Ottawa County Historical Society

www.ottawacountyhistory.org First Quarter 2024

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Rymers Bicentennial Farm
Harris Township
Established 1824
Celebrating 200 Years

On April 12, 2024, the Rymers farm, located on State Route 105, one mile east of Elmore, along the north side of the Portage River will be 200 years old. The farm was established in 1824 by Bartholomew Rossman and Peter Fletcher. The two original tracts totaled under 150 acres. Today, the homestead/farm is 67 acres and is currently owned by Thomas and Gretchen Rymers.

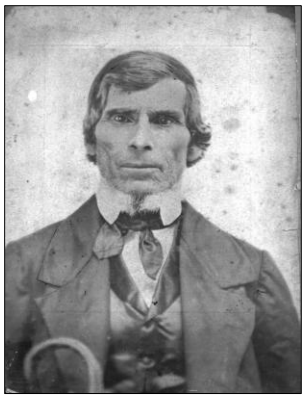
Ezekiel Rice II purchased land adjacent to the farm. He bought the two tracts of land from B. Rossman and P. Fletcher.

In 1823, Ezekiel Rice II along with his brother, Rueben, and his brother-in-law, Bennett Havens, traveled to Sandusky County, Ohio after hearing tales of rich land in this area where they wanted to try their farming skills in the "Black Swamp." At that time that area was part of Sandusky County. They were told of quality land up the Portage River to where the rapids offered a natural crossing. There he found what he was seeking and returned the following year with his wife and two boys. The original farm was deeded out of the wilderness in 1824. The document was signed by then President James Monroe. The actual sheepskin deed still exists.

Ezekiel II, his wife, Lucinda (Havens) and two sons, along with his brother, Rueben, and brother-in-law, Bennett Havens, set up permanent residence along the Portage River in March of 1824. The wilderness proved too much for his wife and she died in August the same year.

In 1827, Ezekiel II married Elizabeth Fletcher and they had eight children. The remaining part of the farm was purchased from the estate of B. Rossman by Ezekiel Rice II on December 29, 1832. Ezekiel Rice II having married John Fletcher's daughter enabled him to own the entire tract.

One of their children, Mary A. Rice , married Henry W. Rymers in 1869 and the Rymers name will be associated with the farm until the present.



Ezekiel Rice II

Henry W. Rymers

Spring Meeting of the Membership

Two Thousand years ago, American Indians in the Ohio River Valley gathered together to build the largest concentration of geometric earthworks in the world. These places of gathering and ceremony drew people from across North America to connect with each other, the earth, and the cosmos in intimate and interdependent relationships. For the past twenty years, Ohio History Connection, Tribes with historic ties to Ohio, the National Park Service, and other passionate advocates have joined in an effort to recognize the remarkable achievements of these ancestors. Together, we have proposed eight of the largest and best-preserved Ohio earthworks for UNESCO World Heritage inscription—the world's highest honor for cultural sites.

In September 2023 Ohio's Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks was added to UNESCO's World Heritage sites. Please plan to attend the Spring meeting of the Ottawa County Historical Society as the featured speaker is Jennifer Aultman, Chief Historic Sites Officer for the Ohio History Connection. She will speak on 'Achieving World Heritage Recognition for Ohio's American Indian Earthworks'.

The Spring meeting will be held on Sunday, April 28 at the Port Clinton Elks Lodge, 231 Buckeye Blvd, Port Clinton. Doors open at 11:30 a.m., lunch at 12:00 noon followed by the speaker presentation at 12:45 p.m. Cost per person is $25.00. RSVP required by April 24. Make check payable to Ottawa County Historical Society and mail to OCHS, P.O. Box 385, Port Clinton, OH, 43452.

Robert Kroeger Returns to Ottawa County

Author and artist, Robert Kroeger, is returning to Ottawa County on Wednesday, June 5. He will be the featured speaker at Lakeside's Train Station art gallery from 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon. In addition to a demonstration painting, Kroeger will share stories from his two books, *Historic Barns of Ohio* and *Round Barns of America*. On display will be 14 paintings of Ottawa County barns Kroeger completed from his visit in 2023. Images of these 14 paintings have been compiled into a 'Barns of Ottawa County' 2025 calendar that will be available for purchase ($10).

Also, the paintings will be part of an online auction beginning June 1 through June 30 via Bidding Owl. All auction proceeds will benefit the Ottawa County Historical Society Scholarship fund. More information on the online auction will be available in the 2Q newsletter and on the website.

