



~ Memories ~

Newsletter of the Jenison Historical Association & Museum

jenisonhistory.org

28 Port Sheldon, Jenison, Michigan
49429

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Chair - Liz Timmer [2019] 457-3708

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772-6523

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Autumn Time

The Grand Lady boat ride was last Saturday. Fortunately, it did not rain although we did have a stiff breeze. There was a nice turn out for this event.

In addition to our work on the local history room, we will soon begin decorating the museum for Christmas. Its been a fast year!

We would like to send out wishes for a speedy recovery to our Chairperson, Liz Timmer, who recently had surgery. We miss you, Liz!



JAMES GALER

Its with heavy hearts that we say good-bye to one of our most active members. Jim passed away September 7th 2019. Jim has been an active member of the JHA and will be remembered participating in the Puppet Shows and Open Houses as well as other activities. Our thoughts and prayers to his wife, Marilyn and their family.



~ 2019 Museum Open Houses ~

The Life & Times of First Jenison Christian Reformed Church

Sat. - Oct. 19 - 2 to 4pm

Holidays at the Jenison Museum

Sat. Dec. 7 - 1 to 4pm

Tues. Dec. 10 - 10 to Noon

Sat. Jan. 4, 2020 - 2 to 4pm

Also available for individuals and groups by appointment. Call the museum at 616-457-4390 or Ken Williams at 774-6523.

Membership & Volunteering

Support the local history and museum by becoming a member. A year's dues is just \$10 [Jan. to Dec.].

We are always excited to have new people volunteer. Come to a meeting or open house. We will be happy to show you what we do and

Monthly Meetings

Oct. 17 - Rosewood Church

Nov. 15 - Georgetown Library

Both meetings start at 6:45 pm.



A Meteor Lands In Jenison

Thousands of Michiganders were dazzled as they witnessed a rare mid-day light show in the form of a meteor on Friday, November 4, 1977. Newspapers across the state ran articles about the sighting which was seen from Port Huron to Muskegon and from Brighton to the Mackinac Bridge. It was described as “15 times brighter than a star,” “brilliant multi-colored fireball,” and “most beautiful sight ever seen.” A fragment, about half the size of a compact car, broke off and fell into the West Grand Traverse Bay near Northport. What an exciting experience it was!

For one local woman it evoked memories of another meteor. We found in our files a news article about Louisa [VanStratt] Cowell and the meteor that landed in her father’s Jenison field in 1898.

This was her account as recorded in the Advance Shopper, November 15, 1977: “In 1898, when I was six years old, my father was plowing. The horses suddenly became nervous and reared up, looking toward the sky. Father couldn’t calm them down. They pulled the plow out of the ground and ran, disappearing over the hill.”

She remembers that the children were playing not far from her father and the plow when “they all heard a noise and saw an object whirling in the sky. It sizzled back and forth and finally plunged into the ground near where we stood. It was the most dazzling object we had ever seen and so hot it could not be touched for some time. It was the size of a football.”

Mrs. Cowell reported that the neighbors also heard the noise and saw the object and soon gathered with horses and buggies in their field. She said that “...later reporters came from as far away as Chicago and New York.” *[I could not find any accounts from those papers]*

She went on to say “It was so beautiful, like tiny pebbles glued together of gold, silver, jewels, of all colors. We had it in our home until we sold the farm to George Vanaken. Mr. Vanaken insisted the meteor stay on the land it fell on.” She noted that the family tried later to trace the meteor but without success. The farm was located one mile south of the Jenison family cemetery which is at present-day Port Sheldon Ave. and 8th St.

In verifying this story, Virginia Timmer in 1986, tracked down Louisa Cowell’s sister, Mrs. Jessie Proos. In a letter to Mrs. Timmer Mrs. Proos wrote:

“It fell and landed near father as he was plowing, frightening him and the horses terribly. It was red hot and stayed too hot to touch for several weeks. In the meantime, people came from all over to see it. The yard was constantly filled with horses, buggies, teams and wagons and often people slept overnight in our barn rather than drive their teams long distances home on the same day.”



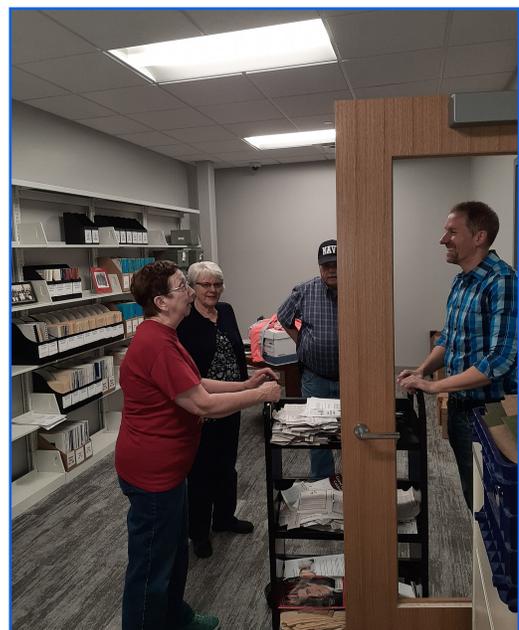
Mrs. Cowell was born to John and Jennie Vanstratt. She, with her father's permission, married in 1910 to Cecil Cowell. They had eight children. They lived for many years on Harding st. NW in Grand Rapids.

Pictured: Mrs. Louisa [Vanstratt] Cowell [1892 - 1979]

Local History Room

We have been pretty busy these last few months sorting, packing and moving our files to the new Local History Room which is located in the basement of the Township Offices. We still have plenty of work to do, however, we are so excited to have this space making it easier to research topics relating to Jenison and Georgetown Township. We don't have opening dates yet so stay tuned.

[Pictured: Mary, Yvonne, Ken and Rob]



An Interesting Letter

As we cleaned up the files for the move, we came across an interesting letter which was written by George Munro to Ysbrant Groendyke. The date of the letter was June 4, 1965 and was shared by Mr. Groendyke's daughter, Sue Ulberg VanKampen, with Virginia Timmer in 1975. Virginia's notes are in the parenthesis.

"Dear Sir,

I was quite interested in an article in last Sunday's Press about the old Jenison Mill, but _____ saw that you were 84 and worked at the mill as a boy. I couldn't resist dropping you a line. I am 80 years old and as a boy I enjoyed many weekends and summer vacations in Jenison.

My father was a miller for the Jenison brothers for many years. He was there when one of the brothers drowned in the water tank [*VT's note: he must be referring to Levi Husband, not one of the Jenison brothers*]. He left there in 1893 because a young fellow, I think his name was Jake Balkema, who worked there offered to run the mill for \$1 a day and father couldn't afford that. Later, he was again at the mill for Mrs. Husband. I know that was in 1910.

When I was a boy, the mill was run by steam and had some stone grinders. I still have my father's old pick which he used to dress them and a Pride of the Valley sack.

We also had a man by the name of Fields who did hauling. He had a boy named Harry with whom I caught frogs along the creek.

I also spent time with Bessie Husband and Alex Martin who lived in a large house across the creek [*now the Jenison Museum; Bessie was Margaret Husband's daughter and Alex was Margaret nephew*].

Father boarded at the hotel which was a large yellow house about a block from the store on the main street [*which was really Mill St.*].

I hope this doesn't bore you too much.

Yours Truly,
George A. Munro"

Why does this letter and the meteor story matter? Because it gives us a view of what every day life was before 1910. We can track history through major events such as wars, political leaders, inventions, etc. but these little stories add the flavor and color to the ordinary lives of our ancestors and the community in which they lived. Consider writing down your stories to share with your family and perhaps someday with the rest of us.