

HISTORICAL MUSEUM

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LETTER FROM A VOLUNTEER

Dear Society Members,

My name is Lou Smith (old timers may remember me as Warder). I was born in Grayling in 1931, the youngest of 4 children to Louise and Jappe Smith. I attended Ferris Institute, then transferred to Michigan State Normal College in Ypsilanti where I received my Bachelor's Degree. After teaching for several years, I attended Cal State Long Beach for my Master's degree. I taught for 2 years before moving to the Miami area.

I returned to Michigan and worked at Draw-Tite in Belleville as general accountant and benefits manager. I was transferred to Hoover Corp. headquarters when Draw-Tite was sold, then became bene-

fits manager of the Automotive Systems Division and remained in that position until I retired in 1994.

In that same year, I moved back to the house my father built at McIntyre's Landing. The property had been a wedding gift from Rasmus Hanson. My father retrieved logs from the bottom of the lake to build the home by using a wooden rowboat he built in the back of his Standard gas station (where the Marathon is today).

For 3 years, I volunteered at the Literacy Center during the winters until they moved to Frederic and for ten years at the Historical Museum during the summers.

I've spent the last nine winters in Ajijic, Jalisco, Mexico where

I teach English to Mexican adults. They can earn more money since many retired Americans and Canadians live there.

I've truly enjoyed retirement because I've been fortunate to have good health and have been able to continue contributing constructively, giving pleasure and purpose to life. Through the years, I've met many affable people at the Museum who come from across the country and various parts of the world.



CHRISTMAS WALK

The final event of the season for the Historical Society will be the Christmas Walk. We will participate with businesses in Grayling by having the Museum doors open in the evening to the public.

The festivities will take place on Saturday, November 17th from 5 to 8 p.m.

The Christmas parade, a live nativity, street vendors and local specials will be featured.

There will be free trolley rides and Santa can be found in the Northern Concept building on Michigan Avenue with his

reindeer parked across the street in the gazebo.

The Museum will be decorated, and cookies and beverages will be offered to visitors as they tour the Depot.

See you there!

RIDING THE RAILS



What an experience! Seeing the front of the big black engine pulling into the station with its large silver bell ringing, its whistle blowing and gray plumes of smoke coming from its stack made me feel as though I were living in 1941.

The excitement continued as I boarded the train and the trip began. My assignment was to

walk through the cars to help pass out booklets describing the event. When finished, I became a passenger.

Sitting in a window seat in a vintage train car, seeing people wave as we passed through towns and feeling the gentle sway of the car on the rails, I felt that I was in a Poirot movie, taken back in time.

Ken Wright has placed a video on our website, grayling-area.com/museum. See and hear the excitement of the crowd as the train pulls into the station. The Pere Marquette #1225 is an impressive machine.

Thank you, Kay, for the opportunity.

Priscilla Geyer, Curator

HATS OFF TO. . . JAY STEPHAN!

Jay Stephan built his first riverboat in 1963. Jay's cousin, Norman (Bud), gave him the pattern to build a boat from plywood and then cover it with a polyester resin. Just 2 months after Jay had made the riverboat, someone wanted to buy it. After the mayfly hatch ended, he sold it, charging \$295—\$50 for materials and \$245 for labor.

In 1965, Jay built 5 riverboats at the same time to make sure he would have one for himself. It didn't turn out that way. First, he had gotten orders for 2

boats. Then, when Mike Wayland learned that Jay was building boats, he went to Jay's home and saw the pieces of wood lying on the floor not yet assembled. Mike said, "I want this one and that one."

Jay made the 5th boat as a gift for his Dad, but sadly, his father passed away that year. Jay kept the boat for 2 years, then decided to sell it (a painful memory). He put it on the front lawn and it sold in one day.

Jay's boats ranged in size from 18' 9" to 23' 9". He built a total of 38 riverboats. Once, he spent 2 weeks with Dave Wyss assembling one of his boats at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C. Jay asked a price of \$1,500 for the boat but was

told that the cost was too high, so he and Dave hauled the boat back home. That riverboat, Jay's 38th, resides at the Michigan State University Museum.

