

# JHA QUARTERLY

Newsletter of the Jenison Historical Association Vol. 4 – 2025



A peaceful winter's day at Hager Park's picnic pavilion at 8212 - 28th Ave Jenison, MI 49428. This photo could have been taken any winter day from the last 65 years as not much has changed in this area of the park. Mr. and Mrs. Titus Hager donated 33 of the park's current 104 acres. Originally called Hager Hardwood Forest, over the years the park has been home to a lumbering museum, stump pullers, and an arboretum. The giant terrain map of the United States remains and was recently restored. The park hosts the Age of Discovery Playground built in 1992. For more information about Hager Park, visit [miottawa.org](http://miottawa.org). The photo, taken in 2024, is used with permission of photographer, Kevin Povenz.

## JHA Mission Statement:

*The purpose of the Jenison Historical Association shall be: to discover, gather, explore, disseminate and preserve knowledge about Jenison and its vicinity; to collect and classify property, objects, letters, pictures, records, documents and other information relating to the past of Jenison and its vicinity, its exploration, settlement, development, institutions and other activities; to publish and sell, print and produce books, brochures in connection with the foregoing.*

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## JHA Leadership

term ends 12/31/[year]

### Board Chair

Liz Timmer [2025]  
(616) 457-3708

### Co-Chair/Historian/Curator

Ken Williams [2025]

### Trustee/Treasurer

Ruth Lowing [2025]

### Trustee/Secretary

Linda Droog [2026]

### Trustee/Acquisitions

Barb Semeyn [2025]

### Trustee/Museum Display Manager

Yvonne Williams [2025]

### Trustee

Gene Kort [2026]

### Trustee/Newsletter Editor

Melissa Vogt [2025]

### Local History Room Managers

Veronica Aungst  
Mary Raper

### Maintenance

Randy DeWeerd

### Township Representative

Gene DeWitt

## Find JHA on YouTube

Did you know JHA has a channel on YouTube? One of the many videos includes a bus tour of Georgetown Township visiting historic sites of Jenison along the way.

Visit <https://www.youtube.com/@jenisonhistoricalassociati7324> or use your camera to take a picture of this QR code to access the channel directly.



## From the Editor

At our Holiday Open Houses, docents often get asked by museum guests about items in the house and if they were authentic to the early 1900s. During the last year there seemed to have been a lot of questions related to Christmas décor on display in the museum. Some of the questions were asked by children, some by adults and even a few docents had questions.

- \* *What kind of ornaments were on trees in the early 1900s?*
- \* *Were poinsettia plants around in 1902?*
- \* *Did Christmas trees get flocked?*
- \* *Did they have tinsel on the tree?*
- \* *Did they bake Gingerbread men?*
- \* *What did they use for wrapping paper?*
- \* *Why don't the trees have any lights?*

Last January, we disposed of the children's tree that was on display in

the back parlor. A search for a new tree started the ball (or should I say ornament) rolling.

We researched ornaments, poinsettias, flocking, tinsel, gift wrap and gingerbread men to come up with answers to these questions.

We researched trees in the 1900s and purchased a new one that was similar to a natural tree that might have been found outdoors at that time. Those trees tended to be spindly, which provide a lot of space for hanging ornaments!

One of our volunteers made new period appropriate ornaments for our children's tree. We rewrapped Christmas presents in tissue. We hung garland and placed poinsettias around the house. And now we are looking forward to you joining us at one of our Holiday Open Houses. Until then, merriest of Christmas wishes to you!

## Jenison Historical Association Hosts Holiday Open Houses

Join us December 6, 2025 from 1-4 p.m. or January 3, 2026 from 2-4 p.m. for our annual Holiday Open Houses. The museum is decorated for Christmas and docents will be dressed in period costumes. Guests are free to explore the museum and learn more about the displays, information and artifacts on each of the 4 floors. The West Michigan Community Chorale will be caroling with us at the December open house from 2-3pm.

There is no charge to attend, although donations are always welcome to help maintain the museum and the work of the Jenison Historical Association. If our parking lot is full, additional event parking is available in the lot of the church across the street.



**Jenison Museum**  
A home for our local history



## Decking the Halls...

*the parlors, the dining room, and the exterior of the museum is a big task but many hands make light work and we sure have a lot of hands to get the decorating done each year. Here is a bit of information about the accuracy of holiday decorating in the Jenison Museum from questions asked by volunteers and visitors.*

### Were poinsettia plants around and used as Christmas décor in 1902?



The quick answer is yes, they were around. Poinsettias are found on magazine covers and Christmas postcards from that time.

