



# Ottawa County Historical Society



www.ottawacountyhistory.org

Fourth Quarter 2020

**2021**

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*Martha Dykes ~ 419-732-1843*

## **The Common Good**

After a year of zero activity, thinking back on my experiences as a Keeper's House docent brings many memories. Some of them involve stretches of waiting for people to show up. But when they do, it is downright fun to tell the stories of our first settler and his family. Especially enjoyable is when a visitor has that one child in tow who, as adults talk history, stands wide-eyed before those scary old photographs on the Annex wall.

Sometimes, a memory stands out for the wrong reason. Dressed in pressed khaki shorts, monogrammed golf shirt, and exuding leather-scented cologne, he hailed from a place called North Royalton. Upon hearing of Benajah Wolcott's death, ostensibly caused by giving burial to cholera-infected bodies that had washed ashore, pink lips curled back from pearly whites as he scoffed, "Well, it makes a good story, anyway."

My response? Smile and nod—internal disappointment at such cynicism notwithstanding. Of course, I'm not very sophisticated. Just a farm boy, I hail originally from a steep hill overlooking the Susquehanna in northern Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania—that's where our nation's founding fathers first gathered to put all this together. As a kid, my connection to a larger world beyond the hedgerows of our quarter-section was *The Daily Review* out of Towanda. I devoured its eight pages every afternoon after school. When a news story mentioned anything about our state, it often used the term, "the Commonwealth."

Commonwealth? What exactly *is* a commonwealth? Well, it seems there's no "exactly" about it. Definitions abound. It can mean a lot of things, depending on one's point of view. Down in the stew of much semantics and verbiage lies one main ingredient, a recurring concept: agreement among people to serve the common good. That's just a bit beyond the notion of a mere collection of individuals, each intent on serving self-interests, as some folks purport was the founders' purpose.

It was a job that, a quarter-century ago, brought this Pennsylvanian to the area. When my wife and I retired, we discussed where we should go next. We looked at each other a moment and decided: right here. Here often reminds me of where I came from, that farm community back in the Commonwealth. Folks here look in on each other, say hello for no reason, and don't even begin to think it incredulous that our first settler gave his life to do something decent for an anonymous stranger who'd already passed on.

So much more I could write for this article, illustrating how our local history exemplifies the spirit of serving the common good. But I must sign off: my neighbor just sent me an email, saying he hasn't seen us about, and asks how we're doing. I'd better answer, so he and his wife won't worry.

PATRICK O'KEEFFE

## Virtual Tour Wolcott Keeper's House

Take a tour of the Wolcott Keeper's House, virtual tour that is. This summer Paul Moon, Becky Shemanski and Patrick O'Keeffe worked with videographer Theo Dunham to showcase the House. The video is now available on the Society's YouTube channel. In the video you'll not only see sweeping views of the House but breathtaking shots of Sandusky Bay and the Marblehead Lighthouse. In addition to seeing interior views of the House, you'll hear why Benajah Wolcott came to the area from Connecticut, a discussion on "how-to" hearth cooking, and an overview of our frontier farm equipment collection. To view the video, there is a link on our website to our YouTube channel or go directly to YouTube and search for the Ottawa County Historical Society channel.

## 2021 Membership Renewal Time

It is that time of year again. Membership dues run from January 1 through December 31. The Society receives funding primarily through our dues and we sincerely appreciate your support. In your membership renewal letter you will also find a copy of the revised By-Laws recently approved by the Board. At our spring meeting, we will be asking the membership to approve these revisions. Again, thank you for helping the Society fulfill its mission to discover, preserve and celebrate the history of Ottawa County.

## Lighthouse Conservancy Update

By Rich Norgard

This past year the Port Clinton Lighthouse Conservancy has been able to complete landscaping and other improvements, including mitigation of flooding, excavation, and seeding on the south end of Derby Pond; completion of additional mounds planted with appropriate plants and shrubs for the area; construction of an eight-foot-wide handicapped accessible walkway around Derby Pond and connecting to the Lighthouse, Boathouse, parking lots, and the 1812 Memorial; completion of asphalt paving of that portion of the walkway under the control of the City of Port Clinton; and purchase of seven additional benches and installation of concrete pads for the pathway area.

Additionally, a Conservancy subcommittee raised over fifty thousand dollars for the purchase of the popular "Lightkeepers" sculpture which is now a permanent fixture near the lighthouse. By next spring there will be a permanent plaque bearing the names

of the original lighthouse keepers of Port Clinton's two lighthouses.

