



# Echoes Echoes Echoes

Newsletter of Old Mission Peninsula Historical Society

Vol. 6, No. 1, April, 2009

## “FISH BOAT LOST BIG STORM”

### FROM the LETTERS and ARCHIVES of KATY HUNT KERN, NEAHTAWANTA By Anonymous

I don't know much about this, myself, but I remember they had salted lake trout to ship each year. I think my mother was the helper. She was no use for the water and had to lay that up for awhile. Pat Huey wanted to go into partnership with Dad. They took the old sail boat and put a gas engine in it and fished at Crescent. Well, the deal was made and they went to work on the boat. This was early summer and in October the trout season would be open. The spar and sail came off and a cabin was built over the open spaces, except 2 ½ foot on the back end was left open, also.

Pat went and got the engine. It was a Durfree 12 horsepower. The Durfree Motor Works didn't last 6 months and we never found out why. The engine was nice when it run, but it didn't always run.

The boat was 25' long and 9' wide and pulled a draft of 1.5' of water. The boat had to have a name on account of the fishing license so it was called Hurry Back. But it was not in no hurry to come back.

The boat was ready and they put her in the water. It was after the season had opened up for fishing and they was in a hurry to go and set up nets. Pat's wife wanted to go. My mother said no, I and Pat said s he didn't need to

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## From the President's Desk

My Grandpa Stoms, who died before I was born, wrote a diary. I can vividly remember sitting in the attic reading it. His handwriting was beautiful. He began each entry with a colored letter with flourishes and curlicues. Although the diary disappeared with the sale of my grandmother's house, I still have an envelope which he used to send a letter to my father, who was in the Navy in World War II at the time. It has the same embellished first letter.

Letters and diaries are the windows to the past. By reading them, we learn about the concerns, the lives, the relationships of people who are long-dead. The preservation of these valuable documents should be one of our primary goals, both as individuals and as a historical society.

Recently Patti Rudolph donated to the OMPHS the diaries of I.M. Roberts, wife of Judge Lorin Roberts, who died in 1905. Do you have diaries or letters that you would like to entrust to the Society? If you cannot bear to part with them just yet, could you make copies for us? I wish someone had done that with Grandpa Stoms's diary.

As a reader of biographies, I know how important letters and diaries are to researchers. The list of sources at the end of these fascinating books usually list libraries and historical societies which preserve these sources. Even if your Great-Aunt Hattie was not famous, her letters provide a valuable resource for those of us who did not experience life as she lived it.

One of the books that I recently read was an in-depth biography of the Peabody sisters, who were important figures in the Transcendentalist Movement. One of them married Nathaniel Hawthorne and another married Horace Mann. The third sister never married but established the first kindergarten in America. Megan Marshall, the author of the book, had finished the book (after spending two decades researching and writing it) and sent it to her publisher when she was contacted by someone who had just found letters relating to the sisters. The author agonized over the letters and whether or not she wanted to read them. She feared that they would contradict what she had just sent to her publisher. But she did read them. The letters confirmed some of the assumptions that she had made based on incomplete evidence.

For myself, I just wish someone had kept my grandfather's beautiful and well-written diary.

—Donna Hornberger, President

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## A Table's Tale

By Jane Louise Boursaw

"It's got to be there somewhere," I hear Dad say as he peers down at me. I'm on my hands and knees, examining the underside of my parents' dining room table with a flashlight, searching for some sign of the table's origin.

But all I find are a few hand-written numbers and an ancient label sporting a tiny Christmas wreath and my parents' address. I crawl out from under the table.

"Solid oak," Dad says, knocking on the wood. "You won't find any imperfections or knots in that table."

This table has served my family for six generations. It dates back to my grandmother's father-in-law, Robert Edgecomb, who bought it at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893 and hauled it back to his farmhouse on the Old Mission Peninsula near Traverse City, Michigan.

