

## Morris Jenks

Morris Jenks, son of Laban, Sr., and Prudence White Jenks, was born at Berkshire, New York, October 7, 1801. At the age of 19 or 20 he came to Michigan territory with his parents and six of his brothers and sisters, arriving at Bloomfield, November 10, 1820 or 21. (history says 21, but Uncle William, his youngest brother, said it was 1820, so I am not so positive.) On November 20, 1829, he was united in marriage to Miss Almira Botsford, daughter of Simon [ed. Simeon] and Mary Clark Botsford. To them was born four children, Leman Case, February 13, 1830, Ester [ed. Esther], October 24, 1832, Oliver Torrey, March 9, 1835 and Minerva, May 8, 1838. Shortly after his oldest son was born, he bought 160 acres of land from the Government. The land grant, or certificate, written on Parchment, with exact copy, written in 1913, is with the other Reunion papers, in the possession of one of his descendants, Mrs. Laverne Sturman. The grant was dated January 5, 1831, and signed by Andrew Jackson, the seventh President of the United States, (our thirteenth is now in the White House). The land described, was the southwest quarter of section 28 in Township 1, north of range 9 east. In fact, the parcel that only within the last few years had passed into the hands of strangers. This part of the country in those days was almost a dense forest, but, clearing a place on the hill, near what is called Plum Bottom Creek - so named because of the many wild plum trees that grew along its banks - he built a log house, and while first living there, his wife used to take the baby, Leman, in her arms and ride horse back up to Aunt Polly Jenks Case and to Uncle William Jenks, where Grandmother Prudence White Jenks lived, and to the several other Jenks families who lived around there. The roads of those days were little more than Indian trails and led over those awful Shuler hills, which, even in these days of good roads, are not very inviting for travel. In their little log house the passing years brought them three other children. Near their home was a living spring and a little further ways was, what was called a deer lick', where the deer, which were very plentiful in those days, came to drink, I have heard said that the water was salty.

The first township meeting in Southfield was held at the home of Benjamin Fuller, April 4, 1831, and Morris Jenks, was elected as one of the highway commissioners.

He was a great hunter and his neighbors used to work for him, while he laid in a supply of venison for them.

The Oakland County history gave me this item:

"In 1833 Captain Jenks trained the Southfield Militia, at the place known as Crawfords Corners, in the Southwest corner of section 22," and I have seen and copied his Captain's Commission, stamped with the seal of Louis Cass, Governor of Michigan, dated October 22, 1829.

In the year 1851 he built the old Jenks house, where the second and third Jenks reunion was held in 1912 and 1913, at the time the home of his daughter, Ester [ed. Esther] Jenks Lee. In this home his children spent their youthful days -

In this house there used to be

Free hearted hospitality.  
His great fires up the chimney roared,  
The stranger feasted at his board,  
And from its station on the wall  
An ancient timepiece said to all;  
"Never, forever, forever never."

It was from this home his youngest daughter, Minerva, went to become the bride of Nathaniel Barnes. In this same house his eldest daughter, Ester [ed. Esther], was married to Charles N. Lee in 1855, was widowed in 1905 and passed away in 1918. His eldest son brought home a bride, Lydia Sicknor, in 1855. She died the following year, leaving a little son, Albert Arlington, less than two months old. He was the first of Morris Jenks' grandsons and his childhood days were spent at the old home. Afterward, Leman married Miss Emily Hungerford, whose married life was only four short years and Arley was again motherless. For the third time Leman married and brought his wife, Lusinda Crandall, to the old home with the old folks, where they lived for a number of years and their children, Justin and Anna, were born.

Oliver, the youngest of Morris Jenks' sons was married to Miss Marian Murphy, and when Leman moved away to a home of his own, Oliver came back to his father's, and while living there, his father died February 13, 1878. I have heard that Uncle Laban and Aunt Jane, Uncle William and Aunt Amy were there and that all were at the table, when he was taken with a Paralytic stroke and died shortly afterward. Mother Jenks went to live with here daughter, Ester [ed. Esther], where she passed away March 6, 1833 [ed. 1883].

