

MYSTERY SOLVED



In 1990, three gravestones were discovered beneath an old building in Canosia Township. No burials were apparent, and vandalism was ruled out. Just recently, the story of the grave markers was revealed.

Alfred and Augusta Hanson, a young couple from Sweden, lived in the Duluth-Hermantown area before the turn of the century. Their first-born child, Frank, died in 1892 when he was two months old. Two years later, their second child, William, died at nine months and, soon after, their third son, Alfred, died at five months. All the children had contracted deadly infectious diseases so common around the turn of the century.

The children's uncle, Charles "Caribou" Johnson, lived in Canosia Township, where he farmed, ran several camps and also served for a time as town supervisor. Johnson and his wife were childless and, perhaps, he ordered the gravestones carved for his three young nephews.

The young Hanson couple never had any other children and, when they died, were buried next to their three sons in a Hermantown cemetery. In later years, new grave markers for the three young children were installed and "Caribou" discarded the old gravestones under one of his old buildings. When the Johnsons died, they also were buried beside their Hanson relatives in the same cemetery.

The old gravestones are still propped up on the safe in the Town Hall. Should they be "discarded" once more?

The Canosia Township Historical Society is grateful to two area researchers for information about the Hanson children: Kathleen Nelson of Duluth, and Barbara Samarzia, Court House Genealogist for St. Louis and Carlton Counties.