



# Ottawa County Historical Society



[www.ottawacountyhistory.org](http://www.ottawacountyhistory.org)

Fourth Quarter 2019

**2019/2020**

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#### **Program Chairman**

Nancy Dunham ~ 419-797-2244

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

Martha Dykes ~ 419-732-1843

## **OCHS Annual Meeting November 10<sup>th</sup>**

A capacity crowd of Ottawa County Historical Society members and guests met at the Catawba Island Club Sunday for a buffet brunch, program, and short business meeting.

Frank E. Kuron of Toledo; author of *Thus Fell Tecumseh*, lecturer, and self-described history enthusiast was the featured speaker. Kuron highlighted facts and oddities about the relationship between settlers and Native American tribes in the period just prior to the Revolutionary War until the War of 1812. Because the natives did not believe land could be ‘owned,’ they were bewildered and angered when the Europeans and Americans sold it among themselves without consulting them. Kuron’s highlighted contemporary maps and paintings illustrating various battles and treaties, with a sly insert of LeBron James’s iconic *What?!* pose to illustrate how the natives must have felt when the floodgates opened after the Treaty of Greenville. He explored the unique relationship between William Henry Harrison and Tecumseh, both idealistic leaders who met several times to try to effect a peace. Kuron continued until the death of Tecumseh at the Battle of the Thames, and the winning of the War of 1812.

In the brief business meeting, Becky Shemenski, Nancy Dunham, and Dave O’Neal were approved as Board members. Patrick O’Keeffe was approved for a second term as president; Brennan Madison as treasurer, and Linda Huber as secretary. Rich Norgard stepped down as vice president, because of his responsibilities at the Port Clinton Lighthouse, and will be replaced in the interim by Becky Shemenski.



## All That Matters

In thinking about our upcoming year for the OCHS, an old friend came to mind.

As a young man—that was a long time ago!—I had occasion to visit my former high school Latin teacher. He was a catholic priest who had moved to a university residence hall where, in his retirement, he counseled students and on Sundays helped out at parishes in his area.

For a man who loved all things classical and whom I remembered as quite an expert on the Renaissance, I was struck by how sparse his living conditions were. He had a bed, a desk and chair, a wash stand with mirror, and an upright locker for his things. That was it. When I commented on that, he laughed and said, “Well, who did you think I was, anyway?”

Then he briefly told me his story. Raised as an Illinois farm boy, he developed a fondness for simplicity. After high school, he pitched for two years in the White Sox organization in the early 20s, then decided on a career in education and joined the Holy Cross Fathers at Notre Dame.

“Entering the religious life, the first vow I made was one of poverty,” he said. “I soon learned, it doesn’t matter what you think, or what anybody else thinks, or even what you believe. All that matters is what you actually do.”

Thus the meager nature of his personal possessions. So, what does this have to do with the upcoming year for the OCHS?

What is it we actually do? What first comes to mind is that we copy what any vibrant organism does, taking what went well and developing it some more, while taking what didn’t go well and improving on it. Vibrancy isn’t about survival. It means that we evolve.

So, what’s coming up?

First, let’s get what didn’t go well out of the way: docents. Bill Coder stepped back from managing that program and I took it over. Okay, I stumbled a bit. Along with some little mistakes, one big one was not making sure we were covered for Saturdays. That won’t happen this year, and maybe we can get our performance back up to what it was under Bill’s direction.

And now for the more fun things from the past year: what did go well. That has to include, of course, the regular schedule of events at the Wolcott Keeper’s House. These events have a momentum of their own that couples with a new enthusiasm that shows up every year.

And then there’s the group that puts out our increasingly acclaimed oral history series. Volume

VII, *The Stories Continue*... suddenly poofed into existence on a late summer’s eve, and one of the gremlins responsible said she was already “pecking away” on Volume VIII!

Another group put together a storytelling program, which tried out its first performance at the Port Clinton Lighthouse Festival to a packed tent. Well, all that did was fire up ideas for new and improved performances for this coming season.

The program group brought in fascinating speakers, on Peter Navarre at the Spring Meeting, and on the culture clash surrounding Tecumseh and Harrison for the Fall. These folks have more things planned, including a possible lecture series above and beyond our normal gatherings.

And there is a move afoot to introduce a program that will directly involve kids in acclaiming our historical legacy...that one still in the noodling process with a promise of more to come.

