



# Ottawa County Historical Society



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

Third Quarter 2022

**2022**

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*Richard Taylor ~ 419-836-7449*

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### **Program Chairman**

*Lisa Hossler - 419-934-2848*

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

*Martha Dykes ~ 419-732-1843*



**Skip and Ellen Honsperger, presenting \$1,000 check to  
OCHS Vice President, Becky Shemenski**

## **OCHS Scholarship Fund Grows**

In 2019, the OCHS Board created a scholarship fund for recognizing area students with an interest in history. Our goal is to build the fund to a \$25,000 level before scholarships are awarded. One of the ways the fund grows is through donations made by individuals like the Honspergers. Members of the Society, Skip and Ellen recently visited the Wolcott Keeper's House to take a tour of the house and present their \$1,000 donation for the scholarship fund. We are about 40% to our target goal. Thank you, Skip and Ellen!



## Columbia Gives To Her Son

*Columbia Gives to Her Son  
The Accolade of The  
New Chivalry of Humanity  
---Edward F. Lentz, Pvt. Med. Dept.---  
Served With Honor In the World War  
And Died In the Service Of His Country.  
(Signed) Woodrow Wilson*

Historical societies and museums receive many interesting artifacts from individuals looking to find a suitable home for the item. The Ottawa County Historical Society recently received a package from a collector of military photos and documents. At an antique show in Michigan the collector found a document of a World War I soldier killed in action, though subsequent research discovered he died of pneumonia in Alabama. The document is a form certificate signed by President Woodrow Wilson. Designed by E. H. Blashfield in 1919, this certificate was provided to families of wounded or killed soldiers before the Purple Heart program was implemented.

The collector purchased the document and did some research on the soldier, Edward F. Lentz, and discovered he was born in Williston, Ohio. He was passing the document along with his research to OCHS with the hope that we would find a home for the materials.

Lentz was born in 1890 and is buried in Williston. Both his parents, Julius and Augusta (Strohshine) Lentz, were from Germany. Edward had several siblings including Gustav, Louise and Augusta Helle. His wife was Florine Kramer.

Williston seemed to be the place to start to find any current descendants that might be interested in the materials. In reaching out to OCHS resident sleuths, i.e., former President Richard Taylor, we were able to connect with Ron Lenz. Ron and his wife have done extensive Lentz/Lenz genealogy research. Edward did not have any children. However, his father's brother, Christian Frederick, is the line Ron descends. Through the power of the internet, we were able to make contact with Ron who expressed immediate interest in these collector materials. The certificate has found a good home.

## 2022 Landscaping Done

This year, Wisler Landscaping has been doing the heavy clean-up around the outside of the Keeper's House and the Annex. Randy Wisler, owner, has edged, mulched, pruned and weeded. He will check things periodically, pruning if needed, then put the landscaping to bed for the winter. Paul Moon and Bill Coder continue to keep the roses looking good on a more regular basis.

Randy Wisler, of Wisler Landscaping and Design of Oak Harbor, is degreed from Ohio State University. He has been in business since the early 1980s.



**New landscaping**  
*photos by Martha Dykes*

# Lighthouses and Their Keepers

## Part Two

By Linda Huber

As we celebrate the Marblehead Lighthouse 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2022, it is important to remember those individuals who helped tend the lighthouse. With Benajah Wolcott as its first Keeper and Edward Herman as its last civilian Keeper, the second part of this two-part article continues the story of lighthouse management and what it was like in the day of the life of a lighthouse keeper.

### Lighthouse Management (1900-present)

The Lighthouse Board was established in 1852 and by the time it was abolished in 1910, the Board had accomplished all it set out to do, i.e., create a first-rate agency in terms of personnel and aids to navigation. The successor organization established in 1910 was the Bureau of Lighthouses under the Department of Commerce. Referred to as the Lighthouse Service, Congress wanted to have more civilian administration and thereby hired experienced civilians to replace military personnel. Responsibility for river aids now fell under the Lighthouse Service with local citizens known as lamp lighters or lamp attendants tending the river aids.

The first Lighthouse Service Commissioner of Lighthouses was George Putnam who served 25 years and was appointed by President William Howard Taft. Putnam increased navigational aids and incorporated new technology whenever possible, particularly in the area of electronics. Two of his most significant achievements were the passage of the Retirement Act for lighthouse personnel in 1918 and the introduction of the radio beacon as an aid to navigation in 1921. The radio beacon permitted a reduction of over 800 employees.

