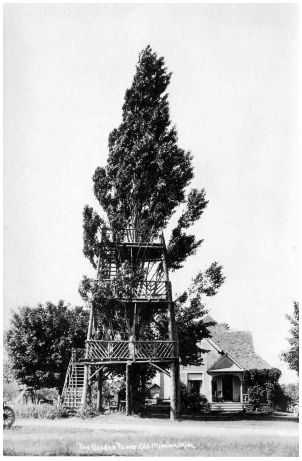
Echoes Echoes Echoes

Newsletter of Old Mission Peninsula Historical Society Vol. 1, No. 1 April, 2004

The Golden Tower

BY CAROL LEWIS

Windsor Golden, from Ogdensburg, New York, acquired farmland through the Homestead Act. In 1861, through a Patent Deed signed by Abraham Lincoln, he secured 80 acres along Eimen Road -- a few yards north of what later became Gleason & Company cherry processing plant, currently the Boat Works. When he died each of his three daughters inherited a part of their father's homestead. Ida, receiving the Eimen Road corner, married Francis Lardie, and in memory to her father, built the Golden Tower. The house on the property is still in use.



The Golden Tower

Elaborately constructed around a poplar tree near the house, the tower was reported to be 35 feet high, and sported three platforms. The view east went all the way to Elk Rapids.

From the Golden Tower Looking East Down Eimen Road

THE OLDEST ORIGINAL BARN ON OLD MISSION PENINSULA THAT IS STILL STANDING AND USED IS THE ALFRED (BUD) KROUPA BARN. IT WAS BUILT IN 1859. THIS BARN IS ON NEATAWANTA DRIVE.

—SUBMITTED BY EVELYN JOHNSON

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

History. All those dates, all those names that were too difficult to remember and to spell. When we were younger, we thought we would never use anything we learned about the past. How wrong we were!

A wise man once said, "We grow old too soon and too late smart." It is now that we must learn from the past so we don't destroy the future for our children and grandchildren. We have driven down many roads in the past and we recall all the good times we have had and places we have been. There was that special house or that wonderful field, the view from that hill, or the smell from that special store. We want to experience these remembered places and sensations again and again.

As we enter the 21st century, here in our own little corner of the world, we will continue to relive our past. Our Old Mission Historical Society has done much to bring the past to life. I believe we are on the verge of doing many wonderful things to help preserve this special area for generations to come. In doing so, we will educate the people of this area, and show them how life used to be lived and how it can be in the future.

So where do we start? Begin by getting involved. Join a club, an organization, and, of course, continue active participation in our society. Getting involved creates an awareness of what is happening around us. We learn to help and be helped. In doing so, we are not only bettering our community, we are making this little corner of the world a better place to live.

—*FRED STOYE*

Meeting Schedule

April 1st	Evelyn and Carl Johnson
May 6th	Velma and John Austin
June 3rd	American Legion Hall
June 27th	**Log Cabin Day/Heritage Tour**
July	No Meeting
August 5th	Gini Browne
September 2nd	Arlene and Bob Dean
October 7th	Flo and Bob Schermerhorn
November 4th	Carol and Stephen Lewis

1870—THE NEW LIGHT AND ITS KEEPER

BY GINI BROWNE

It didn't dominate as does a Norman stone cylinder on a rocky promontory—stalwart sentry facing fierce winds and ferocious waves. Our lighthouse was anchored on posts in the sand dune, nestled on the bank like a pioneer church with painted clapboard siding and wood-shingled roof. Its unique square, wooden tower housed a third order Fresnel lens, not a bell, that beamed seventy feet above and across the wide, rocky shoal that gradually sank on three sides beneath the water to deep blue depths.

It nested on the northern tip of the eighteen mile long peninsula stretching between two bays—halfway to the arctic pole. It was commissioned by the United States Congress in 1859 to assure safer navigation around the dangerous shallows. Increasing traffic to an emerging settlement of aspirant entrepreneurs and settlers at the south end of the west bay required a guiding light. By 1870, the number of wrecks and vessels that sailed or steamed that way was sufficient to warrant the construction of the Old Mission Lighthouse. It opened its doors to the first lighthouse keeper, who assumed the demanding, vital role of vigilant guardian of the first beams sent to assure safe passage to seafarers.

Old Mission Lighthouse Late 19th Century

Jerome Mortimer Pratt was fifty-two years old when he received his appointment from the United States Lighthouse Service Board with an annual salary of $500-600 ($45-50 a month). That was not a bad income considering that eight dollars paid his property tax on forty acres in Old Mission Village. It, also, was two and a half times the minimum wage. His wife and children could live with him free of charge, whereas only relatives were allowed as guests. Jerome would have to have been a disciplined and responsible man. Each day from April 15th through November 30th, he would climb the seventy foot tower one half hour before sunset and remain vigilant through the night until a half hour after sunrise. It was his job to ensure that the kerosene light sent its beam out to passing ships without fail.

