



Ottawa County Historical Society



www.ottawacountyhistory.org

Winter 2018

2018

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Remembering Ro and Jeannie

The sense of contribution to our towns and county makes up one measure of the meaning of our lives.

It is with great tenderness and gratitude that the members of the Ottawa County Historical Society remember Ro Chapman (1934-2018) and Jeanne Huskey (1940-2018), not only for their lifelong contributions to community as a whole but for the formative years of the Keeper's House. In 1989, when the historical society purchased the small stone house on the Danbury Peninsula, it was little known for its historic significance as the oldest standing house in Ottawa County and home of first settlers, Benajah and Rachel Wolcott. Since then, the Keeper's House has evolved into a historic landmark in Danbury and valuable community resource.

"It was largely through the reenactments of the lives of Benajah and Rachel Wolcott, performed by Ro Chapman and Karin Messner, and the coordinating of events by Jeanne Huskey, that the Keeper's House was successfully 'put on the local map,'" says Bill Coder, Site Coordinator.

Dick Taylor, past OCHS president, recalls in those early years the \$1,000 Ohio Arts Council grant to develop scripts based on The Firelands Journals. Sally Williams was instrumental in getting the grant and Karin Messner wrote the scripts. Besides Benajah and Rachel, the reenactments provided fond memories for others in the cast – Jacque Chapman, Kathy and Warren Leonard, Kaitlyn and Zach Riedmeier, Bill Coder, Neil Merckens, Paul Moon and many others over the years

Paul Moon, direct descendent of Benajah and recent OCHS past president says of Ro, "He was absolutely essential to the restoration project. At a critical time he took over chair of the Keeper's House Steering Committee. People came to the Keeper's House in the early days to see the theatrical productions. Only later did they come to see the House."

The performances took place on the second Saturdays throughout the summer for ten years, until 2001. Ro and Karin continued on for many years, welcoming guests at the Keeper's House as Benajah and Rachel. "Like Benajah," Karin writes of Ro Chapman, "He was a good man... he and his warm personality and many talents brought a great deal of joy to this peninsula. "

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Remembering Ro and Jeannie

(continued)

Of Jeanne, Dick Taylor adds, “As was her habit, Jeanne worked tirelessly behind the scenes from the moment we purchased the Keeper’s House in late 1989. She served as treasurer for OCHS from 1988 until 2008. In 1990, she resurrected our newsletter and continued producing it until Martha Dykes took over the job. She played a leading role in our open houses, chairing them from the very beginning. She arranged and did all the work for our clam bakes, which eventually turned into chicken barbeques. She chaired those until they ended when we switched to having the Rotary Fish Wagon. The day of our last barbeque, Bill and I helped her get into her Jeep, and she headed home very ill from exhaustion.”

Paul Moon describes Jeanne as “not only efficient but more importantly, effective! When she locked onto a project she would do it and all by herself.”

Both Jeanne and Ro were widely recognized for their contributions to community and local welfare.

Jeanne taught Sunday School at St. John’s Lutheran Church, Port Clinton. She was a 1958 graduate of Port Clinton High School, a member of Cochran Majorettes,



Ro Chapman & Karin Messner
as Rachel & Benajah Wolcott - c. 1995

Photo by Theo Dunham

and a Girl Scout Leader.. She was a past Port Clinton Councilwoman and also past president of Council. She was elected mayor of Port Clinton for two terms. Besides the Historical Society, she was active in the Humane Society, and a member of the Private Industry Council.

Ro was known by many as Mr. Playmaker because of years of service to local drama. Besides acting in many of the Playmakers’ productions, he served as Director of the Theater for many years. Among his favorite roles were Henry Higgins in *My Fair Lady* and Horace Vandergelder in *Hello Dolly*, in which he and Karin played opposite each other. In addition, Ro was a past president and member of Rotary and co-edited *The Black Swamp Trader Gazette*. He was a partner in the Tadsens Insurance Agency in Port Clinton, retiring in 2000.

The Ottawa County Historical Society is grateful to all who carry on the traditions of our local experience and without equivocation, to our times with Ro Chapman and Jeanne Huskey.

-NANCY DUNHAM



Jeanne Huskey - c. 2012

Photo by Kathy Leonard

From The President's Desk.....

At our first Board meeting of 2018, two competing perspectives quickly emerged, reflective of transition between past and future. I almost hesitate to use those terms because, if we fall into a shallow pond of thinking, we easily connote the former with being out of date or on the verge of fading away and, conversely, allow the latter to conjure unrealistic expectations.

