

St. Ignace Man Discovers Great-great-grandfather Signed Michigan Constitution

By Mark Tower

All Tom Briggs was looking for when he first delved into his family genealogy in the late 1970s was proof his ancestors have lived in Michigan for more than 100 years, for which he was awarded with a certificate from the state.

What the St. Ignace man found was much more interesting.

Research at the Washtenaw County Clerk's office and the Saline Library revealed an ancestor, Russell Briggs, who made his mark on Michigan after moving to Lodi Township near Saline from Skaneateles, a town in the Finger Lakes region of New York. He was a signer of the Michigan constitution.

Tom Briggs said his ancestor likely came to Michigan by way of the Erie Canal.

"I know a lot of people came here by way of the canal at that time," he said.

After receiving an 80-acre land grant from the U.S. government, signed by John Quincy Adams in 1825, Russell Briggs built the first sawmill on the Saline River in 1829 and led an effort to found the first schoolhouse in the area, on Chicago Road in 1831.

"I know education was important to him because he was instrumental in starting the school there," Tom



At left: Tom Briggs of St. Ignace stands in his home on Lake Huron next to three items that remind him every day of his rich family heritage. The sesqui-centennial certificate honors his family's more than 150-year residence in the State of Michigan, the oxen yoke is the very piece of farm equipment his ancestor, Russell Briggs, used to clear the land for the first family home in Lodi Township, and the picture below it is of that homestead, on Waterworks Road just west of Saline.

Briggs said.

Soon after, in April 1835, Mr. Briggs was one of the 91 delegates elected to the first Michigan Constitutional Convention to create a

governing document for the soon-to-be state. The delegates to the convention represented Berrien, Branch, Calhoun, Cass, Chippewa, Hillsdale, Jackson, Kalamazoo,

Lenawee, Mackinac, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, St. Joseph, Washtenaw, and Wayne counties.

Tom Briggs has collected some

information on two of the local delegates, as well as his ancestor.

The delegate from Chippewa County was Bela Chapman, who is buried in the Protestant cemetery on Mackinac Island. According to a biography of Chippewa County families by Reuben D. Ashmun, Mr. Chapman once adopted an orphan after the child accosted him while waiting for a boat, pleading for Mr. Chapman to take him with him. Thinking the boy was a local, he told him to be at the wharf at 10 o'clock and he would take him along. When he arrived for the boat, Mr. Chapman was surprised to find the boy there waiting for him. He then brought the boy, Peter White,

to his home on Mackinac Island.

Mr. White later moved to Marquette and, by age 27, became a store owner, land agent, postmaster, lawyer, county clerk, registrar of deeds, school board treasurer, and state representative, and later the owner of a successful insurance agency.

The Constitutional Convention delegate from Mackinac County was Michael Dousman, a fur trader who settled on Mackinac Island in the early 1800s and owned and operated the mill at Old Mill Creek near Mackinaw City from 1819 to 1839.

Tom Briggs is also interested in the history of how the Upper Peninsula came to be part of the state, he said.

After spending 45 days drafting the territory's first Constitution in the territorial capital of Detroit, the delegates adopted the document on June 24, and submitted it to a vote by the people.

On October 5 and 6, 1835, the people of Michigan approved the Constitution by a vote of 6,299 to 1,359, although the state was not admitted into the Union until January 26, 1837, a delay attributed to a dispute with the state of Ohio over a length of land along

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DeTour Salmonfest Begins This Saturday

The top prize will be \$1,200 in DeTour Village's Salmonfest fishing competition, to begin this weekend.

The 23rd annual Salmonfest begins Saturday, August 8, and ends Saturday, August 15, at 3 p.m.

Prizes this year are \$1,200 for first place, \$600 for second, and \$300 for third. There will also be a prize for the largest King Salmon and a \$50 prize for the largest fish each day. Trophies will be awarded in a youth division, as well. In addition to the cash prizes, many other prizes have been donated

by area businesses.

The weigh-in station at the marina launch ramp will be open daily from 7:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. during the derby.

