

JENISON HISTORY

May 2011

Issue No.: 2011-4

www.jenisonhistory.org

JENISON HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION
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Our mission is to learn about Jenison history, obtain artifacts relating to its history, and maintain the Jenison Historical Museum as a place to share and display our heritage.

From the Archives

These articles are a regular feature primarily from the files of Virginia Timmer. If you have a topic you would like to contribute (your family stories, etc.) please contact the editor

STORY OF THE HUSBAND- HANCHETT-TIFFANY HOUSE

Editors Note: Over time we have published stories that included bits and pieces of this information. This entire story was written by Virginia originally in July 1975 and she revised it in July 1997 and again in May 2001. The story is long, so I will be breaking it up into several parts over the coming months, but remember this story still continues.

A letter dated February 27, 1975 and written by John P. Woodford, Director of the Department of State Highways stated, "You will be pleased to know that the State Highway Commission at its meeting yesterday, approved leaving the Tiffany House in place." The shortness of the letter was not symbolic of the long struggle to save this historic landmark--an effort which began in August, 1971.

Essential to the effort was help from the right people at the right time: cooperation of the Georgetown Township Board; support from area

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At the museum



HUSBAND-HANCHETT-TIFFANY HOUSE (CONT)

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schools, residents and various historical groups, especially the Grandville Historical Commission; Willard Wichers of Holland, then a member of the State Historical Commission; various state legislators; the news media, especially Marian Stevens of the Grand Valley Advance. Support came at the eleventh hour when our cause received a final boost from W.D. Frankforter of the Grand Rapids Public Museum and Jerry Roe on the state level. Also involved were numerous State Highway Officials and the State Highway Commission, especially Highway Commission Chairman, Ellsworth V. Erickson, who made the final decision.

Members of the Jenison Historical Association are to be especially congratulated for the success of the three and one-half year effort. It was their dedication, courage, persistence and perseverance that paid off in the end.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE EFFORT TO PRESERVE TIFFANY HOUSE ON ITS SITE:

An article appeared in the August 25, 1971 issue of the Grand Valley Shoppers' Guide (now the Grand Valley Advance)

asking the citizens of Georgetown Township to volunteer to serve on a committee to save the Tiffany House from demolition. The house had been spared the fate of six others in the same block because it was used for a State Highway District Office. The group of volunteers now known as the Jenison Historical Association, met monthly and more often as necessary, working to save the Tiffany House. The effort ended successfully February 26, 1975.

Reasons given by the State Highway Department were safety factors, federal guideline of fifty feet from the edge of the on-ramp, drainage problems and aesthetic values (there would be a deep drainage ditch behind the house and a high on-ramp).

Previous to the October deadline the Michigan Historical Commission at a meeting on June 16, 1972 "passed a resolution approving the nomination of the Tiffany House as a historic home of local significance" and was given Registry Number 209.

In October of the same year, a meeting was held at the house with interested residents attending along with Willard Wichers of Holland, member of the State Historical Commission;

Barbara Roelofs and Linda DeJong of the Kent County Council for Historical Preservation (KCCHP); Grandville City and Georgetown (Jenison) Township officials; members of the Grandville Historical Commission and Georgetown Friends of the Library. The meeting was hosted by the Jenison Historical Association which grew out of the "Save the Tiffany House" committee.

Early in 1973, the Jenison Historical Association began selling artist sketches of the L & L Jenison Mill to raise money. In February, representatives of the Jenison Historical Association met with then Congressman Gerald R. Ford and a representative from Congressman Guy Vander Jagt's office. In May, the Georgetown Township Board voted in favor of funding the moving and restoration of the Tiffany House. As construction on the interchange progressed, residents and members of the Jenison Historical Association felt more strongly than ever that the house need not be moved. In August of 1973, a last ditch effort began to try to save the house on its original site. The result was that the State Highway Department remained adamant as far as moving the house was

HUSBAND-HANCHETT-TIFFANY HOUSE (CONT)

concerned, but agreed to pay the full cost of relocating the Tiffany House with the only other alternative being the wrecking ball.

Georgetown Township officials signed the contract with the State Highway Department for moving the house in March of 1974. Work was to begin in April. The State Highway Department's District Office vacated the house that they had been using as a project office.

It wasn't until June, 1974, that we learned that S.D. Solomon & Sons, road building contractors for this segment of the new interstate, claimed in a letter to the state, the first of April, that their firm owned the Tiffany House and not the State Highway Department. The dispute was settled in August of 1974 when the State Highway Department regained ownership of the house. S.D. Solomon & Sons removed their trailer near the Tiffany House where it had been for two years.

Bids were opened for the second time in October, the lowest bid being for \$49,000. No one bid the first time around. The Jenison Historical Association had gone ahead with groundbreaking ceremonies on September 5, 1974. Because the

bid of \$49,000 was twice the estimated cost to move the house, Highway Director, John Woodford, appointed highway officials to evaluate the situation and make some concessions with the hopes that the third bids would come in lower. As of November, 1974 the Jenison Historical Association had been involved with seventy people including sixteen various highway officials and had over fifty articles in newspapers, mostly the Grand Valley Shopper (*editor: now the Advance*). Bids were opened again in December and the State Highway Department decided that their recommendation to the State Highway Commission would be to award the bid of \$36,675 to a St. Joseph firm. Open ceremonies were held on December 11, 1974 for the Gerald Ford Freeway (I-196).