1947 was the first year of the Au Sable Canoe Marathon. Jay partnered with a friend, Jack Davis. However, Jack did not have the endurance; they finished in 2nd place. It seemed as if every young man in the area entered the race. Some of the entrants, including Jay and Jack, took the time to go ashore to eat lunch.

To be continued. . .

In the early days, the boats were made from cypress, a heavy wood.

SCHOOL TOUR

On October 8th, the third grade class of Grayling Elementary School toured the Museum. The class consists of 130 students.

Besides being fun, the tour was an educational experi-

ence for them. Part of their assignment is to write an essay about a display or artifact that particularly interested them.

We are always encouraged to have students visit the Museum, knowing that the

preservation of history is being passed on to others.

Our sincere thanks to the Boosters Club for supporting the children through their financial contribution of the tour.



HISTORY'S NUGGETS

A notorious house of ill repute, affectionately known as "The Notch", was located 3 miles west of Grayling just past the bridge on M-72. It was built about 1880 by Harry Young of Toledo, Ohio. The house contained a saloon with a large mirror, a brass foot rail and benches along a wall. There was also an orchestra platform for the dance hall area.

The logging industry was in full swing and the house of ill repute was widely known. (There were 12 boarding houses in the area at the time.) The Notch was also a fighting joint. The lumberjacks fought as well as women such as Grace Conhard

THE NOTCH

who was one of the notable performers. There were also matched dog fights. Silver Jack and Eight Day Bill were among the notorious characters who were regulars at the Notch.

Old-timers told the story of Honkytonk Jack, a livery horse in Grayling who had been driven to the Notch so often that he simply couldn't pass the gate; he always turned in. Sometimes the liveryman rented the horse out to young men who took proper girls for a Sunday ride. Needless to say, Honkytonk Jack caused many embarrassing situations.

After a number of years, Charles and Maude Blair purchased the 110 acre property. They employed up to 13 girls in as many rooms on the second floor. In 1913, when the first military encampment (now Camp Grayling) was established, the Blairs voluntarily closed the Notch. There was a law prohibiting the operation of such a place within a certain distance of military grounds.

The couple continued to live there until they sold the house of ill repute in 1920 to Rasmus Hanson.

To be continued . . .



NEW MEMBER

Travis Roberts, who is the Fire Marshal for the Grayling Fire Department, has just become the newest Board member of the Crawford County Historical Society.

Travis was born in Cass County near Kalamazoo, Michigan. He is married to Jennifer who is a

nurse at Mercy Hospital in Grayling. The couple has two children, a son, Spencer, aged 2 and a daughter, Sidney, one year old.

Travis has been a firefighter for seventeen years; he has lived in Grayling for the past five years. As the Fire Marshal, Travis is in

charge of investigations and fire code enforcement.

When asked why he decided to become a Board member, he replied, "It's an honor to serve the community in another aspect. I'm a history buff and I think it will be fun."

*Welcome to the
Board of Directors,
Travis.*

SPONSOR



**AuSable Family
Dental, P.C.**

Ralph Oppermann, D.D.S., F.A.G.D.

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The Crawford County Historical Society would like to express its deep gratitude to Au Sable Family Dental for sponsoring this month's newsletter.

**Crawford County
Historical Society**

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MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Help your museum continue to grow. We need your help today and any donation will be accepted. Memberships are good for one year, May through April. Any dues paid now will be good for the museum year of 2007. We look forward to adding new members.

DUES:

\$5.00 Senior Citizen
\$10.00 Single
\$25.00 Family
\$50.00 Supporting Member
\$100.00 Memorial Plaque (one or two names inscribed)

Please make checks payable to:

CC Historical Society
P.O. Box 218
Grayling, MI 49738

Our telephone number is:
(989) 348-4461

Our website is:
grayling-area.com/museum

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MUSEUM HOME PAGE