Hard to believe it's 108 years old, I think to myself. The smooth oak finish is weathered but in good shape. Stretched to its full length, the table measures 9' x 4' and boasts six legs that flare at the bottom into paws. Oak leaves are carved into each of the legs.

After arriving on the Peninsula, the table sat in Robert Edgecomb's dining room for 67 years, outlasting him and his wife, several children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

In 1923, the table had perhaps its most glorious moment when it served as the birthplace of my Dad, an event he enjoys sharing with the entire family right before he begins carving the Thanksgiving turkey.

The story goes something like this. It was a snowy January evening when his mother, Stella Johnson, went into labor. "My dad called Dr. Schwartz, our family doctor," Dad explains. "He had an old car that would not have been capable of driving through much of a snowstorm, but he drove out Peninsula Drive to the store at Bowers Harbor and called up and said he couldn't make it any farther. So my Dad took the horses and sleigh and went after him."

"And left your mom there alone?" I ask. "In labor? In a blizzard?"

"Well, there were always boarders around," says Dad. "There was probably somebody there or somebody reasonably close that could be called. I think Mrs. Perry Fouch was a midwife, because I heard she was the one who attended my brother's birth."

I stare at the hard table and try to imagine having a baby on it. "Why did they use the table?" I ask.

"What else would they have used?" Dad says. "In the parlor, there was only the sofa, and the table was convenient because it was the only long, hard surface that could be used for labor. The doctor had to use whatever was available."

At some point in the table's life, my grandfather, Lester Johnson (my grandmother's second husband), grew weary of bumping his hips on the sharp corners, so he took a jackknife and whittled them off. He was a practical man.

The table has set the stage for some of my most cherished memories. Family meals of pork chops and scalloped

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## The Leaning Barn

By Evelyn Johnson

[In a previous issue, we presented a picture of a leaning barn and asked where it was. Here is the answer, and its story.]

This little barn used to stand on Center Road, just north of Old Mission Road. It was perhaps one of the most talked about barns on the Peninsula for those who ventured, or lived, that far out, until it blew down in 1987 (date not confirmed).

It seems it had always listed to the south, and was the source of much speculation by all as to what day, what month, etc. it would tumble the rest of the way over. The stone foundation still stands in a field of weeds quite close to Center Road on property owned by John Schneider and Sharon Olsen.

The 1908 plat map shows Jas. Lardie owning the property while the 1930 map indicates F.L, presumably another Lardie. The attractive stone building on the corner was a gas station and snack shop run by the Lardies in the 30s, and it housed migrants at one time when it was known as the Bunkhouse.

The barn itself passed through a number of owners before John and Sharon bought it. Douglas (Barney) Kramer bought it in 1978. Paul and Martha Tate, neighbors, remember the barn listing to one side. Doug, thinking it was a tour-

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## Fish Boat Lost

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go, but she said no man wasn't going to tell her what to do. So she got in the boat when they were ready to go. Well, I was anyway and Mother finally gave in and said I could go.

This was about 20 Oct 1908 about 1 pm. It was a nice day. Well, the nets were set and the next morning they would lift and would set some more. Some cut-over land was on fire in the eastern part of the state and a strong wind came up from the east and blowed up the lake full of smog. It was thick black fog. You could not see far. Well, they started for shore, that we didn't find. We should have been back by 4, but we was not.

They found out the compass was going round and round and they had been going by the compass. We were close to shore under the high hills or bluffs. The wind was coming from all sides, what little there was. It was dark and the motor was taking a rest. They could not get the thing to go. No light or anchor along in the boat. There was nothing in the boat but a dead motor and 4 people. Well, there was not a thing that could be done. We had to go with the wind and stay in the boat. My mother walked the beach all night with a lantern in her hand, and a few more done the same. The whole settlement was down on the beach, but they didn't stay the night. The life saving station took their boat on a wagon across the sand and went and looked for us. But gave up later and went back. The wind was getting stronger and stronger. I slept until day light and I was sea sick. The boat was getting throwed around, and by the end of the day we had 30' waves to ride. My Dad and Pat was out in the back trying to bail out water with a pail. One man could not stand up alone and bail out water, so the other had to help to hold him. The boat had 2 1/2 feet of open space in the back of the cabin, and the water would come in there. My Dad was out there bailing water day and night. When Pat wasn't there to help him, he would tie himself fast so he wouldn't get throwed over board from the rough waves. My Dad and Pat never slept or rested. The boat had a seat on each side of the cabin. I laid on the lee side and Mrs. Huey laid on the other side,