In the early 1800s, Joel Robert Poinsett, U.S. ambassador to Mexico, visited Taxco and was intrigued by the “red flower.” Poinsett took cuttings back to South Carolina and grew them in his greenhouse. He cultivated and shared this the plant, which was later named in his honor. The flowers are actually the yellow in the center of the colorful bracts (leaves). There are over 100 varieties of the plant and they can grow to be 10’ tall.

### Did Christmas trees have flocking?

Surprisingly, yes. Flocked Christmas trees date back to the 1800s. The first flocked trees were created by German glass blowers who would flock their trees with a mixture of corn starch, cotton, and glue. The use of soap flakes or dustings of flour or cornstarch are also noted as ways to flock or powder a tree for the holidays. Feathers were also used but they didn’t stay attached to the branches very well.



### Did they put tinsel on the tree?

Yes. Tinsel as we know it was started around 1610 and was originally made from extruded strands of silver which reflected light. Other shiny metals that didn’t tarnish were later substituted. Before trees had electric lights, individual candles were clipped to the tree branches. The tinsel magnified the twinkling of the candles on the tree. Tinsel was said to have been inspired by stars twinkling over snowy woods.

### Did they bake Gingerbread men?

They sure did. Germany, France, the Netherlands and the British Isles are where gingerbread traditions started. English recipes used sugar instead of honey near the end of the 16th century and molasses by the mid-17th century. The addition of butter and cream gave us recipes that taste and have the texture of gingerbread cookies of today. The spices in gingerbread were thought to help keep one warm in Winter.



### What did they use for wrapping gifts?

Gift giving became popular during the Victorian Era. Before that time, elaborately decorated Christmas cards were exchanged. Gifts were presented wrapped in plain paper tissue. In 1917, the Hall Brothers (of Hallmark) ran out of tissue at their store and substituted colorful envelope lining paper. They sold out of the paper immediately.



## Happy Birthday Mrs. Margaret Husband



Margaret J. (Morrison) Husband was born in Ontario, Canada on Christmas Day in 1844. Her parents immigrated from Scotland. She was the oldest of ten children.

Before Margaret married Levi A. Husband in 1868, she taught school and considered missionary work. The Husbands eventually settled in Nashville, TN. In 1871, they had a daughter, Elizabeth, known as “Bessie,” and then a son, William, in 1874.

In early 1880, the family came to Michigan where Levi found employment with the Jenison family as a foreman/bookkeeper. In June of that same year, their 5 year old son died of pneumonia. Levi died in 1889 and Margaret took over as manager & bookkeeper of the businesses owned by the Jenison brothers. She was described as having a “rare business ability” and was “closely identified with both business and social life” in Jenison.

When Lucius and Luman Jenison died in 1899, they left Margaret and her daughter, Bessie, \$150,000. The house that is now home to the Jenison Museum was built by Margaret and her daughter in honor of the Jenison brothers at a cost of \$13,000.

# Jenison Historical Association



Preserving the history of Georgetown Township

Save the dates for these 2026 presentations in our community by members of the Jenison Historical Association

## Interurban through Georgetown Township

Thursday, March 12 at 12:45pm  
Georgetown Connections (Senior Center)  
Thursday, March 28 at 6:30pm  
Georgetown Township Public Library

## Farming in Georgetown Township

Tuesday, April 28 at 12:45pm  
Georgetown Connections (Senior Center)  
Wednesday, April 29 at 6:30pm  
Georgetown Township Public Library

## What Used to be Here—Volume 3

Wednesday, September 30 at 6:30pm  
Georgetown Township Public Library  
Thursday, October 22 at 12:45pm  
Georgetown Connections (Senior Center)

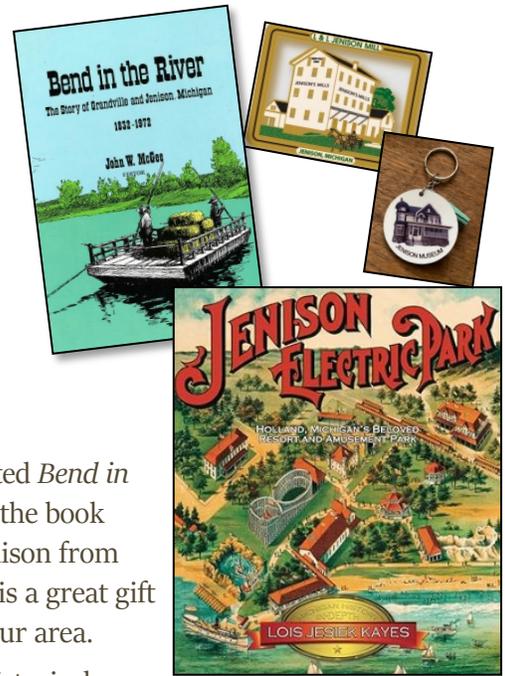
# Gifting Jenison History

The Jenison Museum offers a small selection of gifts including keyrings for \$3, a notecard set for \$3, and a brass ornament in a gift box featuring the Jenison Mills for \$10. A variety of prints priced \$10 or under are available including those featuring Jenison Mills, a Pride of the Valley Flour promotional poster and other local landmarks.

