

Otsego County Historical Society Newsletter



November 2010



FROM THE PRESIDENT



One of the many reasons I became involved with The Otsego County Historical Society was to have a voice for Johannesburg where I live and to assist in featuring other small towns. Some of these small towns no longer exist in Otsego County but are rich in history. This month I would like to tell you a little bit about “the Burg”.

My partner and I purchased the old Johannesburg Manufacturing Company Store a few years ago in hopes of restoring it to its original glory. During the research needed for the National Register of Historical Sites application, I became very acquainted with the men and women that founded Johannesburg which I am honored to share a small part in this newsletter.

Lumber barons Rasmus Hanson, Ernest Salling and Nels Michelson of Salling Hanson & Company out of Grayling poked a hole in the forest, brought the rail system in and built the mill. They were immigrants from Denmark. By the time they built Johannesburg, the lumber industry was winding down and the founding fathers had gone from hard working laborers to becoming some of the wealthiest men in the state. The mill was built with state of the art technology of that era and lumber men from all over the United States came to see and learn. The boiler system not only powered the mill, it supplied electricity to the entire town...this was 1901. Frank Michelson and Thorwald Hanson, sons of Nels and Rasmus ran the mill and with other relatives built the town. The company store was the first commercial building built and today is the last one standing in its original location. At that time, mill workers were paid in company script which could only be redeemed at the Company Store. This changed once the town grew and the Johannesburg Bank was established. Rasmus Hanson named the town after his sister and/or mother who shared the name Johanna. The family called it “Johanna’s Burg”. The mill closed one month before

the great stock market crash in 1929 and all company owned assets were sold, including all the buildings. The bank moved to Gaylord and became known as Gaylord State Bank, now 5th/3rd. The drug store also moved and became Nelson’s Drug Store of Gaylord. The hotel was purchased by the Kwapis family who used the lumber to build their barns. Alfred Larson, the accountant for the company purchased the company store and moved the electrical generation system from the mill to the store. Company houses and land were sold first to the employees for \$50 a house and \$5 an acre. As one travels through the Johannesburg area it is easy to recognize the houses.



Otsego County is filled with similar stories from many other towns that began due to the thriving lumbering industry of the late 1800’s. Do you have knowledge of the past? Sharing history with each other is important. Without sharing our stories history is often lost forever. We have a rich and wonderfilled past...please visit the museum...check out the amazing artifacts...volunteer...and please, pass it on - bring in the children. Keeping our history alive is everyone’s responsibility.

Stacey Jo Schiller

Quilt Winner

Helen was the very excited winner of the "Quilt Raffle" drawing held at the Museum on October 23, 2010. She had sent in her tickets but had not actually seen this beautiful quilt until she came in to claim her prize. The excitement in her eyes couldn't be missed when she saw the quilt that day. She thought the color was so pretty and the workmanship outstanding. Our thanks to Helen and Gene and all of our many friends who purchased raffle tickets, thus supporting our Museum.



Ginny Brozowski, Museum Gift Shoppe Manager, presents the quilt to Helen and Gene Williams.

Thank You

To the OWLS, the Otsego Wildlife Legacy Society, for their generous support of our effort to have photos viewable over the Web Page. The software programs needed to accomplish this were purchased through a grant from the OWLS.

From now to next summer we will continue to import data and by next summer we plan on having the photos uploaded to be enjoyed by all.

Hey, Cooky

I've never met a cooly I didn't like! And the beautiful holiday cookies we are again making for holiday giving are on sale right now! We are taking orders, due with payment at until December 9th. They are freshly baked with homemade recipes and can be picked up December 17th from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the Museum. We are only taking a limited amount of orders so please get your order in early.



