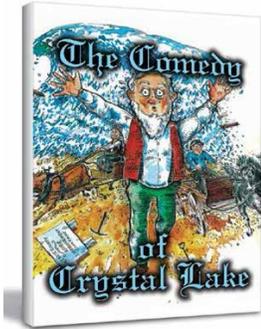


≈THE “COMEDY” OF CRYSTAL LAKE≈

I. The Lowering of Crystal Lake II. The Biography of Archibald Jones *by a Humble Saunterer* STACY LEROY DANIELS

≈ Being a Summary Chronicle with Many More Sidelights, of a Tale written in Two Parts, describing a seemingly Ill-Fated Historical Event, so epochal in its nature as to have had a permanent bearing upon the development and future of Benzie Co., Northwest Lower Michigan, together with myriad viewpoints of its diverse characters and sundry locales, &c, &c. ≈



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496 pages; 46 chapters; 16 appendices, 200 illustrations, maps, timelines, & sidelights.
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The “Tragedy” / “Comedy” is a well-known story of the lowering of Crystal Lake, in Benzie Co., MI.

Archibald Jones founded the Benzie County River Improvement Co. in 1873, intending to improve waterlots on Crystal Lake, remove obstructions and construct slack-water canals between Crystal Lake and Lake Michigan, and build a steamboat to facilitate shipping of settlers and goods to and from the interior of the County to the nearby port of Frankfort. Ensuing events were unique among large inland lakes of NW Lower Michigan. The dramatic lowering of a very large inland lake by 20 feet and the creation of a 21-mile perimeter of sandy beach insured the future of Crystal Lake as a prime recreational area.

The role of Archibald Jones, “the man who (allegedly) pulled the plug at Crystal Lake”, involved travels of a typical American family in the 1800’s, searching for opportunities, experiencing adventures, and facing vicissitudes posed by the opening of the American Midwest. A “Tragedy” depicts a protagonist overcome by superior force or circumstance; a “Comedy” depicts a laughable person involved in a blunder without pain or disaster. The lowering of Crystal Lake has elements of both - a serious beginning with a happy ending with perceived foibles of human nature and realized unintended consequences of bold venture.

It is this author’s intent neither to disparage the “Tragedy” nor to exalt the “Comedy”. The “Tragedy” occurred during 1873 and its “tragic” aspects were felt well into the early 1900’s. The transition into the “Comedy”, with its “comedic” aspects, is of more recent interpretation and still continues. The former remains forever indelibly inscribed in our collective memories; the latter only embellishes upon its virtues.

“The “Comedy” of Crystal Lake, is a continuation of the “Tragedy” of Crystal Lake.

Part I. The Lowering of Crystal Lake is a critical review of recorded legends, contemporary accounts, and historical records that include: the original Stock Certificate, the Articles of Association, the Map of Proposed Improvements, and the Court Proceedings for the Benzie County River Improvement Company from the 1870’s.

Part II. The Biography of Archibald Jones is an accounting of the accomplishments of an entrepreneur and “bootstrap engineer” enjoined in the settlement of a new territory filled with challenges and opportunities.

Be prepared for “rediscoveries”: how Archibald Jones came to Crystal Lake; his plans for “three” canals; the timeline of the “Comedy”; who named of Crystal Lake; the century of debate over control of the level of Crystal Lake; and “Sidelights” of myriad individuals, events, and subjects, with contemporary philosophy on the sense of place and environmental consequence of being at Crystal Lake.