The Weigh Station

By Carol Lewis

Between 1920 and 1960, built and utilized by Cherry Growers, a cherry processing company, the Weigh Station on Old Mission Peninsula served as a local receiving station for the Peninsula’s fruit growers. Previously, growers drove each truckload of fruit to Traverse City, where they often waited in long lines before being unloaded. As a result of this delay, the cherries picked into lugs by migrant families began to rot, becoming unsuitable for sale. Thus, the Weigh Station, at the corner of Peninsula Drive and Seven Hills, was built to serve the needs of the Peninsula fruit growers.

The height of the platform was set at that of a semi-truck’s flat bed, allowing growers to bring in their load, remove their cherry lugs, get their weigh slip, and be on their way, while the cherries waited for the truck from Cherry Growers, which would back up to the platform, and then carry the load into town.

The original scale, which weighed the lugs, can still be viewed where it was built into the floor on the western side of the platform. The wooden dollies, which rolled the cherries from trucks and tractors to the scale, are still displayed. A jack raised the skid, a non-wheel cart, and moved the lugs from the scale to the place where they would be stacked on the platform. Lorey Kroupa relates that the lugs were piled to the ceiling, waiting for the truck from Cherry Growers to arrive.

Frigid Foods, based in Suttons Bay, also bought the cherries. Once the growers re-

From the President’s Desk

This is an exciting time for the Old Mission Peninsula Historical Society. As an organization we are preparing to take on a major new responsibility: the Dougherty House. We will be involved in several different capacities, including fund raising toward its purchase and repair, and once title has passed to the township, as custodians, much as we are for the Hessler Log House. The Dougherty House is a prize historical structure, one many members of the community have sought to preserve. And now that goal is within reach.

The township, along with the conservancy is raising money toward the first installment in the purchase agreement. We will assist in that process as we can. The title must pass through probate before the purchase can be completed. That should happen within the next year.

I have asked Bob Dean to form a committee to handle our various obligations concerning the Dougherty House. Bob has recruited Bill Cole, Bob Rosi, and Gordon Haywood to serve as the nucleus of his committee. He envisions a physical structure and a fund raising subcommittee. I am sure he will be happy to accept ideas and help from Society members.

In addition to our involvement in the Dougherty House, we are dealing with other issues. We have filed the forms necessary to re-establish our incorporation status; we have verified that we retain our 501C standing with the IRS; our bylaw committee, chaired by Velma Austin, should soon have a draft ready for review by the membership; and we have secured permission from the township to meet in the town hall. A number of members have suggested that we meet throughout the winter instead of taking our usual break, and this is an issue we should discuss fully.

All of these activities demonstrate our commitment to fulfilling our mission: to preserve the history of Old Mission Peninsula, and to make that history a vital part of our present and future.

—Stephen Lewis

“Every old man that dies is a library that burns.”
—Amadou Hampate Ba
African Ethnographer

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Lighthouse Keeper Jerome Pratt’s Day Off in the 1870s

By Gini Browne
[This article follows up on last issue’s story on the Old Mission Point Lighthouse. Gini plans a third installment.—ed.]

Jerome Pratt’s world at the northern tip of the Old Mission Peninsula was not the isolated, lonely existence of a lighthouse keeper. Since all was in order at the lighthouse, he hitched up and jostled along the two rut that took him past his nearest neighbor’s farm house only two miles away as he made his way to a thriving community four miles distant in which he held forty acres with house, barn and outbuildings. As he sat in the driver’s seat on a wooden wagon along side his wife, his children might have been seated on an upholstered rear seat.

His first stop might be at his house on the Old Mission Road across from school and store to drop off his family. Or, they might have turned east off the Brinkman road into the village for a stop at the blacksmith for shoeing or repairs; the cooper to pick up a barrel; the shoemaker if some needed fitting for shoes or boots at the store that had served the village since 1853. They would pass the cider mill, saw mill, and ice house, vinegar factory, or apple drying establishment.