Thank You

Thank you to all the generous volunteers who gave their time to work as greeters this year. Although it's been said many times, it is worth repeating - "the museum would not be able to operate without our volunteers." We must have you, our volunteers, to remain open. Since we are always in need of more volunteers, I'm asking each of you to help us in another way. Please recruit one person; a neighbor, a family member, or friend, to consider volunteering at the museum next year. I will be contacting each of you next spring about the 2011 schedule. I'm looking forward to working with everyone again next year. Thank you again for your service.

A decision was made to keep the museum open on Saturdays until Christmas. Ginny Brozowski will be doing the schedules. Thank you to those individuals who are helping at the time.

Roseann Kujawa

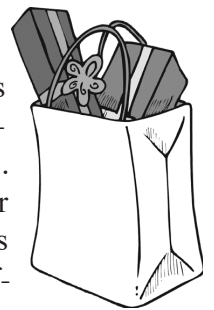
Santa Parade Coming

During the parade and every Saturday thru December 18th the Museum is featuring a live window display for your enjoyment. We will be making tree decorations, reading stories to children, knitting, etc. live in the window. And we will wave as you go by!



Museum Gift Shoppe

Our Museum has wonderful gift ideas for Christmas and we are open on Saturdays from now until December 18th. Many items are specially priced for your Christmas shopping. Examples of items stocked in our Gift Shoppe are many different cookbooks, toy tractors for the kids, log cabin and stone banks, lighthouses, homemade jams, maple syrup, jewelry, stone knick-knacks, wonderfully tasty trail mix treats and all our Step Back In Time books to name just a few. And remember most of these items are locally made by craft people in Otsego County! Nothing in the Gift Shoppe is made outside of Michigan. So happy shopping locally!

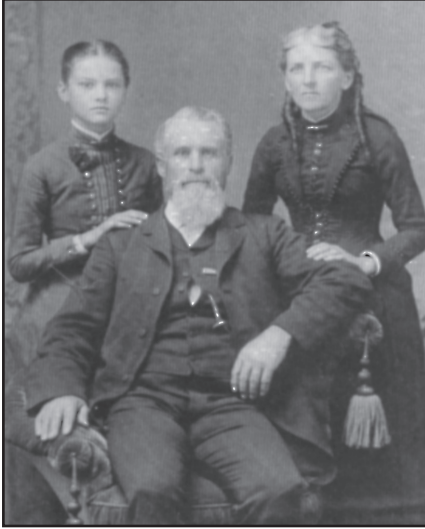


Ginny Brozowski, Mgr.

Dr. Nathan Parmater

The family of William Parmater sent this information to us about Dr. Nathan Parmater. We placed the information in the Parmater Family File at the Museum. Your family information can be placed in the files also. Just type the information and label all pictures.

Here are some excerpts about Dr. Parmater....



William's brother was Dr. Nathan L. Parmater. He was born on September 2, 1835 in Louisville, New York. He entered the military during the Civil War and kept a diary of his experiences. (the OCHS has a copy). After the war, he went to the Homeopathic College in Cleveland, Ohio and

graduated in 1867. He opened his first practice in Conneaut, Ohio. The next year he moved to Reedsburg, Wisconsin where he married Violet Tinkham, who was also from New York.

In 1871, he lived in Fairgrove, Michigan, east of Saginaw where he was a doctor. He also served as a probate judge there. His pay was \$250.00 a year.

In 1873, he moved to the Gaylord area, homesteading in Livingston Township. (on the corner of Murner and Parmater Rds.) He became the area's first doctor and a farmer.

He moved off this homestead in 1888 so that he did not have to travel as much and to be near a school for his daughter, Vieva. He established an office at 118 South Otsego Avenue in Gaylord and a house at 320 South Center Street in 1898. In Gaylord he became a prominent civic figure and was well respected.

An interesting note in a medical journal he kept was that he reported one quarter of the children in the area had a goiter when they reached puberty. They were not always very large or noticeable but it caused him concern. Goiters are the swelling of the thyroid gland in the neck caused by an iodine deficiency. At that time they did not know what was causing the goiters and the only known treatment was surgery. (now we use iodized salt to make up for the deficiency in our food).

