

# TYRONE GLEANINGS

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## lone's Community News

The threat of rain hung over the Kent City Fall Festival on Saturday, Sept 10<sup>th</sup> however, the rain held off during the parade. The afternoon was different however. The tractor pull was interrupted but was completed late in the day. The fireworks were **spectacular!!** A very successful festival thanks to the efforts of John Petruska and many, many people who assisted John. Much time and effort goes into organizing a gathering like this.

I want to send more Kudos to John, the Village Board, and the DDA Board—Kent City is looking good. With the help of some Federal Government funding along with the DDA savings and bank loan a huge change has been made. We have new street lights, trees, plants, flowers and of course the pavilion - a focal point in Kent City. No more leaning, ugly power poles! The improving facades of some of the buildings are a real facelift for Kent City and really looks good. The library, museum and community building are integral parts of “downtown”. So thank you all once again!



**Please mark your 2016 calendar for the following meetings at 1:00pm  
Oct 11<sup>th</sup>, Nov 8<sup>th</sup> & Luncheon on Dec 13<sup>th</sup>**

Dave Johnson, a son of Art Johnson, supplied me with a draft of an article that was given to his father. The article was in a magazine about the “Stone Fence” on the family farm that has been in the family for several generations. Dave lives on the family farm on Paine Avenue presently. His place is the first one south of the Sub-Station on 17 Mile Road. Dave’s father, Art, lived in the second home on the east side of the road at 13738 Paine Avenue at the time this article was written. We are sharing excerpts from that article below. The stone wall is visible from the road between the second and third home on the east side of the road. –Ed Morgan

### **ART JOHNSON’S STONE WALL**

When I told Art that his stone wall was a really nice work of art, he looked at me with a rather bemused look on his face and replied, “Well it really is a piece of work.” Art Johnson, is the third generation of his family to farm the property where he lives and at 89 years young, still helps to farm the property located on Paine Ave, in Tyrone Township in Northern Kent County here in Michigan.

We were looking at a rather unique structure found in the middle of one of the fields of his farm. The structure is an impressive stone wall, about 35 or 40 rods long,” as Art describes it, “and not straight with the fence line. But we work around that when we plow,” Art said. The wall is a “dry stone” wall, so called because the stone is laid without mortar.

Art was raised on the farm where he still lives, along with three brothers. When I approached Art with the idea of writing about his stone wall and the neighboring stone houses, I expected to hear tales of the four Johnson brothers working long hot summers clearing the fields of stone. Art, however retold tales told to him by his father and grandfather about the history of the wall.

It seems that a Civil War veteran named Lorenzo “Renz” Chapman is responsible for the wall. Moving to Michigan sometime after his discharge from the Union Army after the end of the war, Chapman purchased the property that is now known locally as the “Johnson” farm. Chapman may have been fairly well-off at the time, as early on he built a house for his family as well as a barracks wing attached to the house for his help. Chapman was, however, fairly astute. He had two daughters and while the barracks wing which provided housing for the help was attached to his own house, there was no passageway between the two structures.



Chapman first had the help dig a ditch about eight feet wide by three to four feet deep and some 600 feet long. This was then filled with stone – stone which was picked from the fields of the farm. And that is where the wall stands today. Thousands of stones left there by a receding glacier thousands of years ago.

In this area of northern Kent County, a number of stone – built structures is to be found, including houses, silos, and other farm out-buildings. Built as much as 100 and more years ago, they stand today square and solid, a testament to the quality of the work done.



Stone masonry was once a true profession, raised to the level of fine art. The term masonry originally applied only to stonework. Later it also came to include work with brick and concrete.

To build a stone house or other building, required a lot of time, patience and a considerable amount of planning. The raw materials were readily available to anyone with a strong back, a willingness to work and the time and energy to “pick the stone” from the fields. Usually a “stone boat” and a team of horses, mules or oxen were used to skid the stone from the fields to the work site. Stone in the field was a serious hazard to plowing and the farmer was happy to be rid of the stone. In today’s landscaping schemes, however, stone is a desired commodity.

When it was desired to finish the inside walls of a stone-built structure such as a house, the interior of the walls was covered with furring or wooden lath strips which provided a nailing surface for the interior finishing materials. This lath stripping would also provide a surface for plaster as an interior finish alternative.

There are also specific techniques for the exterior finishing of a stone built structure. “Ashlar”, which means squared or hewn stone (sometimes honed or polished) is one technique. “Cobblestone” is another. Cobblestone means naturally – rounded stone, larger than pebbles and smaller than boulders. Many of the stone houses and outbuildings in the area have the cobblestone look to them. Many early Michigan houses and outbuildings were built with stone foundations.

Today, Art lives in the house which was built as a retirement home for his grandparents. This house, like others in the neighborhood, has walls about a foot thick. The inside and outside walls of the framing for the walls are covered with the full-cut one inch thick boards and the inside of the walls are filled with stone “rubble.”



“It’s a real bother,” says Art, “when I try to run new electrical wiring or install new plumbing. It does stay nice and cool early-on, but come August there are many warm nights!”