Adjacent to the tower (one flight down) was the large "mechanical room" in which he had the means to service the light. He kept the brass shiny, the lenses sparkling, and the mechanism that drove the light lubricated. Another, smaller room, also above the living quarters, held supplies, which he hauled up from the abundant stores of flammable fuel kept in the brick outbuilding. There were windows in the tower surrounding the light that he kept spotless. The wick in the Fresnel lamp had to be kept trimmed and smoke free, or replaced. If any of these chores were neglected, a vessel might not make safe passage, and lives lost.

One joy of this demanding job must have been watching the sun paint its way across an evening or morning sky; or seeing the moon's shimmering beam on dark water, and northern lights with eerie dances below bright stars in an otherwise black night. He watched birds home to nest or wild life prowl the shore as day broke. Seventy feet up in a glass enclosed space gave a remote, solitary view of great expanses of clear cut, treeless land and open water.

The day was fresh when Jerome descended, his night's work done, to breakfast cooked on a wood fire and a welcome cup of coffee, then to the daily demands of maintaining the house and grounds. He had horses to

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Welcome to Our Newsletter

This is the inaugural issue of the Old Mission Peninsula Historical Society Newsletter. We will welcome your comments and your suggestions.

Staff
Gini Browne
Evelyn Johnson
Carol Lewis
Stephen Lewis, Editor
Flo Schermerhorn
Fred Stoye

This issue includes what we intend to be regular features: Carol Lewis's article on the Golden Tower is the first of stories to be drawn from the Walter Johnson Memorial Library; each issue will include a message from our president; Gini Browne's lighthouse story is the first of two parts; the picture below is the first of a "What or Where Is It" feature.

Our banner artwork is based on the charcoal sketch drawn by Terilee Johnson, representing the ship, Madeline, which housed the original school. as well as the teepees the first white visitors would have encountered. Our title "Echoes" is meant to suggest our attempt to preserve our past and bring it into our present.

An Old Fashioned Rat Trap

(*The following instructions were found in a yellowed newspaper of uncertain age and provenance.)*

"The best rat trap I have ever used is a large pumpkin cut in two, about a third of the way from the end. I bore a 13/4" hole near the other end, put a rat trap in the pumpkin, and put the pumpkin together with two or three nails. If the pumpkin is large I put in two or three traps. The rats will go in to eat the seed and will get in the trap. I have caught as high as there large rats at a time in large pumpkins. Rats go wild over pumpkin seeds."

The Hessler Log House

BY FLO SCHERMERHORN

Believed to have been built in the early 1850s by Joseph Hessler, the large pine timbers used in the cabin's construction were supported by broad flat boulders at each corner. It would seem that help was needed to cut, hew and move such massive materials, and it was likely that assistance was provided by William Holdsworth and Benjamin Adsit, two men who lived in the area. A single door, two windows, and a shingled roof completed the cabin.

It is not known whether Joseph and his wife, Mary, had children, or how long they lived on the peninsula. No records after 1862 indicate their residency. At one time, a bull was housed in the cabin, and in the 1950s and 1960s, it served as migrant quarters.

Its original location is thought to have been near the shore of the former Jerome Burton (now Underwood) farm, but was moved farther inland when a road was built. It was moved to the park in 1992, and has been restored and maintained from that time by members of our society. In 1999, it was placed on the state register of historic sites by the Michigan Historical Commission.

The society is indebted to the following who have volunteered much energy and countless hours for the restoration, preservation, and maintenance of the Hessler Log House: ***Walter and Mary Johnson, Chuck and Julianne Meyer, John and Velma Austin,*** *and* ***Wally and Hedy Quick.***

The society welcomes new committee members: ***Carol Lewis****, chairperson, and* ***Stephen Lewis, Fred Stoye, Paul and Jackie Burns,*** *and* ***Bob and Arlene Dean****.*

The New Light and Its Keeper

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tend, for they were his transport; wood to chop and stack, as that was his fuel for heat and cooking. He may have drawn water from the outside well and brought bucketsful into the kitchen for household needs. Perhaps it was necessary to rest or he may have gone into the "watching room" to read. He would periodically look up from his desk to note the passage of ships and down again to record entries in the log he was required to keep. On his first day, he recorded the sighting of five ships, and five years later, he entered 175 vessels—evidence of the growing commerce of the area.

"One joy of this demanding job must have been watching the sun paint its way across an evening or morning sky…"

As he walked around the lighthouse, perhaps to view it from the shore, he would descend one flight of steps onto a sandy landing held level by large timbers, then down another set of steps to the broad beach below. He would assess paint on the clapboards, the wood shingles on the roof, and note needed repairs. If visitors happened by, it was his duty as a representative of the United States government to be civil and attentive . If all was in order, the day was his to do as he saw fit, until the sun lowered in the west to set behind the wilderness of Leelanau hills across the water, and he ascended the flights of steps to resume his nightly vigil as keeper of the light.

Old Mission Peninsula Historical Society
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Where Is It?

This rock was used by the Indians. Do you know where it is and what its purpose would have been? In the next newsletter, we will publish the answers.

"That men do not learn very much from the lessons of history is the most important of all the lessons that history has to teach us."

—Aldous Huxley

Join Us!

Membership Dues $5 for Individual/Family

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.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone: _____

E-mail _____

Renewal _____ New Member_____