As a farmer, Nathan had quite a bit of success. On his 25 acres under cultivation, his average yield of corn was 60 bushels and 250 bushels of potatoes per acre. His oats grew five feet high and weighed 40 pounds per bushel. He had a field of timothy which yielded two tons or more per acres and winter wheat at 30 bushels per acre. He also raised 300 bushels of acres of rutabagas and a specimen Marblehead cabbage which weighed 26 pounds after the stem and loose leaves were removed. He had 200 standard and 60 dwarf apple trees. He was able to harvest his maple trees that produced 1300 pounds of sugar. Maple sugar sold for 12 cents per pound and maple syrup for \$1 per gallon at this time.

He ran for Congress in 1887 but lost to Frank A. Baldwin by a vote 1865-1713. To the family, he was fondly known as Uncle Doc. His great niece, Clella Cook, remembered him as very kind and gentle person. Nathan died on January 14, 1910 in Otsego County, Michigan and is buried in Fairview Cemetery in Gaylord.

Nathan Parmater's daughter, Vieva, was the first white girl born in Otsego County (the first boy was born into a different family earlier). She was a graduate of one of the first classes of what is now called GHS. She married Frank Shipp, a well known businessman in the area and the manager of the Gaylord Branch of the Dayton Last Block Works.

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The History of Aprons

When you visit the “old timey kitchen” display in our Otsego County Historical Museum, please take note of some of the aprons hanging there. I don’t think the kids of today know what an apron is

The principal use of Grandma’s apron was to protect the dress underneath, because she only had a few and it was easier to wash aprons than dresses. Besides, aprons took less material to make, but along with that, it served as a pot holder for removing hot pans from the oven.

It was wonderful for drying children’s tears and on occasion was even for cleaning out dirty ears. When company came, those aprons were ideal hiding places for shy kids.

From the chicken coop, the apron was used to carry eggs, fussy chicks and sometimes half-hatched eggs to be finished in the warming oven.

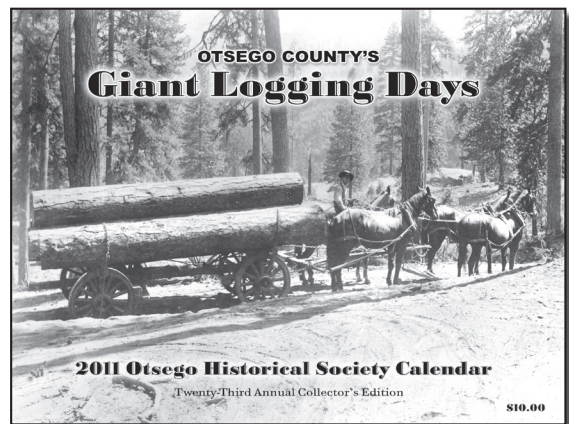
Chips and kindling wood were brought into the kitchen in that apron. And when the weather was cold, Grandma wrapped it around her arms to stay warm.

Those big old aprons wiped many a perspiring brow, bent over the hot wood stove. From the garden, it carried all sorts of vegetables. After the peas had been shelled, it carried out the hulls. In the autumn, the apron was used to bring in apples that had fallen from the trees.

When unexpected company drove up the road, it was surprising how much furniture that old apron could dust in a matter of seconds!

MUSEUM CALENDARS

The Museum 2011 calendars are going fast and we will not be doing a reprint of them. You may still buy them at the Library, the Museum and many area business for \$10.00. But you must hurry as our supply is dwindling. These calendars feature the Logging Days of Otsego County with many outstanding pictures.



When dinner was ready, Grandma walked out onto the porch, waved her apron and the men knew it was time to come in from the paddocks to dinner.

It will be a long time before someone invents something that will replace that “old-time apron” that served so many purposes.

And remember: Grandma used to set her hot baked apple pies on the window sill to cool. Her granddaughters set theirs on the window sill to thaw!