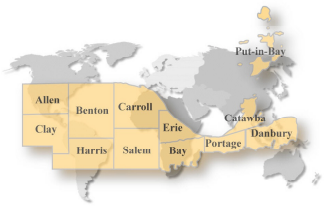

Ottawa County Historical Society

www.ottawacountyhistory.org December 2018

2018
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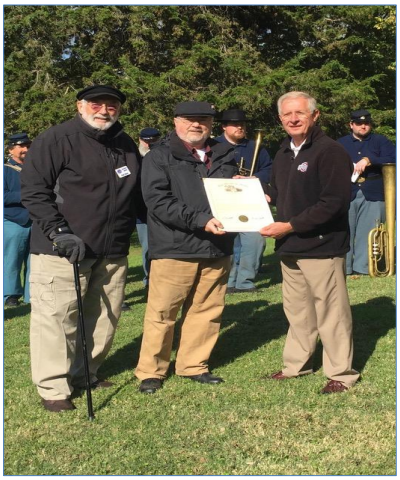
Lighthouse Festival, 2018.

Thirty years at the Wolcott Keeper's House was celebrated by the Ottawa County Historical Society and visitors during the Lighthouse Festival at the Keeper's House, with a proclamation presented by Representative Steve Arndt noting the OCHS's accomplishments through the years since it purchased and restored the house as a living history venue. The 73rd Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment Band, directed by John Hoffman, provided music for the ceremony and throughout the afternoon, and members of the 14th Ohio Volunteer Infantry re-enactors stood at attention during the brief ceremony.

A large crowd stayed to enjoy a variety of activities including the stirring band music and the 14th OVI's Civil War Encampment. The Encampment, a Keeper's House tradition since 2006, honors Henry Wolcott, a Civil War Veteran, and son of Danbury Peninsula lighthouse keepers Benajah and Rachel Wolcott. Groups of costumed re-enactors under the direction of Captain Brian Porter demonstrated the era's war craft and camp craft; and camp followers assisted Keeper's House fireplace cooks, Ray Machar and Becky Shemenski, with preparation of apple pies 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.

The fundraiser drawing winners were: Deb Grissinger, from Wooster, Linda Price from Lakeside, and David Moon from Berlin Heights; receiving, respectively; a Ben Richmond framed print, a gift certificate from Village Pro Hardware, and a signed copy of *Ottawa County, the First 175 Years*.

The Keeper's House is a restoration and living history project of the Ottawa County Historical Society. Go to the website, www.ottawacountyhistory.org for more information or to join the OCHS. Consider the selection of publications for holiday giving.



Representative Steve Arndt (r) presents a proclamation to O.C.H.S. president Patrick O'Keeffe (center) and Paul Moon (l)

From the President's Desk.....

What Do We Actually Do?

Someone, a person much younger than most of us, recently asked me a fair question while considering membership in the Ottawa County Historical Society: "What do I get out of it?"

It certainly gives pause. What does our organization actually do? Our Mission Statement says, "To discover, preserve and celebrate the history of Ottawa County and to promote a heightened awareness of our local place in time."

It is unlikely that the folks who went before us in Ottawa County thought often about how we today might view them as we look back through time. After all, how much attention do we pay to how we think folks in the future might view us? We, like our predecessors, are fully engaged in the business of living our lives.

Sure, like we do, they no-doubt did find a way to put moments aside now and then for reflection. And in the quiet of those moments they must have recalled the circumstances surrounding who they were and just where they had come from, how they had gotten here, or the differences—often stark differences—between what they had envisioned and the reality of how things turned out.

We tend to look back to the past and see events, happenings of importance, milestones easily marking people, places and dates. But, of course, our history is so much more. Those milestones are the points in our past that are linked together with human fabric, the material that yields for us a meaningful sense of pride and from which our place in a larger historical narrative emerges.

