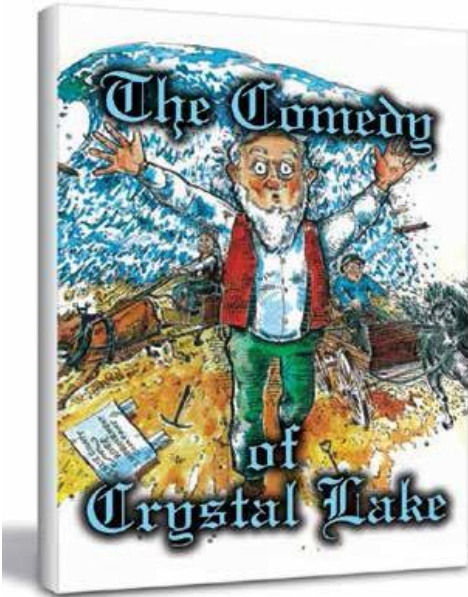


## "The "Comedy" of Crystal Lake" – About the Story

"The Comedy of Crystal Lake", a new book by Dr. Stacy Leroy Daniels (2015), a native "littorian" - "historian" of Benzie Co., is based on the real-life story of the lowering of Crystal Lake - an attempt to build a slack-water canal to nearby Lake Michigan. It is a sequel to "The Tragedy of Crystal Lake", a classic pamphlet by William L. Case (1922).



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, 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 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.

Told in two parts, the "Comedy" chronicles a seemingly ill-fated historical event that is now considered "so epochal in its nature as to have had a permanent bearing upon the development and future of Benzie County". The story also contains many sidelights and myriad viewpoints of diverse characters and sundry locales.

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 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. Herein your humble saunterer has attempted to answer questions about the uniqueness of Crystal Lake. What caused the lowering of the Lake? Who was Archibald Jones? Such is the "Comedy" of Crystal Lake – an epochal event with unintended consequences which has evolved from perceived "failure" of an "ill-conceived" project by an apparent scapegoat, to unqualified "success" by a visionary celebrated as a local hero!

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 combined "Tragedy" / "Comedy" of Crystal Lake exemplifies serendipity - a fortuitous occurrence of a "chance" event with beneficial results derived from unintended consequences of the intended action. The "Tragedy" / "Comedy" of Crystal Lake has another (serendipitous?) association. Sir Horace Walpole, who coined the word, serendipity, wrote in a letter to Horace Mann (31 Dec 1769), "I have often said, and oftener think, that this world is a comedy to those that think, a tragedy to those that feel – a solution of why Democritus laughed and Heraclitus wept."

It is often said, "One can't tell a book by its cover", (or a "tragedy" from a "comedy" ?) metaphorically implying that worth should not be prejudged by outward appearance or first impressions. A cover should be an "attention grabber" to lure the reader onward to be captivated by its contents. (The dust cover of the "Comedy" should gather "attention", not "dust"!)