So there you go. Looks like a fun year coming up. Oh, and by the way, it is easy to be afraid of the concept of volunteering. Don’t let *that* happen to you. Helping out, even for just one afternoon or for one event, does not mean that you will be put upon or burdened. You will be able to have a good time with friends who are also having a good time with you. Phone numbers on the cover of this newsletter are portals to where you might find a way to more fully join in!

Well, that Latin teacher, the friend who was a Holy Cross Father, is long gone, his final possession a simple cement cross bearing his name. I like to imagine he’s throwing the ball around with Shoeless Joe and some of his other friends. But his words will ever resound with me, “All that matters is what you actually do.”

PATRICK O’KEEFFE

## Keeper's House Gardens

For years Sally Heximer and Rich Vedell have volunteered as gardeners at the Keepers House. Now for various reasons they are unable to continue their wonderful work. We thank them for all they have done over time, but their absence creates a vacancy and offers a fine opportunity for service to the Ottawa County Historical Society. No need to apply, just give me a call. See the number for me in the letterhead. As Uncle Sam (or perhaps Benajah Wolcott) would say, “I Want You” dear gardeners.

PAUL C. MOON. KEEPERS HOUSE CHAIR.

## October Openhouse and Civil War Encampment

A brisk but sunny day set the stage for the Society's 13<sup>th</sup> annual fall Civil War encampment at the Wolcott Keeper's House October 12<sup>th</sup>. This encampment has been a Keeper's House tradition since 2006 and honors Henry Wolcott a Civil War Veteran and son of Marblehead Lighthouse keepers Benajah and Rachel Wolcott. The 73<sup>rd</sup> Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment Band, directed by John Hoffman, was on hand providing music throughout the day. Groups of costumed re-enactors from the 14<sup>th</sup> Ohio Volunteer Infantry under the direction of Captain Brian Porter demonstrated the era's war craft and camp craft. Camp followers assisted Keeper's House fireplace cook Becky Shemenski with preparation of apple pies, hot applesauce and cider at the House hearth. Bean soup, corn bread, and cider were served around an outdoor fire pit. Apples and cider were donated by Moore's Orchards, Oak Harbor. John Williams manned a small farmer's market with homemade jellies and breads. Visitors to the Annex gift shop enjoyed Roger and Barbara Jensen's Marblehead Railroad train display. The fundraiser drawing winners and prizes were (1<sup>st</sup>) Dave and Jan Hirt (copy of the book *The History of Ottawa County---First 175 Years*, (2<sup>nd</sup>) Ellen Honsperger (copy of the book *The History of Ottawa County---First 175 Years*) and (3<sup>rd</sup>) Janice Netcher (gift certificate from Marblehead Village Pro Hardware). Partial funding support for this event provided by a grant from the Ohio Arts Council. (Photos by Kathy Leonard) LINDA HUBER



## 2020 Membership Renewal

Although we may not say it often enough, members of the Society are a valuable group and we would not be able to thrive without you! Through your support, the Society is able to continue its mission "to discover, preserve and celebrate the history of Ottawa County and to promote a heightened awareness of our local place in time." Membership runs from January 1 through December 31 of each year and you should have recently received a membership renewal letter in the mail. In addition to providing summer tours of the Wolcott Keeper's House, your support in 2019 helped with the following activities and events: the annual "spring cleaning" of the Wolcott Keeper's House in preparation for the opening of our 31<sup>st</sup> summer season; a Spring meeting of the membership held at Elmore's Historic Barn with a presentation on *The Life & Times of Peter Navarre* by Larry Michaels and Terry Breymaier; an Ohio Historical Marker dedication at the Marblehead Lighthouse telling the story of William Kelly and the Keepers of the Light; our first storytelling project performance entitled "Tales from Ottawa County's Past" at the Port Clinton Lighthouse & Maritime Festival; the Society's Page & Stage Oral History group's release of Volume VII, *The Stories Continue*; the Port Clinton Rotary perch wagon at the Keeper's House providing much enjoyed perch dinners.; the Society's annual summer picnic; the Peninsula Lighthouse Festival & Civil War encampment; hearth cooking demonstrations during the summer; and the Society's Fall meeting of the membership with author and scholar Frank Kuron sharing his latest research on negotiations between U.S. General William Henry Harrison and the Great Shawnee Chief Tecumseh.

Please visit our website

([www.ottawacountyhistory.org](http://www.ottawacountyhistory.org))

for information on current events around the County, shop for books written by our Oral History Committee as well as local authors, and find additional information on the Society.

Again, thank you for your support!

