

Living History

Melodie Nichols :: Museum Curator

July–September 2009

The Bovee Family of Clawson

Another in a series of Clawson family vignettes.

Page 1



Jammin'

Making (preserving) jams and jellies is really quite a simple, and tasty, process.

Page 3



Our past wasn't always so pretty

At one time our fair city was a hotbed of racial and religious intolerance.

Page 3

A look back
The Fourth of July celebrated "old school".
Page 4



The Bovee Family

John W. Bovee graduated from Detroit College of Law in 1913 and was the first attorney to live and work in Clawson. His office was at the corner of Jefferson and Main Streets, and he later joined Mr. Walke at his office on 14 Mile Road.

John was born December 31, 1890 in Fowlerville, Michigan. His wife, Verley M. Stevens, was born July 8, 1893 in Calumet Michigan. They married in May 1912 and had three children, Melvin, Hazel and Donald.

The Bovee family moved to a home at 43 Church Street in 1926, and later to a home on High Street in September 1940.

Verley died in June 1958. John died in 1972 at the age of 81, still practicing law from his High Street home. He had served as Justice of the Peace in Madison Heights, and had been manager of retail stores for the Michigan Liquor Control Commission.

Hazel Bovee Green generously donated several items belonging to her family to the Clawson Historical Museum, including law books, glassware, clothing and hats, Christmas postcards, and the lovely buffet and china cabinet that are currently on display in the museum dining room. LH

CLAWSON HISTORICAL MUSEUM PURPOSES AND POLICIES

The Clawson Historical Museum is owned by the City of Clawson. It is governed by a Historical Commission of five members appointed by the Clawson City Council. It is managed by a curator appointed by the City Manager. Its operating budget is funded through the City of Clawson and augmented by generous donations from the Clawson Historical Society.

Museum Purpose *The purpose of the Clawson Historical Museum is to collect, preserve and encourage the use of documents, photographs and artifacts related to the early history of Clawson, from its settlement in 1823 through the present, focusing especially on the decade of the 1920's, when Clawson incorporated as a home rule village.*

Collections Policy *Historical records include those related to area public and civic organizations, such as the Lions Club and the Women's Club, churches, schools and government, as well as personal oral histories of residents, property abstracts, school and business records and thousands of photographs documenting Clawson's buildings, homes, streets and the changes they have undergone through the decades.*

Also included in the collection are maps, almanacs, and contemporary published materials such as local newspapers and news clippings, books, historical research papers, and national magazines and periodicals that reflect the culture of the 1920's.

These materials are available to the public for research on genealogy, property history, environmental investigations and other personal interests. Student research is especially encouraged.



From the desk of the Curator

It's summertime, and the birds are calling me through the window, enticing me to leave my work behind and venture into the museum's garden. If you haven't seen it lately, you really should. This year it is greener and lusher than I can remember, probably due to all the rain we got in April and May as well as the hard work of the Clawson Gardeners! The flowers are blooming, and I think a pair of sparrows has a nest nearby.

It's business as usual inside, though, and lots of work to be done. The Historical Society Garage Sale raised over \$1,000 this year, and some of that money is being used to update the photograph display in the Community Room. Thank you to all who helped and/or donated. A special thanks to Deloris and Jerry Kumler, who put in countless hours of hard work to make it a success. It would not have been possible without them.

I was thrilled by the positive vote on the Library millage. The library is such a vital asset to the community; it is truly part of what makes Clawson a great place. I'm looking forward eagerly to see the plans and progress of the addition. Thanks to all who voted in favor of the improvements.

Plans for the Fourth of July festivities are well underway—the museum hopes to have a float entered this year. Keep your fingers crossed for sunshine, and I'll see you there!

Melodie



Green museum

With all the emphasis on cleaning up the environment and reducing our consumption of resources, it seems every one is turning greener than the moon's best cheese. But the idea of recycling and reusing our resources is nothing new. Recycling was a way of life for our forefathers, and it is only recently that consumable, throwaway items have become so readily available that they replaced the durable, reusable items.

The museum is creating a "reduce, reuse, recycle" educational program for school-age children. The program will consist of a museum treasure hunt, as well as an in-school program for elementary age students, to help them understand the ways resources were used, preserved and reused in the past. For example, did you know most people brought their own shopping bags to the store in the 1920's, or had their purchases wrapped in paper and tied with string, both of which would be reused around the house later.

If you have stories or examples of how you and your family may have "recycled" or "reused" resources and materials in the past, before it was "green" to do so, please contact the curator at 248.588.9169 or email at historicalmuseum@cityofclawson.com.



