

# OMENA

T I M E L I N E S



**Remembering Omena's Generals and...  
The American Civil War Sesquicentennial**

A PUBLICATION OF THE OMENA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SUMMER 2011



# From the Editor

JIM MILLER

AS YOU CAN SEE, OUR TIMELINES PUBLICATION has changed quite a bit. We have taken it from an institutional “newsletter” to a full-blown magazine. To make this all possible, we needed to publish it annually rather than bi-annually. By doing so, we will be able to provide more information with an historical focus rather than the “news” focus. Bulletins and OHS news will be sent in multiple ways; by e-mail, through our website, published in the *Leelanau Enterprise* or through special mailings. We hope you like our new look!

Because 2011 is the sesquicentennial year for the start of the Civil War, it was only fitting that we provide appropriately related matter for this issue. We are focusing on Omena’s three Civil War generals and other points that should pique your interest.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Suzie Mulligan for her hard work as the long-standing layout person for Timelines. Her sage advice saved me on several occasions and her expertise in laying out Timelines has been invaluable to us. Thanks Suzie, I truly appreciate all your help.

Suzie will be replaced by Dan Stewart. Dan brings extensive experience in many areas relevant to our operation. He is an historian, radio producer and very knowledgeable in the publication software used to produce Timelines. Welcome aboard, Dan. ■

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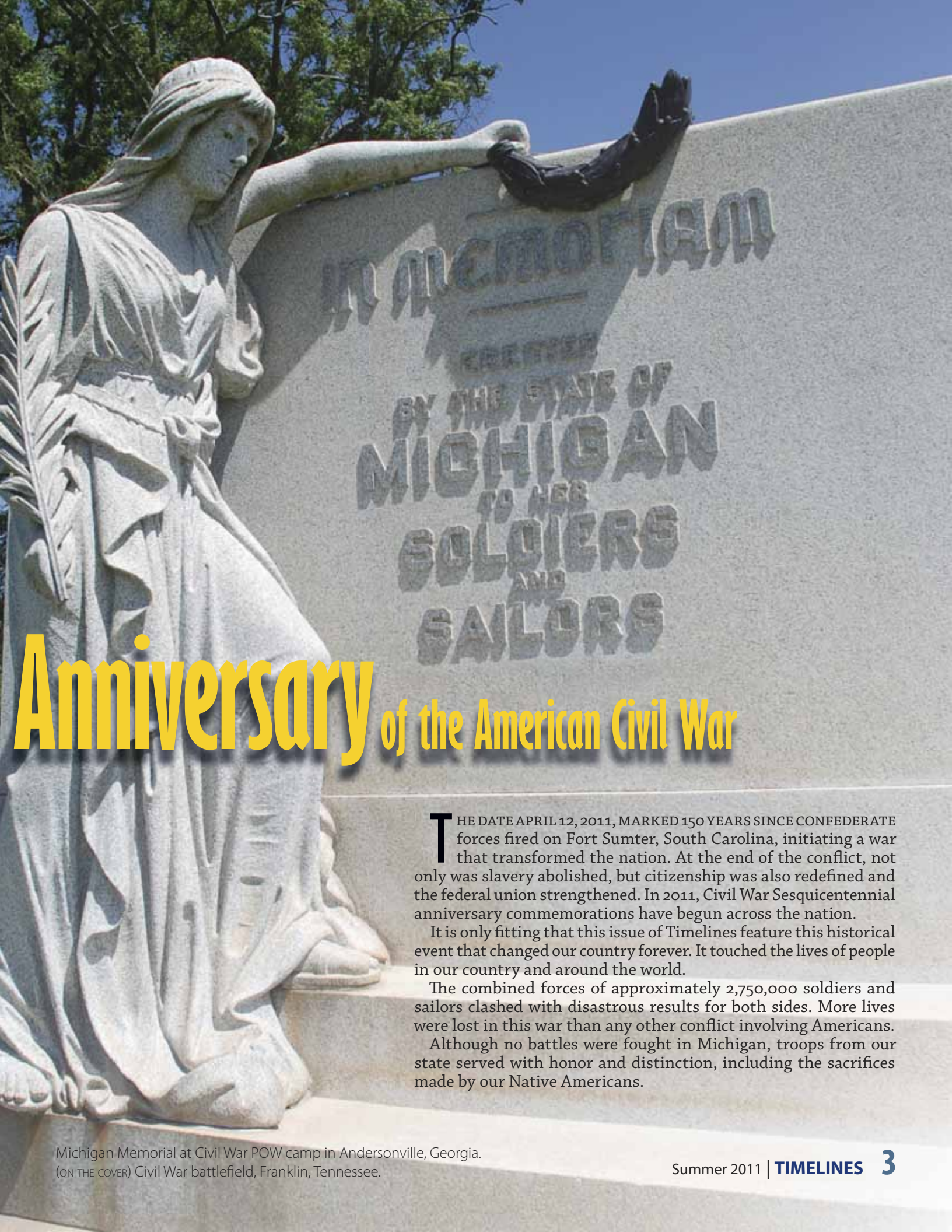
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### **TIMELINES MISSION STATEMENT**

Our purpose is to showcase Omena’s past as we chronicle the present, with an understanding that today’s news becomes tomorrow’s history.

150<sup>th</sup>





# Anniversary of the American Civil War

**T**HE DATE APRIL 12, 2011, MARKED 150 YEARS SINCE CONFEDERATE forces fired on Fort Sumter, South Carolina, initiating a war that transformed the nation. At the end of the conflict, not only was slavery abolished, but citizenship was also redefined and the federal union strengthened. In 2011, Civil War Sesquicentennial anniversary commemorations have begun across the nation.

It is only fitting that this issue of *Timelines* feature this historical event that changed our country forever. It touched the lives of people in our country and around the world.

The combined forces of approximately 2,750,000 soldiers and sailors clashed with disastrous results for both sides. More lives were lost in this war than any other conflict involving Americans.

Although no battles were fought in Michigan, troops from our state served with honor and distinction, including the sacrifices made by our Native Americans.

# The Ambiguity of Omena

JIM MILLER

**N**OT TOO LONG AGO, I WAS IN A BANK IN CEDAR. THE teller saw the name Omena on my deposit slip and actually asked if Omena was down state somewhere. *What?* Understandably, not everyone has heard of Omena. But come on, we're not so small that people in the same *county* shouldn't know of our existence! It's not like Cedar is exactly a huge metropolis, either.

Officially, Omena is a non-entity. Wikipedia, an unofficial internet information source, defines Omena as "a small, unincorporated community in Leelanau Township." In preparing for this article, I asked one of our county officials about Omena's boundaries. The response was interesting; I was told, "The 2000 census did not include specific enough information for Omena," as in nothing. They stated that an effort was under way to have "non-areas of government" like Omena, Cedar and Leland designated as "areas of interest" or "Designated

Places." Now we're getting somewhere!