Of theirs ten grandsons, six are still living. Five of them were born in the old home, Arley, Justin, Fred, Willie, and Seymour, and two Fred and Willie, were buried from there. Of the descendants of Morris Jenks, by birth and marriage, as far as I can ascertain, are as follows: children myself - Mrs. Oliver Torrey Jenks; of Grandchildren, there are twenty-nine, eight of Leman's, eight of Ester's [ed. Esther's], ten of Oliver's, and fourteen of Minerva's. [ed. Aunt Eva says there are 29, yet her count adds to 40. As an explanation, I would offer that Eva counted only direct descendants for the count of 29 and then included the spouses of the descendants for the detail count which adds to 40. In later pages of Eva's manuscript, she would include in-law relatives in almost every tally of the number of descendants that attended the various family reunions.] Of the great grandchildren, there are fourteen, eight in Leman's, three in Ester's [ed. Esther's], one in Oliver's and two in Minerva's families. There may be more in Minerva's, as I failed to hear from Minnie and this record does not include the family of Guy Bolton, her youngest son.

Of the hospitality of Father and Mother Jenks, I have not the least doubt. I never had the pleasure of meeting them myself, but I have heard my sister Julia, wife of cousin Frank Jenks, and Aunt Amy Jenks, say they always had such good visits at Uncle Morris' and I have heard dear Aunt Lou laugh and tell about a whole house full being there from Bloomfield and Groveland and she gave up her bed and slept on the floor. But she had her trouble for nothing, as the men got so interested in playing cards; they forgot to go to bed until morning. I have heard Julia say she was one of the company and had a bed to herself all night and so did Cousin Cordelia Hathaway - Aunt Sophia's daughter. Julia said she had a good curtain lecture waiting

for Frank, but Jim Hathaway came upstairs first and Cordelia lit into him for fair. As Frank heard the most of Cordelia's talk, Julia let Frank off with a word.

Some amusing little stories have been told by some of the many grandchildren of Morris Jenks. I guess they were just full of jokes and fond of their eats in their younger days, as not. Of course it's a little bird that tells me, but Uncle Leman's folks were all over to Uncle Oliver's playing and in the evening, of course, they passed fried cakes, cider and pickles and when Anna bit into a pickle, it hurt her just awful. We ran to her mother, but Aunt Lou said "Go long, your bonnet strings were tied too tight." Ann thought they were very unsympathetic, but after awhile they began to see it was mumps, instead of bonnet strings, that didn't like pickles, and whenever they heard of anyone having the mumps, the laugh was on Anna.

We all know that Justin is very fond of good things, and one boiling hot day when Aunt Lou and Emma had been picking strawberries and came in nearly melted and did not want to get a hot dinner, Justin said: "Don't bother any; just have some biscuits and strawberries", evidently forgetting that biscuits had to be baked before they could be eaten.

Charlie Jenks came in one day and asked Aunt Lou if she had any fried cakes. When she said yes, he went into the pantry and came out with the whole crock full, set the crock in the middle of the floor and said: "Help yourselves boys". Once, when George found all of Uncle Leman's folks away, he did find Aunt Lou's pies and got outside of half of one. Aunt Lou found a note, informing her that "This is a darned good pie."

The girls were not so much for cake, pie, etc., but Anna and Emma would squabble over the Dutch cheese left in the dish it was made in. Aunt Eva never wondered at that, for she is very fond of it herself, and Aunt Lou would make a big kettle full, if she know I was coming and so, in later years, would Hattie and Anna (Wish I had some now.)

One upon a time, when all their folks were away, a couple of kids by the name of Nellie and Charlie, drove the ducks into the corn crib and proceeded to pluck them; whether they were intent on roast duck or a feather bed, I was never informed.

In the days when these grandchildren of Morris Jenks were not very large, their grandpa had a yoke of oxen instead of a tractor to do his ploughing and dragging with, and one day Charlie was dragging a field with them, when they took a notion they wanted a drink and away they went, helter skelter, down one steep bank of the gully and up the other, dragging the drag behind them and leaving young master Jenks sitting on the bank, bellowing his small head off. Another time, he was taking them down to the creek to drink and thinking he would ride, he climbed up, with one foot on the yoke, when away they ran down the road, with their young driver hanging on for dear life. When they arrived at the creek, they stopped so suddenly, that away over their heads went Charlie into the water, and to this day, he sayd that water was wet.

