

Chapter 9 Whatever happened to Mesick's Block # 5?

When Eleanor moved to Washington to live with her son John, the Mesick family plot was sold to the Department of Natural Resources. A big building placed on the back of the lot stands yet today. The DNR remained in Mesick for only a short time. The Mesick home was divided into rooms that boarded Mesick High School students during the winters and other entire families as well. But the building was not cared for and decayed away leaving only the large DNR building there today.

In 1906, Homer Kohn, his wife Goldie and their three children Horace, Lloyd and Mary moved to the village of Mesick. First, they farmed and then in 1919 they opened the Kohn General Merchandise Store on the north side in the center of the 100 block of West Mesick Avenue. (see page 30) This building housed the store on the ground level and the Masonic Temple on the second floor. There were a few grocery stores in Mesick at that time, so one had to be innovative to stay in business. The Kohn's operated their store until 1947. Mary married the telephone company owner, David Nugent, who was also the local undertaker; and Lloyd ended up being the local postmaster in November of 1934. Information on Horace was not found.

Lloyd was only three years old when the Kohn family moved from Willshire, Van Wert, Ohio to MI. So, he had opportunity to watch many changes over the years of the village as it grew from Whistle Stop to Mushroom Capital. Besides helping his parents on the farm and in their store, Lloyd served his country in WWII in the Navy. As I mentioned before Lloyd was the local postmaster from 1934 until Ernest Belville took over in May of 1943 and Lloyd transferred to rural carrier after returning from the Navy.

Lloyd Kohn and Grace Joseph, daughter of Albert and Della (Humes) Joseph were married in Onkama, Manistee Co., MI, on the seventh day of June 1936. Lloyd was age 30 and Grace was age 28. This was the same year Block 5 received a new owner. So, the rural carrier and the teacher built a new home west of the area where the Mesick's home had stood. This home remained in Lloyd Kohn's family until the death of their daughter Deborah in 2015. With no one to carry on the family name, Deborah decided to will it to the Mesick Historical Museum, a favorite interest of both Deborah and her mother. Interestingly enough that came about from Lloyd's pursuit of searching for the Mesick ancestry.

Lloyd enjoyed the outdoors and usually was accompanied by his dog Wags. The spaniel was beside him as he drove his pickup down the road. Wherever Lloyd went, Wags went. Since I was with Wags during his last hour, I later asked Deborah how old Wags was, because the dog was a part of their family ever since I could remember. She looked at me and laughed. She said, "Every time one of their spaniel's died, Dad went and got another puppy and named him Wags."



Deborah and Wags in one of the Mesick parades.

Taken By Death

Lloyd Kohn, 66, a retired mail carrier and resident of the Mesick area most of his life, died this morning at Munson Medical Center following an illness.

The body was removed to the Hibbard funeral chapel with arrangements to be announced Friday.

Traverse City Record Eagle
Thursday Nov 11, 1971

After Lloyd's death in Nov. of 1971, Grace took up Lloyd's ancestry quest. She spent many hours clipping newspapers, collecting photos and accumulating facts about the Mesick area and the growth of the village. As Mesick approached its 100th year birthday, Grace was asked about planning a celebration. She said she would on one condition, that she could have plenty of help. The celebration turned out very well and was the beginning of new friendships for Grace, as Ross and Emma Mesick accepted the crowns of King and Queen of the affair.

In the meantime, several Mesick residents: Jack and Shirley Jewett, Bill and Ann Beach, Jack and Theresa Gaylord, to mention a few, were responsible for starting the Mesick Historical Museum. They recognized that there was a need to preserve the many items that were in our community. The Mesick Historical Museum was funded in part with some of the proceeds that accumulated from the 1889-90 Centennial. And a book Grace co-chaired in publishing that was authored by many members of the community was a success in adding funds to open a museum.



An interested group continued to meet regularly and then purchased the building at 117 Mesick Ave to use as a museum in 2003. This building had been Sandy Mac's Restaurant until 2002. Items from the past were donated by virtually the whole community. After 27 years the museum still remains in operation.

As for Grace the centennial was one of many ways, she made new friendships with the Mesick family over the following years. Letters flew back and forth in her research for the ancestors of the couple that started the village of Mesick. It became almost a full-time occupation after Grace retired from teaching. I couldn't sum up Grace (Joseph) Kohn's life any better than her obituary that was placed in the Traverse City Record Eagle:

“Grace M. Kohn, 95, of Traverse City, formerly of Mesick, died Monday, Dec. 8, 2003, at Grand Traverse Pavilions. Born Feb. 9, 1908, in Marilla, she was the daughter of Albert and Della (Humes) Joseph. On June 7, 1936, in Onekema, she married Lloyd M. Kohn, and together they built their home in Mesick, in 1936.