Omena is comprised of people from virtually all walks of life. What we lack in ethnic diversity, we make up for with individuality and an unparalleled sense of community spirit and unity. When asked what the population of Omena is, we are inclined to ask, "summer or winter," as the difference is substantial.

So, exactly what is Omena? A village? A hamlet? Most refer to it as a village. Others have called it a hamlet. The dictionary defines a hamlet as "a small village," so there you go. Mystery solved.

Then there are those that refer to us by our geographical location or in relation to a commercial entity. "Omena? Isn't that where that sharp bend in the road is, between Sutton's Bay and Northport?" Or, "Is that the quaint little village with the beautiful bay and restaurant across from the gallery?" »

## Omena's Place in the World

KATHY MILLER

**O** MENA IS NOT A BIG PLACE. WE'RE NOT EVEN A TOWN, but just a village. As Jim writes above, there are a surprising number of people in our own region who don't know about our village—which makes it all the more of a surprise when you encounter someone on the other side of the world who knows Omena.

A story that appears in Amanda Holmes' *Omena: A Place in Time*, is just such a tale. Vin Moore, longtime summer resident, and his wife, Ginny, were on a Mediterranean cruise in the 1960s. Vin, a physician and now deceased, had not signed on as a doctor but when the ship's executive officer learned that fact, he asked if Vin would help them out of a predicament. Their own ship's doctor had taken ill, they were without medical services, and they now had several passengers who had become quite sick. Vin agreed to see them.

One woman had a high fever and a severe bladder infection. She was now looking at a possible emergency helicopter transport to the nearest hospital. Vin, being an urologist, happened to have some free samples with him for just such an ailment. He convinced her to take some with a lot of water, in hopes there would be improvement over the next hours.

Sometime later, Vin went to check on her and found her vastly improved. Wondering what magical powers he had used, and feeling much better, the woman demanded to know who he was. When Vin explained he was a doctor and happened to be just the kind she needed, she then wanted to know

where he'd gone to school. He went on to explain he'd grown up in Michigan and had gone to the University of Michigan's medical school.

Aboard a ship in the Mediterranean Sea, she asked him if he'd ever heard of a place called Omena. Can you imagine how much out of left field that must've sounded? Vin replied affirmatively with an explanation of having a home there where he'd spent many a summer.

The woman then began her story—of having visited Omena in 1910 when she was on her honeymoon. She had married in Cincinnati and her new husband loved traveling by train and boat. They traveled through the Mackinac Straits and back, actually spending two weeks at the Sunset Lodge here in Omena. She remembered our two churches (our present Presbyterian Church and what was once the Congregational Church, now the Omena House on Lake Street) and two docks. She told about taking wagon rides from the dock up to the resort driven by a man with a funny name; a man who turned out to be Joe Kalchik, Sr., whose family still remains in the area.

Eight of their fourteen days were spent riding the boats to various ports of northern Michigan. This new bride had a hard time convincing people of how unique her honeymoon was but she never forgot Omena. We're lucky to have this quaint story to remind us of our past...and of our unique place in this world. ■

“It's a surprise when someone on the other side of the world knows Omena.”



» Those familiar with Omena are usually very complimentary. It is a romantic place. Many have signed the OHS website's guest book, recalling visits in their youth or family ties to our village. All speak fondly of Omena and their memories of being here.

Being a relative newcomer to Omena, I have been curious as to the village's boundaries. Be honest, how many of you

know—or care, for that matter—where the boundaries of Omena lie? One of the first duties of establishing Omena's Historical Society was to determine the area of Omena. How can you document and preserve history if you don't know the area you are preserving and documenting? These are the boundaries, they concluded, that define Omena's borders:

## EASTERN BOUNDARY

Following the Lake Michigan shoreline, the boundary runs from just north of Camp Haven Road in the north to just south of Freeland Road in the south.

## SOUTHERN BOUNDARY

This is the only boundary that is somewhat ambiguous. According to the OHS map, Omena's border is just a few yards south of Freeland Road. Starting from Lake Michigan heading west, across M-22, the boundary line travels in a straight line that runs into Pobuda Road. It follows Pobuda Road for approximately 1.3 miles until it intersects an area designated by the DNR as "wetlands." There is a slight discrepancy with this line as the southern border for the entire Leelanau Township runs in line with Kitigan Mi-Run Road and not Pobuda Road, which is slightly to the north.

## WESTERN BOUNDARY

From Pobuda Road, the boundary line travels northward, meandering through the center of the wetlands, to the west of Bass Lake. It continues northward along the wetlands for approximately 2.5 miles, gradually turning northeasterly.

## NORTHERN BOUNDARY

Because the western boundary meanders to the northeast, there is no clear northern boundary, i.e. roads, streams, etc.. It emerges from the wetlands on M-22, slightly south of Lee Mann Road. Continuing northeasterly, the line reaches the shores of Lake Michigan just north of Camp Haven Road.

Remember, this is unofficial because officially, we don't exist as a defined area. Of course we pay property taxes, so we are not entirely non-existent. I guess to be an Omenian, it seems you just have to say you are from Omena, live in the general vicinity and pay your taxes. People don't really care what your actual address is although having our own post office lends credibility toward proving our existence. It is hard to believe that our little village at one time had nine resorts in operation, a train stop, and even three gas stations, although these were at different times.

No matter the metes and bounds, no matter the name, no matter the exact location, we are just a lucky bunch of people, living in a beautiful rural area we happen to call Omena. I think we will take it just the way it is. Being designated as an "area of interest" is okay by me.

Even the name Omena is a bit unclear. It is said to mean "Is that so?" in the Ojibwa language. I wonder, has anyone checked the Ojibwa word for heaven? ■



Graveyard, Omena Presbyterian Church.

Photo by Jim Miller

# Milestones

## ROBERT W. BAILEY

*December 15, 1927-June 18, 2010*

A long time Omena resident; married March 5, 1949 to Patricia L. Dustman, who survives; University of Michigan graduate; a staff architect for Bechtel Corp. He and his wife retired to the family summer home on Omena Point Rd. and he launched a second career with several retail ventures specializing in Michigan products. Also surviving are their children: Deborah Love (Robert), Kirk Bailey (Diane), Anne Causlin (John), and Brian Bailey (Jeri-Lynn).

