

Jenison Historical Association

# JENISON HISTORY

October 2012

Issue No.: 2012-5

[www.jenisonhistory.org](http://www.jenisonhistory.org)

JENISON HISTORICAL  
ASSOCIATION  
PO Box 664  
Jenison, Michigan 49429  
TELEPHONE  
(616) 457-4398

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.

## 1ST ANNUAL COLLECTABLE ORNAMENT

**Get your 1st Annual collectable honoring Jenison History and support future JHA projects!**

Cost is \$15 each

Pick up your order at the museum during an open house, call the museum or find an order form on the web site

These will make great gifts for family and friends!



September Open House - Jenison High 'Reunion' showing items from 1969 thru 2011

We will have a booth at the **Grandville-Jenison Chamber Community Expo on October 27th**. Join us to network with the Community and local businesses.



2012 1st Annual Ornament



## JENISON MILL

*JHA Editor: I went looking for some information on the Jenison Mill and it's workings, and did not find alot on the inner workings of the mill, maybe there are others in our audience that can add to what is known. Below is a letter to the editor of the Grandville Evening Press, calling them out for missing some information in a published article. This was written word for word from a clipping of the original and was found in Virginia Timmer's' files; notes in parenthesis are hers. The date is not included, but it is estimated sometime after 1907. I have also included an excerpt on the subject taken from the 'Bend in the River' book.*

**Editor of The Evening Press:**  
 In reply to a certain article published in the Grandville News to the effect that L.& L. Jenison (meaning Lucius & Luman Jenison) were the founders of the Jenisonville properties, so-called, of those times. The articles do not mention the name of Hiram Jenison who was the eldest of the Jenison company and the prime factor and organizers of said company.

Away back in the forties (1840) the company of H. and L. Jenison was formed and its business comprised a sawmill and lumbering business which

continued up to 1863. About this time Hiram Jenison proposed the project of building a grist mill. He told the younger brothers Lucius and Luman that some parties were talking of forming a stock company to build a grist mill to be located upon the Horace Wilder property at Grandville. Lucius and Luman objected to going ahead on the ground that they knew nothing about the grist mill business and had better stick to the saw mill and lumbering. But Hiram Jenison said to them: "If a grist mill should be erected at Grandville it might draw away business from our place and hurt our town. We have a good water power and can run a grist mill cheaper than a steam mill can be run at Grandville and it will draw business here." So in 1864 the grist mill at Jenison was built.

Hiram and Luman looked after the milling business while Lucius remained on the farms as he disliked the other business and took no active part therein. Hiram Jenison was the head and front in organizing the business and known to all the people here, and he gave "the boys" as they were called, a half interest in all the property known as the H. and S.(L?) Jenison Company.

H. and S.(L?) Jenison was the company that acquired and built

what is known as the Jenisonville property. There are many old settlers yet living who know the facts that are a part of the history of the old company. Eugene Jenison and Douglas Jenison, sons of Hiram have felt grieved to learn at this late day that the memory of their father should be entirely forgotten in the articles published.

C.L.Moody, Jenison, Mich.

[The Grandville News began in 1907, so the above was sometime after that]

**Excerpt from the Bend in the River, published by the Grandville Historical Commision.** "Down the road a bit all was a bustle of activity. At the corner of Mill and the Grandville Road stood the focal point of the village, later to become the landmark of the area - the old Jenison Mill, built in 1864 at the height of the Civil War. Five stories in height, constructed of the Jenisons' own white pine, with a long portico across the front for the wagons to draw up under while they waited in the hot summer sun, with their loads of grain. The mill in season would see the farmers lined up for miles waiting their turn.

The original mill was operated by water power from Rush Creek;

## PRESIDENT GARFIELD (CONT)

this later gave way to steam; then thirty years later a diesel engine was installed. The mill had a capacity of fifty barrels daily. Only pastry flour was produced, and most of it was sold to Grand Rapids customers, including the Hekman Bakery. Often in early days there was a water level problem and the farmers might have to leave their grain and return for it later.

The steam power came first from nearby wood, timbered in the area, and later from coal and then oil. In 1949 a report noted that some of the stone grinders were still in use for grinding

buckwheat and graham flours.

To this very day the antique pump that serviced the well in front of the old mill may still be seen. *[JHA Editors note: this is currently removed while the renovations to the corner are being made]* It was a deep well that once had been a flowing well. By it hung a tin cup for thirsty travelers, with a trough for horses. Mrs. Burton Timmer tells: "I can remember in later years people driving up with containers for the good tasting water and children on their way to school would stop for a drink. This was the drinking water supply for the mill and store

employees and nearby homes."

Today it is difficult to recall all the men who labored for almost a century in the Jenison Mill. Some names are: John and Ed DePuit, John Markus, John and Abe VerStrate, Andrew Repina, Tony Doornbos, Jacob Balkema and his sons Bert and A.J., John Gibbs was the engineer when the mill was run by steam. The last general manager was John J. Piers.

*[JHA Editor: if you have any other memories or stories about the Mill, please come to the open house or call the museum to share]*

## Museum Happenings

## July-September 2012

The museum has been a hub of much activity this summer with many inquiries and other activities going on.

