could have come from the nearby Buckland or Cobb brickyards. The original section of the home

was built in 1814, which makes it the oldest structure on Edgewood. It consists of the small rear section and the lean-to-roofed kitchen. The larger section was built around 1825. The foundation

stones are said to have come from Meadows Ditch which was dug out to make the Erie Canal. The pointed window in the front gable is unusual for this home's early date. Recent and current owners have made many sensitive changes to the home in the past few years, but the historic character of this important landmark thankfully remains.



The earliest owners of record were George and Edward Wilson. We can only assume that the home was built during their ownership. William and Mary Hill purchased the home and about 120 acres in 1877. William Hill came to Monroe County from England when he was 16 years old. His wife came from Pittsford. They had five children. The youngest son, William T.O. Hill and wife, Naomi, stayed on the farm as did their son, Luther W.E. Hill and his family. Luther's second wife lived at 397 Edgewood, which was built for her when Harry Davis purchased the family farm in the 1950s.

**394 Edgewood:** Hill Farm Tenant house – built c.1840. Enlarged in 1895. Home of the late Gladys Rowland Lewis, a descendant of the Rowland and Evans families. The roof was raised and an addition was put on. The original roofline is still visible in the attic. The style is the simple New England Farmhouse style with Queen Ann and Eastlake details added to the porch.

Warren and Gladys Rowland Lewis bought the house from Luther Hill in 1953. Gladys was the granddaughter of Daniel Rowland II and Joseph, Jr. and Susan Evans. Her mother, Harriette Evans Rowland, taught at the little one-room school where our tour began.

**377 Edgewood:** This early twentieth century bungalow with Colonial Revival details was moved to this location from (now) Allens Creek Road near the route 590 overpass. Note the foundation of concrete block where it meets the brick chimney.

*The histories of the next two houses are related so they will be discussed together: 15 Southwood (corner of Edgewood - originally 333 Edgewood Avenue) and 281 Edgewood. The home at 281 was originally on the site where 15 Southwood now stands and was the original Evans farmhouse. The Evans Farm Tract was formerly the property of the Joseph Evans family and was sold to developers in 1954 by Teresa Evans Burke, who owned and occupied the former Evershed homestead (a designated Brighton landmark at 2005 Westfall Road). The actual Evans farmhouses are at 15 Southwood and 281 Edgewood.*

**\*15 Southwood Lane:** Second Evans Farmhouse - Built c.1875 using the foundation of the original farmhouse. Ann Evans felt that the little white house was too small. She wanted a larger and more “modern” home. The little house was moved to the north side of the property (281). Joseph built his wife the simplified vernacular Gothic Revival house that stands today. Its pointed windows have an Eastlake feeling. The front porch and side porch are sensitive additions by recent owners, reflecting the style of this designate Brighton Landmark. The garage addition is a wonderful example of how to adapt a landmark to its owners needs and still be appropriate and sensitive to the history of the structure.

Joseph Edward Evans and his wife, Ann Evans Evans, were born in Cheddar, England in 1824 and 1821, respectively. Joseph came to Brighton prior to his marriage and was indentured to Joseph Abbey of 245 Edgewood Avenue. Joseph and Ann were married in 1850 and he brought her to America for their honeymoon. They lived with the Teare family on Allyn’s (Allens) Creek Road until they purchased their farm in 1851.



**\*281 Edgewood:** First Evans Farmhouse - It is not known if the little farmhouse was there or if Joseph built it for Ann. The house appears to be older than 1851 with its simplified Federal/Greek Revival details. There was no record of any previous owners found.

Joseph and Ann had one son, Joseph, Jr., born in 1854. Joseph, Jr. married Susan Ann Studley in 1878. Joseph and Ann gave the newlyweds 1.5 acres of land and the little house which had been moved to its present site. They had seven children. Joseph, Jr. died in 1894 leaving Susan to raise the children, ranging in age from 15 years to a few months old. Susan managed to keep the family together and lived to be 95. Different members of the family continued to live in one or both of the homes until 1957 when the last part of the farm was sold.

