

JENISON HISTORY

February 2015

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www.jenisonhistory.org

JENISON HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION
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THE BEGINNING OF POSTAL SERVICES IN JENISON

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.

According to the National Archives in Washington, DC our first post office was established at Georgetown, Ottawa County, on March 24, 1852. This post office was located in the store by the mill of Stephen L. Lowing. From there the post office moved into the home of E. Franklin Bosworth, Stephen's brother-in-law, or that of his brother, Holden C. Lowing depending upon which party held control in Washington.

On January 29, 1872, the post office was established as a fourth-class unit at Jenisonville. The name was changed to Jenison on October 14, 1887.

During the Democratic administration, the post office was located in the L & L Jenison Store. When Republicans ruled, the post office was in the Ohler Brothers Store across Main Street from the Jenison Store. The railroad which came through in 1872 ran behind both stores.

Luman Jenison was postmaster in 1888 until he died in 1899. Margaret J. Husband became the postmistress in 1904 until she died in 1913.

Political switching continued until Fanny Japinga became postmistress in 1920. Fanny's husband, Peter Japinga, really ran the post office, but it was his wife who took the exam. After Fanny died in 1943, John J. Piers substituted for five months until Mrs. Lillian M. Moody was appointed.

Jenison had two horse and buggy mail routes in 1906--one 11 miles long carried by John Closterhouse and one 26 miles carried by Hiram Mackus.

In July of 1911, permission was granted to Hiram Mackus to deliver mail on route one by

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Jenison Museum Souvenir's Still Available in the Gift Shop



2014 Jenison's Mill
Souvenir Ornament

2012 Jenison Museum
Souvenir Ornament



Prices:

New 2014 design \$15 each

Previous design \$12 each

Purchase one of each for \$25

**(Order form available on web site or
stop by an open house)**



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automobile. Closterhouse and Mackus exchanged mail routes in 1915 and continued its system until 1931 when route one was split into Jenison route one and Grandville route one. Mileage was also exchanged with Hudsonville to bring both routes to an equal distance of 30 miles.

When Mackus retired in 1933 after 20 years, the routes again split with Grandville. The one route out of Jenison became 45 miles long. The 45-mile route was carried by John Closterhouse until October of 1950 when he retired after 44 years of service.

An interesting note is that from June 1, 1899 to January 25, 1900 there were 50 money orders issued at the Jenison office. From June, 1953 to January of 1954 there were 2,647 money orders issued at Jenison. This is an indication of the growth of Jenison which necessitated establishing two mail routes as was the case in 1906 when the horse and buggy was used.

As a child, Virginia Timmer, the writer of this story, remembers that in the 1930's and 1940's outgoing mail bags were hung on a pole along the tracks at Mill Street near the old hotel. Someone on the train would snatch the outgoing mail sack off the pole as the train went through and men on the train would throw incoming mail on the ground. Mail was sorted on the train. There were two passenger trains about 15 minutes apart around 5pm--one eastbound and the other westbound. Sometimes the post-master had to scout down the tracks to find the mailbags.

Betty Mackus began as a substitute clerk in 1950 under Lillian Moody. At that time, the postmaster and clerk handled all the dispatching of mail and window service from the location in the L & L Jenison Store. John Closterhouse was the one rural carrier and serviced about 459 families including part of

Allendale Township. Mrs. Mackus experienced the moving of the post office twice during her 20 years due to tremendous growth in the community.

In 1953 Harold C. Lowing became postmaster and served for 18 years. Harold's great uncle, Stephen Lowing, was Georgetown Township's first postmaster. Harold had begun his career as a rural carrier in 1950 under Lillian Moody when there was just one route.

In 1953, the post office moved to the Robert Andre building at 7450 Main Street (now Union Street). Bob Andre purchased part of lot 27 of the old Jenisonville plat from Mrs. Bessie Hanchett. When building began in 1953 trenches were discovered. The old L & L Jenison Mill race had crossed this lot at the time the mill was operated by water power. The old trenches had been filled with sawdust. The sawdust had never had a chance to dry, so it was still just as nice and bright as if it had been recently cut. There were 810 patrons and 100 boxes were installed in the new building. It was then a second class postoffice.

On August 15, 1962 a new post office was built at 401 Baldwin near Cottonwood on the historic John DePuit property next to the site of District #6 School. There were 13 employees.

On July 27, 1966, a congressional mandate to cut back federal employment resulted in all regular Saturday window services to be discontinued. Mail service would not be provided to new housing subdivisions and apartments. Saturday mail was eliminated. Because of a Canadian postal employee strike, no mail was accepted for Canada.