Additional goals for 2021 include working with the controlling agent of the land on the eastern edge of Derby Pond to allow completion of the paved walkway using an ecologically and mutually acceptable alternative to blacktop; the installation of a permanent "Welcome to the Port Clinton Lighthouse" sign to replace the wooden billboard structure along Perry Street that is designed to promote approved community events such as the Walleye Fest, Artists Club, Antique Auto Show, etc. (This sign would be designed to allow overlapping fabric or plastic signs but would default to the permanent "welcome" sign during non-promotion times); replacing the current wooden benches on the walkway to the former Jet Express parking lot with new benches; installation of three interpretive signs around the pathway highlighting the history of Port Clinton and the history of Port Clinton's Lighthouse; planting/mulching the unfinished mound adjoining the

Perry Street parking lot; placement of an antique and restored light pole near the entrance; and completion of the electric service to the Boathouse.

Two additional projects are being planned. The first is the creation of a landscaped welcome area, with seating for small programs, to be located west of the walkway by the Boathouse. The Friends of the Port Clinton Parks and Mayor Snider have indicated an interest in supporting a restroom in this area which could be designed to resemble, though on a larger scale, the oil house that was located a hundred yards south of the original Lighthouse when it was located on the west pier.

The second major improvement would be a landscaped and paved parking lot north of Perry Street, at Washington Street. This project will likely need governmental or other outside funding.

The Conservancy wishes to thank everyone who has provided financial support to its efforts.

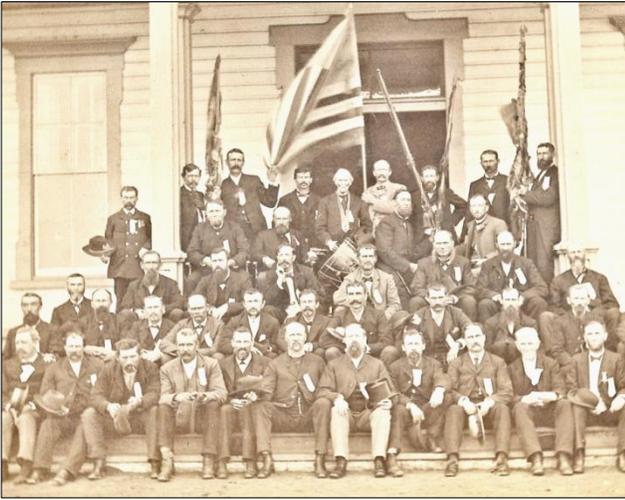


**Port Clinton Lighthouse decorated for Christmas**

*Photo by Martha Dykes*

## Presidential Visits

Ottawa County is known to have had a number of Presidents stay or pass through the County. When Lakeside was founded the American Civil War had been over for just eight years. Throughout the remainder of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many Union regiments held reunions there. A 1904 Lakeside Bulletin is the last to mention a reunion for the 23<sup>rd</sup> Ohio Veterans Volunteer Regiment. Both Presidents Ulysses S. Grant and Rutherford B. Hayes attended these reunions with Hayes attending them until his death in 1893. As Ohio's Governor, President William McKinley was a featured speaker at Lakeside in 1891.



President William H. Taft attended the September 1913 Perry Monument dedication ceremony. The ceremony also re-interred the remains of three American and three British officers beneath the rotunda floor.



Included on the list of "Famous People Who Have Stayed In Our Historical Island House Hotel" in Port Clinton is included Presidents Hayes, Taft and James A. Garfield.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower was an avid hunter. He visited the Mallard Club Marsh Wildlife area in Lucas County while it was in private ownership in 1954 and 1958. Perhaps on one of those trips he made time to visit the hunting areas of Carroll Township.



The Kozy Corners Restaurant, a local gathering place for the community, is located on State Route 163 on the west side of Oak Harbor. During a campaign swing through Ohio, President Barack Obama stopped for lunch at the Kozy Corners Restaurant on July 5, 2012. President Obama chatted with local residents inside and outside and even shared his strawberry pie with a patron. The President posed with a group of ladies that play cards there on the first Thursday of every month. The card players are (l-r) Marilyn Appelhaus, Delores Buhrow, Suzanne Buhro, Norma Reif, and Sara Zibbel. The background is a 1950s wall mural created by Kami Sprague Brough in 2007.



LINDA HUBER

## Reciprocal Member Guest Column

### Catawba Island Historical Society Craig Koerpel, President

The Catawba Island Historical Society has created a series of brief articles about their community. Combining the words “Catawba” and “History Trivia”, the individual stories and explanations are called “CATAWBA HISTRIVIA”.

Following is one that was written by its President, Craig Koerpel, about a local billboard.