They would, indeed, be intrigued by the latest arrival of commercial and fishing vessels docking at the deep water pier. From some ships, excited family, friends, visitors, and vacationers would disembark, clattering onto the dock, happy to be landed in the safe harbor. Some would be seeking refuge from the heat of southerly cities. Others would make their way to the Old Mission Inn, which opened its doors to guests in 1869. Still others would wend their way to summer homes newly built or being built by busy crews of carpenters. All enjoyed the cool, fresh breezes wafting over the land from across the deep cold waters of the bay, providing a refreshing respite from the oppressive summer heat of the cities. And some of those stepping onto the dock might be returning from shopping or medical or dental visits in Elk Rapids. Finally, there were those who arrived for meetings, dances, entertainment at Maccabee’s Hall or the Grange Hall.

Surely, before they pulled into the forty acre homestead, they would have hitched up the horses at the Old Mission General Store (established 1855) to pick up household goods, grocery items, clothing, tools, and candy. Listening to the latest news was also a reason to dally.

A lot was going on in the village that had grown from an Indian settlement in 1839 when Reverend Peter Dougherty, looking to establish a mission, beached his canoe on the shore of a land heavily forested and wild. What greeted Dougherty was essentially a frontier. Old Mission village was founded by Dougherty and his family, along with an Indian blacksmith, a farmer, and a carpenter as directed by the United States government in an effort to acculturate the Native Americans, to transform them into Christian farmers. So from a church, a school, a frame house in 1840-42, Old Mission had grown to a full community by the 1870s when Jerome became first lighthouse keeper. And, even though the 1854 census determined a population of 216 for the Peninsula, we might assume that most were settled in and around the village as evidenced by Old Mission School being designated as District One. By 1895, the Peninsula census cited a population of 850. The Old Mission Jerome and his family visited on the lighthouse keeper’s day off in the 1870s was a beehive of business, building, shipping, farming, fishing, and neighborhood activity.

“His first stop might be at his house on the Old Mission Road across from school and store to drop off his family.”

Undated Old Mission Cider Mill, southeast corner of Old Mission Road and Swaney Road

Newsletter Staff
Gini Browne
Evelyn Johnson
Mary Johnson
Carol Lewis
Stephen Lewis, Editor
Flo Schermerhorn
Grace Fouch: Peninsula Centenarian

By Flo Schermerhorn

he youngest of four children, and the only girl, Grace was born May 28, 1904 in a house across from the present Ogdensburg United Methodist Church on Center Road. Living for the past three years at Grand Traverse Pavilions, she has much to tell about her many years on the Peninsula.

Grace remembers when Center Road was not much more than a wide, gravelled path; when there were three stores in Old Mission Village in the 30s; when the numerous farms had livestock and chickens; when cherry and apple orchards spread throughout the Peninsula; when the docks at Bowers Harbor and Old Mission bustled with activity; and when resorts and cottages lined the shore.

Grace says her parents, Milton and Catherine Gore, let her grow up pretty much the way she wanted. Living on a farm, and having three brothers along with neighborhood friends, offered her a lifestyle she still cherishes.

She helped with chores, always picking cherries during the harvest and working the family’s big garden. After a day’s work of cherry picking, Grace, her brothers, and farm workers looked forward to singing. She played guitar accompaniment and, with an impish smile, adds that they played tricks on each other.

In her leisure time, she never cared much for dolls, preferring to read and play baseball. (She continues a true baseball fan, watching televised games.) Grace was somewhat spoiled by having her own horse and buggy, which she often drove to Omena and Northport to visit relatives.

Her family went to church a lot, not only for Sunday services but other activities as well, such as the box socials, which were especially entertaining. The annual church Christmas program was one of her favorites. In her adult life, Grace continued a close church affiliation, attending church regularly, meeting with the Ladies Aid Society, offering assistance to shut-ins and volunteering her help when asked.

Grace attended the Ogdensburg school through the eighth grade, then completed her high school studies, in Traverse City boarding with a family in exchange for help around the house. She returned to her beloved Peninsula every summer, happy to be caught up in all the activities of family, friends, and farm. She graduated from Traverse City Central High School in 1922.

Grace married Clifford Fouch in 1923. They went to Grand Rapids on their honeymoon. With a laugh, she likes to tell how the train hit a cow along the way, causing quite a commotion. Clifford and Grace continued to farm next to what is now Mission Hills, and raised their children, Howard, Virginia, and Maretta.

