



# Ottawa County Historical Society



www.ottawacountyhistory.org

Second Quarter 2020

**2020**

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*Paul Moon ~ 419-276-6593*

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## **Membership Chairman**

*Linda Huber ~ 419-702-7060*

## **Program Chairman**

*Nancy Dunham ~ 419-797-2244*

## **Corresponding Secretary, Oral History Chairman, Newsletter Editor**

*Martha Dykes ~ 419-732-1843  
martgene80@gmail.com*

## **Website**

**www.ottawacountyhistory.org**

## **OCHS Activities Cancelled**

We have all been looking forward to an active year at the Ottawa County Historical Society. But, under the current conditions surrounding the Covid19 Pandemic, it's just not to be.

Our Spring Members' Meeting and luncheon, planned for May 3 at the hotel in Oak Harbor, is cancelled. As soon as we can, we will schedule a another members' meeting.

Activities at the Wolcott Keeper's House for the upcoming summer season are cancelled for now. The House will not be open to the public, at least until further notice.

The Civil War Encampment Event, planned for October 10, and the Fall meeting and luncheon, planned for November 15, both remain on the calendar...let's hope (real hard) that we can still count on these two events!

Please check in regularly with the website for updates. Secretary Linda Huber keeps everyone well informed: <http://ottawacountyhistory.org/> "

## **OCHS New Board Members**

The Board recently welcomed two new members to fill the unexpired terms of Jen Fording and Kathleen Giesler. It is with pleasure we announce the appointments of Tom Bergman and Erin Sandvick.

**Tom** is a lifelong resident of Genoa and is founder of the recently formed Genoa Historical Society. He has a degree in City & Regional Planning from Ohio State University and is in the road construction industry with Henry W. Bergman, Inc., which is now in its 108<sup>th</sup> year. In 2018, he organized the preservation and renovation of Genoa's historic G.A.R. Building, now known as Heritage Hall. Recently elected Mayor of Genoa, he has been in office since January 1, 2020.

**Erin**, originally from the Akron area, is a resident of Ottawa County, living in the Marblehead/Lakeside community since 2005. She taught grades kindergarten through sixth, with a science and math focus, at Kelleys Island School for eleven years. She is currently the Branch Manager of the Marblehead Peninsula Branch Library, which is a branch of the Ida Rupp Public Library in Port Clinton. Erin is dynamically involved in the history of the Danbury Peninsula. She sees her role as one of facilitator for the various groups in her area, some of which meet regularly at her library, including the Marblehead Lighthouse Historical Society. She has acted as a guide for the "historical walking tours" around Marblehead, a popular activity during the summer and hosts monthly local history talks.

We know both Tom and Erin will be a wonderful addition to the OCHS Board of Trustees.

## **OCHS "At The Movies"**

Over the years, Nancy Dunham's son, Theo, has video recorded a number of OCHS events and presentations. We are in the process of putting them online for your viewing enjoyment.

Most of the events were either spring or fall meetings of the membership but we also have a few special presentations. Topics include the War of 1812, the 175<sup>th</sup> Ottawa County History book, the ship *Success*, Early Northwest Ohio, the rerouting of the Portage River, artifacts from the Johnson's Island Civil War Prison, the DeLery Passage, the "Black Swamp Doctor", Prohibition, and the History of Lakeside. We'll keep you posted on when the project is completed

## Historical Society...at your service!

An unfamiliar area code, a phone number I didn't recognize. "...not gonna answer it."

A few moments later the phone dinged to let me know somebody had left a message. Cindy Kennedy of Myrtle Beach SC asked me to call her back. She had purchased an item in a Port Clinton antique shop some thirty years ago—and had just now taken a really good look at it. The Historical Society might be interested. The item was a satchel. Inside was a bundle of documents from the 40s, indicating that it had once belonged to a man from Port Clinton.

"I'd like these to go back to the rightful owner," Ms. Kennedy said. "I don't know where to start."

I agreed to accept the satchel to see what I could do with it toward finding the owner or a member of his family.

The item was of well-worn heavy leather with two buckle-straps and clasps. Inside were a identification cards, notes and letters, addresses scribbled on scraps of paper, pamphlets, a collection of varied humorous (a bit naughty) poems, and a handful of photographs. Most of the items appeared to be related to military service—all except one, a driver's license issued on September 27, 1941 to Franklyn G. Eaton, W. 3<sup>rd</sup> St., age 17, good for one year—for a fee of 25 cents.

I could find nothing about Mr. Eaton in any current records, so I turned to the library. I decided to start with the Port Clinton High School yearbooks from the early 40s...and there he was, page 13 of the 1943 edition. A search of obituaries online was not quite as yielding, but it did finally turn up a notice about him in the *Sandusky Register* from March, 2000. Franklyn George Eaton had passed away a few days shy of his 76<sup>th</sup> birthday. Continuing online, I used the information provided in the obituary to search for family members.

The search produced three possible addresses for his daughter Sandra: in Port Clinton, Columbus, and Elkhart, IN. None of the phone numbers provided were still operable. I paid a number of visits to the Port Clinton address, but nobody was home. Finally, a letter to each address resulted in a phone response from Sandra Van Voorhis of Columbus. Sandra, who grew up in Port Clinton was Sandra Eaton, Franklyn's daughter.

Sandra is a retired teacher. Her late husband, Eugene Van Voorhis, had served as curator of the Ottawa County Museum in the 1990s.

"I'm thrilled that you've come across these items that belonged to my father," she exclaimed. "I would love to have them."

