



Ottawa County Historical Society



www.ottawacountyhistory.org

Fourth Quarter 2022

2022

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Linda Huber ~ 419-702-7060

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Corresponding Secretary, Oral History Chairman, Newsletter Editor

Martha Dykes ~ 419-732-1843

October Openhouse and Civil War Encampment

Our annual Civil War Encampment featuring the 14th Ohio Volunteer Infantry and the 73rd OVI Regiment Band, apples, cider, bean soup and cornbread was held October 8th. This event coincides with the Marblehead Lighthouse Festival. A new Keeper's House sign placed at the exit of the Marblehead Lighthouse directed visitors to the Keeper's House. This, our Fall Festival with historic military demonstrations and music, is a favorite for our guests. The many visitors enjoyed hearing the history of the Keeper's House, watching hearth cooking and tasting samples of the delicious apple pies baked on the hearth by the Keeper's House cook, Suzy Wittenmyer who was assisted by ladies of the Camp followers. As always, the bean soup, cornbread that was donated by OCHS members, served over an open outdoor fire pit was a bit hit on the sunny but chilly day. Apples and cider were donated by Moore Orchards. The 73rd OVI Regiment Band provided music throughout the day. Re-enactors from the 14th Ohio Volunteer Infantry demonstrated the era's war craft and camp craft.

Winners of the raffle prizes were: \$50 gift certificate from the Village PRO Hardware went to Judy Twarek Bickley; *The History of Ottawa County-The First 175 Years* book went to Esperanza Davenport and the collection of books by local authors with a Keeper's House tote bag went to Marian Sandvick.

Photos by Lisa Hossler



The 73rd OVI Regiment Band



Suzy Wittenmyer preparing apple pie on the hearth.

Foundational Pioneers **Named, Honored**

As his last act as chair of the Keeper's House Bicentennial Committee, Paul Moon thanked the hundreds who have assisted in the restoration and preservation of The Keeper's House; *pioneers* he called them. Then he named what he called the three *foundational pioneers*, those whose work if taken away, would have prevented restoration and celebration of *The House*.

Karin Messner, whose early research and reporting in 1989 assured closure of the pending purchase of *The House*. Her portrayal of Rachel in the many reenactments performed at *The House* and for the greater public introduced *The Keeper's House* to the world. Thank you Karin!

Tom Evans of Masonry Construction Company was commended for over 30 years of work on *The House*, some work often critical to survival of *The House*. In 2019, Masonry Construction removed over a ton of old stucco from the face of *The House*, then tuck pointed William Kelly's original masonry work in all its glory, and then repaired any other breaks in the original masonry work throughout the exterior of the entire *house*. It may truly be said that *The Keeper's House*, structurally, is in as good condition now (2022) as when originally built in 1822. Thank you, Tom and Masonry Construction Company!

Our much loved **Bill and Sharon Coder** provided daily care, maintenance, and creativity at *The House* for over 35 years. Bill and Sharon did everything from treating the wooden floors and repairing cracks in *The House* to planting and caring for the red geraniums along the pathway to the Annex. When the Annex was purchased from Ms. Truman, the same daily care was lavished on that building as well. Over time the Coders provided a level of security to *The House*, Annex and grounds that could not otherwise have been achieved. Thank you Bill and Sharon!

Each of the three *Foundational Pioneers* was presented with a crystal likeness of *The House* which carries an etching of the Ottawa County Historical Society logo and a message of Thanks! In an unexpected turnabout Society President Patrick O'Keefe presented the crystal likeness of *The House* to **Paul Moon**, chair of The Bicentennial Committee for his spear-heading restoration of *The House* and his work with *The House* over the years. Thank you Paul!

Keeper of the Fire **By Patrick O'Keefe**

2022 was a special year in many ways. In coordination with activities involving remembrance of the first moment the Sandusky Light was lit out on the end of what was then a desolate Danbury Peninsula, we got to celebrate the construction of the Wolcott Keeper's House, the oldest house in Ottawa County and home of the first female lighthouse keeper on the Great Lakes, Rachel Wolcott, and the first keeper, her husband Benajah.

In the words of one of our many visitors through a full summer of house tours, "What a delight to learn all of this—who knew?!"

We opened with hearth cooking, followed by the on-site Rotary Perch-Wagon to accompaniment of fine musicians playing Stephen Foster tunes, the potluck picnic, participation in the statewide Open Doors event, and an increased number of bus tours. It all led up to the Civil War encampment on October 8. Well, following two years of somewhat abbreviated activities due to Covid, our 2022 season was one of the best in memory. Of course, memory tends to favor what happened most recently.

Memory. It's at the heart of what we do. People from two-hundred years ago are long gone, some of their grave markers even gone to dust. And yet we, through our celebratory activities, enliven their memories almost as if they were still here to experience them. Conversely, suppose we didn't bother: those folks, and everything they did and thought important in their day-to-day lives, would have long faded away.