The most significant impact of technological advances during and following World War I was the automation of lighthouses thereby making human management unnecessary. Several of these technological advances included a device for automatically replacing burned-out electric lamps, a bell alarm warning keepers of fluctua-

tions in the burning efficiency of oil-vapor lamps, the first experimental radio beacon, an automatic time clock for operating electric range lights, a photo electric-controlled alarm device to check the operation of the unwatched electric light, a lightship staffed by remote control, and battery-powered buoys gradually replacing the older acetylene buoys. Electric line service to remote sections in the country by the 1920s-30s provided most light stations with electric service thereby again reducing staff.

By 1939 the Bureau of Lighthouses was abolished and effective July 1 of that year all functions were transferred to the U.S. Coast Guard. Bureau civilian employees were given a choice of a military position with the Guard or remain in the civilian position. About 50% joined the military.

Eventually by the 1960s all these various changes led to automation throughout the entire system and thus resulted in demolishing outdated, though historic, buildings.

### Day in the Life of a Lighthouse Keeper (Edward Herman)

Although we have no known records for the early keepers of the Light, Keeper's George McGee (1873-1896) and his wife, Johanna, (1896-1903) provided a good picture of the Keeper's tasks and weather conditions for their time. When the U.S. Coast Guard took over management of the Marblehead Lighthouse in 1943, the last civilian Keeper was Edward Herman. Thanks to his great-niece, Rebecca Lawrence-Weden we have quite a bit of historical record providing a full, rich picture of a day in the life of a lighthouse keeper.



**Capt. Herman**  
~Rebecca Lawrence-Weden

Born in 1878 in Tonawanda, NY, Edward died in 1964 at Lakeside, OH. As a Captain he served in the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service on the *USS Lot M. Morrill* and then was appointed to the U.S. Lighthouse Service serving at the Buffalo, NY Horseshoe

Reef Lighthouse. He was the last civilian USLHS Keeper at Marblehead before it was taken over by the U.S. Coast Guard. At Marblehead he was the fourth assistant keeper from 1913 to 1933 and then keeper from 1933 to 1943 when he retired.

His first year at Marblehead must have made him wonder whether it was the place for him. The diphtheria that had plagued the community lasted through the early part of 1914. It was immediately followed by a winter storm that lasted well into March. Records reflect, "The lake is covered in ice. The ice in the lake is two feet thick and is as far as one can see."

Like ships, lighthouses need to be painted, cleaned and maintained on a regular basis. These duties need to be completed during ongoing weather conditions and are in addition to maintaining the light, keeping records and reports as well as performing rescues. Occasional visitors and lighthouse tenders rounded out a day in the life of the lighthouse keeper.

Visitors to the lighthouse may have come via the water but they also came by land traversing the long winding lane to the lighthouse and the keepers were responsible for not only the lane's construction but for its maintenance. The log book records "in five days we did 50 wagon loads of stone and dirt."

Rebecca Lawrence-Weden's website has an extensive, detailed record of the daily and monthly activities of her great-uncle Edward Herman. The website is dedicated to the men and women of the U.S. Coast Guard, to all Lighthouse Keepers and their spouses, and to the U.S. Life-Saving service. It can be accessed at [www.lighthousediscovery.com](http://www.lighthousediscovery.com). In addition, Rebecca wrote a wonderful article on Edward for the OCHS oral histories Volume VIII, "*The People of Ottawa County, Milestones and Memories*".

### **Conclusion**

As we enjoy today's well-kept and beautifully maintained grounds of the Marblehead Lighthouse, it is difficult to imagine the challenging circumstances the early keepers faced when performing their duties. A simple 'thank you' doesn't seem quite enough.

## **Ottawa County Museum News (126 W. Third St., Port Clinton)**

The Ottawa County Museum will participate in Ohio Open Doors on Wednesday, September 14, from noon to 3 p.m. The theme for the museum will be local genealogy. The museum will present many of the resources available to local genealogists and collect genealogical material that individuals wish to donate to the museum. The museum has been expanding its genealogical collection in the past several years. Individuals wishing to do so will also be given access to the archives where all genealogical material are filed. Admission to the museum at 126 W. Third St. is always free and the museum is handicapped accessible.



On November 14 at 6 p.m., Museum Curator Peggy Debien will present a program at Ida Rupp Public Library (310 Madison St. PC) on the history of Erie Gardens. She invites all past and current residents of Erie Gardens (as well as interested individuals) to attend and share stories and photos of their neighborhood and homes. Her program will last about 45 minutes, with 45 minutes for those attending to share stories and information. Peggy lived in Erie Gardens at 703 Bataan Lane from around age 10 until she graduated from college.



The Ottawa County Museum will begin "winter hours" after Labor Day. Beginning on September 7<sup>th</sup> and until Memorial Day, the museum will be open on Wednesdays from noon until 3 p.m. or by appointment by calling Peggy at 419-732-1039.



