**Good Land by the Lake**

As with most towns in Minnesota, New Brighton and the surrounding area was first inhabited by Native Americans. The Dakota (also referred to as the Sioux) and the Ojibway (commonly known as the Chippewa) came through the area on rice harvesting treks, eventually locating near Long Lake at Rice Creek. Many artifacts have been found in this location including bones, pieces of pottery, pipes and arrowheads.

Due to poor language translation and continuous warring between the tribes, there is little oral or written history of New Brighton’s early residents. It is estimated, however, that they occupied the area for approximately 15-30 years from 1755-60 until about the end of the Revolutionary War.

In the mid-1800s, came French and English settlers looking for land to homestead. As the number of settlers increased, they recognized the need for an organized settlement. In 1858, a settlement was established which included a general store, school and mission church. A government with elected officers was also formed, called Mounds View Township.

**Stockyard Industry Booms**

The most significant point in the history, which led to the founding of New Brighton, was the formation of the Minneapolis Stockyards and Packing Company in 1888. The company, which was located in what would be known at New Brighton, was formed to supply home demands and to claim a share of the growing trade. Leaders in the venture were such prominent Minneapolis people as streetcar magnate Thomas Lowry, flour millers, J.S. Pillsbury and Senator J.D. Washburn, ex-Minneapolis Mayor W.H. Eustis and industrialist W.O. Dunwoody.

The following year, the Twin City Packing Company began operation bringing more business to the area. A number of slaughtering houses, rendering works and hide houses were located in the “Butcher’s Spur” area, a unique name on the New Brighton map to this day. Other industry at the time included the Harris Forge and Rolling Company, operating two iron rolling mills; the Marston Business Block; and the Merriam-Barrows lumber office and yards.

Around the same time, New Brighton, not yet officially a city was given its name by the predominately English founders. The city was named after Brighton, Massachusetts, a cattle center serving the Boston area, which in turn was most likely named after the famed Brighton, England resort city.

**First Hotel and Church**

With the industry booming, hotels, houses and other needs of a bustling town emerged.

Shortly following the buildings of the stockyards and packing plants, numerous hotels were established. The most prominent hotel was the four story brick Cattlemen’s Hotel, also known as the Exchange Building. The hotel was ultra modern for its day and cost $35,000 to construct.

The Exchange Building (Cattlemen’s Hotel)
One year before New Brighton became incorporated the first church was erected. The white wooden building with its tall spire was a distinctive landmark perched on the hillside on Cleveland Avenue. The church served as a center of worship as well as social activity. Later it became part of the New Brighton United Church of Christ, which presently stands west of Long Lake near I-694.

**New Brighton Becomes An Official City**

The Village of New Brighton was incorporated on January 20, 1891. At that time fourteen passenger trains passed daily through the newly incorporated village. Now that the city was fully vested, there needed to be an official newspaper. The first newspaper was the *Twin City Livestock Reporter*, a daily newspaper housed at the Cattlemen’s Hotel. Ticker services allowed the paper and cattle industry to maintain contact with Boston, Chicago, and Kansas City cattle centers. Edited by George F. Wright, the paper later became known as the *New Brighton Journal*.

New Brighton’s first mayor was John T. Davies who bore the title of President, a title that continued well into the 20th century. Davies was a Welshman who owned the Transit House Hotel on what is now the southwest corner of 10th Street and 5th Avenue. A firm saloon man, he refused to sell liquor to customers whom he judged had drunk their limit. He was one of the most esteemed people in the community and known as a sensitive gentleman and humanitarian.

**A Celebration of History**

As one can tell from reading New Brighton’s early history, the presence of the stockyards transformed a sparsely populated piece of land into a thriving community. It is for this reason the citizens of New Brighton annually celebrate “Stockyard Days,” in appreciation of the industry that gave the city its beginning.

Further information can be found in *A Centennial History of New Brighton, MN*, by Gene F. Skiba, and a second & third book entitled *A Pictorial History: New Brighton, MN from 1880s-1950s*, and *...from 1950s-2000s* by Joyce Kloncz. Books are available at City Hall, Community Center, Beisswengers Hardware, and the New Brighton History Center (summers only).

To join the New Brighton Area Historical Society, send the following information and a check to:

NBAHS, P.O. Box 120624, New Brighton, MN 55112

Name ________________________________
Address ________________________________
City, State, Zip ________________________________
Phone ________________________________

Membership Types:
☐ Single, $10  ☐ Family, $15
☐ Senior, $7  ☐ Club, Business $25

_____ Yes, I’d like information about volunteering for the New Brighton Area Historical Society.