Would that matter? Apparently, it would: we keep doing what we do, and this year that turned out to be—I'm a relative newbie, so bear with me—among the best ever.

That brings us to what actually happens. People show up, maybe for one event, or for an hour or two, or for the entire season, or for every season—it doesn't matter, all are breathing life into the Memory—armed with an idea, elbow grease, or a combination of both. It is by way of thoughtful application of ideas and a bit of that elbow grease that our society participates in statewide grants and historical activities, our newsletter appears out of the night mist four times a year, the old house gets cleaned up every spring, busloads of inquisitive tourists come to see what we're all about, crowds arrive for our events where volunteers man tables, serve

cornbread and chili, tell stories, play music, and produce those tasty goods straight from the hearth.

Experts tell us it's through the sense of smell that memory is most vividly activated. For example, the waft of printer's ink and binding glue from opening a new book has been known to take one back immediately to his or her first day of school. At the Wolcott Keeper's House, it's the aroma of pies, bread fresh from the stone oven, or those special cakes whose secret recipe includes cabbage and onion. And, of course, the distinctive sweet smells of wood burning in the fireplace. Suddenly we are back to the first day we ever visited the home of Rachel and Benajah.

Memory may take us back two-hundred years, or maybe just a few. Hearth cooking doesn't hibernate within the pages of "Cooking from the Hearth," our popular OCHS publication. Those hearth cooking smells and smoky firewood, most recently by way of Becky Shemenski and newer volunteers under her tutelage, vividly bring to life the Memory...

Sally Williams is remembered in our now-famous cookbook's dedication as the "chef" of hearth cooking by its authors, Georgette and Ray Machar. Following Sally, and for many years through the 2018 season, it was Georgette and Ray who manned the old stone hearth. For every occasion, their bountiful yield vividly enlivened the legacy of those who came before us and, tapping into the Memory, encouraged us to just keep on doing what we do.



Ray & Georgette Machar serving a hearth cooked meal at the Keeper's House

We recently lost Ray. He was the guy who, after years working in an engine plant, came here with Georgette to retire. Working in an engine plant, by the way, involves a skilled mind and hands engaged in procedural precision. For these two, "retire" did not mean sitting in lawn chairs watching the sun traverse the sky and set on Sandusky Bay in a fiery blaze. They chose a fire of a different kind—the one

in the old stone hearth at Rachel and Benajah Wolcott's home.

While his bride tended the cooking, Ray took great pride in tending the fire. He researched and implemented procedures, accumulating a precise understanding of how to maximize natural draft, pretty much a lost art today's era of blowers and HVAC controls. Of course, many of the other things he took care of around our house we will never know. He was one of those people who...well, who just did things.

That was how he passed onto us his legacy at the Historical Society. Like people in the old days, he did what he saw was needed, tended to things, tended the old stone hearth as he saw it should be done. In my experience, any successful endeavor always has one of those guys.

That was — and still remains — Ray Machar. Ray...our Keeper of the Fire.

Remembering Roger Jensen.....

Roger Jensen was a quiet, unassuming man. He was gentle and kind. Roger and his wife Barbara were members of the Ottawa County Historical Society for many years and attended most of our public events. They even attended our one and only very cold Christmas Open House in 2017 where the musicians apologetically told us they could not stay because it would ruin their instruments. Roger and Barbara stayed and talked with us in front of the roaring hearth fire.



Roger with his train set in the Keeper's House annex

Linda Huber

On two separate occasions Roger brought a detailed collection of train sets to display at our fall public events. One display was of the interurban route from Toledo-Port Clinton-Lakeside. The other involved the route around the Marblehead quarries and was

quite involved. He and his wife quietly set up the displays, thanking for but rejecting help, instructing our guests all day, then quietly took down everything themselves and left for the day.

Besides the Ottawa County Historical Society, Roger belonged to the Portage Valley Flying Club for 30+ years. Although Roger took pilot training, he did not get his private pilot's license, instead enjoying riding with other pilots for short trips. Roger and Barbara were great birders. We liked to compare the species of birds between his home in Martin to those we were seeing in Oak Harbor.

This quiet man will be missed.

Submitted by BECKY SHEMENSKI

Remembering Janet Stephenson.....

After a career as a librarian, Janet went on to pursue her passion for history. She was an avid reader with a large collection of historical books. For several years she worked at the Lakeside Heritage Society organizing their archival collection. If you had a question about Lakeside, she had the answer or knew where to find the information.

Janet was an integral part of the OCHS *Page&Stage* oral history project from its beginning, interviewing many Ottawa County residents over the years as well as helping with the construction of the *People of Ottawa County* publications. In recent years, she was unable to drive but was still an active member of the oral history team with suggestions about people who would be great to interview, to helping with the stories being written and her help with proofing the manuscripts was invaluable. Her knowledge of local history was amazing.