Arley Jenks, the eldest of Morris Jenks' grandsons, remembers many little incidents concerning himself and grandfather and some stories, told him by his grandfather, what I have, and I know you will find very interesting. I will give them in Arley's words:

"I will give you a few memories, as I have heard them related by Grandfather Morris Jenks; many of them you probably know. The reason he located his cabin on the banks of Plum Bottom, there was a good spring of water a few rods from the door, and a short distance up the bottom, was located the famous deer lick, it being a salty spring, where deer came to drink. I have heard him say in the early morning he had seen as many as a dozen deer, passing up the flats to go to the spring.

An old Indian trail, leading to Detroit, North Farmington way, passed thru his little clearing, when was frequently used by Indians, going to Detroit. One morning he was cutting wood to start the fire, when an Indian, with his squaw and two papooses, on their way to Detroit over the trail, came up to him. The Indian pointed to the squaw and children and said: " Buckoday' em". Grandfather knew that buckoday meant bread, so he invited them into the house and they were given all the bread and milk they could eat. This Indian always stopped at the cabin, when passing through, often bringing them baskets of wild berries. A few years later this Indian did them good service. Grandfather had a boy, about fifteen years old, living with him, who was bitten on the leg by a rattlesnake. Next morning his leg was swollen and turned black, when who should come to the door but the friendly Indian for his usual bowl of bread and milk. Grandfather showed him the boy's leg, then he started for the door on a run. He was gone about a half hour and came back with a hand full of green herbs, when he punded up and bound on the snake bites. Then he started out on a run again and was gone about an hour, bringing back a larger supply of herbs. Then he had his bread and milk and went on his way saying: "Me come tomorrow sun." The herb poultice was kept up that day and night. True to his word, at the sun-rise Mr. Indian came in to see the boy. He looked at the leg and said "heap good" , for the snake bite was nearly cured. He afterward showed Grandfather where he could find this herb, and years afterward, by the use of it he cured Robert Harmon and George Lee of snakebite.

As there were no mills at this time to grind their grain, he dug a round place, like a bowl, in the top of an Oak stump. He would put the corn or wheat in this place in the stump and pound it with an iron pestle. They called this product "Samp". From this they made their bread or corn pone. The hot ashes of their fireplace was their oven.

Having a yoke of oxen, it was necessary to have a sled. To construct this it required some round poles for runners and he must have a two inch auger to bore the holes. Not having an auger, he started out to borrow one from a neighbor, several miles away who had a new one. When he arrived there, the man said he was neither going to borrow or lend.

Once a year every man had to go to general training for the Militia and were required to have a gun. Now this man that had the auger, had no gun, so he came to grandfather to borrow a gun. Grandfather told his he couldn't lend his gun, for, having no auger, he had to use the gun to shoot the holes in his sleigh runners, so it was out of order.

The raising of a barn frame in those days was quite an occasion. Neighbors, being far apart, some would come ten miles to the raising. A Deacon (somebody) up in

Bloomfield, near Long Lake, had a barn frame to raise, so Grandfather went to the raising. He was customary to give a gallon jug of whiskey at a raising, but the Deacon said he would have none of it. Now in those days, before they pinned the frame together, they had to plough the main and beam, where the siding from above lapped over the siding below. To do this job they had a tool like a long handled chisel, with a gauge at the bottom to keep it from going too deep. They would attach a long rope to this plough; one man would hold the handle and the rest would pull the rope. Everything being ready to plow this beam, Grandfather being Captain of the Militia, was selected to hold the handle and boss the job. He got his men on the rope to pull the plough, but for some reason they didn't seem able to make it go, so they all sat down and declared that it would require a jug of whiskey to give them strength. After waiting till nearly noon, the Deacon was forced to send for the required toddy. When it arrived the beams were ploughed and the frame was up in short order.