By 1970, Jenison had a first class post office serving about 3500 families with six rural carriers.

Changes in 1972 were the addition of two rural routes to total eight and one

more route was added in 1977. The Jenison post office became part of area mail processing. Under this plan, all outgoing mail was to be processed from Grand Rapids. The word "City" could no longer be used as an address. Local mail would be processed locally.

Nationwide 5-digit zip codes began in 1963, and by 1975 90% of mail from Jenison included a zip code. The zip code went to 9 digits in 1979. Also in 1975 it was no longer necessary to air mail letters because first-class mail went by air anyway if distance warranted it.

On July 4, 1976, people could obtain a stamped envelope denoting the Bicentennial. Also in 1976, Richard Root was awarded for compiling 19 years of accident-free service as a rural mail carrier. Root retired after 27 years. Seven other drivers had a total of 75 years without mishaps.

Because of parking and traffic problems at Baldwin and Cottonwood, and no room to expand, a new post office was built on Chicago Drive on the corner of what is now Cottonwood. It opened in July of 1987. A new zip code for the post office boxes became 49429. The post office also provided room for the motor fleet and letter carriers for Grandville.

In 1990 two mail carriers (Mac Mc Alary and Al Kuipers) retired after a combined 55 years of delivering mail for Jenison. Mc Alary had 25 years with an accident-free record for the entire period he worked at the Jenison post office. He and Kuipers said they found various items in the mailboxes such as birds and earwigs--once in awhile a homemade treat or a cold drink in the summer. Al Kuipers joined the post office in 1961. At that time, he had route one which had 600 boxes. By 1990, there were 14 routes with about 500 boxes each.

Hour changes were announced in 1994 as part of customer appreciation. The

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office opened earlier at 7am weekdays. Saturday hours were extended from 9am to 1pm.

Also, in 1994, the Jenison post office received 14 new trucks to make mail delivery vehicles uniform. This necessitated the mail patrons to raise their mailboxes to between 46-48 inches because the trucks were higher than the cars.

September 1, 1995 ended the long postal career of LaVerne De Young who put in over 31 years as a deliveryman. When he started there were only two routes, now there were 15. De Young received the million mile safe driving award given to postal employees who worked 30 years or drove one million miles without a preventable accident.

1995 was another first for the Jenison Post Office when it had for the first time in its history a specialized cancellation stamp commemorating a township event--the Memorial Day race.

In June of 1995, the Jenison post office offered a lighthouse cancellation stamp in honor of the U.S Postal Service's release of stamps of the Great Lakes lighthouses.

The following year, postmaster Joseph Michniacki was the recipient of that year's Business of the Year Award from the Jenison Chamber of Commerce in

recognition of improvement in postal services to the Jenison area. In the same year self-adhesive stamps came out and people loved them. They were especially appreciated by those involved in the

Persian Gulf War. They were credited with triggering the idea because the lick stamps would stick together and become unusable.

Winter weather was a challenge. If mailboxes were blocked with ice and snow, the mail would go back to the post office and be delivered when possible. Other options were to have a neighbor receive the mail, put up a suitable temporary receptacle, meet the carrier at your box (he was not allowed to get out of his car), or pick up the mail at the post office. Even though it was



From the front of the Post Office Boxes that stood in the L&L Jenison Store. See the entire artifact located at the Jenison Museum

required that patrons provide proper access to their boxes, in extreme conditions they had to help each other.

A special 33-cent stamp was issued to celebrate the arrival of 2000. It showed a baby ringing in the New Year.

Postmaster Joe Michniacki was honored by the Michigan branch of the National League of Postmasters as the 2001 postmaster of the year.

He was treasurer of the organization. His other activities were in the Jenison AMBUCS Chapter, the Grand Rapids/Kent Optimist Club, and Jenison Chamber of Commerce. His involvement in the community had also brought him the Benjamin Franklin Community Service Award, presented by the postmaster general of the United States Postal Service. After seven years as the head of the Jenison post office, he took over the larger Holland post office temporarily for about a year. He has been Jenison postmaster ever since.

By Virginia Piers Timmer, Historian

July, 2003

Sources:

- [The Economizer](#)
- [Grand Valley Advance](#)
- [Grand Valley Shopper's Guide](#)
- [The Grand Rapids Press](#)

Isenga, Dirk

National Archives and Records Service

Piers, John J.