## HUGH E. "BUD" COOK

*January 23, 1928-September 10, 2010*

Born in Traverse City to Clarence Cook and Ina Clawson Cook; married to Virginia E. Smith, who preceded him in death, as did his brother, Daniel; recently retired from the Northport/Leelanau Township Fire Department after 57 years of service. He traveled all over the world for his custom welding business, and later became a plant manager at Cherry Growers in Omena. He is survived by his children, Hugh Cook Jr. (Martha), Stephen Cook; Lisa Denham and her partner, John; and Timothy Cook (Vicky).

## DAVID W. HILDNER

*March 23, 1921-March 31, 2011*

A long-time summer resident of the family's Omena cottage, hand-built in 1915 by his wife's grandfather, father and uncles; husband of Barbara Bradley Hildner, who survives, as do their three children: David J. Hildner (Berta), Ann E. Hildner and Gregory Richard Hildner. He was a 1942 graduate of Oberlin College and commander of a U.S. Navy PT boat in the Pacific theater in World War II. During the post-war years, he was a high school teacher, then an engineer specializing in engine design and engineering at Western Electric in Kansas City.

## ERNESTINE FREELAND JOHNSON

*April 15, 1912-January 12, 2011*

Born in Omena; grew up on Freeland Road, where her parents operated a small resort; graduated from Northport High School and Michigan State College; studied nursing in Washington D.C.; married Sidney Johnson, a Cleveland attorney. After his death, she earned a master's degree in nursing at Case Western Reserve and, in 1960, was recruited by Northwestern Michigan College in Traverse City to establish and administer a Registered Nursing program there. In 1973 she retired and spent much of her time at her Omena home, then moved to Benzie County. She was preceded in death by her daughter, Valerie, and by siblings Ruth Carmody, Paul Freeland and Mary Smith.

## VIRGINIA JOHNSTONE

*January 3, 1922-October 19, 2010*

A native of the Detroit area; daughter of Charles and Mable Kelley; wife of Richard Johnstone, who preceded her in death. She is survived by her children, Ricki Rosensweet, of Bali; Jill Nylander, of Sarasota, FL; Gregory Johnstone, of Traverse City; and Tim Johnstone (Laurel Levine) of Auburn Hills. Widely traveled, the family also lived in England and India. On retirement in 1976, they purchased Sunset Lodge on Tatch Rd., Omena, and enjoyed twenty years there before moving to Traverse City.

## CHARLES J. KALCHIK, Jr.

*March 26, 1936-September 8, 2010*

Born in Omena to Charles Joseph Kalchik and Juanita Goodrich Kalchik; married to Sharon Virginia McMachen, graduated from Michigan State University; taught at Northport Public School for several years; and was briefly its principal. He was a fruit farmer and co-owner and manager of Bay View Orchards and Hilltop Farms; a charter member of Cherry Central; a real estate broker; co-founder of Leelanau Wine Cellars Ltd.; a volunteer firefighter; and an active participant in many community affairs. He is survived by his wife, Sharon, and his sister, Carolyn (George Staehling). Also surviving are five children: Laura Kalchik (Trenn Roberts), Allen Kalchik; Colleen Kalchik; Karen Kalchik (Brad Trolenberg), and John Kalchik.

## NICHOLAS R. "RON" MIRON

*July 24, 1937-April 3, 2011*

Born in Detroit to the late Joseph H. Miron and Sophie Engel Miron; survived by his wife, Marla, whom he married on March 21, 1987. He was an avid fisherman; worked for many years in the retail business; and was a Senior Buyer for fishing tackle for Kmart Enterprises for 32 years. After retirement, he and Marla moved to their property on Tatch Road. His first wife, Mary Jean, died at the age of 45, but their daughter, Mary (Danny Barish), and two grandchildren survive.

## JOAN THERESE ROTHENBERGER

*November 10, 1929-September 2, 2010*

A former resident of Omena; graduate of Boston College where she earned a BSN degree; a registered nurse for 26 years, serving in many different settings and capacities. She was born in Lawrence, Massachusetts to Daniel F. Maloney and Lillian Rae Maloney, and was married on August 30, 1958, to Edgar B. Rothenberger, who preceded her in death. She is survived by a daughter, Susan (Tom Sunderman), and three grandchildren.



# Milestones, CONT.

## WARREN WILLIAM SINGER

*December 31, 1935-May 19, 2010*

Born to Margaret Braun Singer and William Ellsworth Singer of Detroit; attended school in Detroit, including Mackenzie High School and Wayne State University. His career in the automobile business spanned more than 51 years and included corporate sales management with American Motors and Chrysler Corporation and, prior to retirement, employment at Grand Traverse Auto in Traverse City. A former resident of Omena, he is survived by his wife of 51 years, Marilyn Wreford Singer; his children, William Russell Singer, Wallace Singer, and Jennifer Singer Orsella; and four grandchildren.

## JOHN A. WEISS

*July 27, 1928-February 19, 2011*

A native of Cincinnati; son of Frederick and Bessie Elder Weiss; attended Miami University and then joined the U.S. Navy. He was the Vice-President of Balcrank in South Bend, Indiana and served on the Board of Directors for Reid Tool Supply. For many years his family enjoyed their summer home on Omena Point. He was preceded in death by his wife, Connie, and his brother, Robert, also a long-time Omena resident. He is survived by his children, Bessie Weiss and John C. Weiss (Kris), and grandsons, Mitch Weiss and Matthew Weiss. ■



The hobnailed boots of a resting Civil War reenactor in Franklin, Tennessee.

Photo by Jim Miller

# Omena's Civil War Generals

DEBBY DISCH

*The information in this article was drawn from OMENA: A PLACE IN TIME by Amanda Holmes, and supplemented with additional information from Joey and Larry Bensley.*

**A**PRIL 12, 2011, MARKED THE 150<sup>TH</sup> anniversary of the beginning of the Civil War.

Omena has connections to three Civil War generals – Major General George Armstrong Custer, Brigadier General Benjamin H. Grierson and General Byron M. Cutcheon. While he is the best known of the three, Custer's associations with Omena are tangential and only one visit has been actually documented, although other visits are assumed to have taken place. Grierson and Cutcheon both owned cottages in Omena, long after the end of the Civil War.

## General George A. Custer

CUSTER'S CONNECTIONS WITH OMENA began decades before those of Grierson and Cutcheon and link him with two of Omena's earliest families, the Bacon and Page families. Custer married Elizabeth "Libbie" Clift Bacon in February 1864. They had met in 1862 in Monroe, Michigan, where Libbie had been born in 1842 to Judge Daniel Bacon and Sophia Page Bacon. The Bacon family appears in Omena's historical record as early as 1852 when Daniel Bacon, a state senator and land speculator, purchased about 70 acres at the southwest corner of what is now County Road 626 and M-22, as well as land at the head of Omena Bay. By 1858, he also owned property on Omena Point and to the south of Omena, including the present day Villa Marquette property.