To illustrate his sense of location in the dark woods at night, I will relate an anecdote of a trip he made, cooning in the Royal Oak swamp. Having shot a coon out of a tree, he wanted to stick to string through his hind legs for a hand hold to carry his game. For this purpose, he cut a small bush; the next morning when he wanted to skin his coon, he found that his knife was missing and concluded he had laid it down over in the marsh, where he cut the stick to string his coon. He said: "Some night I will go over there and get it". Several nights later he said he would make a trip over and get his knife. I asked if I could go along and he said: "It will be a long trip, but if you think you can stand the walk you can come." I wanted to see him find the knife, so we started out. The night was pitch dark, but we finally reached the swamp. After going, what seem to be, about a mile through the thick brush, he said: "We are not far from the place where I cut the bush", so he began to look carefully about with his lantern and soon found the stub where he cut the bush and sure enough, there was his knife.

Grandfather and Uncle Laban Jenks used to go north of Lapeer deer hunting and he used to tell a joke on himself that happened on one of these trips. He was going through the woods, on the watch for deer, when he saw a tree top lying on the ground. This, he thought, would be a good place for a deer to hide in. When he had approached within about twenty rods, he could see the horns of a deer. He aimed his rifle where he thought he could hit the deer just back of the right shoulder. It did not stir, so he fired again and the third shot brought no more movement. Then he concluded there was something wrong with the deer, so he investigated and found that someone had shot the deer and tied him in the tree top to look lifelike from a distance. He concluded that someone had done this for the purpose of bringing a green hunter and watch him get the buck fever shooting at the deer. He looked for his own bullet mark and found them back of the shoulder blade, all three in a space the size of the palm of his hand. He thought that when the person that put up the joke saw those marks he would conclude there had been some hunter shooting that hand't the "buck fever."

We will pass over a few years now and relate a little turkey hunt. Uncle Laban came down from Groveland for a visit and of course, that meant a hunt. Word was brought that some hunters got after some wild turkeys in Braes's woods just at dusk and

scattered them. Grandfather said: "tomorrow we can call them together." I asked permission to go along and see the sport. The next morning at sunrise we were in the woods, where the turkeys were supposed to be. Grandfather began to call on his turkey bone, as we were walking along a cow path, myself some fifty feet in the rear, when we heard an answering call. Every few minutes he would sound his call and get an answer. Pretty soon the hunters turned about face. This brought me in the front instead of the rear. They squatted down in the path and motioned me to lie down, and the answering call was getting pretty close. All at once a gun roared and a big Tom Turkey that was coming down the path, came rolling on the top of me, a dead bird.

We will now take up a little fishing trip, down the River Rouge for mullet, grandfather with his net, Uncle Oliver Jenks with his team and wagon, Uncle Charlie Lee, John Harmon and myself made up this crew. Our fishing ground that day was to be below the old Dearborn pike. Our objective point was at a German farmer's place, where there was a lane going down to the river. When within a mile of the place, we met another gang of fishermen coming back, to begin fishing further up stream, they said: "No good going down any further. We've been down to the Dutchman's and he won't let anyone down the lane." Grandfather told Uncle Oliver to drive on, we would go and see. When we got to the Dutchman's, Grandfather opened the gate and we drove in. The man came out to look us over and said: "I know you, you old white headed man; when you fish on mine place, you don't break down mine fences, you don't throw mine wood in the river; put your horses in mine barn and fish any time you want to." It proved to be an unusually good day for fishing. At three in the afternoon, we were forced to quit, as we had nine hundred brown mullet and that was all the team could draw over the sandy roads. That meant the four of us must walk home, a distance of twelve miles. Grandfather rode and drove the team and we landed home at one o'clock the next morning, some tired, (and the historian thinks they were all ready to fill on fresh fish for breakfast.)

Morris Jenks was born in 1801, married in 1828 and died in 1878. He was twenty seven years old when he married and had been married twenty seven years, when his oldest son, also his oldest daughter, were married. His children all lived, to what people call "a good old age." Oliver, the youngest son, was the first to pass away and the youngest when he died, being but sixty six years old. Leman was eighty two, Ester [ed. Esther] eighty six, and Minerva, seventy three. As for himself, he was seventy seven years old when he died, only five years older than the one who is writing this.

One hundred and twenty three years have gone by since he was born, and forty six have gone by since he died, but this little imperfect history will bring back to his grandchildren, present today, many pleasant and almost forgotten memories.

*Eva Seymour Jenks, Historian*  
(1924)