The waves was working up against us. We both had to hang on so we could hold our beds. I was ten years old and as sick as I was I didn't not worry on the whole trip, and I was not nervous. I was too sick to know anything, I guess. Mrs. Huey was a big woman about 6'4" tall and weighed over 300 pounds. Pat was about 5'8" and

a light weight. Mrs Huey got throwed from her side over to my side, and we all thought the boat had gone to pieces when that happened. But she was alright. That happened two times and them times the wave went right over the boat and left a lot of water in it for us to bail out. We left on Monday afternoon.

Monday night, Tuesday and Tuesday night and Wednesday night until 1 am Thursday morning we were out there. It was the landing ahead of us now. We was going to land in that storm. The storm had gone down some. The *Hurry Back* was the best there was in a sea boat, and she needed every inch of that. But the landing. A beach was one thing. And what kind of beach would we land on?

Pat seen a light. We thought it must be a boat. It was coming our way. If we had some light to flash in the window, maybe they'd see it. Pat got some rags and put oil on them and got a fire going. He had the rags on a stick so he could hold it up in the window. The light on that boat came and went by. Pat was ready to get sick. We lost that boat. Right then there was a thunk on the back end of the keel. My Dad came in and said we struck bottom. There was just enough light that we could see each other.

The boat laid still after that faint thunk. My Dad and Pat took a look outside and came back in and said, "We can see land." The boat was still and it didn't even wiggle. My Dad went out and jumped overboard and came back and said, "I will carry you over so you won't get your feet wet. It is only a few steps to shore. I can't see very much, but give me that rope. And I will tie the boat to something so it won't get away." Pat went in but he said he could not carry his wife and she had to get herself in the water and go to shore. Pat thought of a fire the first thing. And he felt around for wood and found some. He got some slivers to start with. He felt in pockets for a match and found a match. And partly wet, too. But it made it and we had a good fire in a short time. The boat we saw with the light, was a lighthouse. And it was blowing the fog horn.

We stayed by the fire and I slept until morning. Mrs. Huey wanted us all to stick together and go out and look around to see what we could find out. We found nothing and stayed by the fire that night. The next morning the same thing. Pat wanted to get a lot of wood in a pile and set fire to it when it would get dark. Well, it was

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## Fish Boat Lost

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one good way.

My Dad said when they ain't looking I will slip out in the woods, and go along the bank close to the water and see if anyone lives here. I will be back by dark. Pat was working on his pile of wood and Mrs Huey helped, too. My help wasn't much but I done what I could. Pat said he killed a snake and some people eat them when they are cooked. I will skin it and cut it in small pieces if someone would care to eat. I said I would try anything. So Pat found a can in the boat and put the pieces in with some water and put it on the fire. When it got done, Pat came and gave me the can and said I could have it all, and I made good use of it. I never tasted anything so good in my life.

We landed Thursday morning 1 am and spent Thursday and Thursday night and this was Friday, and Friday night was coming on and no help. Not a thing to eat since Monday at noon, before we left. Our bread boxes were empty and we all knew that. It was almost dark and Pat carried the small fire over and got the big fire going, it was all dry wood and it went up with a roar, sky high. Pat said, "there. That will bring out something and it did. My Dad came out of the bushes with a basket full of eats. My Dad said it was an island and they call it Detroit Island about 5 miles long and 2 miles wide. He said he was on the other end and found a place where there was a woman at home. He told his story and had some eats and she filled a basket.