Narrative. That's a key word. It's what stories are made of. And stories are the fruit of those quiet moments of reflection mentioned above. Whenever people come together, stories begin to flow. It is how we humans, so much separated by distance and obligations, share our lives with each other on every level. Our shared lives, while marked by events, are woven in a fabric of stories we tell each other.

The real "stuff" of what our organization does is tightly wound around story telling. Just look at how the community embraces books put out by our Oral History group. Those books are filled with stories—stories of how people lived, what they thought and did day-to-day and how they felt about it and themselves. Stories are the means by which life from the past is shared with our lives in the present.

The same dynamic lives in re-enactments. It is one thing to proudly recall events. It is quite another to enjoy the richness of hearing the same exact music, played on the same instruments, as the participants in those events. When Ray Machar hands you a bowl of his famous stew from the fireplace, we are sharing in the very lives of people who, though not specifically thinking about it, have handed to us our time and place in history.

It is through these activities of sharing that we preserve and celebrate our history and learn a little more about who we are. And as we learn new ways to expand our storytelling and hone those skills, possibly those who come along after us will pick up on what we're doing, will desire to share who we are and who we have come from.

PATRICK O'KEEFFE

New Historical Marker

The Marblehead Lighthouse State Park will soon be displaying a new Historical Marker detailing on opposite faces the building of "The Light" and "The Keepers of the Light." The detailed and lengthy application for the marker to The Ohio Historical Connection was a joint effort of The Marblehead Lighthouse Historical Society and The Ottawa County Historical Society with the county historical society doing the research and writing and the lighthouse historical society providing the funding. The marker has already been cast and will be delivered to East Harbor State Park for safe keeping until installation ceremonies at The Lighthouse on May 25th, 2019. This will be the second such marker at The Lighthouse joining an earlier marker giving information on "Lake Erie" generally. Just another example of "your" historical society in action!

PAUL MOON

The Art of Storytelling

In October the Lakeside Heritage Society sponsored its first of what it hopes will become an annual weekend conference on "The Art of Storytelling." Recognizing the unique challenge historians have in making history come alive through the interpretation of compelling stories, the Lakeside Heritage Society organized a weekend conference around presentations and activities aimed to help the historian, museum professional and librarian share innovative methods used to tell unique stories. Among the various lectures topics included: "Oral Histories: Turning Rough Notes Into Histories," "Packaging 175 Years of Ottawa County History," "Using Monuments as Memories," "Developing Interactive Museums," and "Curating Johnson's Island Confederate Prison Site."

A special treat was Saturday's dinner keynote speaker, Brian Ellis, from FoxTales International. In his role as Captain Henry Detweiler, a riverboat man who piloted steamboats for 30 years in the mid-1800s, his re-enactment succeeded in helping the audience feel they were "Steamboatin' Down the Mississippi River." Local librarians Jen Fording (Harris-Elmore), Ariel Gresh (Ida Rupp) and Lina Hall (Oak Harbor) wrapped up the conference on Sunday describing how today's libraries are more than just about books.

Several members from the Ottawa County Historical Society and its Page&Stage Oral History group attended the conference. Inspired by new ideas and a wealth of information shared at the conference, the OCHS Program Committee hopes to develop its own storytelling event in 2019. Check the OCHS website for updated information on County events at

www.ottawacountyhistory.org.

Brian Ellis as Capt. Henry Detweiler

Volunteer Brunch at Avery's

OCHS 2018 Volunteers
Becky Shemenski, Paul Moon, Patrick O'Keeffe, Bill Coder, Todd Marsh, George McCormick, Linda Price, Dave O'Neal and Linda Huber