LINDA HUBER, MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE



## The Art of Storytelling

Increasingly, we hear of Storytelling as a successful and engaging art form for presenting historic programs. One example in the past few years has been Wood County's Cemetery reenactments in Bowling Green. Another interesting program was a ferry trip, sponsored by Lake Erie Islands Historical Society, in which visitors helped resolve an old island mystery on North Bass through conversations with residents cast as early settlers.

In the winter of 2018, at the National Maritime Museum in Toledo, we were first introduced to the work of professional storyteller Brian (Fox) Ellis. For almost two hours, Ellis held the audience spellbound with moments in the life of French explorer Robert La Salle as he sailed down the St. Lawrence into the Lake Erie Islands.

The performance by Ellis surely triggered our imaginations about the power of storytelling and how it might apply to our own Page&Stage oral history collections.

In October 2018, Ellis was the featured performer at Lakeside's Conference on "The Art of Story Telling." The example he provided as a river boat captain on the Mississippi furthered motivation for building our own county programs. When the Port Clinton Lighthouse Conservancy offered us an opening to tell county "water" stories at the Lighthouse Festival, it provided opportunity to do a program. We were encouraged by those folks who came forth to contribute time and talent and the audience that came to share the stories.

And now, for our spring program! OCHS has invited a speaker from Xenia, Ohio, to talk about how his community built a storytelling program, including the details in the process such as the call for scripts, how stories were selected and finally how to find those interested in performing the stories.

In the meantime, we are working to develop this opportunity further and welcome all who have an interest in participating. For more information, contact [ndcat@roadrunner.com](mailto:ndcat@roadrunner.com)

While this project is welcomes participation by everybody, it particularly addresses those who are interested in history and who have a taste for sharing through performance.

Requirements for participation in this project: a taste for history.

We are working on plans for a storytelling workshop and encourage those who enjoy history and storytelling to get in touch.

In the meantime, For more information, contact us at [ndcat@roadrunner.com](mailto:ndcat@roadrunner.com)

We hear of Storytelling as a successful and interesting format for historic presentations. Some of the

more familiar programs include cemetery reenactments which bring back to life the themes of former days.

As a result, members of the Ottawa County Historical Society's Program Committee have been wanting to try our hand at transforming stories from our oral history collections and treasured family stories into the charm and circumstance of live performance. This has been a work in process with a nucleus of interested individuals meeting over the past year to develop scripts and practice. Last August we were able to present our first program, with great appreciation to the Port Clinton Lighthouse Festival.

Help us explore. These invitations have continued as have our enthusiasm for trying to bring to life the people and events that have created the unique history of our county. To that end we invite and welcome anyone who shares this interest. If you enjoy history and contact Nancy

History tells us to stand back and look at the moments from a distance. Storytelling takes us back into those distances. We hear of historical societies through the region. It has taken various formats. Wood County a cemetery program that brings to life this challenge needs a lot of attention. Put together storytelling names. Tell Brian Ellis he whet our appetite for the potential of education and entertainment in storytelling. An opportunity to work separately and together. In this interest that we are putting out a call for those interested and manuscripts. The premise behind storytelling is to entertain as well as educate, so the stories may include any aspect that describes county experience and life as well as how it felt to be part of that experience. Successful scripts so far have often been written in first person point of view with images, descriptive sounds and voices to enhance the telling.

For starts, we are looking for stories that illustrate and dramatize 1) the diversity of lifestyle and opportunity throughout this county; 2) unique environment and how it has affected life styles here; 3) how national politics and events of the entire country have affected and shaped the local region; and 4) anything else that describes our region such as stories of immigration, unusual experiences. Also, we are hoping to develop a collection of county ghost stories for an October program.

Each story should include something in the realities of historic setting or challenges that face the character based on Ottawa County experience. Beyond that, it is permissible, even necessary, for script writers to use their own imagination in developing details about the person's feelings.

Convert scripts into a live performance that celebrates and creates dialogue about our local county history.

NANCY DUNHAM

## Port Clinton Lighthouse Update

The Port Clinton Lighthouse Conservancy reported a successful third season of opening the Port Clinton Lighthouse to the general public, highlighted by a highly successful Lighthouse and Maritime Festival on August 17<sup>th</sup>.

As the group prepares to enter the 2020 season, all are invited to attend PCLC's annual meeting on Sunday, January 26 at the Elks Lodge in Port Clinton, which will include an extensive update on the plans for completion of the landscaping plan for the Lighthouse area (north of Perry Street to the lake between Washington and Fulton Streets).