Judge Bacon donated the land on which Reverend Peter Dougherty and the Indians built the Presbyterian Church in 1858 and established the Indian cemetery. His brother-in-law was Aaron Page, who owned Page's Boarding House, across from the current site of Sunset Lodge. Page was also Omena's first postmaster. Several decades later, another

brother-in-law, Abel Page, worked with Frank Graves on the planned Omena Resort development. Judge Bacon died in 1866, while Libbie was stationed with Custer in Fort Riley, Kansas. Libbie, the only one of four children to survive to adulthood, was his sole heir.

Custer and his wife spent the rest of the war seeing each other under harsh and uncertain conditions. A war injury may have been what gave Custer his first opportunity to visit Omena. He was injured by a spent rifle ball in a cavalry raid on Richmond, and in July 1864 was »



George A. Custer



» granted a leave. He and Libbie went to Monroe, Traverse City, and Omena, most likely to see Libbie's Page relatives. His July 22, 1864, visit was chronicled in the diary of Reverend George Smith, one of the earliest settlers in Northport.

“Custer’s July 22, 1864, visit to Omena was chronicled in the diary of Reverend George Smith.”

It is, however, possible that any of Custer's leaves may have resulted in a trip to Omena. In 1874, he had a six-week leave, during which they are believed to have traveled to Michigan. Custer died in 1876 at the Battle of Little Big Horn. Her widow's pension left Libbie in need of money and she gradually sold off the Omena property. A need for money presumably had also led General Custer and Libbie to sell 80 acres to Rinaldo Putnam in 1871. That land is now the site of the Villa Marquette, and the house that Rinaldo Putnam built on that property was moved into downtown Omena in 2004 and is now the home of the Omena Historical Society.

### General Benjamin H. Grierson

WHEREAS CUSTER BEGAN HIS MILITARY CAREER as a West Point cadet, Benjamin Grierson took the entrance exam and was accepted, but declined at his mother's request. Instead, he began his adult life pursuing his musical abilities.

Grierson was born in Pittsburgh, the son of Irish immigrants. At a young age, the family moved to Youngstown, Ohio. At the age of 13, Grierson became the leader of his first band. He married his Youngstown sweetheart in 1854, and tried running a grain and mercantile business in Meredosia, Illinois. By 1859, he gave up that business and traveled to small towns to organize amateur bands, and also wrote campaign songs for Abraham Lincoln's presidential campaign.

With the start of the Civil War, Grierson volunteered in May 1861. Like most volunteers in the Union Army, he expected quick results and had joined as an unpaid aide-de-camp to General S. M. Prentiss. By October 1861, the war seemed likely to continue for a while, and he was commissioned as a major in the 6<sup>th</sup> Illinois Cavalry. One of the great ironies of his career was that he had harbored great dislike of horses ever since he was kicked in the face as a young boy.

The most famous of his Civil War accomplishments became known as “Grierson's Raid.” On April 17, 1863, he received orders from General U. S. Grant to lead his 1,700 men through Mississippi with only three days of rations. He led his men 600 miles in sixteen days, destroying Confederate military supplies and infrastructure along the way. Grant called the raid “one of the most brilliant cavalry exploits of the war.” As a result, Lincoln promoted then Colonel Grierson to Brigadier General of Volunteers. Grierson remained in the Union Army until April 30, 1866, by this time a Major General helping to oversee the reconstruction in the South.

After the end of the Union Army, Grierson, like Custer, decided to make the U. S. Regular Army his career. Grierson had worked with black troops during the Civil War and had gained a respect for their soldierly qualities. He was appointed commander of the 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, one of two newly authorized postwar black cavalry regiments that the Cheyenne and Comanche would nickname the “Buffalo Soldiers.” The 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry mapped tens of thousands of square miles of the western territories, laid hundreds of miles of telegraph cable and new roads, and skirmished with rustlers, bandits »



Benjamin H. Grierson

» and Mexican revolutionaries. He also retained his passion for music. No matter how remote the outpost, he always managed to muster a regimental band.

In 1890, he retired with the rank of Brigadier General. His wife had died two years earlier and his four sons were grown.

“Grant called Grierson’s raid ‘one of the most brilliant cavalry exploits of the war.’”

He kept a house in Jacksonville, Illinois, and a ranch at Fort Davis, Texas. Grierson most likely found his way to northern Michigan through friends from Jacksonville, some of whom built cottages at the tip of Omena Point.

In 1896, Grierson built his own cottage, now the Rule Cottage, which he called “The Garrison.” After spending so much time in the arid West, he seemed to revel in the activities of the bay, and became part of the local scene. Grierson remarried in 1897 and they continued to live in Jacksonville, and summer in Omena. Around 1900, Grierson purchased acreage on Ingalls Bay and acquired Rev. Dan Freeman Bradley’s cottage on the Point, which he opened as a hotel, The Oaks.

In the winter of 1902, his home in Jacksonville caught fire and he and his wife had to flee in only their bedclothes. The general caught a chill that turned into bronchitis. He was well enough in September, 1903, according to his Omena neighbors – fellow Civil War General Cutcheon and his wife – to clear trees, and construct an icehouse and a hired man’s shed. But the fire and its aftermath had irreparably damaged his health. He had been steadily failing for more than a year when he fell while in Omena in 1911. Grierson died in his cottage in Omena on August 31, 1911.

## General Byron Cutcheon

PERHAPS THE LEAST KNOWN OF OMENA’S THREE CIVIL WAR generals, Byron Cutcheon was a distinguished member of the Union Army and an important figure in postwar Michigan history.

Byron Cutcheon was born and raised in Pembroke, New Hampshire, in 1836. He ventured westward in 1852, at age 16, to continue his education in Ypsilanti. He graduated from the University of Michigan in 1861 and returned to Ypsilanti to teach ancient languages in high school. After the attack on Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861, that started the Civil War, a wave of volunteers formed into local regiments, and marched to war, expecting to return home by the end of summer. With no early victory, by 1862, more volunteers were joining to help bring the war to an end. In July, 1862, Cutcheon joined the United States Volunteers with the 20<sup>th</sup> Michigan Infantry. Within days, he was promoted to officers’ rank, and in the fall of 1864 was commissioned Colonel of the 27<sup>th</sup> Michigan

Infantry. When Cutcheon resigned from the army in March 1865, he had attained the brevet rank of Brigadier General and bore two wounds from battles.

While both Custer and Grierson continued their careers in the military, Cutcheon returned to civilian life. He returned to the University of Michigan and obtained a degree in law. In 1867, he moved to Manistee, then a thriving lumber town on Lake Michigan. During the war, he had met several men from Manistee who would become his neighbors and business partners. He had married Marie Warner of Dexter, Michigan, in the midst of the war in 1863. Over the years in Manistee, in addition to his business ventures, he served as city attorney, prosecuting attorney for the county, regent to the University of Michigan, and postmaster of Manistee. In 1882, he was elected to the U. S. Congress, where he served three terms.