She said she was a house keeper for 2 fishermen and they were out and when they got home she would send them right over, but they never came. Well, Mrs. Huey took over the basket and said I will dish out what I want you all to eat, and there was some apples and she gave us each one apple. I ate mine in a hurry and Pat ate one-half of his and got sick and Mrs. Huey had her hands full and my Dad had to give her a hand.

The life saving station on Plum Island seen the fire, and one man said there is the people who got lost. And wanted to go over and the other boys said, including the captain, no we are not going. Them people that got lost are gone for sure. Walter Oleson said I'll go alone and if it is them I will report everyone of you when I get

back. He went for the boat and the rest was there before he got in. It was a sailboat they had, and they came over there just after Pat got sick. We was ready to go and Mrs. Huey happened to think of the basket of eats and it was empty. When Pat got sick, I didn't let the food go to waste and took it back of a cedar bush and cleaned up on the works, drank up the milk, and ate up the rest of the apples. Well, I stayed out of her reach and later she had forgot. I didn't see her or Pat until we was leaving Monday.

The next morning was lots of things to see and hear. That was Saturday and they was having laughs about me eating all the eats in the basket. The storm had been very bad and we had been reported gone for good, all boats on the lake big and small, were in harbour or in shelter from the storm except two lumber barges loaded with lumber was missing, crew and all was gone, and they said that some of the lumber should hit north Manitou, and we could look for it when we got back.

The place where we landed was called Death's Door, Wisconsin. It was so full of rocks, rocks as big as houses out a long ways, and under the water line. The end we landed on was full of big rocks, and so close to each other I couldn't see how we ever got through alive. But we did and the boat came in front

end first. It was a low place in the land, inside of them rocks, and when the storm came in from that end it would raise the water in there.

When a boat is drifting, it is sideways and this boat had to make a 1/2 turn to come in front end first. The low place was about 100 feet wide by 100 feet long and with the boat only drawing up 1 1/2 foot of water. So it went right into the other end and stuck fast to the sand bottom. They said there had been lots of boats lost on them rocks out there in the water, and no boat had sailed through until us. The boys at the lifesaving station said one time a boat of 200 Indians went wrecked on the stones and everyone drowned. They was picked up by the life saving crew and buried on that end in the sand. This was back in years and on record at the station. And the

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Plum Island Life Saving Station



## **Fish Boat Lost**

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only place that had sand there and not rocks was where we camped: a small acre and the rest was all rock. The lifesaving men was teasing us about sleeping and walking on top of them dead Indian bones.

The life saving station men wanted to get the Hurry Back out. The wind was gone and the waves were gone, too. The water in there was getting low, and they waited, thinking it could get *too* low for them to go out again, but they got the boat out all right. I and my Dad went with the station men. They took us to Pilot Island. We went with the Pilot Island men in their gas boat. They was to tow the Hurry Back over to Plum Island Station, which is an island not too far away. The Pilot Island Station was where we'd seen the light when we landed. It's a big rock with sides cemented straight up. The top was flat for the lighthouse and keeper's house. The keeper's family and 2 boarders had a place for their gas boat down one side of the cement wall. They seen our light going in and they thought we were gone, and then later they seen our camp fire, but they could not get their boat out and no phone.

Pilot Island is a little way across the water from where we landed, but water is between both these islands. All these islands are the same way: rock walls straight up and down, and no beach or shore line. Where we landed is the only low water in all that one place, and the other end of the island is low, too, and it only has a harbor for small boats. The sides of the islands are rock walls from 4 to 16 ' high and flat on top. All the timber on there was very young.

Plum Island has its rock walls, too, flat on top with young trees. On the east side, there's one place with just enough room for the station to fit in. The Island is about 3 miles around the outside. The boat from Pilot Island had one of the first gas engines made. This one had one cylinder standing on end. Up-and-down it was 5 feet tall, and had a fly wheel 4 ½ foot across and a 6 horse power motor. When the boys got the Hurry Back into the water, one of the boys gave the motor a turn and it went. They could not find anything wrong with it.