After World War II, she and Clifford spent most of the winter in Miami, Florida where they had a house, but Grace didn’t like it. Clifford passed away in 1980, and Grace returned to the farm.

Grace doesn’t think about getting older. She has just kept on going and didn’t stop driving until she was 94. Although her hearing isn’t what it used to be, her wit, wisdom and spirit are undiminished.

New Board Members

Compiled by Mary Johnson

STEPHEN LEWIS, President, is a retired English Professor, and author of college texts, historical novels, poetry and short stories. I am originally from New York, where I met and married Carol Johnson. Our 16 year old daughter, Danielle, is a junior at St. Francis, and I have two married daughters in New York. We have one grandson, and two grandchildren on the way. We moved to Old Mission in 2002 and live in a house built in 1909 by Rob Swaney, near where Carol grew up.

I hope to continue developing the society’s presence in the community, begin to coordinate with other local historical organizations, work on our current preservation projects, help Carol maintain the Hessler Log Home, involve the historical society the in the township’s purchase and restoration of the Dougherty house, and promote a greater historical consciousness, with special attention to school children.

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By Joanne Cole

For the second year, the Old Mission Peninsula Historical Society hosted a series of events to mark Log Cabin Day on Sunday, June 27. The Old Mission celebration was held in conjunction with the statewide Log Cabin Day, sponsored by Log Cabin Society of Michigan. Ninety log cabins across the state were open to the public as part of the day.

The Hessler Log Home, located on the grounds of Lighthouse Park at the tip of Old Mission Peninsula, provides visitors with insight into life in nineteenth century northern Michigan. The home was built by Joseph and Mary Hessler in 1858 on land now occupied by the Underwood Farms Subdivision. It was rescued, relocated near the lighthouse, and restored by the combined efforts of Walter Johnson, Julieanne Meyer, John Austin, Hedy and Wally Quick. Although furnishings are visible year-round through the cabin’s windows, visitors are only allowed to walk inside on Log Cabin Day.

As an added attraction the nearby Old Mission Lighthouse was opened to the public. Visitors climbed up to the lighthouse tower to see the magnificent views of Grand Traverse Bay, beach and surrounding grounds. A constant flow of lighthouse enthusiasts, both young and old, made the climb, carefully removing their shoes before entering the back door of the now private residence.

Entertainers and historical interpreters provided additional diversion. Kathleen Skelcuy, Helen Herzberg, and Mike Beveridge played button boxes (accordions) and violin. Jim Ribby dramatically recited Civil War era poetry, evoking images of thundering horse hooves and booming cannons. Steve Drake, a flint knapper, demonstrated how arrow heads were made and allowed children to try the ancient skill. Deb Downing portrayed a Civil War nurse, giving history lessons on medical care and bandaging the “wounds” of young attendees; Barb Downing modeled civil war era clothing. Richard Hayes, President of Grand Traverse Genealogy Society offered information regarding local family trees.

In addition to the entertainers, several women demonstrated 19th century folk art, including weaving by Carol Salerno, Donna Rutterbush, Chris Boals, Cathleen Gardner and daughter, Belinda Cooper, Tracy Moyer and her daughter Rachel; loom construction by Martha Zehn; jewelry making by Maureen Simmons; quilting by Jackie Putnam; rug hooking by Alaina Trout; chair caning by Patty Rudolph; and wool spinning by Laura Johnson. The Maritime Heritage Alliance displayed the Gracie L., a reproduction of a Mackinac boat that sailed back and forth in the nearby waters 150 miles.

Photos by Jane Boursaw

Marissa Boursaw tries the table loom

Visitors enjoy horse drawn wagon tour

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New Board Members

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BOB ROSSI, Vice President, spent his summers at Illini Orchards cottages located off Old Mission Road on the West Bay, and eventually built a cabin in 1973, and moved there in 1998. My wife Penny and I live on a farmstead that dates to 1870. We have preserved many of the original buildings. I joined the Old Mission Historical Society after seeing many changes on the Peninsula, and learning from Walter Johnson that little was known or written concerning Illini cottagers. The Society should take an active lead in matters of historical interest throughout the entire Old Mission Peninsula.