As of this writing, the satchel and its contents are in transit to her home in Columbus.

Franklyn served in the US Army in the final two years of World War II. The papers and photos in the satchel appear to be from a period during his training in Missouri in the Signal Corps. None of the contents appeared to be related to his time in action in the European Theater as the Allies were closing in on Berlin.



Photo of Franklin (right) during training in the signal Corps in 1944

"He would never talk with the family about his experiences in the service," she said. "My mother told me he had nightmares from it, and that he would only talk about it to a buddy he had served with, the two of them going out together now and then, away from everybody else."

Franklyn was the oldest child in a family of six, which included five boys and one girl. The family lived on a farm owned by his parents, Jesse and Mabel, on West Third Street in Port Clinton in a location situated between the two cemeteries in that area. Jesse worked for the telephone company and was known as "the flying repairman," a moniker earned because of his frequent assignments requiring that he take himself and his equipment to the Put-in-Bay by way of Island Air Lines.

Upon returning to civilian life, Franklyn married Anna King, a girl he had known through school activities while growing up. The couple would have two children, Sandra and Sharon. Sharon now lives in Arizona.



Franklyn Eaton's Drivers License

"He drove a truck for a while," Sandra said of her father, "hauling lumber out of Ken-

tucky. He then worked for a number of years for US Gypsum, and later for Uniroyal, which is where he retired from.”

In addition to his full-time jobs, Franklyn did odd jobs as a handy man for the American Bank in Port Clinton. It was in that capacity that he became involved in the discovery—or rediscovery—of a hero from the past. One of the managers at the bank hired him to clean out the attic in an old house on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, near Washington Street. In performing that



**Franklyn G. Eaton from  
1943 PCHS Revista**  
~Ottawa Co. Museum



**Lewis C. Shepard,  
Congressional Medal  
of Honor recipient**

task, he came across the Congressional Medal of Honor, and the accompanying certificate, awarded to Lewis C. Shepard, the lone recipient from Ottawa County of that honor. Shepard had served the Union in the Civil War, incredibly, in both the Army and Navy.

“That makes me so happy,” said Cindy Kennedy, the person who purchased the satchel many years ago. “When I saw what was inside it, I knew it would have to be of great value people who knew this man.”

PATRICK O'KEEFFE

## “Secret Ohio: 23 Hidden Gems”

Ohio Magazine completed a feature story on 23 hidden gems across the State of Ohio and in their April 2020 issue you'll find the Wolcott Keeper's House made the list. Paul Moon provided wonderful historical commentary on the House history, layout and current events held at the House. An online link to the story can be found at:

<https://www.ohiomagazine.com/travel/article/secret-ohio-the-keeper-s-house>

## Ottawa County Barn Quilt Trail

The Ottawa County 4-H Program and the Greater Port Clinton Area Arts Council have teamed up to create the Ottawa County Barn Quilt Trail. Barn quilts are painted quilt squares fashioned on boards and mounted on a barn or other building. Unlike cloth quilts that are made up of a series of squares, a barn quilt is almost always a single square. The concept of barn quilts began in Adams County, Ohio in 2001. Today, barn quilt trails can be found in over 200 communities in 47 states across the country.

The Ottawa County Barn Quilt Trail is an invitation for visitors to take a driving tour around the county to view the quilt blocks mounted on barns and buildings and enjoy the unique character of Ottawa County. In addition to promoting tourism, the Trail fosters an appreciation of barns, tells the story of an agricultural community, and displays the art, craft and legacy of quilt making in the region.

The barn quilts created and installed throughout Ottawa County is a result of a collaborative project made up of barn owners, artists, carpenters, and sponsors. The first completed barn quilt was installed June 2017 at the Damschroder Hall at the Ottawa County Fairgrounds. The goal is to have 20 installed by the end of this year. At the project's completion there will be an informational brochure available with a map of the Trail, identification of each quilt pattern, the sponsor, and the name of the club or organization that painted the square. The OCHS website at [www.ottawacountyhistory.org](http://www.ottawacountyhistory.org) has a “Barn Quilt Trail” page listing the current 17 completed barn quilts. You can also visit the Greater Port Clinton Area Arts Council website for information on how you can help with the project at [www.ottawacountyarts.org](http://www.ottawacountyarts.org).

## Ottawa County Museum

While the Ottawa County Museum is closed, questions or requests can be directed to [ochm@cros.net](mailto:ochm@cros.net) or to Curator Peggy Debien at 419-732-1039. Opening date is to be determined.

### Help Support the Ottawa Co. Historical Society

**Online:** Using PayPal, you can make a donation directly to the Society by clicking the PayPal button on our new website.  
**Through purchases you make:** When you purchase items through Amazonsmile (Amazon's charity website) or through Kroger supermarket and designate your charity as Ottawa County Historical Society, a portion of your purchase will be donated to the Society

Ottawa County Historical Society  
P.O. Box 385  
Port Clinton, OH 43452



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**OTTAWA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**2020** - ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES - due in January of each year  
*(If your address label does not say 2020 or Life Member it is time to pay dues.)*

Single \$15\_\_\_\_\_ Family \$25\_\_\_\_\_ Student \$10\_\_\_\_\_

Sustaining \$35\_\_\_\_\_ Sponsor \$50\_\_\_\_\_ Patron \$100 or more \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Contributions \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Keeper's House \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*The OCHS is a non-profit organization.. Your contribution may be tax deductible.*

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**Mail to: OCHS, P.O. Box 385, Port Clinton, OH 43452**

**I am interested in volunteering.**