The little house had several additions since its move, making it a fine family home. It, too, is a designated Brighton landmark and the owners have been sensitive to keeping the original character of the home through its many changes.

**\*245 Edgewood:** The Abbey-Taylor House – built c. 1820. Designated Brighton landmark. In 1814, Joseph Abbey made his way through the New York woods from New England to settle on 105 acres he purchased from Elijah Northrup. Cutting his own lumber, he built a log cabin to house his wife, Experience Callender, and their seven children. Joseph died soon after his arrival, seven months after the town of Brighton was established. Some of his land



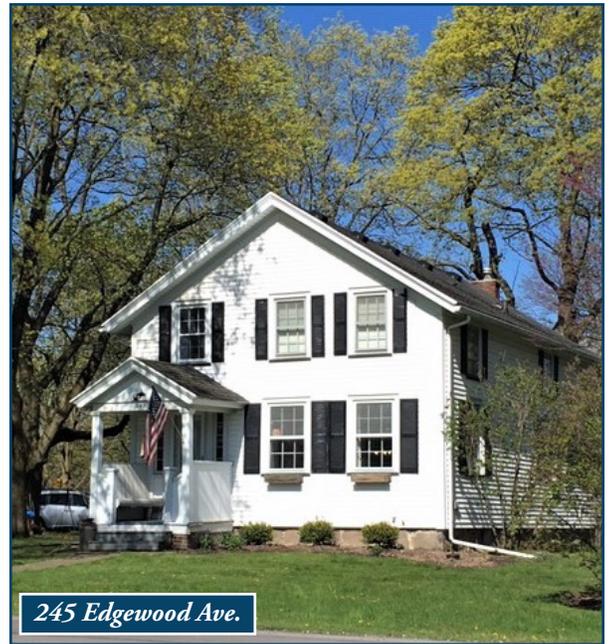
was sold at this time. In 1820, a three-room home was completed by other family members; it was a typical early farmhouse with two rooms and a kitchen with a dirt floor and living space above. This became the core for later

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additions. Note the difference in the roof heights at the rear of the house. In 1831, Joseph Abbey, Jr. purchased the farm from his family. When he died in 187his wife, Nancy Ann, rented some of the land to nurserymen and hired men to farm the rest.

Abraham Taylor, a nephew of Joseph Abbey, Jr., and his wife Caroline Minnamon of Pittsford, and their children gained ownership in 1917. Abraham had lived with the Abbeys for many years. One of their children, Clarence, was the chief lock operator at Erie Canal Lock # 32. He married Ruby Everts of Corning and had one son, Robert. They lived with Abraham until his death in 1958 at the age of 93. They never farmed the land extensively but enjoyed the woods and fields surrounding the home.

This house is an example of vernacular New England style farmhouse with simplified Federal and Greek Revival details. Note the porthole window on the south side with the original glass. The porch was a later addition, perhaps in the 1870s. Unfortunately, this house was vinyl-sided by a previous owner.



The home sits on a one-acre site with a huge original 19th century barn at the rear. All the other land had been sold over the years to developers.: 1930s - Birmingham Drive; 1940s – Carverdale; 1960s the Free Methodist Church.

**182 Edgewood:** New England style farmhouse – built between 1840 and 1860. The garage was once used as a surveyor’s shed near the Erie Canal. It was moved to this site when that purpose was no longer needed.

In 1937, owner Teddy Quant sold much of his farm to developers. Monroe Avenue Estates resulted: Mode Lane (now known as Modelane), Pickford Drive and Willowbend Road. These charming streets helped create the look of Edgewood today.

- *Written by Arlene Vanderlinde*

*Sources:*

- 1. Gladys Rowland Lewis's family bible and scrapbook*
- 2. The 1852, 1872 and 1902 plat maps of Brighton*
- 3. History of Monroe County 1788-1877*

The tour continues to Stonybrook Drive and a visit to Allens Creek and a host of mallard ducks, if lucky.

