

# JHA FOOTNOTES



## JHA Update

The summer has been busy with our flag display that was featured on the local news in the spring.

We are getting ready to wrap that up, and store the flags for safe keeping, after August 1 Open house.

Also, watch for tickets to go on sale soon for our fall tour on the **Grand Lady Riverboat**.

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

## Are you a Jenison Historical Association Member?

Our membership dues are still only \$10 per year to support the association. There are many opportunities for volunteering; you could train as a docent to work during open houses, assist with displays, editor of this newsletter is an open position, housekeeping and general support. Everyone finds their niche.

Come to any meeting of the Association or Open House, or contact any member. Times and dates of events are listed at the end of this newsletter.

## Preserving & Enlivening History by Marilyn Klyn Galer

*“Those who do not know their history will be condemned to relive it.”  
(Santayana)*

*“Every now and then a local community dreams of capturing the memories of the past and recording them to be treasured by its people in days to come. Those who dream this dream must be willing to invest it months and years of patient research, and a great deal of honest-to-goodness labor. There will be moments of despair, when the task seems impossible. There will be hours of sheer joy when one discovery follows upon another. There will be the disciplined chore of styling and restyling. Then, finally, will come the story for all to savor and relish and hand on. For this is how local history is enshrined.*

*Such a people are the citizens of the Grandville-Jenison community, and I am pleased that among my constituents I find a group so dedicated. The history of the area reaches back into the pioneer world, and it is from roots such as theirs that the solidity and fiber of our America grew. May the strong-hearted, forward-looking people of Grandville and Jenison gain much from this study of their past. I feel certain their traditions will be kept alive in the many happy tomorrows that await them.”*

*(President Gerald R. Ford, forward from Bend in the River, The Story of Grandville and Jenison, Michigan)*

The history and “herstory” of recording history and enlivening the past for the communities of Grandville and Jenison began as a part of a need for artifacts, materials, and primary sources in local classrooms.

In 1963, Esther Huyser Kunnen and Marilyn Klyn Galer were searching for local historical materials to present to students at South Elementary School in Grandville and found none. That summer they decided to research the histories of both Grandville and Jenison and soon found a list of local residents who were willing to share their memories, diaries, scrapbooks, pictures and innumerable other primary sources with the teachers. Hours, days, months, and years of researching, interviewing, and documenting ensued. Soon the project captured the interest of local newspaper writer Barbara Roberts who lead them to more primary sources such as city, township, county, and state records. Newspaper articles of all the local and state editions were valuable sources. Other city, state, county, township and local records of all kinds, even maps, were used to document research. The bibliography of all of these sources is located on pages 327-330 in Bend in the River, the Story of Grandville and Jenison, Michigan.

As the project grew, interest multiplied and many residents of Jenison and Grandville got deeply involved; their dedication never waned. Chief collaborators with Esther Huyser Kunnen and Marilyn Klyn Galer were Virginia Piers Timmer, Robert and Marian Avink, Patricia Carlson, Suzette Groendyke Ulberg and attorney William S. Wilson. Many other citizens, in both communities, became dedicated researchers and are all listed in Bend in the River, The Story of Grandville and Jenison, Michigan.

In 1969-70, both Esther and Marilyn returned to teaching and parenting full-time and realized they would need more support to publish such a vast body of research, so they engaged the help of Father John W. McGee, a historian/priest serving in Grandville. Writing and restyling began in earnest about 1970 with the goal of producing a local history book. Father McGee served as Editor while the three shared the writing of the main body of the manuscript. Other researchers wrote portions of the final chapters. Angie Zylstra proofread and typed the final draft.

Attorney William S. Wilson prepared a meeting with William B. Eerdmans of the Eerdmans Publishing Company in Grand Rapids who immediately signed on as publisher. The Grandville City Council and Georgetown Charter Township Board offered to financially back the project. The book, Bend in the River, The Story of Grandville and Jenison, Michigan was published in 1973 and was a complete financial success on its own. Both communities embraced the history over the years that followed. A student version called Jenison At The Bend was later developed from the original history by a group of Jenison

Continued next page

teachers including Pat Carlson, Kenyon Williams, and Marilyn Klyn Galer; and is being used in the Jenison schools to this day.

As a result of heightened community interest, the Grandville City Council officially established The Grandville Historical Commission on June 11, 1971. Appointed as its first Chairpersons were Esther Huyser Kunnen and Marilyn Klyn Galer. Its total membership is listed on the title page of Bend in the River. Virginia Piers Timmer was its first Secretary. The city council was officially promoting the project from then on.