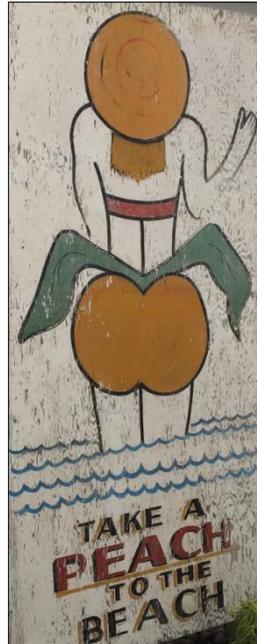
*Jeff Bumbera was a 14 year-old growing up on Catawba Island when he was asked to paint the original “Take a Peach to the Beach” sign that advertised fruit for Bergman Orchards.*

*The art was considered a bit “racy” at the time; so much so that a national feminist magazine allegedly wrote an editorial condemning it.*

*Years later Jeff was asked to do an updated, more modern version of the woman who had weathered in her peach bathing suit. Perhaps it, too, was a bit ahead of its time.*

*It wasn’t in place long before a duplicate of the first sign was back along Route 269 to beckon customers headed for the beach at East Harbor State Park.*

*The faded, very first sign is on display in the courtyard garden of the CIHS Union Chapel Museum. But what happened to its brief replacement? Stop by Catawba Museum at Union Chapel if you’d like to swap theories!*



Original Sign



Updated Sign

### Oral History Committee Update

In spite of the current COVID situation work is continuing on Volume 8 of oral history books. We have not been able to have committee meetings but are keeping in touch with each of the committee members. As we are not able to do face-to-face interviews we have had to be inventive obtaining stories. The format may be slightly different but the stories are interesting and informative. Seven stories have been completed and four more are in the works.

Our county has such a rich history made possible by its diversity and great folks, with great stories. If you know of any interesting stories or people we can write about please contact Martha Dykes, 419-732-1843 or martgene80@gmail.com



## And the Winners Are ....

The annual raffle drawing was held on October 10, 2020. The winners were pleased with their gifts which were generously donated.

1<sup>st</sup> ticket drawn was for Lydia Barnard of Kokomo, Indiana, first cousin to Paul Moon. She was happy to choose the history book of *The First 175 years of Ottawa County*. The book was signed and then mailed to her by Patrick O'Keefe.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> ticket drawn was for our own Martha Dykes and she chose the gift certificate from the Marblehead Hardware store.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> ticket drawn was a repeat winner from last year, Ellen Honsberger of Fremont. Ellen is active in the Sandusky Historical Society and fully supports all things historical.

The cost of the ticket printing was again shouldered by The Frederick Insurance Agency and we are thankful.

BECKY SHEMENSKI

## History Speaks

Despite the pandemic or perhaps of because of it, OCHS story tellers are keeping busy with a story telling program we are calling HISTORY SPEAKS. Our objective is to celebrate our county history from those who lived it. Our oral history interviews have helped to get us started, but we welcome and encourage new contributions. This is a mission in "the art of storytelling," and despite the limitations of the current circumstances, we see it as an experiment in communication – both between ourselves and our connection to the past.

We are very pleased and grateful to the individuals who have accepted invitations to perform the stories -- Dave Blankenbeker, Jeff Bugbee, Sylvia Chappell, Sue Doell, Jaclyn Favro-Zajac, Margaret Helbing, Monica Heineman, Matt Parker, Debbie Gordon and Patrick O'Keefe. HISTORY SPEAKS organizers are Nancy Dunham, Linda Huber, Rich Norgard, and Patrick O'Keefe.

Until such time as we can again schedule live programs, we are working with the scripts as best we can. We plan to video record performances and post them on our website and in the meantime, meeting to rehearse the scripts on Zoom.

NANCY DUNHAM

## Liberty AviationMuseum Event Cancelled

The COVID-19 Pandemic has impacted the Liberty Aviation Museum and Tin Goose Diner. Both were closed on March 16<sup>th</sup> and did not reopen until June 25<sup>th</sup>.

Due to the continued uncertainty with the COVID-19 situation, the Liberty Aviation Museum is cancelling the Holiday Stop and Shop scheduled for December 12-13, 2020. We are disappointed to have to make this decision, but as always the safety of our visitors and staff is our first priority. We will plan to schedule a similar event as soon as conditions permit.



*Our books make great gifts for your favorite history buff!!*

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*Along the Highways & Waterways*  
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*And more.....*  
**Order form on page 6**

Please mail me the following items.

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Book	<i>The Keeper's House - children's coloring/activity book</i>	\$3.00	\$2.00	\$0.35		
Book	History of Ottawa County Historical Society	\$7.00	\$3.00	\$0.70		
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Book	<i>Lake Erie's West Sister Island</i> by Martha Dykes	\$10.00	\$3.00	\$0.91		
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### Ottawa County

#### Historical Society Website:

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

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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

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