The Board of the Ottawa County Museum is looking for an individual to fill the position of treasurer on the board. (The board meets 5 times a year on the third Thursday of odd numbered months.) Please, call board president Jim Rusincovitch at 419-202-1253 for more information or to apply.

## Life-sized Silhouettes Around Marblehead

In honor of the Marblehead Lighthouse's 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary, village merchants helped sponsor a scavenger hunt-like exploration around Marblehead and Danbury Township.

Sixteen life-sized silhouettes have been placed around the village of Marblehead, one for each of the keepers of the Marblehead Lighthouse. Lorrie Halblaub, a local historian and librarian headed up this effort. She personally oversaw and conducted the necessary research for each silhouette. Fifteen provide information on each lighthouse keeper and one offers insight into one of the assistants. Each silhouette features a brief bio on each person. These keepers worked and lived at the lighthouse from 1822 to 1946.

### The locations of each silhouette:

1. Benajah Wolcott (Marblehead Bank, 709 W. Main St.)
2. Rachel Ogden Wolcott (Victory Coffee & Co., 724 W. Main St.)
3. Jeremiah Van Benschoten (Holy Assumption Orthodox Church, 114 E. Main St.)
4. John Roderick Williston (Starcher Village Pro Hardware, 802 W. Main St.)
5. Charles Ferris Drake (Teriayki Designs, 1002 W. Main St.)
6. Lodrick Colly Brown (Brown's Dairy Dock, 709 W. Main St.)
7. Jared Bradley Keyes (Marblehead Town Hall, 513 W. Main St.)
8. David L. Dayton (Galley Restaurant, 113 W. Main St.)
9. Thomas B. Dyer (The Redfern Inn at Rocky Point Winery, 111 W. Main St.)
10. Russell E. Douglas (Galley Restaurant, 113 W. Main St.)
11. Thomas Julius Keyes (Pink Perch, 122 W. Main St.; and Martha & Molly's 126 W. Main St.)
12. George H. McGee (Marblehead Peninsula Branch Library, 710 W. Main St.)

13. Johanna Schenck McGee (Marblehead Peninsula Branch Library)

14. Charles August Hunter (Pickle & Chips Bakery and Latitude Cafe, 306-312 W. Main St.)

15. Edward Martin Herman (Victory Coffee & Co.)

Andrew M. Turinsky (Camp Runinmuck, 8786 N. Shore Blvd.)

*Note: See August 17 [Sandusky Register](#) article by Jessie Opfer for more details.*



**Benajah & Rachel Wolcott silhouettes**



**Captain  
Edward  
Herman**

*Photos by  
Martha  
Dykes*

## Civil War Encampment

**Saturday, October 8<sup>th</sup>  
11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

The Wolcott Keeper's House will again hold the annual Civil War Encampment as part of the Marblehead peninsula-wide Lighthouse Festival. The encampment features Civil War music, period re-enactors, and "frontier-style" food as well as hearth cooking in the Keeper's House.

The 14<sup>th</sup> Ohio Volunteer Regiment encampment includes demonstrations and drills along with Civil War lore. Music will be provided by the 73<sup>rd</sup> Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regimental Band, a 15-piece authentically uniformed band playing Civil War era music on instruments from the period. The band has performed at various ceremonies and historic venues throughout Ohio



**As usual, volunteers are needed to contribute bean soup and cornbread for serving and also to help serve.**

**If you can help, please contact Kathy Leonard at 419-512-1741.**

### Fall Membership Meeting Speaker

The 2022 fall membership meeting will be held November 13 at 12 noon at the Catawba Island Club.

Storyteller, musician, and dancer Genot Picor will present "Stories, Songs, and Dances of the French Voyageur" at the November membership meeting. This program is based on Adrien Jolliet, brother of the Mississippi River explorer Louis Jolliet. Adrien Jolliet is believed to be the first Frenchman to explore Lake Erie.

Genot holds a Master's Degree in Theater Arts with a specialty in oral tradition, narrative studies, and the anthropology of performances. His interactive programs are designed to bring frontier history alive.

## OTTAWA COUNTY COMING EVENTS

### Keeper's House Schedule

*Saturday, September 17, 2022, 1:00 p.m.*, Ohio History Connection Open Doors Event, come and learn everything you ever wanted to know about the Keeper's House and were afraid to ask!

*Saturday, October 8, 2022, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.* Our annual Civil War Encampment featuring the 14<sup>th</sup> Ohio Volunteer Infantry and the 73<sup>rd</sup> OVI Regiment Band, bean soup and cornbread.

*Sunday, November 13, 12 noon.* Fall membership meeting at the Catawba Island Club.