While in Congress, he served as chairman of the House Committee on Military Affairs, and spearheaded the efforts to create a national monument to commemorate the Battle of Gettysburg. Until his involvement, the efforts were focused on the Northern victory. Cutcheon envisioned a broader scope, and, in 1890, submitted a bill to create the Gettysburg National Military Park that recognized both the North and

»



Byron Cutcheon

Courtesy of PictureHistory.com



» the South. The bill did not pass in that session, and the controversy over the inclusion of the South may well have played a role in his losing his seat in the

“Cutcheon spearheaded the efforts to commemorate the Battle of Gettysburg.”

election of 1890. Nevertheless, his vision eventually prevailed and helped shape the commemoration

of the Civil War for the generations that followed.

With his political career over, Cutcheon and his wife, Marie, moved to Grand Rapids. There he most likely made his connection with Omena through Rev. Dan Freeman Bradley. The Cutcheons built their cottage, Maplewood, in 1896-97, shortly after Grierson had built his next door. (It is now the home of Phil and Susan Goldman.) In his retirement years, Cutcheon worked hard at preserving history, writing a book on the Civil War and one on Michigan's history. He died on April 12, 1908, the 47<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the firing on Fort Sumter. ■

## General Custer, Up Close

MUCH HAS BEEN WRITTEN ABOUT GENERAL George A. Custer. His checkered life as a flamboyant and controversial soldier has been fodder for countless writings. Going by his actions and even his unusual selections for uniforms, it seems safe to say he had no issues with the public's view of him. Whether liked or disliked, the general piqued the curiosity of the masses and the ire of many, like few others of that era.

Below is a letter written by James H. Kidd, which describes Brigadier General George Custer, who fought for the Union, in vivid detail:

*Looking at him closely, this is what I saw: An officer superbly mounted who sat his charger as if to the manor born. Tall, lithe, active, muscular, straight as an Indian and as quick in his movements, he had the fair complexion of a school girl. He was clad in a suit of black velvet, elaborately trimmed in gold lace, which ran down the outer seams of his trousers, and almost covered the sleeves of his cavalry jacket. The wide collar of a blue navy shirt was turned down over the collar of his velvet jacket, and a necktie of brilliant crimson was tied in a graceful knot at the throat, the long ends falling carelessly in front. The double row of buttons were arranged in groups of twos, indicating the rank of brigadier general. A soft black hat with a wide brim adorned with gilt cord, and rosette encircling a sliver star, was worn turned down on one side giving him a rakish air. His upper lip was garnished with a blonde mustache. A sword and belt, gilt spurs and top boots completed his unique outfit... That garb, fantastic as at first sight it appeared to be, was to be the distinguishing mark which, during all the remaining years of war... was to show us where, in the thickest of the fight, we were to seek our leader – for, where danger was, where*

*swords were to cross...there he was, always.* ■

*Excerpted from Matthew Gallman, THE CIVIL WAR CHRONICLE (Gramercy Books, 2000), 408-409.*



# Grand Traverse in the Civil War

JOHN C. MITCHELL

ULYSSES S. GRANT COMMANDED A FORCE OF 118,000 soldiers when he started toward Richmond in early May 1864. In the first two weeks of fighting along the Wilderness-Spotsylvania front, the Army of the Potomac had suffered 38,000 casualties, compared to General Robert E. Lee's losses of 20,000. Grant had succeeded in pushing the battle lines steadily south toward the Confederate capital, but at a daily cost never seen before in the Civil War. However, the General did not waver, and when the weather cleared, he again ordered his troops south toward Richmond, keeping his promise to "fight it out on the line if it takes all summer."

Dozens of Grand Traverse soldiers had been killed in the onslaught in what would become the bloodiest summer in American military history. Former Grand Traverse sheriff William Sykes, Lake Leelanau school teacher Tom McCraney, Native American Sharp Shooters Sgt. Charles Allen of Northport and former Judge Henry Graveraet, were among the many who had died in combat during

opening weeks of the Peninsula Campaign.

On the morning of May 20, 1864, the passenger steamer *Nile* fired her boilers with cordwood in Detroit for the voyage ahead. Awaiting passengers boarded the ship and headed for the salons.

“Dozens of Grand Traverse soldiers were killed in what would become the bloodiest summer in American military history.”

Among those traveling back home on the *Nile* was Traverse City's Albert W. Bacon, the brother of Libby Bacon, who had recently become the wife of General George Custer. Albert Bacon arrived in Grand Traverse Country in 1852 at the age of 20 and worked as one of the area's first surveyors, helping his father, a prominent downstate judge, buy timberland in the Omena area. *The Grand Traverse* »



A private of Co. F, 4th Michigan Infantry.





Union reenactors help to recreate the Battle of Franklin in Tennessee.

» *Herald* described him as “more thoroughly acquainted with the country and its resources, from actual exploration and observation, than any other man.”

It was inconceivable that another promising young Grand Traverse man was about to perish in the exceptionally cruel month—especially so far from the battlefields. However, in May 1864, the grim reaper was having his way. Reverend George Smith of Northport wrote in his diary: “Propeller *Nile* exploded her boilers at the dock...instantly being blown almost to atoms. A.W. Bacon was just aboard & was thrown far above a warehouse...in all 6 dead have been recovered. A considerable [number] are in the wreck. Much damage was done in the city. One man was killed by a stick of timber thrown over buildings some distance—went through the wall of a brick building – struck him in the side & killed him.”

Bacon’s friend Morgan Bates, the editor of the *Grand Traverse Herald*, wrote: “We never received a greater shock than when...informed us that Mr. Bacon was a corpse. We had seen him only a few days before, full of health, life, hope and energy. A mangled corpse is all that remained of our noble, generous, warm-hearted friend.” Bates had inadvertently written a eulogy to the many Grand Traverse soldiers whose names soon appeared on the casualty roles arriving back North. With the death of Bacon, it seemed as if some tragic force was making sure that May was the month Northern Michigan paid its share of the cost of the Civil War. The sad fact was there were still ten days left in May—time enough for more Grand Traverse men to die. ■

*Excerpted from GRAND TRAVERSE: THE CIVIL WAR ERA (2011).*

## About the Author

**A**UTHOR JOHN C. MITCHELL WAS BORN AND RAISED IN the Detroit area at a time when the Motor City made most of the world’s cars. He later graduated from the University of Michigan where he worked as a reporter and editor for the student newspaper, *The Michigan Daily*.