An awards ceremony will be August 15, at 6 p.m. at the Chamber of Commerce Pavilion.

Registration fee is \$25 and registration may be made at River Bend Resort, North Country Sports, and Sune's, or online at www.detroitvillage.com.

The derby is sponsored by the DeTour Area Chamber of Commerce.

Mackinaw Historic Village

Old-fashioned Ways Highlight Summer Celebration



Bill Marvin of the Mackinaw Area Historical Society explains the rules of the vintage base ball game to the Mackinaw Boys and Luddington Mariners. The game adheres to "gentleman's rules," for example, an umpire may overturn his decision if a player disagrees with it. The assumption is made that the player is honest when he contests a decision.

By Michael Ayala

Nearly 300 people explored the Mackinaw Historic Village at its Summer Celebration Saturday, August 1, ducking into pest houses, restored school buildings, and taking part in spirited square dancing lessons just west of Mackinaw City.

The 38-star American flag was raised over the village and an 18th century version of the "Star Spangled Banner" was played for

the crowd.

The community garden was one of many attractions offered at the historic village. Visitors learned that the garden was available for anyone to use, and the healthy crops of beans, lettuce, beets, and squash demonstrated the success the gardeners were enjoying.

A teepee-shaped bean pole stood amid the garden plots, drawing the attention of many. The structure was constructed by Mike

Teike, the son-in-law of Mackinaw Area Historical Society secretary Dorothy Krueger, using cedar branches. It is designed so that beans grown at its base will gradually crawl up it, making harvesting easier. An opening at the side of the teepee is large enough for a person to enter it and harvest beans from within.

Some gardeners have allowed anyone interested in fresh greens to enter the garden and take what they want, Mrs. Krueger said.

Most of the vegetable seeds used in the garden were provided by the Vermont Seed Company. Some of the seeds were used to create a "self-weeding" plot, where the crops grow so thickly they gather necessary sunlight while choking out any weeds that grow.

All garden plots are full this year, but people interested in using the garden can apply to the historic village board for permission next year, Mrs. Krueger said. The garden has been open for about a year, and it may be expanded if enough interest is shown.

"It's very peaceful out here; you can come out here and work on your garden and all your cares go away," she said.

Demonstrations of how clothes were made in the 1880s were held throughout the morning. Susan Workman of the historical society explained to onlookers that wool could easily be pulled apart unless it was spun. When spun through a spinning wheel, she showed, the resulting material would become resilient, perfect for use in clothes.

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Chairs for Charity Are Displayed Downtown

Local Artists Create Unique Designs; Auction Will Be August 22 in St. Ignace

By Mark Tower

St. Ignace has created the Chairs for Charity benefit this summer, which encourages local businesses to purchase wooden adirondack chairs, commission them to be painted by artists, and then auction them off to donate proceeds to local charities. Chairs are now displayed and available for use by people strolling downtown.

The auction will be Saturday, August 22, in the parking lot of First National Bank in downtown St. Ignace, and money raised will go to the St. Ignace Area Hope's

food pantry and Legacy House, a local women's shelter.

Many of the chairs have been on display since June 19 and are all hand-painted by local artists. Each chair will be fitted with a brass plate with the name of the artist and a number for the auction.

The fundraiser is sponsored by St. Ignace's Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Business Association, and unpainted chairs were provided at a reduced price by Ace Hardware.

Tom and Yvonne Della-Moretta, St. Ignace business owners

and proponents of the program, said the idea was to create something both beautiful and practical. The chairs brighten up the sidewalk and provide a place for visitors to sit and relax in front of area businesses during the summer, Mr. Della-Moretta said, before they are auctioned off for a good cause.

Local artists who have put their mark on chairs around town include Mrs. Della-Moretta, Debbie Foster, Amara Ellis, Joanne Haas, Carolyn Shaw, Wendy Belongia, Eileen Evers, Norine Rudd, Elissa Crystal, Lori Engle, Judy Fenlon, Karen Hughey, and Robin Kissinger.

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