We simply cannot be ignorant of our own history. Some years ago, the Ottawa County Historical Society began to concentrate on restoration of the Benajah Wolcott Keeper's House in Danbury Township. The energy that went into that effort subsequently mushroomed into a host of creative activities, including re-enactments, period concerts, opening the house to the public, and many special events. These efforts, which remain ongoing today, have made the Keeper's House a center-point of the Society's work of drawing on the past to enrich the present.

So, what of the future? The enthusiasm with which our predecessors and our current mentors have engaged us has begun to rapidly mature into new and broader perspectives. We are "looking westward" as an organization—taking a renewed interest in, and receiving a renewed interest from, all the reaches of Ottawa County. Meanwhile, transition does not mean leaving behind our legacy, especially its multi-dimensions of participation, involvement, and high degrees of energy with which its visionaries have engaged us right up to now.

Our first meeting of 2018 had a certain tension to it—a good tension, a vibrancy that will ensure expansion into what we are going to be that remains well-aligned with all that got us here.

PATRICK O'KEEFFE, PRESIDENT



Happy
Valentine's Day!

First "Harvesting History" Event Planned

Bay Township has been selected as the first venue for the History Society's Harvesting History project. An outgrowth of collection efforts that led to the publication of *The History of Ottawa County* by OCHS President Patrick O'Keeffe, Harvesting History is an invitation to all township residents to bring their cherished memories, photographs, and artifacts to the Bay Township Hall between the hours of 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. on Saturday, April 14, where OCHS members will screen, record, and catalog the information. If successful, future Harvesting History events will be scheduled in other townships.



Prohibition Talk to Kick-off Lecture Series

The OCHS Program Committee has developed a Lecture Series to bring topics of historical interest to venues around the county and will kick off its 2018 Lecture Series with *Prohibition in Ottawa County* by John Gibson, tentatively scheduled for March 17, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. at the Carroll Township Community Hall. Gibson has presented his lecture in other parts of the county to popular acclaim.

A lecture is also planned for September or October at Schedel Gardens in Elmore, tentatively titled *The Societal Impact of Corruption in Ottawa County* and to be presented by Lou Hebert, who spoke at the OCHS Annual Meeting last year.

Like to Meet People and Talk History?

The Ottawa County Historical Society provides summer tours at the Benajah Wolcott Keeper's House on Bayshore Road in Marblehead. As summer will be here before we know it, we are starting to put together the 2018 schedule and will be in need of both docents for the House and greeters for the Annex.

We are finalizing the dates for the 2018 season. Currently, our hope is to start the first Saturday in June through the end of August, staffed Monday through Saturday if possible. We have four-hour afternoon shifts from 1 to 5 p.m. available. Docent duties include meeting and greeting visitors to the House and serving as a tour guide through the first floor rooms. At the Annex volunteers greet visitors and provide details on display items as well as collect funds for the few items available for sale. A volunteer orientation session will be held in May to provide more specific details.

This is an opportunity to share your love of history along with a desire to meet interesting people either passing through our County or who live nearby. To learn more and to volunteer please contact Linda Huber of the Ottawa County Historical Society by calling 419-702-7060.

Museum Looking for Photos

The Ottawa County Museum is looking for photographs of the interiors and exteriors of county businesses for an exhibit they are working on comparing "then" and "now."

If you have any business photos, please call Peggy Debien at 419-732-1039 or stop by the museum on Wednesdays from noon to 3 pm. The museum will scan your photos on the spot and return them to you.



2018 Spring Cleaning at the Keeper's House

WHEN: Saturday, May 12
from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

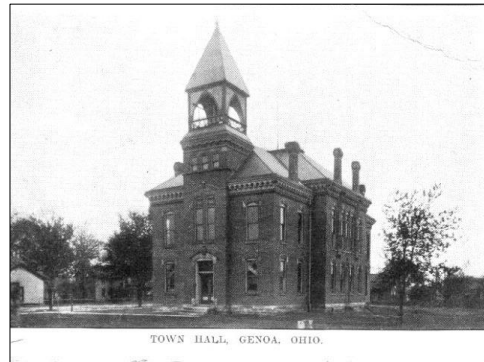
WHERE: Keeper's House,
9999 Bayshore Road, Marblehead



Bring light cleaning supplies and join the Boy Scouts for a morning preparing the inside and outside for the 2018 Season. We'll be sweeping out the cobwebs inside the Keeper's House and outside raking the old leaves making room for this year's flowers. We'll start at 10:00 a.m. and pizza will be served at noon. All welcome!