Also on our shelves is the newly reprinted *Bend in the River*. Originally published in 1973, the book covers the history of Grandville and Jenison from 1832-1972. The book sells for \$25 and is a great gift for local history buffs or those new to our area.

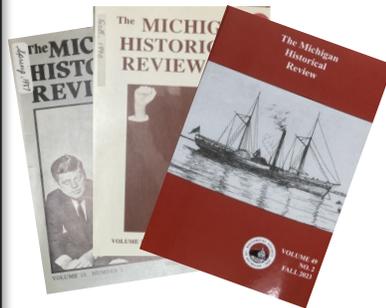
*Jenison Electric Park*, is an illustrated historical profile of the lakeside resort and its beloved amusement park that blossomed at the turn of the twentieth century. Located on the shores of Black Lake (Lake Macatawa since 1934), it rose to popularity during the gentle era of steamship travel, electric railroads, and the twilight of the horse and buggy. Families, church groups, and other vacationers sought refuge from the summer heat on the shaded lawns cooled by lake breezes. This book brings a life to a forgotten time in Michigan's fascinating history. This book sells for \$27.95.

Items can be purchased at the Holiday Open House or by calling (616) 457-4398 to make arrangements to stop by during work hours at the museum to purchase items.



# LHR Seeking Michigan Historical Review Issues

Our year book search continues and we are also trying to fill the gaps in our Michigan Historical Review collection for the LHR (Local History Room). Please consider donating back issues to us if you have any that need a new home. Book donations may be given to a JHA board member, dropped off at the main desk of the Georgetown Library during library hours, or to the library's LHR on Wednesdays between 11 am and 1 pm. Be sure to leave your name and contact information with your items so that we may thank you properly.



- 2001 (Spring & Fall)
- 2005 (Spring & Fall)
- 2006 (Spring)
- 2010 (Spring & Fall)
- 2011 (Spring & Fall)
- 2012 (Spring & Fall)
- 2013 (Spring)
- 2014 (Spring)
- 2015 (Spring & Fall)
- 2016 (Spring)
- 2017 (Spring & Fall)
- 2018 (Spring)
- 2019 (Spring)
- 2020 (Spring & Fall)
- 2021 (Spring)
- 2022 (Spring & Fall)

**Jenison Museum**  
Home for our local history  
28 Port Sheldon Road • Jenison, MI 49428

## Holiday Open House

Saturday  
December 6, 2025  
1 to 4 p.m.

Saturday  
January 3, 2026  
2 to 4 p.m.

## A Recent Acquisition

This bedside chair was recently donated to the Jenison Museum by Mary Ann and Gary Church. The decoratively carved wooden chair is covered in fabric with a needlepoint design on the back and cushion.

Chairs were helpful in the bedroom, especially from the 17th to early 19th century, when dressing was a complicated and lengthy task for women who had to put their shoes on before their stays, as bending over after fully dressed was difficult, if not impossible.

*Stays are structured undergarments similar to a corset, that helped support and shape the torso.*

*Often made of linen or cotton and stiffened with boning (like whalebone, wood, or cane), they were worn by people of all classes, from children to adults. They supported the bust, improved posture, and provided a base for fashionable silhouettes.*



## Discover Georgetown Library's Local History Room

In partnership with Georgetown Township Public Library, JHA maintains the Local History Room in the lower level of the library. Available in the history room are:

- Files & Books
- Newspaper Articles
- Genealogies
- Slide shows
- Maps and Pictures
- And many other types of resources

Members of the Jenison Historical Association staff the room on Wednesdays, from 11am to 1pm.

You may make arrangements to visit the room at other times by contacting history room staff by leaving a message at (616) 457-4398 or contacting us by email [info@jenisonhistory.org](mailto:info@jenisonhistory.org).

The Jenison History Room is located in the Georgetown Township building at 1525 Baldwin. From the main library entrance, take the stairs to your left down. For elevator access, enter through the township offices.