Another last-ditch effort gained momentum when some State Highway officials stated that they felt the house could stay where it is and had obtained federal approval. Again, letters were written to the State Highway Commission by many of the persons mentioned previously in this article. Then on Wednesday, February 26, 1975 the State Highway Commission voted to allow the house to remain on its site.

The Georgetown Township Board, who included \$8,000 for renovating the landmark, will retain ownership with the restoration process and furnishings left up to the Jenison Historical Association. The State Highway Department enclosed their ditch behind the house and landscaped along the on-ramp to I-196. Presently outside can be seen the sixty-foot-long beam from the L & L Jenison Mill [*editor: this has since been cut and moved to the basement*], the pine stump fence (the Jenisons made their fortune in lumbering), the State Historical Marker, the relocated grape arbor and the garden on the south side put in by the Riverbend Gardeners.

Thousands of Jenison third-grade school children and others have toured the house which still contains the semblance of the elegance of earlier days. The Tiffany House is a lovely old landmark of the days of the early part of the twentieth century and the craftsmanship of the inside and outside of the house is a visible remembrance and reminder of days gone by.

June: The House
July: The People



May Open House: We have enjoyed this demonstration before and continue to get requests for this popular reenactment. The LaGrande Riviere were the French fur trappers that ended up settling this area at first. Then they were replaced by the British and eventually this area became part of the United States.



July: We will once again take the riverboat tour. Tickets will be going on sale later this month...get yours by contacting or any board member or call the museum at 457-4398 and leave a message.

Check out the calendar: for other upcoming events such as the always popular 'Jenison - Then and Now' coming in September.

We look forward to seeing you, and if you would like to volunteer to help at any of these events, please contact the museum at 457-4398 or email us at info@jenisonhistory.org.

SUMMER FUN (CON'T)

Editors Note: This is still open, would love to publish some of your summer fun idea's!Let's have fun with some memories from days gone by. If you remember any of these or your family still has fun with any of the activities, or you can think of others; send in your stories, I'd love to publish them over the summer. How did your family entertain themselves over those long summer days and nights? Send them to rloving@aol.com or info@jenisonhistory.org

If you are not a dues paying member, please consider joining contact the JHA at info@jenisonhistory.org or calling the museum 616-457-4398

Volunteer Opportunities!!

Museum Cleaning: This is a big job, as you can well imagine, that needs constant attention in order to have the museum look it's best during the open houses. Contact any board member if you can lend a few hours.

Tour Guides: The school tours are a great way of teaching the children about our history and is such a rewarding experience. You won't regret being a part of this experience

for our local children. Joyce Klawiter would love to hear from you.

Community Displays: An initiative is to get some displays out into the community, possible to local banks, schools and businesses. What better way to get awareness out into the community than to bring the museum to them. Grayce Lancaster is heading up this project. She would welcome any help you might be able to offer from finding the locations to

picking display material and setting up the displays.

And the list goes on... Monthly Open Houses, Theme's for Open Houses, Inventory, Museum Maintenance, board trustee.

You can come to a monthly meeting or reach out to any board member if you would like to volunteer in any particular area.

OPEN HOUSE

The LaGrande Riviere

Come to see a reenactment of the days of the French fur traders on the front lawn of the museum

SATURDAY, May 21, 2011
2-4 PM

Donations are appreciated to help maintain the Tiffany House Museum, Jenison

FOR SALE AT THE MUSEUM

‘Bend in the River’ Book
Mill Prints and stationary

Available during any open house, or call the Museum at
457-4398

JHA TRUSTEE’S

Chair

Liz Timmer (13)

Vice Chair/Co-Historian

Ken Williams (11)

Treasurer/Editor

Ruth Lowing (11)

Social Secretary

Nellie DeLaat (13)

Recording Secretary

Bev Potter (13)

Tours/Co-Archivist

Joyce Klawiter (12)

Co-Archivist

Barb Semeyn (11)

Displays/Curator

Grayce Lancaster (12)

Maintenance/Co-Historian

Mike Timmer (13)

Trustee

Anne Foote (11)

Township Rep

Del South

(##) = year of re-election to the board

Contact Information: To reach any board member, leave a message at 457-4398.

Historical Association of Michigan

Find us on the registry of the Historical Society of Michigan
www.hsmichigan.org



Jenison Historical Association
PO Box 664
Jenison, MI 49429

2011 Meeting Schedule

Thursday, May 19 - Rosewood Reformed
Thursday, June 16 - Rosewood Reformed
Thursday, July 21 - Georgetown Library
Thursday August 18 - Georgetown Library
Thursday, September 15 - Georgetown Library
Thursday, October 20 - Georgetown Library
Thursday, November 17 - Georgetown Library
No Meeting in December, 2011

All meetings begin at 6:45 PM unless noted

2011 Museum Open House Schedule

May 21 2-4 PM LaGrande Riviere
July 16 2:30-4 PM The Grand Lady
September 17 2-4 PM Jenison Then and Now
October 15 2-4 PM
December 3 1-4 PM Holiday Open House

1st Tuesday of the month April thru November
10 AM - Noon

Themes posted on web site: www.jenisonhistory.org
Call to volunteer your time at the open houses