“Preserving” the past

Preserves, jams and jellies are a great way to lock up summer’s bounty for those dreary gray days that lay ahead. Colorful jams and jellies provide a taste of summer just as fresh and tasty as a day in July, as they recall the memory of sunny days picking strawberries or the cool shady blueberry patch.

Making jams the old fashioned way required long cooking times, which reduced the fruit to mush, darkened its color, and sacrificed some of its flavor. During the 1920’s, packaged pectin (Certo and Sure-jel) became available to haste along the jelling process. Below are two recipes, tried and true, for making jam and jelly like grandmother, (or great-grandmother) used to do.

Strawberry Jam

2 quarts firm ripe strawberries
6 cups sugar
1 package liquid pectin

Clean and hull strawberries. Crush them, one cup at a time. Do not make a puree- there should be pieces of fruit left. Heat strawberries in a large kettle with the sugar. Bring to a rolling boil. Boil hard one minute. Remove from heat and stir in pectin. Stir and skim for 5 minutes to prevent floating fruit. Pour quickly into jar and seal with paraffin. Alternately, you may pour boiling fruit into the jars, seal with caps and rings, and invert for a second to sterilize the lid. If you use powdered pectin, you will need to follow the box instructions. Makes about 5 pints.

Grape Jelly—from Certo, 1932

2 cups of grape juice (or grape juice from concentrate)
3 cups sugar
½ bottle (1/2 cup) liquid pectin

Measure sugar and juice into large saucepan and mix. Bring to a boil over hottest fire and at once add pectin, stirring constantly. Then bring to a full rolling boil and boil hard ½ minute. Remove from fire, skim, and pour quickly. Paraffin hot jelly at once, or seal with caps and rings and invert. Makes about 5 eight-ounce glasses.

Preserving the fruit of summer and preserving the past may be accomplished in different manners, but the result is the same; a package of memories, fresh and colorful as the day they were made, to provide enjoyment, nourish our bodies and souls, and allow us to savor all that has gone on before.

Book signing

Deloris Kumler, retired curator the museum, will be at Leon & Lulu, 96 W. 14 Mile Road, on Sunday, July 5th from 1 to 4 p.m., signing copies of her new book Clawson, The Way It Was. The book offers a fascinating look at the history of Clawson from its earliest pioneers through the turbulent 1970’s. This is Mrs. Kumler’s second book on Clawson’s history and offers an in-depth history, including stories and humorous anecdotes of Clawson people and places through the years.

Not at all pretty

Every reader of this newsletter would likely agree that Clawson is a great place to live. A thriving downtown, good roads and schools, and great neighbors make Clawson a unique hometown environment. Giving our history a superficial glance, it would be easy to conclude that this is the way it has always been.

The reality, however, is quite different. Not that Clawson wasn’t a great place to live, but it wasn’t always the most tolerant place for all people. Catholics, Jews and African Americans were not well tolerated in the early days, and even throughout the 1930’s harsh discrimination existed, as evidenced by restrictive covenants that prohibited the sale of property to any person of non-Caucasian race.

Probably the most dramatic example of this was the activity of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920’s and 30’s. This group, resurrected from the group of the same name that appeared in the south shortly after the Civil War, targeted any group of people who were not of Anglo-Saxon, Protestant descent, including Catholics, Jews, African Americans and Communists. While they outwardly espoused their support of the “American Way of Life”, it was only their definition of America that counted. In Clawson, as in many other areas of Michigan, this was primarily directed toward Catholics, and they were targeted with discrimination, intimidation and outright terrorism.

A new display at the museum offers insight into both sides of the Klan story. Oral histories recorded by Clawson residents, including both a former Klan member and a Catholic target are included in this display and provide enlightening insight into their actions. Visit the exhibit in the community room now through the end of September.

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A look back

Clawson's Fourth of July Celebrations first began in 1933, and have continued every year except for a few years during World War II. The program for the first festivities began early in the morning with the Kiddie parade. Prizes were awarded for the prettiest costume, best comic character, best pet display, best-decorated bicycle, and others. Following the parade was the "Old Timer's Baseball Game." The prizes were a case a beer, and a box of cigars, awarded to the team with the first home run. Athletic contests followed, including 3-legged race, 100-yard dash for single men (chose a slow one, ladies!), a fat men's race, a women's tug of war, a slipper-kicking contest and a pie-eating contest. Prizes awarded varied from 24 ½ pounds of flour (Kroger), a free suit cleaning (Mathewson's Cleaners), 500 lbs of ice (Joe's Ice & Coal), a hair cut and tonic (Sears Barber Shop), a carton of cigarettes (Straub's Grocery), and five gallons of gas (Caverly's Gas Station). Concerts, fireworks and a street dance rounded out the festivities.

