

# A Tribute to Jean Anderson

As I began my work today as the historian in the Black River Falls Public Library-Jackson County History Room, I realized a great big part of Jackson County's history is gone. Reporter, writer, and, above all, historian, Jean Anderson has died. At the age of 88, Jean died today, Wednesday, Jan. 23, after losing a short battle with cancer.

Jean was the last among three individuals whose inquisitiveness contributed to seeking out facts, recording them and letting us know what was happening now and what went on in the past in Jackson County. Jean's co-friends who shared their

passions for writing news stories were the late Toddy Porath and Betty Epstein.

If I had to end my tribute here, I would only have to write three words ... "Jean loved history" ... early history to be exact. Her love of logging, Mormon history, early settlers and railroad history are just a few topics that she could talk about for hours and never repeat herself. She knew dates, names, faces and locations as if she had actually been there. Her "Looking Backs" that she wrote for local newspapers were filled with details and were great examples of her determination for seeking out facts and her love of

history. She studied writings, journals, newspapers and biographies as if they were part of her everyday reading routine. Combining these together and her love of doing genealogy with precise details became a life-long passion and love.

A few years ago, the Jackson County History Room became the permanent home for Jean's files that she compiled as she recorded history. Those files not only reflected her love for history but for the communities she called home: as a youngster, Brockway, or as she liked to call it "Hardscrabble" and her home for many years, Merrillan. There are files on village government, schools, community events and, of course, people. When Jean covered events, her sole companion was her camera. The History Room has negatives from the photos she took, not just a few, but hundreds. Her negatives/photos are of great historical importance, as they include homes, buildings and businesses that are no longer standing or underwent facelifts, individuals who were everyday citizens or "important" citizens, for one reason or another, or local landmarks.

I should add that Jean proudly served on the committee that established the missions and guidelines for the Jackson County History Room when it was incorporated as part of the present library. Her visits were frequent for several years, and she always left with leaving a little bit of history for this historian to absorb!

Jean was always a quiet person. Her mannerism was one of "let the other per-

son talk, and I will listen." However, in all the years I knew her, the one topic she liked to discuss was the "falls" in the Black River in Black River Falls. I will never forget her telling me on numerous occasions, "There are no falls in the Black River at Black River Falls; it's a riffle." A riffle is described as, "a rocky or shallow part of a stream or river where the water flows brokenly." When the dam was being repaired a few years ago, one could see that there were no falls, and Jean knew what she was talking about when she said, "It's just a riffle." I will never forget her clarifying me on the issue more than once. And, yes, throughout my years as historian, people have asked as to where the falls can be viewed.

Jean Anderson's contributions to the history of Jackson County has been realized and appreciated for many years and will continue to be so. There is a famous quote that states, "Time stands still for no one." I look at Jean Anderson's files in the History Room and marvel at the time, patience, research and dedication that the files contain.

Jean's time is now still, but her love of history will never stand still. It will always be alive in someone's heart and mind.

You will be greatly missed, Jean Anderson.

*Mary I. Murray Woods*  
Historian  
Black River Falls Public  
Library,  
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Room

Jan. 23, 2019



Contributed photo

**Reporter, writer** and, above all, historian, Jean Anderson passed away at the age of 88 Jan. 23, after losing a short battle with cancer. Jean's contributions to the history of Jackson County has been realized and appreciated for many years and will continue to be so.