Simultaneously, Jenison citizens' interest grew accordingly with a group of residents formed by the Georgetown Township Board as early as October 10, 1966; Virginia Piers Timmer was an appointed member of the early group. Later members of this group organized a "Save the Tiffany House Committee" headed by Gerald Scholma and John DeWinter; other volunteers on that committee are listed on pages 302-304 of Bend in the River. On June 16, 1972, the Michigan Historical Commission declared the house, now known as the Jenison Museum, a state historical site. New enthusiasm and more volunteers stepped up to restore the historic home, built by the Jenisons' bookkeeper Margaret Husband in about 1903, in honor of the Jenison twin brothers Lucius and Luman and their family.

Restoration of the house now known as the Jenison Museum, located at the corner of Port Sheldon and Main Streets, involved refinishing the original woodwork and floors, appropriately wallpapering and preserving all other structural features inside and out. Original pictures taken by succeeding residents were used to authenticate donated furnishings. Many local citizens interested in their own local history worked for years gathering furnishings and artifacts; this detailed work continues to this day. They were members of the Jenison Historical Association under the governance of the Georgetown Charter Township Board. From the beginning, Virginia Piers Timmer led the preservation and restoration, and soon organized the Jenison Historical Association and its by-laws were written.

Local citizens donated the furnishings and artifacts which are catalogued. The group continues researching, gathering, and organizing materials for presentation at regularly scheduled open houses and programs of all types to maintain the living museum concept. This is also done at the Grandville Historical Museum located in the basement of Grandville City Hall. That facility was established as early as 1973 when the history was published.

Volunteers faithfully assume the responsibilities of making this a living, educating facility holding monthly meetings, frequent open houses; presenting programs, educating school children and visitors to the local history.

Early in its institution, the Jenison Historical Association and Museum has been favored by constant service to the community through the efforts of Ken and Yvonne Williams, the Timmer family, members of the Lowing family and so many others, all listed in the membership of the Jenison Historical Association. These multigenerational volunteers serve as researchers, office holders, newsletter writers, docents, puppeteers, artists, curators, decorators, cleaners, carpenters, all mutually supporting each other in this endless labor of love for their community and its living.

*Sources for this article: Grand Rapids Press; Grand Valley Shoppers Guide; The Grandville Almanac; Bend in the River The Story of Grandville and Jenison, Michigan*

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### In the news

#### "BURGLARY AT JENNISON

MAY 15, 1888 — Last night burglars broke into the office of Luman Jennison, blew open the safe and secured about \$1,000 cash and a check for \$1,200, payable to bearer. There is no clew, but the parties are supposed to be the same as broke into L. M. Wolf's store at Hudsonville last week."

*Telegram-herald, Grand Rapids, Mich., May 16, 1888, page 1*

## Upcoming Open Houses

### It's a Grand Ole Flag,

We are still highlighting the flags thru the August 1 Open House.

**July 15 (1 to 4 PM)**

**August 1 (10 A.M. to noon)**

### Working and Cruising the River

We don't have regular open houses scheduled after August 1, but we will be busy preparing for our next themed display

**See schedule on back page**

If you would like to schedule a private tour, please call Ken Williams (see Trustee list for phone)

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### Jenison Museum Souvenir's

Check out our Gift Shop for many Jenison History items and help support the Association.

Ornaments are \$15 each or buy both for \$25. These make great gifts,

Other items include pictures, stationery, pencils. Bend in



Find us on Facebook at Jenison History Association and become a friend.

## JHA Trustee's

### Chair

Liz Timmer (2019)  
457-3708

### Vice Chair/Curator/Tours

Ken Williams (2017)  
772.6523

### Treasurer/Editor

Ruth Lowing (2017)  
540-4709

### Social Secretary

Nellie DeLaat (2019)  
457-1193

### Recording Secretary

Linda Droog (2018)  
457-3016

### Archivist

Barb Semeyn (2017)  
457-9343

### Maintenance/Historian

Mike Timmer (2019)  
531-1218

### Trustee

Yvonne Williams (2017)  
772-6523

Gene Kort (2019)  
534-6769

### Township Rep

Becky Steele

(####) = year of term expiration

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

### Organization Membership

### Historical Society of Michigan

Find us on the registry of the Historical Society of Michigan

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

## 2016 Association Schedule

### Museum Open House Schedule

#### It's a Grand Ole Flag:

July 15 - 1 to 4 PM

August 1 - 10 AM to Noon

#### Working & Cruising on the River

September 5 - 10 AM to Noon

September 16 - 1 to 4 PM

October 3 - 10 AM to Noon

October 21 - 1 to 4 PM

#### Grand Lady Riverboat Ride (watch for ticket availability)

October 14 - Noon to 2 PM

Check out the web site for the entire 2017 schedule

### 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. Dates of the 2017 year are:

January 19

February 16

March 16

April 20

May 18 (location Rosewood Reformed Church)

June 15 (location Rosewood Reformed Church)

July 20

August 17

September 21

October 19

November 16

>> No meeting in December

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JENISON HISTORICAL  
ASSOCIATION

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PO Box 664  
Jenison, MI 49428

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