### Marblehead Lighthouse Schedule

*September 3 - Star Party - 8:30 pm to 10:30 pm*

*October 8 - Lighthouse Festival - 9 am to 4 pm - community wide event*

### Lake Erie Islands Historical Society

*September 11 --* Historical Weekend Old Tyme Baseball Game, 2 pm, on the east lawn of Perry's Victory & International Peace Memorial. The local Mossbacks challenge the Ohio Historical Society Muffins to a game using the original rules of baseball. Museum staff and volunteers will sell hot dogs and soft drinks provided by our friends at Miller Boat Line with all proceeds benefitting the museum.

*October 1 --* Island Wine Festival Silent Auction at the Put-in-Bay Winery. The silent auction is part of the Put-in-Bay Chamber of Commerce's annual Island Wine Festival, 11 am to 5 pm, Always a great selection of items, including vintage souvenirs, collectables, antiques, wine-related items, Put-in-Bay lodging stays, Jet Express and Miller Boat Line passes and other items donated by island businesses.

Email [director@leihs.org](mailto:director@leihs.org); Phone (419) 285-2804

Address 443 Catawba Ave Put-in-Bay, OH 43456

**Mailing Address:** PO Box 25 Put-in-Bay, OH 43456



Please mail me the following items.

Item	Description	Price each	Shipping/ Handling each	Tax each	X Quantity	Total
Book	<i>Along the Highways &amp; Waterways of Ottawa County</i>	\$20.00	\$4.00	\$1.68		
Book	<i>History of Ottawa County - the First 175 Years</i>	\$50.00	\$5.00	\$3.85		
Book	Volume I: <i>How We Got Here, What We Did</i>	\$15.00	\$4.00	\$1.33		
Book	Volume II: <i>Recollections and Voices</i>	\$15.00	\$4.00	\$1.33		
Book	Volume III: <i>Across the Townships</i>	\$15.00	\$4.00	\$1.33		
Book	Volume IV: <i>Threads and Textures of a Tapestry</i>	\$15.00	\$4.00	\$1.33		
Book	Volume V: <i>Ottawa County Through Their Eyes</i>	\$15.00	\$4.00	\$1.33		
Book	Volume VI: <i>Memories and Adventures</i>	\$15.00	\$4.00	\$1.33		
Book	Volume VII: <i>The Stories Continue</i>	\$15.00	\$4.00	\$1.33		
Book	<b>Volume VIII: <i>Milestones and Memories</i></b> <b>NEW!!</b>	\$15.00	\$4.00	\$1.33		
Book	Complete set of Oral Histories: Volume I through VIII	\$120.00	\$8.00	\$8.96		
Book	<i>Combined Atlas of Ottawa County - 1874 &amp; 1900</i> <b>NEW PRICE</b>	\$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	\$2.00	\$0.35		
Book	History of Ottawa County Historical Society	\$7.00	\$3.00	\$0.70		
Book	<i>Hearth Cookbook</i>	\$5.00	\$3.00	\$0.56		
Book	<i>Marblehead Lighthouse on Lake Erie</i> by James Proffitt	\$21.95	\$3.00	\$1.75		
Book	<i>Lights at the Portage</i> by Richard J. Norgard	\$10.00	\$3.00	\$0.91		
Book	<i>Lake Erie's West Sister Island</i> by Martha Dykes	\$10.00	\$3.00	\$0.91		
Book	<i>My Island Home</i> by Gladys Curd McMeans	\$10.00	\$3.00	\$0.91		
Tote	Keeper's House Tote Bag <b>NEW!</b>	\$20.00	\$4.00	\$1.68		
T-Shirt	Keeper's House T-shirt - heather gray <b>NEW!</b> <b>Circle Size: M, L, XL, 2XL, 3XL</b>	\$20.00	\$4.00	\$1.68		
Mug	Keeper's House Coffee Mug <b>NEW!</b>	\$20.00	\$4.00	\$1.68		
Misc.	Cat's Meow Keeper's House <b>NEW!</b>	\$20.00	\$4.00	\$1.68		
Misc.	Cat's Meow Marblehead Lighthouse <b>NEW!</b>	\$20.00	\$4.00	\$1.68		

**Note: if books or merchandise are being picked up do not include shipping/handling charge.**

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**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**

**2022-** ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES - due in January of each year

*(If your address label does not say 2022 or Life Member it is time to pay dues.)*

Single \$15\_\_\_\_\_ Family \$25\_\_\_\_\_

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

Scholarship Fund \$\_\_\_\_\_ Keeper's House \$\_\_\_\_\_ OCHS \$\_\_\_\_\_

*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.**