“Grace graduated from Mesick High School in 1926, received her bachelor's degree from Central MI University, and her master's degree from MI State University.

“She taught school for Harrietta, Cadillac, and Mesick Schools for 35 years, and was elementary principal in Mesick for 18 years. Grace's parents started Joseph Supply in Mesick, and she helped in the office when her sister was not available, especially after her father passed away.

“Grace and Lloyd were part of the group that helped Roy and Ellen Brigman start Camp Roy-El, a camp for physically handicapped children. She helped the 40 years that was active. Grace had many memberships including Munson Medical Center Auxiliary, Mesick Golden Agers, MI Association of Retired School Personnel, MI Association of Elementary Principals, NEA, MEA, Traverse City Business and Professional Women, Mesick Women's Club, and the Mesick Chamber of Commerce Women's Auxiliary. She was a member and treasurer at Mesick United Methodist Church, chairman of Mesick Centennial Committee until it changed its name to Mesick Historical and Museum Committee, and she co-chaired the publishing of the book on the history of Mesick.



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“Grace loved to garden, read, and correspond with family and friends. With her correspondence, she was able to bring different branches of the Mesick family together at the Centennial in 1990, after which she kept in contact with many of them. She loved helping other people, especially driving them to and from appointments, and 'adopting' young people, encouraging them in a positive way.

“Grace is survived by her daughter, Deborah Sue Kohn of Traverse City; sister, Ruth Denison of Houston, Texas; and several nieces, nephews, and cousins. She was preceded in death by her husband, Lloyd, on Nov. 11, 1971; sisters, Wretha Brastrom, Lois Brastrom, Lucille Sprague, Verna Solarick, and Vera MacPhee; and a brother, Harry Joseph. Burial will be in Sherman Mesick Cemetery”... Traverse City Record

Eagle After the death of her parents, Deborah Kohn become very involved in volunteering at the Mesick Historical Museum. She worked diligently after her retirement as a schoolteacher, to honor the tradition her family had set—to keep the Mesick family alive in the hearts and minds of the community.

Deborah Sue Kohn born April 8, 1943 died December 22, 2015

At the time of her death, Deborah passed the baton of keeping the village of Mesick and the Mesick family alive to the volunteers of the Mesick Historical Museum. The part of block 5 the Kohn family owned was left to the Mesick Historical Museum to help it carry on the Kohn family tradition.



In the summer of 2017, a gathering of community members was welcomed by Laurie Bailey, Treasurer of the Mesick Historical Museum, at the unveiling of the Mesick and Kohn family memorial.



gathered today to remember and honor the

“I like the saying, Honor the Past, Celebrate the Present, and Create the Future.

“Today we are Honoring the Past—by standing here on the ground of the Mesick Family’s original home site.

“We are Celebrating the Present—by unveiling and dedicating the Kohn Family Memorial to Deborah and her parents Lloyd and Grace.

“And we are Creating the future for the Mesick Area Historical Museum, thanks to Deborah, to move forward with abundant opportunities to collect, preserve and share our area’s rich history with the public for generations to come.”

Greg Bailey went on to say, “We are

Kohn family, Lloyd, Grace and Deborah.

“Their living legacy is alive in the hearts and minds of those who they touched.

“I was privileged to know all three and witness to some of their contributions to me, to students and to the community. Lloyd was a veteran of WWII, a businessman, mail carrier, postmaster, beekeeper and loving father and husband. His wife, Grace (Joseph) was a teacher, principal, mother and amateur historian. Deborah, their daughter was a teacher, a survivor of polio,

an organizer, historian, and an inspiration to all who knew her.

“These three took life’s lemons and made lemonade. They triumphed over the challenges of dread disease and with love and determination to always be the best that they could be.



Deborah was stricken at a very young age and left with daunting physical challenges. She became a successful teacher who touched the lives of countless children and adults. Her family of origin and this community all had a hand in that. The family has left the Mesick Area Historical Museum a large legacy. We are charged with sustaining this legacy to honor Mesick's past while building a better future for all.

“Each one left an example for us to be the best we can be; to strive, with every day we are given, to make something worthwhile.”