Genoa Sesquicentennial Celebration

Genoa will be celebrating their 150th birthday this June 1-3, 2018. Kim Harsanje and her dedicated Committee are planning a weekend of activities for the downtown area. We'll keep you up to date on the festivities as soon as they are confirmed.



Please visit their website at www.ottawacountyhistory.org or the Village of Genoa's website at www.genoahio.org for information on the sesquicentennial as it becomes available.

Phones Part of PC Life For 70 Years

(from the Daily News, March 15, 1965)



Think the telephone is a relatively new innovation in the American home?

Heck, Sis was talking to her gal friends via the phone in Port Clinton nearly 70 years ago!

In 1887, a telephone company known as Central Union began at Port Clinton with 13 subscribers. Ten years later the Port Clinton Telephone Company was organized.

In 1901, this company was sold to the Ottawa County Telephone Company with headquarters in Elmore. The Ottawa County Telephone Company purchased the Central Union Company in 1921.

In 1926, Frank A. Knapp and Associates acquired the Ottawa County Telephone Company and the following year it became a part of the Northern Ohio Telephone Company.

Dial service came Port Clinton in 1936. In 1962, the present telephone building was dedicated and a completely new system was placed in service. At the same time direct distance dialing was inaugurated.

As of January 1, 1965, the seven exchanges in Ottawa County operated by the Northern Ohio Telephone Company served 13,060 telephones - 1,145 more than were in service when the new system was placed in operation three years ago.

More than 100,000 long distance calls are completed each month through toll centers at Port Clinton and Genoa. The plant value of the telephone property in Ottawa County has risen to \$5,896,808.90 as of December 31, 1964.

Not only does the Telephone Company provide a vital service to this community but it also plays an important part in the economic welfare of Ottawa County.

Northern Ohio Telephone Company provides regular employment to 61 men and 36 women. It has an annual payroll in Ottawa County amounting to \$368,051.32 and paid county taxes in 1964 amounting to \$113,066.10.



**Ice piled near the Port Clinton Pier Light
early 1900s**



**Ice piled near the former Moose Club
January 2018**

Presidents
Day
February 19th



OCHS 2017 Membership

Life Member - Ruth Weisenauer

Patrons (\$100 +)

John Bayliff '17
James Blum '18
Bill & Sharon Coder '17
Mark Coppler '17
Peggy Debien '17
Ron & Diane Gerkenmeyer '18
Carl & Mary Anne Koebel '17
Richard & Catherine LeSourd '17
Paul & Maria Moon '17
Virginia Prusik '18
Holly Gast & John Starcher '18
Jim & Judy Walser '17

Sustaining (\$35)

David & Sue Blankenbeker '18
Dale & Gretchen Davis '17
John & Mary Jane Gibson '17
David Grimm '18
Marlene Gulas '18
Joel & Kim Hirt '17
Linda Kresser '17
Masonry Construction '18
Karin Messner '18
David Moon '18
Oak Harbor Public Library '17
Robert & Norma Nehls '17
Janice F. Netcher '17
Robert & Norma Netcher '17
Bill & Jean Nicholson '18
Jim & Molly Sass '17
Sandra Zenser '18

Sponsors (\$50)

Lydia Moon Barnard '18
Bill & Sharon Bird '17
Lee & Natalie Bredbeck '18
Bob & Anne Butcher '18
Kathleen Brunt '18
Richard Celek '17
Lloyd & Audrey Dayton '18
Diane DeVries '17
Jim & Kathy Egan '17
Joanne Fleming '18
Larry Fletcher '18
Doug & Connie Focht '18
Bob & Cindy Grimm '17
Dr. Derrill Hablitzel '17
Dr. Mark & Tina Hablitzel '17
Dr. Michael & Cathy Hablitzel '17
Roger & Barbara Jensen '18
Karl & Carol Kessler '18
James I. Kleinhans '18
Ray & Jeanne Lambert '18
Paul & Carol Lehmann '17
Warren & Kathy Leonard '17
Elizabeth & Frank Maloney '17
John Millisor '18
Kathryn Orta '17
Richard & Jeannie Rice '17
Mark & Judy Stahl '18
Robert & Katherine Steinmiller '17
Janet Stephenson '18
Richard & Susan Taylor '18
Alex & Bonnie Thomas '18
Wayne & Sally Walter '17
Dennis Warga '17