A group of Wolcott Keeper's House volunteers was honored with a brunch at Avery's Cafe in Marblehead last week. As docents they showed visitors through the restored home of the Marblehead Peninsula's first lighthouse keepers, Benajah and Rachel Wolcott, and the adjacent museum and gift shop. Volunteer coordinator Bill Coder recognized Linda Price for 60 hours of service, and Patrick O'Keeffe for 56 hours. Members of the group shared stories, including George McCormack, who hosted former residents of the 1820's stone home, the Kellers. They related how their grandmother was adamant about preserving the historic features of the House-even the copious vines nearly hiding the exterior. O'Keeffe told about a family from Indiana on a road trip to discover some of the historic sites in the midwest. "Seeing their eyes light up is just fun," he said. New volunteers Dave O'Neal and Todd Marsh were introduced. Also attending were Paul Moon, Linda Huber, Becky Shemenski, and Kathy Leonard. Karl and Carol Kessler, Barbara Sminchak, Ray Machar, Tom Wiseman, Nel Adcock, and Lynn Pedro were unable to attend.

The Wolcott Keeper's House, is a restoration and living history project of the Ottawa County Historical Society and funded by dues, donations, fund raising, and grants.

That Time of Year-- Membership Renewal

Thank you for being a member of the Ottawa County Historical Society (OCHS). The Society's efforts to broaden our reach to new audiences and with new partnerships continued this year. Here is a brief recap of our 2018 celebrations of history.

- The April "Harvesting History" event held in Bay Township provided an opportunity for residents to bring family treasures and share their associated history with OCHS members.
- Our Spring meeting of the membership was held at the Oak Harbor Golf Course and spotlighted the Society's Page & Stage Oral History group's latest book, *"Along the Highways & Waterways of Ottawa County."*
- A celebration was held in June for the 30th annual summer season opening day of the Wolcott Keeper's House on Bayshore Road in Marblehead.
- The Port Clinton Rotary perch wagon at the Keeper's House in July was enjoyed by all.
- The Society's annual summer picnic in August allowed members and guests to share favorite dishes.
- In September, the Society helped organize County-wide "open door" events from Oak Harbor to Marblehead including building tours and special presentations.
- In October during the Lighthouse Festival, we hosted a Civil War encampment at the Keeper's House with presentations from the Ohio 14th Volunteer Infantry and Ohio 73rd Volunteer Regimental Band.
- Hearth cooking demonstrations and classes at the Keeper's House were held throughout the summer.
- Finally, the Society's Fall meeting of the membership in November at the Catawba Island Club featured Craig Koerpel, President of the new Catawba Island Historical Society, who spoke on that group's first year journey.

In 2019, the Program Committee is planning a number of events and activities some which will continue the annual traditional events and some new activities to support our mission: **"To discover, preserve and celebrate the history of Ottawa County and to promote a heightened awareness of our local place in time."**

Your support is sincerely appreciated. If you have not yet done so, we ask you take a moment and complete and return the enclosed membership form. All are welcome.

Lighthouse Festival - 2018

Ohio Open Doors Events in Ottawa County

Two years ago the Ohio History Connection in Columbus started a statewide event called "Ohio Open Doors." This year's event was held September 7-16, 2018 where building and landmark operators opened their doors to the public for special tours and programs. The purpose of the event is to honor the history and stories of the local area helping to promote, educate and inspire pride in Ohio's amazing heritage. Within Ottawa County, thirteen events held by organizations and individuals shared the history of Ottawa County. Area walking tours, museums, town halls, and 'behind the scenes' building tours provided wonderful stories of the County's fascinating history. The 2018 participants included:

- *Carroll Township Museum*: museum tour and exhibit of Nina Williams' glass plate photo collection. Nina was an early postal clerk for the Township;
- *Catawba Island Historical Society:* tour of museum/cultural center at Union Chapel, a renovated non-denominational church built in 1888, with inaugural exhibit on the history of ice harvesting;
- *Harris-Elmore Public Library*: presentation on the history of the Elmore Manufacturing Company from the Elmore "roadster" bicycle to the Elmore car used as the official taxi in Washington, DC at the turn of the 20th century;
- *Johnson's Island Historical Society*: presentation on the Civil War Confederate Prison and guided tour of cemetery;
- *Lake Erie Islands Historical Society*: museum tour and exhibits on history of Put-in-Bay and the Islands;
- *Lakeside Heritage Society*: behind the scenes tour of Hoover Auditorium with exhibit celebrating its 90th year;
- *Oak Harbor Public Library*: two events—(1) tour of the Local History museum and video presentation of 1949/50 downtown stores and (2) guided walking tour of downtown buildings;
- *Ottawa County Historical Society*: presentation at Wolcott Keeper's House on the first fighting in the War of 1812 in Ohio on Danbury's Peninsula;
- *Ottawa County Museum*: exhibit of school memorabilia and senior portraits from the 1930s/1940s;
- *Ottawa County Courthouse*: guided tours of interior and exterior of courthouse;
- *Port Clinton Lighthouse Conservancy*: tour of last timber frame pier head lighthouse on Lake Erie;
- *Witt Union Center School*: guided tour of a one-room schoolhouse. Norm Witt's grandfather, Theodore, bought the Union Center School property which operated from 1899 to 1934. Norm restored the building and interior furnishings, including a bell rope used by teachers to ring the start of the day.

The Ottawa County Historical Society hopes to make the "open door" events an annual program with tentative plans for September 2019. Visit our website often for information on these and other upcoming programs at www.ottawacountyhistory.org.

Ottawa County Museum Holiday Schedule 2018

Open Wednesdays 12-3 as usual

December 27, 28, 29
Museum open 12-3

December 15 at 2 p.m.
Book Signing
at Ida Rupp Library
POWs in Ohio - WWII
or
Open by appointment
Call Peggy Debien
419-732-1039

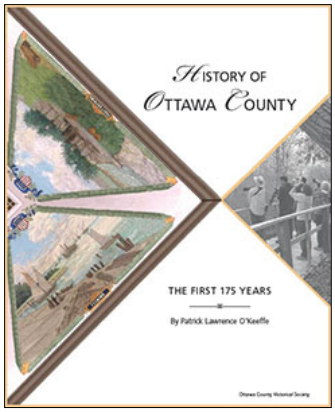
Liberty Aviation Museum Events

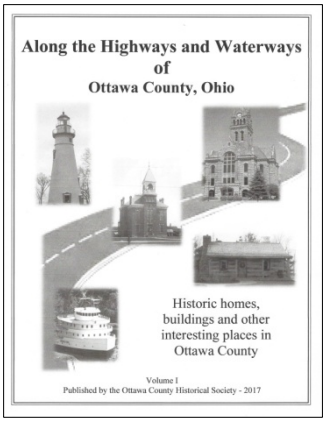
Dec 8th & 9th 6th Annual Holiday Stop & Shop

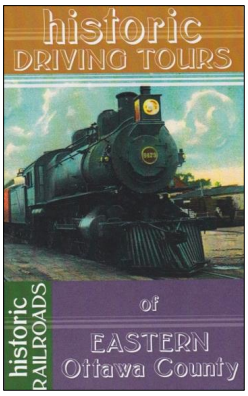
Dec 16th Santa Breakfast & Santa Fly-In
Breakfast times: 8 a.m.-10 a.m.
Fly-In 11a.m-.1 p.m. The Fly-in is FREE to all who wish to come out and visit Santa & Mrs. Claus!

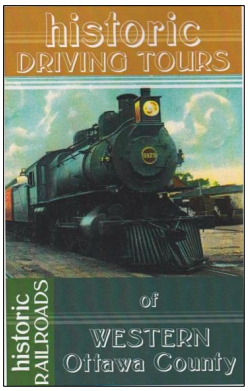
Dec 31st NYE WWII era
1940s Big Band Hangar Dance
8 p.m.-12:30 a.m.