## JHA Members, Volunteers and Donors Keep Jenison and Georgetown History Alive

JHA membership dues and volunteers help maintain the house by funding and fulfilling the mission of the Jenison Historical Association. Membership is currently just \$10 per year and makes a great gift for local history buffs, those with connections to our area, or those new to the area who want to learn more about our history.

To renew or begin your membership, fill out the form below and return it with a check made out to Jenison Historical Association.

To get started volunteering, indicate your area of interest on the form and mail it or reach out to us via phone or email.

Tax deductible donations or gifts *in honor of* or *in memory of* someone are also a way to contribute to our mission. For more information, contact us at (616) 457-4398, visit [jenisonhistory.org](http://jenisonhistory.org) or send an email to [info@jenisonhistory.org](mailto:info@jenisonhistory.org).

## Jenison Historical Association Membership/Volunteer Application

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Please print

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_  
(your email address will be held private; it will be used for newsletters and notifications only)

I would like to help preserve Jenison history in the following ways (check all that apply):

- Member of the Jenison Historical Association:** (Please include \$10 [checks payable to Jenison Historical Association] for annual dues. Send check and completed form to: Jenison Historical Association, PO Box 664, Jenison MI 49429)
- Docent:** Help with tours of the museum. Orientation is provided.
- Volunteer:** Indicate your area(s) of interest. You will be contacted when there is a project in your area of interest.
  - Gardening
  - Special Events
  - Cleaning
  - Painting & Repairs
  - Inventory
  - Computer Data Entry
  - Research
  - Other/Anything

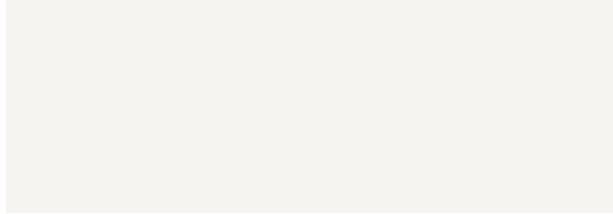
Questions, call 616-457-4398.

Jenison Historical Association  
P.O. Box 664  
Jenison, MI 49429-0664

The JHA Board meets on the third Thursday of each month at 6:00 p.m. at the Georgetown Township Public Library, except for December.

Those with an interest in the work of the JHA are welcome to join us at these meetings. For further information, contact Liz Timmer at (616) 457-3708.

If you would like to be added or removed from our newsletter mailing list, contact us via [info@JenisonHistory.org](mailto:info@JenisonHistory.org).



## Jenison Museum Open House Dates

**2025/2026 Holiday Open House Dates**

**December 6, 2025, Saturday, 1-4pm**  
**January 3, 2026, Saturday, 2-4 pm**

JHA holds Open Houses at the Jenison Museum throughout the year where visitors learn about life in Jenison in the early 1900s. Open houses feature changing themes highlighting a particular time, place or event in our local history.

**March 3**, Tuesday, 10am-Noon  
**March 21**, Saturday 2-4pm

**April 7**, Tuesday, 10am-Noon  
**April 18**, Saturday, 2-4pm

**May 5**, Tuesday, 10am-Noon  
**May 16**, Saturday, 2-4pm

**June 2**, Tuesday, 10am-Noon  
**June 20**, Saturday, 2-4pm

**July 2**, Tuesday, 10am-Noon  
**July 20**, Saturday, 2-4pm

**August 4**, Tuesday, 10am-Noon  
**August 15**, Saturday, 2-4pm

**September 1**, Tuesday, 10am-Noon  
**September 19**, Saturday, 2-4pm

**October 6**, Tuesday, 10am-Noon  
**October 17**, Saturday, 2-4pm

**November 3**, Tuesday, 10-Noon

**2026/2027 Holiday Open Houses**  
**December 5, 2026**, Saturday, 1-4pm  
**January 9, 2027**, Saturday, 2-4 pm

Jenison Historical Association & Jenison Museum are located at 28 Port Sheldon St, Grandville, MI

Email: [info@jenisonhistory.org](mailto:info@jenisonhistory.org)

Phone: (616) 457-4398

Facebook: Jenison Historical Association

Website: [www.jenisonhistory.org](http://www.jenisonhistory.org) or use the QR code below



Admission is free, though we gladly appreciate and accept donations to help maintain the museum and the work of preserving Georgetown Township history.

Individuals, organizations and groups may request arrangements for alternative dates and times to visit the museum. To arrange your tour, call (616) 457-4398 or visit [www.jenisonhistory.org](http://www.jenisonhistory.org).