While a resident at Otterbein North Shore Retirement Community she helped maintain their library and was always searching for books to add to the library. She will be truly missed.

MARTHA DYKES



2023 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME

It is that time of year again! If you have not yet renewed your membership for 2023, we ask that you take a moment and do so. Membership runs from January 1 through December 31 of each year. The Society receives funding primarily through our dues, and we sincerely appreciate your support.

As well as renewing your membership, we ask you consider making an additional donation to either the Wolcott Keeper's House, the Scholarship Fund or the OCHS General Fund. The Scholarship Fund was created to provide Ottawa County high school students assistance with college and our goal is to reach \$25,000 before awarding scholarships. We are about 40% to that goal.

As always, thank you for helping the Society fulfill its mission to discover, preserve and celebrate the history of Ottawa County.

Oral History Committee Looking for Interested Folks

The *Page&Stage* Oral History Committee is looking for folks who would enjoy interviewing people in the county and helping create our *People of Ottawa County* books.

We are currently working on Volume IX of our series.

If you are interested in joining us,
please, contact Martha Dykes
at 419-732-1843 or
martgene80@gmail.com



Ottawa County Museum

126 W. Third St, Port Clinton

Holiday museum open hours:

Week before Christmas: open:

Wed/Thurs/Friday Dec 21, 22, 23

Week after Christmas: open

Wed/Thurs/Friday Dec 28, 29, 30

Also, open by appointment by calling Peggy

Debien at 419-732-1039 or 419-967-5533

OCHS Fall Meeting Held

The 2022 fall membership meeting was held November 13 at Catawba Island Club.

After a delicious lunch a business meeting was held for the election of officers, appointments of Trustees and the approval of the revised By-laws. *Foundational Pioneers* were honored for their contributions to the Keeper's House. (see article on page 2)

Storyteller, musician, and dancer, Genot Picor, presented *Stories, Songs, and Dances of the French Voyageur*, a program based on Adrien Jolliet, brother of explorer Louis Jolliet. Adrien Jolliet is believed to be the first Frenchman to explore Lake Erie. Picor's interactive program was designed to bring frontier history alive and was enjoyed by all.



Paul Moon dressed as a voyageur
by Genot Picor

photo by Kathy Leonard

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

History of Ottawa County - The First 175 Years

The People of Ottawa County

oral history series

Volume I thru Volume VIII

*Along the Highways & Waterways
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Combined Atlas of Ottawa County 1784 & 1900

Historic Driving Tours

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And more.....See our new items

Keeper's House T-shirts, coffee mugs, tote bags

Also, *Cat's Meow*

Keeper's House & Marblehead Lighthouse

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 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



OCHS 2022 - 2023 Membership

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Holly Gast & John Starcher '23
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Thomas & Mary Wiseman
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Memorials for Janet Stephenson

Martha Dykes

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Richard & Catherine LeSourd

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Warren & Kathy Leonard
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Please mail me the following items.

Item	Description	Price each	Shipping/ Handling each	Tax each	X Quantity	Total
Book	<i>Along the Highways & 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		
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Book	Volume VII: <i>The Stories Continue</i>	\$15.00	\$4.00	\$1.33		
Book	Volume VIII: <i>Milestones and Memories</i> NEW!!	\$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 & 1900 -- OUT OF PRINT</i>	Online version available at Ohio History Connection website under "Historic Maps & Atlases" (www.ohiohistory.org)				
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 NEW!	\$20.00	\$4.00	\$1.68		
T-Shirts	Keeper's House T-shirt - heather gray NEW! Circle Size: M, L, XL, 2XL, 3XL	\$20.00	\$4.00	\$1.68		
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Misc.	<i>Cat's Meow</i> Keeper's House NEW!	\$20.00	\$4.00	\$1.68		
Misc.	<i>Cat's Meow</i> Marblehead Lighthouse NEW!	\$20.00	\$4.00	\$1.68		

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

Please, recalculate 7% tax based on the item price only.

TOTAL

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Inside:

October Openhouse/Civil War Enactment
Foundational Pioneers Names, Honored
Keeper of the Fire
Remembering Roger Jensen
Remembering Janet Stephenson
Oral History Committee
Ottawa Co. Museum Holiday Hours
OCHS Fall Meeting Held
2022-2023 Membership

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OTTAWA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2023 - ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES - due in January of each year
(If your address label does not say 2023 or Life Member it is time to pay dues.)

Levels and Dues: (check one)

___ Single (\$20) ___ Family(\$35) ___ Sustaining (\$50) ___ Patron(\$100 or more) \$___ Lifetime(\$500)

Additional Donation: (select which fund and specify amount of donation.)

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Name _____

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Total enclosed _____ Date _____ Check # _____

I am interested in volunteering.

The OCHS is a non-profit organization. Your donation may be deductible.
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