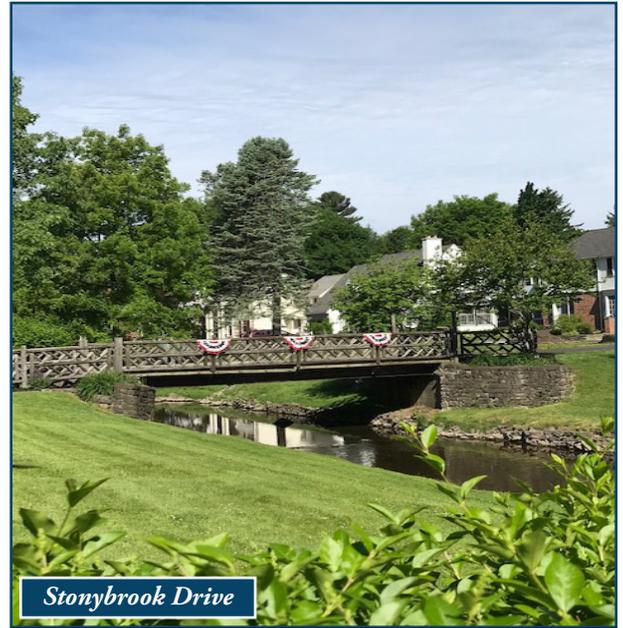
## **THE STONYBROOK NEIGHBORHOOD**

*(Edited from an article written by E. William Clymer and published in the Brighton-Pittsford Post on October 4, 2006)*

The Stonybrook Neighborhood, located near the intersection of Monroe and Edgewood Avenues in the center of Brighton, has long been recognized as one of the most picturesque sections of town. Many people in the Rochester area know Stonybrook Drive because of its beautiful setting created by the passing of Allen’s Creek parallel to the road. All sixteen homes face the creek. The driveways on the south side of the road actually cross the creek by means of wooden bridges. This unique feature and the large population of mallard ducks that reside near the Edgewood Avenue bridge are known to many.

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The earliest recorded land transaction for the property that was to become the Stonybrook subdivision was the sale of this land by Benjamin Campbell, an early Rochester flour miller (re: Campbell-Whittlesey House in the Rochester's Third Ward) to one William Billingham in 1837. In 1841, the property was sold to John Rowland. The Rowland family kept ownership until 1917. After several other transactions, a Mr. Mengerink purchased the land in 1931 and then sold it to Donald P. Woods in 1939. Mr. Woods would be the first to develop the land. He and his partner, Robert Hartman, both residents of Edgewood Avenue, created a housing development which they named Hartwood Subdivision. While this was the official name, it quickly came to be known as the Stonybrook Neighborhood. A primary obstacle to the development of this parcel was that Allen's Creek divided the property in a way that did not allow for decent-sized lots. Although the records are not clear, it is generally agreed by original Stonybrook homeowners that the course of the creek was altered so the 16 lots would be of appropriate sizes for homes.



Wood and Hartman hired architect Howard L. Stone and general contractor Robert Bristol for all but one of the homes in their project. Each home reflects a charming individual character. The first home was built in 1940 for Mr. and Mrs. Howard Youngman. The bridges had not yet been built, so all the building materials were brought to the site from Roosevelt Drive. Construction began on the rest of the lots just before World War II broke out. Once the war started, metal and other building materials became impossible to obtain. Fortunately, all the needed materials had already been delivered, so construction for most of the homes proceeded.

On March 4, 1947, a spring thaw caused an ice blockage at the old and very narrow Edgewood Avenue bridge resulting in flooding of the front yards of most of the houses on Stonybrook. The next year the bridge was widened to prevent a recurrence. There have been only a few times when the creek waters rose up into the front yards of the residences, but they quickly receded without causing damage. The State of New York had often released water from the Erie Canal thus causing front yard flooding. This practice ceased after neighbors and elected officials put pressure on the state government in the early 1990s to stop.

The Stonybrook Neighborhood Association owns and maintains the park-like area at the beginning of the street. It is a favorite place for families from throughout the our community to come and feed the ducks, have a picnic and admire the serenity of this beautiful place.