This landscaping includes restoration of Derby Pond (particularly shoreline protection on the south side); grading and upgrading drainage of areas south of Derby Pond to solve the standing water issues after significant rains; constructing additional mounds with appropriate native species; constructing and paving a handicapped-accessible walkway around Derby Pond and connecting to the Lighthouse, Boat-house, and the 1812 Memorial; the installation of historical signs along with placement of five benches along the walkway; and paving/landscaping of the current parking lot that is accessible off Perry St. leading to the Boathouse and Lighthouse. If progress continues with invasive species abatement, the PCLC anticipates beginning the landscaping improvements in the spring of 2020.

RICH NORGARD

## Ottawa County Museum Holiday Hours

The Ottawa County Museum, 126 W. Third St., Port Clinton, will be open from noon to 3 p.m. during the holidays:

Thursday, December 26  
Saturday, December 28  
Sunday December 29  
Thursday, January 2  
Saturday, January 4  
Sunday, January 5

The museum will also be open by appointment. Call curator Peggy Debien, 419-732-1039 or the museum 419-732-2237. Admission to the museum is free and is handicapped accessible.

PEGGY DEBIEN, 419-732-1039

## John Reid Alexander Bryson Kelly son of William Perkins Kelly

Born December 17, 1809, Troy, New York  
Died April 18, 1888 on his farm in Danbury Twp.

John was named after his father's two brothers, John and Alexander, his sister Nancy Bryson's married name and his mother, Janette Reid's maiden name.

When he was fourteen years old he helped his father, William Kelly build the Marblehead Lighthouse. He is buried in the private Kelly Cemetery located on the prairie that was once part of his farm in Danbury Township.

On Christmas 1862, he was presented with a chair handmade by Confederate prisoners on Johnson's Island. It was made of carved native woods and laced with strips of leather from the tops of worn-out officers' boots. The chair was donated to the Texas Confederate Museum, in 1979, by R.L. Kelly and his sister, Hilda Nelson.



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# HOLIDAY EVENTS

**December 7, Saturday  
Downtown Port Clinton  
Community Christmas**

20 businesses that host activities like face painting, ornament making, cookie decorating and games. While the kids are busy having fun the adults can sample some delicious chili at several different

businesses during our  
5<sup>th</sup> Annual Chili Tasting Competition.  
visit with Santa & Mrs. Claus at  
the Island House Hotel.

head to 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and watch the  
5<sup>th</sup> Annual Lighted Christmas parade  
which ends at Adams Street Park for  
the City's Tree Lighting Ceremony.

**December 8, Sunday - 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.**

***Holiday Open House at:***

Magee Marsh Migratory Bird Center  
Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge  
Black Swamp Bird Observatory

**December 13, Friday - 7:00 p.m.  
Cleveland's Burning River Brass  
Concert**

**at St. John Lutheran Church  
207 Adams Street, Port Clinton**

This concert is free to the public, so you will want to be sure to come early to get good seats. A free ticket order form may be found in the Beacon. The concert is part of Firelands Presbyterian Church Musical Arts Series.

**December 14 & 15-Saturday & Sunday**

**7<sup>th</sup> Annual Holiday Stop & Shop**

**Saturday: 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

**Sunday: 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.**

Liberty Aviation Museum,

3515 East State Road, Port Clinton

Free admission. Contact the Museum for details  
at 419-732-0234.

***Holiday Breakfast with the Arts***  
**December 17, Tuesday -8:30 a.m.**

The 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Holiday Breakfast with the Arts will be held on Tuesday, December 17, 2019 at Port Clinton High School for Port Clinton City School District residents age 60 and older. Tickets are on sale beginning November 19 at the high school office, Mary's Blossom Shoppe, and Otto & Urban Greenhouse & Flower Shop until December 10. The cost per ticket is \$2.00 per person and includes the cost of breakfast. Advance ticket purchase is required.

This popular event allows students to show their appreciation to residents of the school district and showcase talented P.C.H.S. young artists and musicians. See details at [www.pccsd.net](http://www.pccsd.net).

**December 31, 2019 (hours to be announced)**

***WWII Era Big Band USO-style***

***Hangar Swing Dance***

Liberty Aviation Museum,  
3515 East State Road, Port Clinton  
Contact Museum for further details  
at 419-732-0234.



## OCHS 2019-2020 Membership

Life Member - Ruth Weisenauer

### Patrons (\$100 +)

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**Ottawa County  
Historical Society Website:  
[www.ottawacountyhistory.org](http://www.ottawacountyhistory.org)**

### 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  
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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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Total enclosed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Check # \_\_\_\_\_

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

**I am interested in volunteering.**