During the past twenty-five years, Mitchell has collaborated with noted illustrator and friend Tom Woodruff to produce a series of four popular history books for children: *Michigan* (1987); *Great Lakes and Great Ships* (1991); *Indians of the Great Lakes* (1994); and *Prehistoric Great Lakes* (2001). In 2007, Mitchell wrote *Wood Boats of Leelanau*, a book that won

a State History Award. The author has taught history and writing programs in elementary schools throughout the state as a National Endowment for the Arts scholar, and continues to work as a writer in residence throughout the Great Lakes region. *Grand Traverse: The Civil War Era*, released at the start of the war’s Sesquicentennial, explores the region’s extensive involvement in the most revered era of American history.

Mitchell has lived on the Leelanau Peninsula for forty years, where he raised a pair of boys and worked continuously in history-related ventures. He resides with his wife, Ann Marie, in the greater Omena area. ■

# Interesting Civil War Facts

COMPILED BY JIM MILLER

- ▶ Much of the destruction of Atlanta was done by the retreating Confederates to keep the Union army from taking their military supplies.
- ▶ Confederate General Richard Taylor was commanding general of the Department of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. He was also the son of President Zachary Taylor.
- ▶ General Hooker was the first leader to create badges to identify individual units. This idea is still used today.
- ▶ The Battle of Franklin, Tennessee, fought on November 30, 1864, lasted just 5 hours yet it cost the Confederate Army of Tennessee dearly. In all, 8,587 died in the short but brutal battle that started in the late afternoon and ended with hand-to-hand fighting in total darkness. Total losses for the Union forces were 2,326. The south's total came to 6,261 including 6 generals. The 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry Regiment from East Saginaw bravely held the right flank in that battle against overwhelming numbers.
- ▶ 150 Confederate cannons, the largest number assembled during the war, were at Gettysburg. It was said that the noise from the guns could be heard 160 miles away in Pittsburgh.
- ▶ Because both northern and southern armies banned women from serving, it is estimated that as many as 400 women disguised themselves as men to fight in the war.
- ▶ On average, three-quarters of the surgeries performed were amputations.
- ▶ Night time truces were often called so that the men could retrieve their dead and wounded.
- ▶ Lt. Rutherford B. Hayes and Sgt. William McKinley of the 23rd Ohio both fought in the battle of Antietam. Both went on to become presidents of



50th Pennsylvania Infantry in parade formation in Beaufort, SC.

the United States.

- ▶ U.S. Grant, a West Point graduate who had resigned from the Army in 1854, waited for two days in Gen. George McClellan's office, hoping to get an officer's commission. McClellan did not have time to see him. McClellan also snubbed Abraham Lincoln. When Lincoln went to McClellan's home, the President was asked to wait, and eventually a servant told him that McClellan had gone to bed.
- ▶ Ben Butler was the only general to purchase and use Gatling Guns in the war. He used his own money to buy them.
- ▶ Maj. General, George E. Pickett, CSA, was last in his West Point class of 1846. Lt. General George A. Custer was last in his class of 1861.
- ▶ A review board was convened in 1916 to review the Medals of Honor awarded to date for all military actions. The board rescinded the awards of 911 Medals of Honor. Among those stricken were the 27th Maine, whose 29 officers and men had accompanied the remains of President Lincoln's body from Washington to Springfield, Illinois, in April 1865; Civil War doctor Mary Edwards Walker (later reinstated); and another very colorful hero of the Indian Wars, William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody.
- ▶ The total number of Medals of Honor awarded for Civil War actions came to 1,520, of which 1,196 were Army, 307 Navy, and 17 Marines.
- ▶ 47 Union generals and 77 Confederate generals were killed in the Civil War.
- ▶ 153 Confederate generals and 188 Union generals had no military training.
- ▶ In what is sometimes referred to as "the last major battle of the Civil War," in Columbus, Georgia, Captain John S. Pemberton, a druggist, was both cut by sword and shot, yet survived to go on to become the inventor of Coca-Cola.
- ▶ By the time the war ended, 1,504 Confederate ships had been captured trying to run the southern blockades.
- ▶ Samuel Wilson supplied barrels of beef to the United States Army during



- » the War of 1812. Wilson (1766-1854) stamped the barrels with “U.S.” for United States, but soldiers began referring to the grub as “Uncle Sam’s.” The local newspaper picked up on the story and “Uncle Sam” eventually gained widespread acceptance as the nickname for the U.S. federal government.
- Approximately 186,000 blacks, mostly former slaves, served in the Union Army. It is estimated that 68,000 died.
- Nathan Bedford Forrest was the only soldier in the war to enter as a private and end as a Lt. Colonel.
- The first Union prisoners arrived at the Andersonville, Georgia prison on February 25, 1864, while the stockade wall was still under construction. The prison was designed to hold 10,000 prisoners. It was soon overcrowded, holding 22,000 by June. Although the prison was enlarged, the number of prisoners continued to swell. By August 1864, more than 32,000 prisoners were confined at Andersonville. Death tolls would eventually reach 13,000.
- In August of 1865, President Andrew Johnson gave his approval to charge Captain Henry Wirz, Andersonville’s commanding officer, with “wanton cruelty” in the treatment of the prisoners. He was found guilty on November 6th and executed by hanging four days later. ■

## The Only Female Medal of Honor Awardee KATHY MILLER

**B**ORN IN 1832, MARY WALKER GREW UP IN RURAL NEW York. She graduated from Syracuse Medical College in 1855 and set up her office in New York and married. Throughout her thirteen years of marriage, she didn’t use her husband’s name, going against the social practice of the time,

a time when women were still considered property by some.

The Army didn’t recognize women as doctors so she was allowed to work only as a nurse. Her involvement with the Civil War began at the Battle of Chickamauga in 1863, where she served as a “volunteer surgeon” in an army hospital in Chattanooga, TN.

Several times, Dr. Walker crossed enemy lines to aid Georgians whose lives had been decimated by the war. At the time, women and children were frequently driven to live in swamps, even when sick or near death. Dr. Walker would help them with supplies taken from the Federals.

While dressed in full military uniform, Dr. Walker was captured in 1864. The Rebels’ commanding officer ordered her sent to Richmond as a prisoner. She was later released in a trade that pleased her in that she’d been traded “man for man.” This release allowed her to help as a surgeon during the battle for Atlanta.

After the Civil War, Dr. Walker was recommended for the Medal of Honor by Generals Sherman and Thomas, which she received in 1866. Later, in 1917, the federal government tried to correct many errors they felt had been made in issuing medals. Along with Mary Walker’s medal, 911 others were rescinded in the “Purge of 1917.” She refused to return her Medal of Honor as requested and wore it proudly every day until her death in 1919. Due to the tireless efforts of her granddaughter, President Carter signed a bill in 1977 reinstating her medal.