WILLIAM COLE, Treasurer, is married to JoAnn and has two children and three granddaughters. As a retired professor of mathematics education from Michigan State University, I co-authored elementary math series, first year algebra books and community college algebra texts. I have been a property owner in Old Mission since 1994, and a permanent resident of Old Mission since 2000.

My goals for the historical society are to continue historical information talks/discussions at monthly meetings, and initiate and aid in the preservation of historical heritage of the Old Mission Peninsula, increase active membership, assume leadership role in and the acquisition and preservation of selected historical sites on the Old Mission Peninsula and provide educational activities in support of the history of the Old Mission Peninsula.

JACKIE BURNS, Secretary, has ancestors on two sides of her maternal family, the Brinkmans, that were original settlers in Old Mission; therefore I have been able to enjoy my favorite place in the whole world -- Old Mission-- every summer of my life, as well as all year round since 1999 when I retired from working on the railroad.

I am a wife, mother, grandmother and church organist, and I enjoy swimming, playing bridge, and playing the piano and organ. Goals that I have for the Old Mission Historical Society are: educate the population on historical information, and preserve photos, papers, stories and buildings that have historical value.

The Weigh Station

Continued from page 1

ceived their weigh slip, they then drove to Suttons Bay to the Frigid Foods Office to get their pay.

In the 1960s, with the change-over to cherry shakers and catching frames, which could be operated by a crew of four to six people at the speedy rate of approximately one to five minutes per tree, cherries were dropped directly into 1,000 pound tanks of cold water, reducing the fruit’s skin temperature and thus slowing rot. These huge tanks far exceeded the capacity of the scale at the Weigh Station, and operations there were discontinued. Instead, it became a market for the Lorey Kroupa family, who continue to own and operate it, selling flowers, fruit and vegetables.

Frigid Foods pulled out of the business when it began to get all of its needs filled from the farms on the Lelanau Peninsula, where the company was based. Cherry Growers went bankrupt. The Weigh Station scale was put on the auction block. And Louie Gray, Lorey Kroupa’s grandfather, who had worked as the weighmaster, attended the bankruptcy sale with five hundred dollars in his pocket. He bid on the scale, got it, and brought it back to the stand, where it remains today as a historic marker.

In 1982, Lorey Kroupa, with the assistance of Governor Bill Milliken, had the Weigh Station, and the attached four acres, placed on Michigan’s Historic Register.

Log Cabin Day

Continued from page 4

years ago. Ed Brown, Rich Brauer and Bernie Kroupa were instrumental in transporting the Gracie L to Old Mission. In addition to the events at Lighthouse Park, a Heritage Tour was held in the village of Old Mission. Visitors could take a Victorian Carriage ride or walking tour of Mission Road. The Congregational Church, Old Mission Inn, Dougherty House, Altenburg-Pratt House, General Store, Old School House, and Log Church were featured. Bob Schermerhorn and Fred Stoye provided commentary and historic insight on the carriage rides; volunteers from the Old Mission Historic Society were also stationed at each site to answer questions.

An estimated 1500 people visited the Old Mission Peninsula and participated in Log Cabin Day events, far exceeding the expectations of the planning committee, and well above attendance at any of the 90 cabins open across Michigan that day. Thanks to the many members of the Historical Society who volunteered their time and labor to make this Log Cabin Day the success it was. Plans are already underway to hold a bigger and better Log Cabin day in 2005.
Where Is It?

This two story barn, built in 1910 by the Jamieson family sat on 40 acres of a cherry farm and held cattle, pigs and farm equipment. Later, it was cleaned and housed migrant workers. Do you know where this barn is?

THE ROCK
The mystery rock is in the front yard of the K. Frank family, four houses south of Londolyn Road on Center Road. This big old stone has a hollow on the back side of it. Indians used to come across from Elk Rapids to grind their flour in it. The Frank family have found arrowheads and stones most likely used for the grinding.

—Evelyn Johnson

Old Mission Peninsula Historical Society
POB 115
Old Mission, MI 49673

Join Us!
Membership Dues $5

Please make checks payable to Old Mission Peninsula Historical Society and fill out this form and mail to us at POB 115, Old Mission, MI 49673.

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