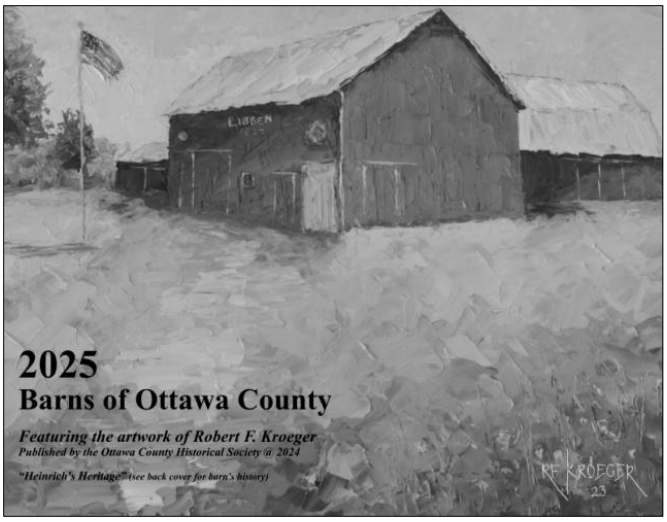
Please, join us for Robert's June 5 Lakeside event. Lakeside will provide a free 4-hour gate pass to OCHS members. Reservations are required by sending an email to Linda Huber at: abhawkins57@me.com

America-250 Ohio Awards Grant to OCHS

The Ohio Commission for the U.S. Semiquincentennial (America-250 Ohio) has awarded the Ottawa County Historical Society a grant to help fund a National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) marker. The marker was created to honor the memory of those who served in the American Revolution and raise the awareness of present and future generations of the sacrifices made by patriots.

Sponsored by the DAR Norwalk Chapter, the marker will honor Ottawa County resident, Benajah Wolcott. Born in New Haven, Connecticut, Wolcott enlisted in 1776 and served for a little over six years. After the war, he was part of the team that surveyed the western lands of the Connecticut Western Reserve known as the Fire Lands. He loved the area so much he permanently settled here in Ottawa County. In addition to being a farmer, he was appointed in 1822 by President James Monroe as the first keeper of the Marblehead Ohio Lighthouse.

A marker dedication ceremony is tentatively planned for spring 2025 at the Wolcott Family Cemetery located near the Wolcott Keeper's House on the Marblehead Peninsula. For more event details, visit the OCHS website at www.ottawacountyhistory.org



Barns of Ottawa County
2025 Calendar

Memories of a School Building

When Oak Harbor founder Adolphus Kraemer donated land in Oak Harbor, he did so with the intention that Oak Harbor would be the county seat and his land would be used for a courthouse. When the decision went to Port Clinton, Kraemer's donated land was repurposed for a school.

Last December, the doors to the school built on Kraemer's land closed for the last time. The Oak Harbor Middle School, formerly high school, formerly all-in-one school was, according to the experts, way past its prime. The squeaky new middle school, adjacent to the elementary school was ready for its close up. The ribbon cut, the teachers assigned their rooms, and the students adapted to a new school.

One of my favorite Oak Harbor stories goes back over 100 years in this very school. When the school was built, public speaking was a priority to the citizens of Oak Harbor. In order to ensure their children spoke eloquently, two literary societies were formed. One society was called the Adelphians and the other society acquired their name from the Greek island known for their female actors—Lesbo. This society was given the unfortunate name Lesbians. Each student in the 9th grade was randomly assigned to one society where they would reside for the rest of their high school career. As a result, half of the students, including the boys, were lesbians. The students would perform plays, sell magazine subscriptions, and publish newsletters. It was a classic rivalry, the Lesbians vs. the Aldephians. Many a proud student put on their college application and later their resume their association with the Lesbian or Adelphian Society.

In their heydays, the societies were a prominent part of the school. But like many stories, they went out with a whimper. Prospective college recruiters were not impressed by those who proclaimed that they were in the Lesbian Society. Instead, it was a deterrent.

And for those students who closed the Middle School last December, they may have heard rumors about a suicide in the boiler room or a haunting in the basement, but how many have heard about the Lesbians that performed on the stage where they held their gym classes. Memories of the Adelphian and Lesbian societies are fading fast. Soon there will no longer be a male lesbian in Oak Harbor, and that is a shame.

I wonder who will be the last one. LISA HOSSLER

(Thanks to John Liske for his help with this article).

Photos & story courtesy of Oak Harbor Public Library

Oak Harbor Middle School Sign

2024 Spring Cleaning at the Keeper's House

WHEN: Saturday, May 18th -
Time: 10:00 a.m. - noon
WHERE: Keeper's House,
9999 Bayshore Road, