Ottawa County Historical Society

www.ottawacountyhistory.org Second Quarter 2023

2023

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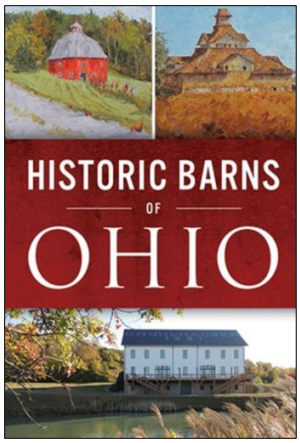
A Perfect Trifecta:
History • Painting • Book

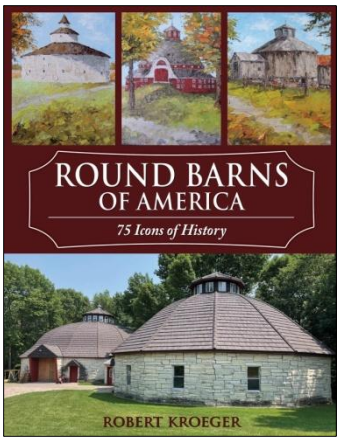
History can provide marvelous adventures connecting people, places, and time. In some cases, we can also make history as will be the case at the Ottawa County Historical Society's first Scholarship fundraising event on **Friday, June 2** at Port Clinton's "The Arts Garage" at 317 W. Perry Street.

This particular adventure began in June of 2018 when OCHS received an email from Robert (Bob) Kroeger sharing information about his "Ohio Barn Project" featuring oil paintings of old barns and essays which became the basis for first book, *Historic Barns of Ohio"*. Not idle during the covid-19 pandemic, Bob took his passion for painting and barn stories on the road and subsequently published his second book, *Round Barns of America*. OCHS is pleased to have Bob Kroeger as its featured guest at the first Scholarship fundraiser to benefit students of Ottawa County.

We are partnering with Port Clinton's "The Arts Garage" as the venue for the June 2 event. Unique to Port Clinton, TAG provides a central space for artists' galleries as well as an opportunity for artists to collaborate on projects. The building is the former storage space for the city and is a vital part of Port Clinton's West End revitalization efforts. TAG has an ongoing $1.2 million fundraising project for restoration plans.

Please, join us on Friday, June 2. The event is free and open to the public. Doors open at 4:00 p.m., barn stories talk at 6:00 p.m. and book sales/signings at 7:00 p.m. Bob will do a painting demonstration at the event, and the completed painting will be the first of three prizes of the raffle at the OCHS Wolcott Keeper's House annual fall festival in October.





Pedaling to Untrammeled Womanhood

By Patrick O'Keeffe

Welcome to a new season. I'm happy to report that, thanks to inspiration from our vice president Lisa Hossler, one of our activities will be to directly participate in the Portage River Festival sponsored by the Elmore Historical Society on Sunday, June 25. This is in keeping with our commitment to more actively expand what we do.

How many people outside Harris Township recall that Elmore was once the nucleus of a revolution? No, not the violent kind, but one that arose in the everyday lives of common people and changed things forever. It was all the doings of Harmon Becker, a man from Clyde, who arrived here to start a business in 1893.

Those were the days when Ottawa County found itself transformed from a somewhat crude backwater into a scattering of emergent bustling communities. Representative of that transition was Harris Township, the village of Elmore serving as its commercial and cultural center.

In the early 1800s, Joseph Harris had built a log cabin as a trading post on the Portage River, choosing a location that took advantage of a natural rocky ford connecting the original native trails on either side of the stream. You can still travel those trails, now paved roads designated as Route 105 and West Portage River South. In 1825 Harris Township came into existence as part of Sandusky County. Later, after it had become part of Ottawa County, officials settled on the township boundaries we know today.

Early conditions were harsh. Settlers soon demonstrated they were generally not of the temperament whereby one would be happy to just barely eke out a living in the wilderness. Between 1840, when Ottawa County was founded, and 1900, the western region underwent extensive change. What began as a trading post rapidly evolved into a center of diverse enterprises.

The Great Black Swamp was host to massive ancient trees, some as much as six feet in diameter. Industrious residents soon recognized a highly marketable commodity. The lumber industry, centered in Oak Harbor, rapidly spread throughout the area. Timber was floated down the river to ships in Port Clinton and, by way of the Lake and the Erie Canal, to ports all over the world. Locally, burgeoning lumber, barrel, basket and other industries emerged. Following closely on the heels of cutting down all the trees was systematic drainage of the swamp, turning what had once been considered barely habitable terrain into rich farmland.

In the 1890s, that local entrepreneurial personality expressed itself still more intensely. Small fabrication and manufacturing operations popped up, serving the needs of agriculture, including blacksmith forges and machine shops. Into this mix of expanding commerce, enter Harmon Becker, owner of a sawmill and barrel stave shop in Clyde. Becker came to Elmore with his two sons, James and Burton, where they opened the Elmore Manufacturing Company.

Having recognized that local lumber resources were rapidly disappearing, Becker foresaw the potential of a new personal-transportation trend that had begun to find popularity in eastern cities: the bicycle. If popular on city streets, why not on country roads? Putting local folks with forging and machining skills to work, the Beckers began production of the Elmore Bicycle.

The "bike," or velocipede, was not a new invention. It had started out as a means of conveyance around Karl von Drais' garden in Germany in 1817. Von Drais was also the inventor of the keyboard typewriter. Over the next few decades, the bike went through a number of iterations in the hands of other inventors with the addition of pedals, a drive chain, bearings, brakes, and handle-bar steering. In 1888, John Dunlop, a Scotsman living in Ireland, came up with a pneumatic tire, which he installed on his daughter's tricycle. He soon foresaw that it could be profitably applied to the bicycle. His invention proved to be the final stage in allowing the velocipede, up to then called a "boneshaker," to suddenly emerge as the modern bicycle, a simple, self-propelled device that could easily travel over dirt and pavement alike.

So, what of that revolution Elmore was the nucleus of, mentioned above? Personal trans-

portation was a revolutionary idea. Prior to the bicycle, one went where he or she needed to go on land either by horse, animal-drawn vehicle, rail, or on foot. Few folks, and certainly not women, travelled more than a few miles from where they lived unless it was absolutely necessary. This was especially true in rural communities, of which all of Ottawa County was made up.

Well, not any more. The Elmore, with an introductory price of $100, was an immediate success. The Beckers put twenty-five skilled artisans to work, and within a few months of its introduction, the factory was putting out fifty bikes a week. The company introduced new models that appealed not only to men, but to women as well. Prices dropped, and the Elmore ever more effectively competed with other brands. The company was soon shipping them throughout the nation, and then the world. Word had spread, and the Elmore Bicycle secured its place in the collective consciousness of the American consumer.

Locally, according to the *Elmore Independent*, "There are now 30 bicycles owned in Elmore and several more will soon be added." Elmore felt the need to pass an ordinance forbidding the riding of "the two wheeled Velocipede" on sidewalks, and giving the mayor the power to revoke a permit to ride within the village.

This new self-propelled contraption had a long-lasting effect on the rural populace. The bicycle rescued women from having to stay home, a phenomenon that soon caused vociferous detractors to swarm. As with anything new and popular, among its critics were the usual self-appointed protectors of our shared cultural values and predictors of moral demise. But also among their ranks were folks who should have known better. Editors at *Scientific American* felt compelled to weigh in on the evils of this two-wheeled contraption with a claim that its use deformed the human anatomy. They proposed that it "induces displacement, embarrassed functional activity, and arrested or diseased development of certain organs in young bicyclists, a very serious condition." The article did not indicate which organs it was referring to.

Such a dire warning would have been expected to give pause to any youngster, especially any female youngster, weighing the thought of pedaling to town with friends against staying home with the wash. For the most part, the warning seems to have gone unheeded. Women everywhere discovered a new impetus of self-reliance and expression—the bicycle, and particularly, the popular Elmore bike.

"Let me tell you what I think of bicycling," Susan B. Anthony wrote. "...it has done more to emancipate women than anything else in the world. It gives women a feeling of freedom and self-reliance. I stand and rejoice every time I see a woman ride by on a wheel...the picture of free, untrammeled womanhood."

Woman's Bicycle, 1890s Elmore Catalogue
--courtesy Harris-Elmore Public Library

The Elmore Historical Society 48th Annual Portage River Festival

The Elmore Historical Society's 48th annual Portage River Festival will be held Sunday, June 25, 2023 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The goal of this event is to share with the residents of Elmore and surrounding communities the interesting history of the Great Black Swamp, from yesterday, today and for tomorrow, in fun interesting and inventive ways. The Society owns the Elmore Railroad Depot building, the Heckman Log Cabin and they house thousands of primitive objects in their EHS Barn and Quonset building, all on one site. These buildings will be open to the public during this event.

They will have speakers coming in on bees and swans. There will be a cooking demonstration in the Cabin, over the open hearth, by volunteers in period dress. The Train Club will open the

Depot and they will give tours, answer questions and demonstrate their model railroad layout throughout the day. There will be children's games, a petting zoo, food and food trucks, a garden tractor pull, a bicycle tour, a bicycle obstacle course by the Elmore Police Department, a demonstration by the Elmore Fire Department, an antique car show, along with numerous other activities and live music throughout the day.

Ottawa County Historical Society's president, Patrick O'Keeffe, will be one of the speakers. He will talk about the *Elmore Bicycle*. OCHS will also have booth handing out literature as well as having our publications and other items for sale. Please, take a moment to stop at our booth.

Fitting Tribute

By Linda Huber

On Saturday, April 1 OCHS dedicated Ottawa County's 21st Ohio History Connection historical marker at Holy Assumption Orthodox Church in Marblehead. In addition to several members of the community, also commemorating the event were Marblehead Mayor Jacqueline Bird, Ottawa County Historical Society President Patrick O'Keeffe, Ohio History Connection Garin Veris, Holy Assumption Orthodox Church Archpriest John Adamcio, and St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church Kristina Smith with Pastor Jarrod Schaaf. The *Beacon*'s Sheri Trusty was on hand to capture beautiful photos as well as share 'the rest of the story' with *Beacon* readers.

Start to finish, all the pieces and parts of the historical marker process took about two years with the covid pandemic thrown in to keep us on our toes. Throughout Saturday's event, there were many people acknowledged for their contributions in bringing about the marker. Sometimes we find what seems like the simplest of projects in the end turns out to be 'a bit more' and only comes about as a result of many people collectively going the distance. This was certainly one of those projects. Starting with Peggy Debien who passed along information on the Ohio History Connection's original "special call" for markers to recognize underrepresented groups; to the OCHS Board agreeing to sponsor a marker honoring the County's immigrant contributions in helping to shape the County; to the number of OCHS members taking responsibility for various pieces and parts of the 53-page marker application, especially Paul Moon and Patrick O'Keeffe on helping to condense so sweeping a story in so few words; to Ron Royhab and Wayne Golub from Holy Assumption and Kristina Smith from St. John helping to dot the 'i's and cross the 't's in the wording; to Laura Russell with the Ohio History Connection who kept us up-to-date on the marker status from acceptance to marker shipment; to John Starcher and the Village of Marblehead service crew who provided 'TLC' from marker delivery via a semi-truck to installation of the bronze plaque and marker post in the ground; to the amazing group of people at Holy Assumption Orthodox Church who made everyone so welcome Saturday and gave a Church tour as well as providing delicious food offerings; and finally, to Mr. Weather who eventually cooperated with some sunshine and light breeze during the marker unveiling. My deepest and sincere thanks to one and all!

Front of plaque
Courtesy Garin Veris, Ohio History Connection

Back of plaque
Courtesy Garin Veris, Ohio History Connection

Interior of Holy Assumption Orthodox Church
Courtesy Sheri Trusty, The Beacon

Celebrating 150 Years of Lakeside History

This summer Lakeside celebrates its 150th year on Ottawa County's eastern peninsula along the shores of Lake Erie. The season is jam packed with events including the Preacher of the Week at Hoover Auditorium on Sundays and during the week, book authors, keynote speakers, lectures, and recreational opportunities. Seasonal favorites will be returning, like the Craft & Art Show, Antique Show, Wooden Boat Show, and fireworks, of course. For more information on events, visit Lakeside's website at:

www.lakesideohio.com.

One of the many projects to commemorate the 150th is an anniversary book published by the Lakeside Heritage Society available summer 2023. Similar to the OCHS "History of Ottawa County---The First 175 Years", it is a beautiful hardbound coffee-table type book meticulously researched and includes hundreds of photos. See the LHS website for more details on the book at

www.lakesideheritagesociety.org.

Of special note is the WGTE Toledo public television documentary to air on their "Toledo Stories" program Thursday, June 1 at 8:00 p.m. More information on the video schedule is available at their website www.wgte.org. A fun-filled season honoring the past, celebrating the present, and looking toward the future. Plan to spend time this summer at Lakeside and help make history!

Lakeside Chautauqua Entrance Gate - 2017
Courtesy Martha Dykes

Coming Events at the Keeper's House

Saturday, June 10 from 11a.m. to 3 p.m.

Hearth cooking at the Keeper's House. Learn about how frontier cooking was done with an open hearth. Come to learn, observe and sample our hearth cooking. OCHS Hearth Cookbooks available to purchase at $5.00 each.

Saturday, June 17 through August

The Keeper's House open for the season. Hours to be determined.

Saturday, July 8 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Return of the Rotary Perch Wagon to the Keeper's House. Delicious meals and sandwiches available until they are gone. Music provided by balladeers Steve & Lisa Ball.

Wednesday, August 23 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Annual potluck at the Keeper's House. This event is a favorite of members and friends. Bring a dish to share. Bring a friend. Come for the afternoon and enjoy all the delicious food.

Saturday, October 14 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

At the Wolcott Keeper's House

Our annual Civil War Encampment featuring the 14th Ohio Volunteer Infantry. Period music provided by Allan Howey with cornet, bugle, banjo and guitar. This is our fall festival with historic military displays, and music. Apples, cider, bean soup & cornbread available. Samplings of apple pie at Hearth Cooking station.

Membership

The following membership opportunities are available:

- Single – $20
- Family – $35
- Sustaining – $50
- Partron – $100 or more
- Lifetime – $500

Benefits of membership include:

- Quarterly newsletter
- Invitations to special events
- Participation in Spring and Fall membership meetings
- Please complete and return the application with your fee as noted on the application.
- If you have any specific membership questions, please send an email to:

info@ottawacountyhistory.org.

Volunteers

There are many volunteer opportunities available for those wishing to share Ottawa County's fascinating history.

- **Researchers:** The Society's "Page & Stage Oral History Project" is open to anyone wishing to research various topics to be compiled as part of the current volume being produced.
- **Docents & Greeters:** During the summer season the Wolcott Keeper's House provides tours in the House and offers merchandise for sale in the adjoining Annex. Docents and greeters are needed for the House and Annex throughout the season. Light gardening opportunities are also available.
- **Event Assistance:** There are a number of activities and events held at the Keeper's House throughout the season requiring volunteer assistance including the hearth cooking events, Civil War enactment, and the mobile perch-wagon sales event. Also, the Keeper's House is open as part of the fall festival on the Marblehead peninsula.
- **Storytellers:** The Society's newest project is "History Speaks" where local people tell local stories based on oral history stories. We are looking for people to write scripts as well as tell the stories. Please read more about this project on our website's "**Virtual Museum—Project**" page

If you are interested in volunteering for any of these activities, please, send an email to **info@ottawacountyhistory.org**.

Please mail me the following items.