The Post Office best describes Mary Walker’s accomplishments aiding the North and South with the issuance of a special stamp. The declaration reads as follows:

*Dr. Mary Walker was a humanitarian devoted to the care and treatment of the sick and wounded during the Civil War, often at the risk of her own life. A patriot dedicated and loyal to her country, she successfully fought against the sex discrimination of her time. Her personal achievements as much as her vocal support significantly contributed to the struggle for women’s rights.* ■



# From Your President

KANDA MCKEE

**W**HEN I WAS ELECTED PRESIDENT BY THE OHS Board in September of last year, I felt I was facing a daunting task. I was following in the footsteps of Nana Kennedy. What she, her board and the many volunteers were able to accomplish in two years was unbelievable!!! The unique fund raising events put Omena in the news.

An organization like the Omena Historical Society is all about its volunteers. One of my goals is to keep that spirit of volunteering at the forefront of the OHS. When I was asked 3 years ago to become a volunteer, I asked myself the following questions. I had read these in an issue of the *KY CPA Journal*. Hopefully, you will find them – and my personal reflections on them – helpful to you in considering getting, or staying, involved with OHS.

## ? Do you have a passion for Omena history?

My husband and I have been visiting Omena since 1980. We were invited by Les and Debby Disch soon after we were married. Harold and I, having been raised in Ashland, Kentucky and Cincinnati, Ohio, respectively, fell in love with Omena and the surrounding area. We loved the blue water, the clean air, the unique restaurants and bars, the views, the trillium, the morels, the state and federal parks, the wineries, the eagles, the black squirrels, etc. It was heaven to us. We always found time to spend at least a week or two every summer while we were working in Cincinnati. Finally, in 2003, we purchased our land in Aghosatown and built our own place. We first became involved in the Omena Historical Society by attending programs and events. Harold is more of a history buff than I am, but we both love Omena history. I guess you can say that we both have a passion for Omena and its history.

## ? What unique value can you bring to the organization?

Although I am a CPA, I am not versed in nonprofit accounting, but I can research and learn. I hope to help other non-financial volunteers understand and accurately gauge the organization's fiscal health.

## ? What are the expectations?

Many nonprofits look to their volunteers to be active in supporting the organization through

personal contributions. Small non-profits, like OHS, have no staff, nor any professional fund raising staff. We rely on our volunteers to help in annual fundraising, act as docents at the museum, serve on various committees, help build and organize the OHS archives, and work on programs and special events. Thankfully, we have volunteers in the Omena area who are fantastic in these roles.

“The Omena Historical Society is all about its volunteers.”

We couldn't survive without them. I wish I could list every single person who volunteers their time, talent and money in support of OHS. But, I would be afraid that I would miss someone.

## ? What is the time commitment?

The time commitment varies with the role that you have. The organization is flexible in working within the time that you have to give. The OHS Board members, for example, work throughout the year planning for the upcoming season.

## ? What are the dynamics of the Board and the various committee members?

Volunteers are made up of all kinds of people, with different interests and talents. The OHS Board members and our other volunteers are no different. I am glad to have the opportunity to work with so many different people, and to get to know them better through our shared interest. My goal is to work toward making us the best team that we can be.

I hope in answering these questions, you'll see that I am committed to helping OHS succeed. The task is not so daunting with the help of the board members, committee members and all of our volunteers.

For those of you who have not yet had the opportunity to volunteer your talents to OHS, I would like to extend an invitation to do so. Volunteer service gives you the opportunity to share your talents and learn more about Omena. Let's have a great summer in Omena. ■

*Contrary to common belief, those hardy Omenians that stay in town for the winter don't all just hibernate when the thermometer drops. Just as in the summer, the winter folks find reasons to socialize and share stories about fire wood, warm clothes and snowplowing their driveways. Each year they rally to decorate at Christmas time and, of course, there is the celebration after the work is done. The fair weather Omenians don't know what they're missing.*

[PHOTOS ON OPPOSITE PAGE]

Bob Smart (on the ladder), Stu Milligan and Bruce Balas.

Stu Milligan and Judy Balas.

Kathy Miller and Mary Smart.



Judy Smart, Marcia Bikupski, Mike Ten-Brock and Joan Ten-Brock had a fun time volunteering their services at Deli Days.



## Deli Days Contribute to OVPA Improvements

LAST SUMMER, THE OMENA VILLAGE PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION (OVPA), through the generosity of Sally and Brian Shapiro, summer Omena residents and proprietors of the world-famous Shapiro's Deli in Indianapolis, enjoyed a fun and very successful fundraiser. The event was held on the Kalchik farm now owned by Laura Deibel. The event provided much needed funds to re-invest in OVPA properties in downtown Omena, namely the Post Office and the Anderson House adjacent to it.

This past year at the Post Office, OVPA has invested in a new wood floor in the lobby, repaired and painted the fascia, and installed new wooden porch posts. The foundation under the east and west sides has been shored up. On the drawing board for this spring will be new lights (historic) in the lobby, painting the lobby and the front of the building. New planter boxes will be installed. Also, a memorial bench is being designed that will allow residents to have a tile dedicated to honor or memorialize someone.

Under the management of Jeff Lingaur, the Anderson house has been spruced up and will see a new painted fence and window boxes. Winter activities included some new windows, painting of front steps, and a new dishwasher.

OVPA and OHS reached an agreement to share the well between the Putnam-Cloud Tower House and the OVPA properties. This will ensure a continuous water supply to OHS since the Tamarack Gallery is for sale.

Thanks to all who supported the Deli Days and to those who worked very hard to make it a success. ■



# OHS Summer Programs

KATHY MILLER, PROGRAM CHAIR

**T**HE OHS SUMMER PROGRAMS OF 2010 STARTED OFF ON June 30<sup>th</sup> with longtime Omena/Northport resident George Anderson. His Powerpoint presentation on **"The Cemeteries of Leelanau Township"** entertained us with factual information and entertaining anecdotes. For instance, he told of a heated discussion that arose about the Civil War cannon when it was being moved from the Town Hall to the cemetery in 1932. This was years after the war but it became emotionally charged when talk turned to whether the cannon should be aimed north or south. Finally, it was settled when all agreed to aim it towards the tax assessor's office!

On a perfect July day, we held our **historical pontoon cruise**. OHS members and neighbors donated the use of their vessels, renamed "Columbia," "Lou A. Cummings," "Chiquamegon," and "Crescent" in honor of Omena's early passenger boats that used to sail the waters of Lake Michigan to various ports. Prior to our cruise, a social hour on Kathy and Jim Miller's lawn was enjoyed. Larry Bensley, with his straw boater and resort garb, gave a talk on the old resort sites around Omena Bay. It really was an idyllic Omena Day. Our thanks to all who volunteered their pontoons.