That landing part was on everyone's mind about what could happen to poor us and after it was over. If we had hit them rocks or landed against that rock wall, we could also be gone. And if we had gone through, we would be in Green Bay, Wisconsin, after drifting some more. The captain of the station couldn't get over us landing in there with the Hurry Back, and he said no human hands could never steer a boat through them rocks, storm or no storm, and at night like that.

When they came over to pick us up that Friday night, he and one of the others just stood there and looked at the boat and said how did that boat ever get in there and not a mark on it. My Dad and Pat put in a call to Crescent for money and clothes, and a boat to go with the Hurry Back and one man to go *on* the Hurry Back. Mr and Mrs Huey was to take the big boat back, they didn't like our Hurry Back no more.

Oscar Smith and Ed Fisher came from east Manitou station, leaving 4 a.m. Monday morning, and arriving to us at 10:30 a.m. At 1 pm we were headed for Crescent. The Hurry Back motor worked fine and before dark it was having bugs. So they tied a rope on the Hurry Back so Smith wouldn't lose it in the dark. When it got dark, it stopped and took a rest. It was up to Oscar Smith to tow the thing to Crescent. This slowed us up and we was 10 -12 miles out when the motor decided to take a little rest. It was dark then. But we landed at Crescent all right, and the beach was all lit up and everyone was there with a lantern in their hand and there was a fire on the beach, too. . My Dad threw the line over on shore, and everyone was looking at us and I was looking at the crowd. Fisher and my Dad had to get the gas out of the Hurry Back as Smith had used up his gas in towing the Hurry Back back. Smith had 12 miles to go yet to get home.

Excuse my mistakes and poor spelling.

## **Leaning Barn**

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ist attraction, shored it up with a few well placed beams, but it was no longer used as a barn. In 1987 Dough was killed in a car crash and his parents Arthur and Ruth Kramer took the property over. One very windy day in the spring, the barn stood



straight up defying the wind, but then collapsed.

When John and Sharon bought the property in 1997, they used some of the barn wood to make a playhouse next to the garage. And so the little barn lives on!



# 1909 Time Capsule

*By Samantha Tengelitsch*

In the spring of 1909, with cherry trees in bloom across the north end of the peninsula, the students at Old Mission School buried a time-capsule beneath a maple tree on the school property to celebrate their commencement. Inside the hermetically sealed casket, they placed programs and other artifacts relating to their graduation ceremonies.

Graduating students Marshall Pratt and Grace Tompkins ceremoniously carried a copper plate and rivets atop a 100-year-old copper platter donated for use by the Pratt family. Principal E. H. Wilcox carefully fastened the plate, bearing the title "Class of 1909," to the young maple sapling which had been secured by the school custodian, P.A. DeVoll. Marshall's

younger siblings Carl and Helen (Pratt) helped steady the tree while Marshall and Grace buried the roots overtop the time-capsule. As they worked, the students listened to their primary teacher, Fannie Swaney, read a poem about planting a tree. This pleasant ceremony closed with the singing of "America" by the students.

In the last one-hundred years, much has changed around Old Mission, but the quaint village itself appears frozen in time. The schoolhouse, built in 1857 and one of

the oldest structures in Grand Traverse County, still stands, but was converted to a private residence after area schools consolidated and moved to the new building at Island View Rd.

This May will mark the 100th anniversary of the planting of the maple tree and burial of the time-capsule. In the last century, the once small sapling grew

quickly, enveloping the copper plate marking the spot where the time-capsule was buried. Fortunately, the newest residents of the old schoolhouse have granted permission to the Old Mission Historical Society to locate the capsule in the coming months. After 152 years, the wonderful charm and character of the schoolhouse and grounds have been preserved and the new owners, Joyce and Steve

Cavender, assure us the building is still a school in part, as the couple's children are all educated at home.