Item	Description	Price each	Shipping/ Handling each	Tax each	X Quantity	Total
Book	*Along the Highways & Waterways of Ottawa County*	$20.00	$4.00	$1.68		
Book	*History of Ottawa County - the First 175 Years*	$49.95	$5.00	$3.85		
Book	Volume I: *How We Got Here, What We Did*	$15.00	$4.00	$1.33		
Book	Volume II: *Recollections and Voices*	$15.00	$4.00	$1.33		
Book	Volume III: *Across the Townships*	$15.00	$4.00	$1.33		
Book	Volume IV: *Threads and Textures of a Tapestry*	$15.00	$4.00	$1.33		
Book	Volume V: *Ottawa County Through Their Eyes*	$15.00	$4.00	$1.33		
Book	Volume VI: *Memories and Adventures*	$15.00	$4.00	$1.33		
Book	VolumeVII: *The Stories Continue*	$15.00	$4.00	$1.33		
Book	VolumeVIII: *Milestones and Memories*	$15.00	$4.00	$1.33		
Book	Complete set of Oral Histories: Volume I through VIII	$120.00	$8.00	$8.96		
Book	*Combine Atlas of Ottawa County 1874 & 1900* - **OUT OF PRINT**	Online version avialable at Ohio History Connection website under "Historic Maps & Atlases" www.ohiohistory.org				
Book	Historic Driving Tour Guide: *Historic Railroads of **Western** Ottawa County*	$4.00	$2.00	$0.42		
Book	Historic Driving Tour Guide: *Historic Railroads of **Eastern** Ottawa County*	$4.00	$2.00	$0.42		
Book	*The Keeper's House* - children's coloring/activity book	$3.00	$2.00	$0.35		
Book	History of Ottawa County Historical Society	$7.00	$3.00	$0.70		
Book	*Hearth Cookbook*	$5.00	$3.00	$0.56		
Book	*Marblehead Lighthouse on Lake Erie* by James Proffitt	$21.95	$3.00	$1.75		
Book	*Lights at the Portage* by Richard J. Norgard	$10.00	$3.00	$0.91		
Book	*Lake Erie's West Sister Island* by Martha Dykes	$10.00	$3.00	$0.91		
Book	*My Island Home* by Gladys Curd McMeans	$10.00	$3.00	$0.91		
Book	*Johnson's Island: Prison for Confederate Officers* ***NEW!***	$18.00	$3.00	$1.47		
Book	*I Fear I Shall Never Leave This Island: Life in a Civil War Prison* ***NEW!***	$18.00	$3.00	$1.47		
CD	*Skirmish on the Peninsula* ***NEW!***	$15.00	$3.00	$1.26		
Tote	Keeper's House Tote Bag ***NEW!***	$20.00	$4.00	$1.68		
T-Shirt	Keeper's House T-shirt - heather gray ***NEW!*** ***Circle Size: M, L, XL, 2XL, 3XL***	$20.00	$4.00	$1.68		
Mug	Keeper's House Coffee Mug ***NEW!***	$20.00	$4.00	$1.68		
Misc.	Cat's Meow Keeper's House ***NEW!***	$20.00	$4.00	$1.68		
Misc.	Cat's Meow Marblehead Lighthouse ***NEW!***	$20.00	$4.00	$1.68		
					TOTAL	

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.

PLEASE PRINT Date _____

Name _____

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City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

Please, make your check payable to the Ottawa County Historical Society and mail it to:

Ottawa County Historical Society, P.O. Box 385, Port Clinton, OH 43452

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Inside:

A Perfect Trifecta
Pedaling to Untrammeled Womenhood
Elmore Portage River Festival
Fitting Tribute
Celebrating 150 Years - Lakeside
OCHS Coming Events
Memberships

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:
Through Kroger supermarket, designate your charity as Ottawa County Historical Society, a portion of your purchase will be donated to the Society

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**.)

$_____OCHS General $_____ Scholarship Fund $_____ Wolcott Keeper's House

Name_____

Address/City/State/Zip_____

Phone Number_____

Email_____

Total enclosed_____ Date_____ Check #_____

☐ **I am interested in volunteering.**

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

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