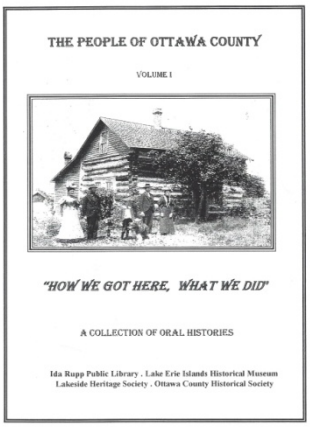
Our books make great Christmas gifts!

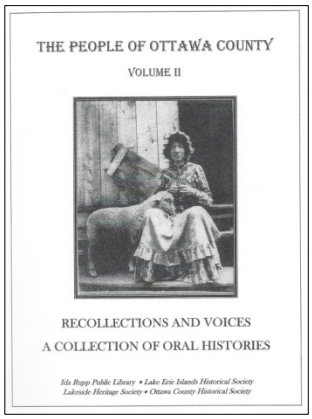


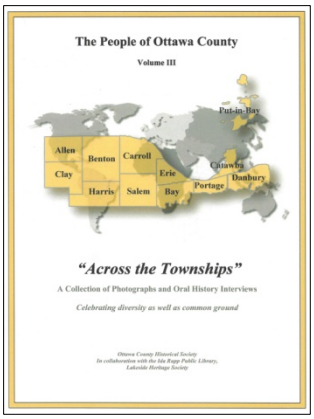


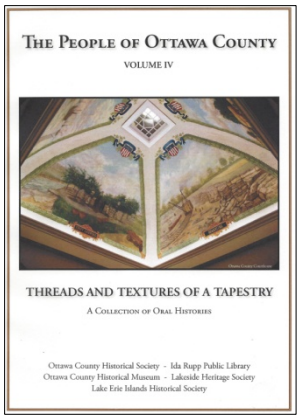


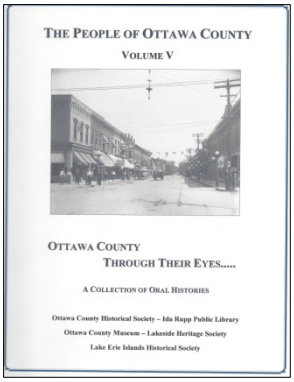


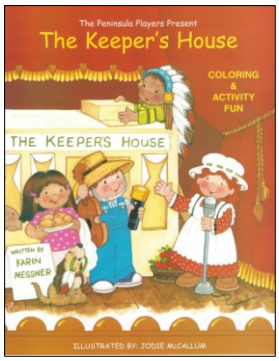




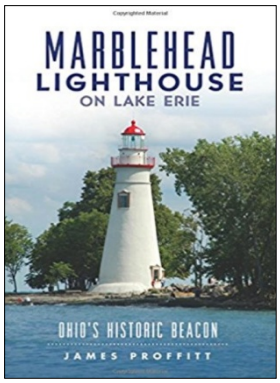


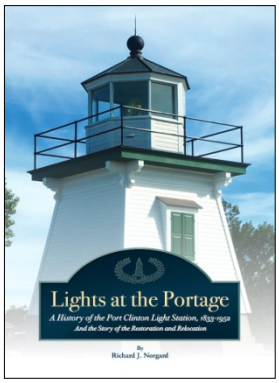


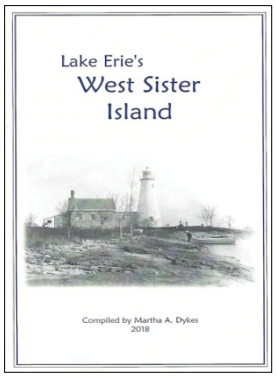




Books by local authors







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www.ottawacountyhistory.org

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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

2019 - ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES - due in January of each year

(If your address label does not say 2019 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.

Name_____

Address/City/State/Zip_____

Phone Number_____

Email_____

Total enclosed_____ Date_____ Check #_____

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

☐ I am interested in volunteering.