Stone houses and other buildings built of stone, have proven over time to be durable and solid. Stone connects to the making of the building, the human hand and the people who made them. Today, one can marvel at what has been achieved by hand those many years ago.

*Photos are a segment of the stone wall. The Old Renz Chapman home and Art Johnson's former home at 13738 Paine Ave.*

### **Interview with Anne Frahleigh Eck - by Ed Morgan**

Anne Frahleigh Eck has lived her entire life in the Casnovia area. Anne was born and raised on the family fruit farm west of Casnovia. Her father was John “Jack” Fraleigh. Jack was born in 1907, and died in 1970. Years ago, the name was originally spelled more like Fralagh, and pronounced in the old German way as “Fray Lick”. Anne’s mother was Marie Furlong who was born in 1908, and died in 1977. She later changed the spelling- of what is now Fraleigh- slightly and the pronunciation of the name to what it is today.

The family farm was about 3 ½ miles west of Casnovia on M-46. It was a mile long and ran from M-46 to Laketon. Anne was born in a small home on the Farleigh farm and later the family moved one mile to the other side of the farm where they lived for years in a big house.

Anne is one of three siblings. She had an older sister named Jane who was married to Hugh Lautner and a younger brother, John W. who just passed away this past March in Saginaw. Anne married Robert Eck and has three children. Their names are Bradley, Kimball & Cynthia Van Buskirk and Robert who passed away in 2010. Lela Waters was a cousin to Anne’s father. The family called her “Aunt.”

Anne remembers the Prisoners of War from the Sparta POW Camp worked in her parents’ orchards. They had mostly cherry orchards at the time. Anne has very early childhood memories of the Prisoners of War working in her father’s orchard. She remembers this work as having taken place more in the spring time during pruning time or doing other similar work. She does not remember it as being harvest time. Anne remember the prisoners of war were brought out in an open truck from Sparta. The men seemed to be a happy bunch. She does not remember any guards with them or any people carrying guns to supervise them. She remembers the prisoners just being happy to be with them to work.

Her parents let her go to and from the house and play in the yard at will when the prisoners were there. Anne does not remember that there seemed to be any worries about anything. Her mother made soup and fed them, when they were there. Anne thinks the men must have provided their own cups and spoons for eating, as she does not remember her family providing any eating utensils to them.



Anne's father was also born and raised near Casnovia. He went to and graduated from Casnovia High School which was on Waterloo Street and burned in 1926. Anne remembers it being said that he had less than twelve in his class. Anne went to the Canada Corners School, kindergarten through sixth grade. For seventh grade her father wanted her to go to Sparta School so she would ride the Greyhound bus from Casnovia to Sparta to attend school. At that time several men worked third shift at Continental Motors in Muskegon who were from Casnovia, Sparta and beyond. These men would ride the Greyhound Bus home to Casnovia and Sparta after working the third shift. These are the people that Anne rode the bus with as a child. She remembers the experience of going to Sparta to school as broadening her circle of friends. She feels she was lucky enough to have Casnovia, Sparta and Kent City friends at the time.

Anne worked her sophomore year of high school for Hammer Jewelry in Sparta. She had time after school was done to get to Hammer's and begin her shift at four and work until six p.m. then catch the Greyhound bus at 6:20 in Sparta to go home to Casnovia. Anne remembers having good times with friends at the Sparta Rodeo. Her father would haul her horse down there and she would hang out with her friends during rodeo time.

Anne and her family attended the Casnovia Methodist Church. After the Casnovia Methodist and the Kent City Methodist Churches merged she attended Chapel Hill United Methodist Church. The two Churches merged in the 1960's because of dwindling attendance at each. Rev. McNary was the minister at the time of the merge.

Anne was director of the Chapel Hill Folksingers for twenty-five years. She began with the group in 1965. The group was first called the Chapel Hill Players and as they added members from other churches they changed the name a bit to the Chapel Hill Folksingers. At one time the group had members from five denominations playing with them. The Folksingers would dress up and it was often said they would "Go fifty miles for fifty dollars." Some of the members of the group Anne remembers were John Moore, Lela Waters, Anne's brother, Deb Longcore, Rev. Charles and Mrs. McNary, John Vins, Beth VanLente, Norm Weston, Fred Nelson, Henry Schuitema, Karen Edgar, Darrel Coxon, Pastor David Morton, Mrs. John Humphreys, Mrs. Eldon Eck and Mrs. Donald Austin as well as others. The group formed so as to do fund-raising for the Chapel Hill United Methodist Church. They began having at first, a Spring Concert. This did so well they began doing two concerts and sometimes more. Favorite songs the group sang were: "Go Tell It On The Mountain," "500 Miles," "Sama Wacky Brown," "Early Morning Rain," "Daddy Sang Bass," "Num Bi Ya." After a while it got to be too much for the members of the group and they cut back and finally disbanded.

Anne is known for having taught many of the people- who are now adults- how to swim in the swimming lessons she taught for years at Half Moon Lake. Anne did these classes through the American Red Cross, in partnership with Casnovia Lions Club and Casnovia Township. Children had to be eight years old and older to take instruction. Anne did this for several years.