Members

Joe & Jean Alexander '17
Dick & Jan Batke, '18
Denise Bell '18
Mayor Jacqueline Bird '18
Robert Bredbeck '18
James Cagle &
Bailey Van Kirk '17
Charles & Arlene Carr '18
Ro Chapman '17
Jim & Betsy Deer '17
LaVonne Dodge '17
Richard & Nancy Dunham '17
Cheryl Grissinger Dunn '17
Martha Dykes '18
Tom & Mary Evans '18
Diane Fowler '18
Rod Gale '18
Joseph & June Gall '17
Judge Kathleen Geisler '17
Dr. David & Pat George '18
Jill Gray '17
Deb Grissinger '18
Donna Gyde '18
Jill Hansen-Lawrence '17
Jim & Edna Hansen '18
Edward E. Hartung '17
Ron Hart & Nancy Beadle '17
Eileen Hasselbach '18
Dan Hearlihy '17
Mr. & Mrs. Howard Heilman '17
Jim & Joan Herl '17
David Hirt '17
Sue Homsy '17
Linda & Doug Huber '17
Jeanne Huskey '17
Nancy M. Ihnat '18
Kyle Johannsen '17
Carolyn Jones '17
Donna M. Lueke '18
Ray & Georgette Machar '18
Dan & Lynne Madden '17
Todd Marsh '18
Richard Martin '18
Bill Moon '18
Ralph Moon '18
Carol Morgan '17
Richard Norgard
Patrick O'Keeffe '17
David O'Neal '18
Virginia Park '18
Shelby Peto '18
Margaret Phillips '18
Linda Price '18
Jim & Lisa Recker '17
Randy & Sarah Riedmaier '17
Mary Ann Robbs '17
Dianne M. Rozak '18
Forest & Arline Sabin '17
Donna M. Schell '18
Carlton & Judy Schwan '17
Rebecca Fritz Shemanski '17
Lucille Smith '17
Susan M. Smith
Robert & Patricia Sondergeld '18
Robert & Annette Textor '17
Judy Twarek '18
Sally Heximer & Rich Vedell '18
Glen & Mary Wagner '17
Ruth Whipple '18
Richard Williams &
Laura Womack '18
Tom & Mary Wiseman '17

**Ottawa County
Historical Society Website:
www.ottawacountyhistory.org**

**Contributions
Ruth A. Weisenauer**

**Memorial - Ro Chapman
Karin Messner**

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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

Item	Description	Quantity	Price each	Shpg each	Tax each	Total
Book	<i>Along the Highways & Waterways of Ottawa County NEW!!</i>		\$20.00	\$4.50	\$1.72	
Book	<i>History of Ottawa County - The First 175 Years</i>		\$49.95	\$4.00	\$3.78	
Book	Volume I: <i>How We Got Here, What We Did</i>		\$15.00	\$2.50	\$1.23	
Book	Volume II: <i>Recollections and Voices</i>		\$15.00	\$2.50	\$1.23	
Book	Volume III: <i>Across the Townships</i>		\$15.00	\$2.50	\$1.23	
Book	Volume IV: <i>Threads and Textures of a Tapestry</i>		\$15.00	\$2.50	\$1.23	
Book	Volume V: <i>Ottawa County Through Their Eyes</i>		\$15.00	\$2.50	\$1.23	
Book	Volume VI: <i>Memories and Adventures</i>		\$15.00	\$2.50	\$1.23	
Book	Complete set of Oral Histories: Volume 1 through VI		\$90.00	\$6.00	\$6.72	
Book	<i>Combined Atlas of Ottawa County - 1874 & 1900 NEW PRICE</i>		\$15.00	\$4.00	\$1.33	
Book	Historic Driving Tour Guide: <i>Historic Railroads of Western Ottawa County</i>		\$4.00	\$2.00	\$0.42	
Book	Historic Driving Tour Guide: <i>Historic Railroads of Eastern Ottawa County</i>		\$4.00	\$2.00	\$0.42	
Book	<i>The Keeper's House - children's coloring/activity book</i>		\$3.00	\$1.50	\$0.32	
Book	<i>Hearth Cookbook</i>		\$5.00	\$1.50	\$0.46	
DVD	Bicentennial War of 1812 Re-enactment: <i>The Skirmish on the Peninsula</i>		\$15.00	\$1.50	\$1.16	
Book	<i>Marblehead Lighthouse on Lake Erie</i> by James Proffitt		\$15.00	\$2.00	\$1.19	
Note: if books are being picked up do not include shipping/handling charge.				TOTAL		

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OTTAWA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2018 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES - due in January of each year

(If your address label does not say 2018 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.