Timmer, Virginia (Piers)

This information was from the research of the late Virginia Timmer, (who left us with so much information from her tireless research)



March/April 2015

Civil War

We are busy getting ready for our next open house series highlighting the Civil War, the soldiers primarily from Georgetown and Allendale who joined up with Stephen L. Lowing to form Company I of the 3rd Regiment, and some of their stories.

May/June 2015

John J. Piers

Coming up next we will feature John J. Piers, manager of Ben and Bessie Hanchett's properties in and around Jenison.



MUSEUM HAPPENINGS

Considering Membership in JHA?

If you are not a dues paying member, please consider joining to help support the Association. Dues are a bargain at only \$10 per year, you will receive monthly updates to the happenings of the Association. Contact the JHA at info@jenisonhistory.org, or call the museum at 616-457-4398. We look forward to seeing you,

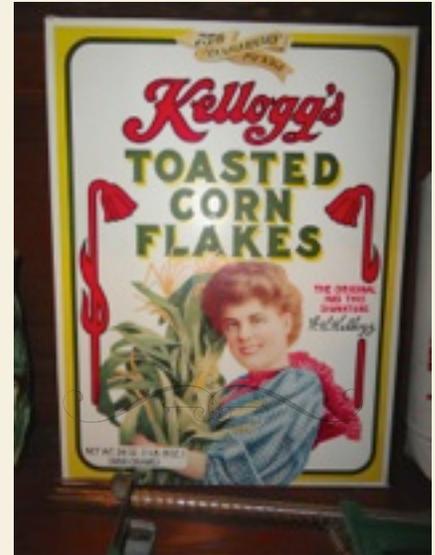
Web Site:

Keep up to date by stopping by our website for a list of the our meeting and Open House dates and times by visiting (www.jenisonhistory.org)

Restoration Fund

Stop by and see the wonderful restoration of the Garfield print, made possible by the generous donations of a few of our members.

Can you find this artifact?



In your visit to the museum, keep an eye out for this artifact. How close does it look to the current version on the shelves of our grocery store?



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.

Newsletter: Interested in helping publish? Research articles?

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.

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.

March/April Open House

March 21 and April 18, 2015

2-4 PM



Learn about Steven Lowing and Company I that marched to the Fairgrounds in Grand Rapids to join the 3rd Regiment on June 6, 1861

The Saturday Open Houses we plan to feature reenactor's dressed in period clothing. Displays will remain for the Scheduled Open Houses on the 1st Tuesday of the Month

For Sale at the Museum

Jenison Museum Note Pads	\$ 1.50
Stationary with Envelopes	\$ 2.00
Book: Bend in the River	\$10.00
Book: At the Bend	\$ 4.00
Mill Print (unframed)	\$10.00
Jenison at the Bend CD	\$10.00
Historical Prints:	
Large	\$10.00
Small	\$ 7.50
Pencils (neon colors or wood)	\$.25
Souvenir Ornament: 2014	\$15.00
Souvenir Ornament: 2012	\$12.00

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

JHA TRUSTEE'S

Chair/Membership

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457-3708

Vice Chair/Curator/Tours

Ken Williams (17)
772.6523

Treasurer/Editor

Ruth Lowing (17)
896-1447

Social Secretary

Nellie DeLaat (16)
457-1193

Recording Secretary

Linda Droog (15)
457-3016

Co-Archivist

Barb Semeyn (17)
457-9343

Maintenance/Historian

Mike Timmer (16)
531-1218

Trustee

Yvonne Williams (14)
772-6523
Gene Kort (16)
534-6769

Township Rep

Ron Villerius

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

Contact Information: Members may contact the board at the above phone numbers or leave a message at 457-4398 or info@jenisonhistory.org

Organization Membership in the Historical Association of Michigan

Find us on the registry at www.hsmichigan.org



Jenison Historical Association
PO Box 664
Jenison, MI 49429

2015 Meeting Schedule

Meetings are all open to the public and held on the **3rd Thursday** of the month at 6:45 PM at the Georgetown Library, unless noted. No meeting in December.

February 19, 2015
March 19, 2015
April 16, 2015
May 21, 2015 (watch for alternate location)
June 18, 2015
July, 16, 2015
August, 20, 2015
September 17, 2015
October 15, 2015
November 19, 2015

All meetings begin at 6:45 PM unless noted

2014 Museum Open House Schedule

Saturday, Open House schedule

March 21, 2015
April 18, 2015
May 16, 2015
June 20, 2015
July 18, 2015 (2:30 PM - 4 PM, after the Riverboat cruise)
September 19, 2015
October 17, 2015
December 5, 2015
January 9, 2016

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