Ken and Yvonne Williams have spent most Tuesdays working to keep things in order and they have also worked closely with our intern, Cordy Crawford to get our inventory updated and add picture links to each item. No small task!

Several members have helped to host the many special tours; from individuals that wanted a tour to a Jenison family visiting from Oregon.

We felt the sadness of losing one of our historical landmarks, and bittersweet excitement for the changes coming in it's place.

Many of you joined us for our annual Grand Lady Riverboat tour in July. It was our most memorable yet. Thanks to Captain Bill Boynton for the resourcefulness of getting us off the sand bar and home again. And the Root Beer Floats were wonderful!

September brought us an Open House full of Jenison High School memorabilia. Thanks to Kathy Headley and her collection along with additional items from Paul Eldersma.

Kathy helped greet along with Thorval Hanson, and we spent the afternoon talking about growing up and going to school in Jenison. What fun!

We also have been working with Wendy Bachelder who does a Victorian fashion show in Grand Rapids. She has developed a program called 'A Victorian Lady from the Inside Out'. She did her debut with a special showing in late August, then on September 29th we had 2 shows. We learned about the changes in styles and all the layers of clothing and what it took to put on button boots, corsets and bustles in the 1890's.

## October Open House

Come check out the newest display on the Jenison Mill on

October 13th,  
2-4 PM.



## December: Christmas Open House

December 8th is our Christmas Open house. Come to the museum and see her decorated in all her finery for the Holiday!

**Watch the calendar on the web for upcoming events. ([www.jenisonhistory.org](http://www.jenisonhistory.org))**

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](mailto:info@jenisonhistory.org).

## Are you a member??

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](mailto:info@jenisonhistory.org) or calling the museum

616-457-4398

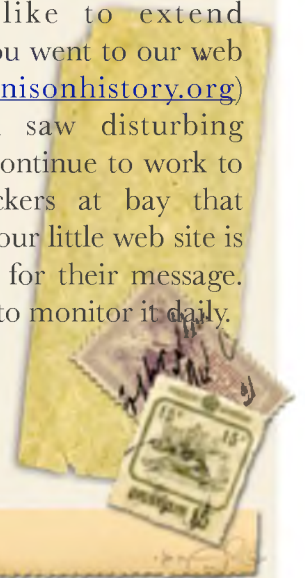
## JHA Board Elections:

There are current openings on the JHA Board and elections will be coming up next month. Please consider joining the

board, and/or volunteering a few hours a month to maintenance of the museum and learning about and preserving our Jenison heritage? Please contact a board member by calling the museum and leaving a message or send an email to [info@jenisonhistory.org](mailto:info@jenisonhistory.org).

## Web Site:

We would like to extend apologies if you went to our web site ([www.jenisonhistory.org](http://www.jenisonhistory.org)) recently and saw disturbing images. We continue to work to keep the hackers at bay that seem to think our little web site is a good forum for their message. We are trying to monitor it daily.



## 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.

## Restorations Needed

The picture shown is but one of the pictures that JHA is looking to restore. This picture is of President Garfield and his family. He came to our area to visit his brother, Thomas, who lived in Jamestown, one account says his last visit was 3 years before he was assassination in 1881. This picture of Garfield and his family, is showing signs of deterioration which can still be stopped, but the price is upwards of \$600 for just this one picture.



JHA is starting a drive to build a restoration fund with the donations earmarked for just such projects. Would you be willing to donate to help restore this picture and others in need of repair?

Come to the next open house to learn more, or you can send your donation to PO Box 664, Jenison MI 49429 and mark it for the Restoration Fund.

## 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	\$ 3.00
Mill Print (unframed)	\$10.00
Jenison at the Bend CD	\$10.00
Historical Prints:	
Large	\$10.00
Small	\$ 7.50

\*\*Coming soon our web Gift Store will be opening soon. Watch the web site.

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

## JHA TRUSTEE'S

### Chair

Liz Timmer (13)

### Vice Chair/Curator

Ken Williams (14)

### Treasurer/Editor

Ruth Lowing (14)

### Social Secretary

Nellie DeLaat (13)

### Recording Secretary

Bev Potter (13)

### Tours/Co-Archivist

Joyce Klawiter (12)

### Co-Archivist

Barb Semcyn (14)

### Maintenance/Historian

Mike Timmer (13)

### Trustee

Yvonne Williams (14)

### Township Rep

Steve Sanders

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

**Contact Information:** To reach any board member, leave a message at 457-4398 or [info@jenisonhistory.org](mailto:info@jenisonhistory.org)

## Historical Association of Michigan

Find us on the registry of the Historical Society of Michigan  
[www.hsmichigan.org](http://www.hsmichigan.org)

**We are now on Facebook, find us at Jenison History Association and become a friend.**



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### **2012 Meeting Schedule**

Thursday, October 18 - Georgetown Library

Thursday, November 15 - Georgetown Library

No Meeting in December, 2011

**All meetings begin at 6:45 PM unless noted**

### **2012 Museum Open House Schedule**

October 13      2-4 PM    New Jenison Mill Display

December 8      1-4 PM    Holiday Open House

January 12 2013   2-4 PM   2nd Holiday Open House

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

Call to volunteer your time at the open houses