Whether or not we are able to locate and uncover the capsule is unknown, but it is wonderful to imagine what treasures it holds from a newspaper clipping to a photo of the school children to a single sweet breath of spring captured in 1909 and cradled for a near-century by the now towering maple.



*Photo by Charles Brackett. Used with permission.*

## Dues Due

**Please Remember:**

Dues for next year's membership are to be paid in June. They can be mailed in or paid at the June Annual Potluck Dinner at the American Legion Hall on June 4. \$5 for students, \$10 for individuals, \$15 for families, and \$25 for businesses.

### Newsletter Staff

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Banner drawn by Terilee Johnson

Photographer, Tom Maguire



## Peninsula Pioneers

by Flo Schermerhorn

The historic sketch below was passed on to me when I was president of the Old Mission Women's Club (2005 - 2007) during the celebration of the club's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding in 1931. The sender noted that Hazel Ladd had been a past president (1966 - 1968) and believed this note about a bit of peninsula history was interesting and worthwhile to share. I am passing it on to the readers of this newsletter and have added more historical data I gathered from an assortment of documents, books and public records.

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“Early Days in Old Mission”

“In May 1852 my grandfather, Elisha P. Ladd of Herkimer, N. Y. arrived at Old Mission coming from Buffalo by boat. He had been teaching in Herkimer county for several years and, after settling at the Mission, building a log cabin near the bay, he sent back to Herkimer for his wife, Mary Wilmarth. Mary was afraid of the Indians tho they were on friendly terms with the early settlers. One old fellow, on coming to the cabin and finding the door barred on the inside, would sit patiently on the doorstep to await the return of my grandfather to whom he remarked, ‘White squaw heap fraid!’

“Later my grandfather taught in the little school and was elected Peninsula supervisor in 1861 and became county superintendent of schools, serving from 1872 - 1876.

“He moved from the log cabin to the farm on Center Road, now belonging to Jack Holmes.”

by Hazel E. Ladd

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Elisha and his wife, Mary had a family of six children: Emmer, Maria, Fremont, Adourian, Jessie and Carrie. A set of twins, Elbert and Delbert, born in 1896, died a few days after their births. In one of the two Ladd family burial plots at Ogdensburg Cemetery, a grave marker reads, “Our Babes” June 1886. Elisha died in 1898 at age 78 and is buried in Ogdensburg Cemetery with his wife, Mary, noted by two unmarked stones, beside the road bearing his name.

Hazel, the daughter of A. Judson (Adourian), was a public school teacher in Clifton, NY and later, in Lake Forest, IL. She returned to Old Mission after her retirement and when the frailties of old age set in, moved to a care facility. She died April 1, 1986, age 93. A short and simple announcement was printed in the *Record-Eagle* April 4th:

*Hazel E. Ladd*

*Hazel E. Ladd, 93, of Old Mission, died Tuesday at Grand Traverse Medical Care Facility.*

*Funeral arrangements will be announced by the Hibbard Funeral Chapel, Traverse City.*

The obituary gives an impression of an injustice to a woman who maintained high moral qualities, merited respect and esteem, followed a scholarly profession teaching to the future, contributed much time to community projects and born a “daughter” of one of the area's earliest, hardy, pioneer stock.

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## A Table's Tale

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potatoes. Laughing as four kids competed to put the most milk in a glass without going over the top. Playing “Go Fish” and “Monopoly”. Birthday cakes and friends. Holiday feasts. Doing homework across from my dad, who was doing paperwork of his own.

The table has also been the setting for a few memories I'd just as soon forget. Like having to sit there long after supper was over until I ate every last pea and Brussels sprout. That's where the ledges underneath the table really came in handy. I used to sneak unwanted food down there, and Duke, our German Shepherd, would come along and eat the evidence.

My siblings and I have begun talking about what will happen to the table after our parents are gone. It would be a welcome addition to any of our homes, and I guess it doesn't really matter where it ends up. As long as it stays in the family for many memories to come.



**Old Mission Peninsula Historical Society**

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**Membership Dues: Student, \$5; Individual \$10;  
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