Our **OHS annual meeting** was once again held at Shady Trails. Ed Oberndorf fondly recalled former summer resident of many years, Vin Moore, and his early days in Omena. Along with his memorable narrative, Ed had early photos on display for all of us to enjoy. Jim Centner and Bill Renz, the elders, also shared their early memories. We thank all for making this such a personal memory of early Omena.

The final program of the summer was held at Omena's last resort, the Sunset Lodge. This is the only resort still in operation of the nine that once were thriving summer destinations. **Food historian Susan Odom** prepared a wonderful dinner based on an old resort menu. The Sunset Lodge owners Linda and Dave Jacobs, generously allowed us to hold this capacity event at their lovely inn. Again, it was another perfect Omena day and an awesome way to end our OHS summer programs of 2010. ■



Larry Bensley takes center stage in summer 2010 – reluctantly, no doubt...

## Summer Programs for 2011

- ▶ **June 26, 4-6:00 pm:** OHS Opening Exhibit and 5<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party of PCTH.
- ▶ **July 7, 7:00 pm,** at the Putnam-Cloud Tower House: John Mitchell, local author, speaks on Michigan soldiers involved in the Civil War.
- ▶ **July 12, 11:00 am:** Tour of Eyaawing Museum at Peshawbestown.
- ▶ **August 3, 3:30 pm:** Omena Cottage Walk.
- ▶ **August 9, 4:30 pm:** Annual Meeting at Shady Trails.



# Ernestine Freeland Johnson

JOEY BENSLEY

**O**N JANUARY 12, 2011, A LOVELY LADY WITH SPARKLING eyes and a heart of gold passed away at her residence in Frankfort.

Ernestine Freeland was born on April 15, 1912, and grew up in the small hamlet of Omena in the early 1900s. Much has changed since that time, but fortunately, through interviews and the written word, she left a valuable amount of material providing an understanding of Omena in the early 1900s and an appreciation for its history.

The house Ernestine was born and grew up in sits on the corner of Freeland Road and M-22 and is currently owned by Jim Centner. The road was named after her father, Albert Freeland, who arrived from Chicago with his family in 1908. The house, according to

Ernestine, was remodeled many times and things added to it, as was the custom in very old places. In the beginning the house served as a summer resort called Freeland Lodge. At the time it required a large kitchen, but as years passed and the Freelands retired, the end of the kitchen was eradicated because it was no longer needed. When guests did arrive, the family would move out and camp in tents, as there were not enough bedrooms for everyone.

Ernestine's earliest memories were of the Omena School, a one room school house about 1¼ miles from her house. She recalled walking down the railroad tracks with the Southwell boys who lived nearby. In winter, her older sister, Ruth, and one of the older boys took turns breaking the path after they left the tracks so they could cut across the field and orchard. The school, described by Ernestine as being pretty and sitting in a maple grove, was west of Sunset Lodge on Tatch Road. The teacher at the time was Jesse Alyswoth whom Ernestine realized, as she grew older, was an excellent teacher.

By the time she was ready for 6<sup>th</sup> grade, the township schools had been consolidated and Ernestine and others from Omena attended Northport School. They were transported by bus in spring and fall and by a covered sleigh drawn by a horse in the winter.

The village of Omena at that time was similar to what it is today except the building that houses Knot Just a Bar and Leelanau Cellars did not exist. There were two docks and large steamers came in from Chicago and other places. The boats brought tourists to Omena and left with apples and potatoes, major crops at the time.

Entertainment for children during the early part of the century was very different from today as technology had

not advanced and TV, computers, etc. had not entered onto the scene. Pom Pom Pull Away, Prisoners' Care Base, cards, and other games were played with friends who lived nearby. Visiting with neighbors and reading, done with the aid of kerosene lights, were enjoyable pastimes as well.

For those who were fortunate enough to know Ernestine they will remember her as a gracious, kind, talented and clever lady who was always willing to laugh at a joke on herself. Perhaps her older sister, Ruth, in her book, *Omena, Oh Is It So?* captures the essence of her best in words used when

“‘She looked to me like a very wet rat intent on surviving, but she was a very precious rat — tiny, lively, adorable, full of life, and most dear to us all.’”

they taught Ernestine to swim—“she struggled through the water toward us, her hair clinging to her head and she looked to me like a very wet rat intent on surviving but she was a very precious rat—tiny,

lively, adorable, full of life, and most dear to us all.”

Survive she did and went on to become a nurse and eventually was asked by Northwestern Michigan College to establish and administer a nursing program which continues today. While practicing in Cleveland, she married Sidney Johnson and was blessed with a daughter, Valerie Jacqueline. Ernestine's life was filled with family and friends and her stories of life in the early 20th century are a treasure to those who follow the history of Omena. ■

## An Omena Memory

[THE] SPIRIT OF INCLUSIVENESS STAYED A PART OF holidays in Omena. On Halloween night there was always a feast and fun. New Year's Eve was a watch meeting with a midnight supper. Christmas included a huge Christmas tree with handmade gifts for everyone.

ERNESTINE FREELAND JOHNSON PARTICULARLY enjoyed Christmas Eve at the [Omena Presbyterian] church. “As a child I remember it looked like such a great big tree,” she said. “The children would all speak a piece. Often three or four would since one of the Christmas carols. They gave out little candy boxes for the children. One time somebody said, ‘Isn't that a beautiful Christmas tree?’ And one of the little girls says, ‘That's no Christmas tree, that came from my daddy's swamp.’ That always tickled us. Usually he got down there without kids knowing it, but this time she had seen it.”

From OMENA: A PLACE IN TIME

**ON ANY GIVEN SUMMER DAY,** Leelanau County visitors will drive through our beautiful Omena and think that we are just another sleepy little village on a picturesque peninsula. But if they actually stop and look beneath the surface, they will be rewarded by seeing our rich history of missionaries, Native Americans, Civil War generals, and turn-of-the-century resorts that catered to people from around the world.

Even better hidden are the hundreds of hours given by volunteers who ensure that Omena's history is preserved and shared. From serving on committees to doing the physical work of repair and restoration to contributing artistry to the creation of our exhibits, volunteers are critical to our survival.

**We especially need volunteers now.** Inside this magazine you will find an insert that describes how you can help us to maintain our proud Omena heritage. Contribute only as many hours as you can—but PLEASE CONTRIBUTE.

And don't forget to play the quiz. It's fun, and the prizes are *fantastic*.

Enjoy your summer!

**KANDA MCKEE**

*President, Omena Historical Society*



**Omena, Michigan ...**  
**In all eras. In all seasons.**

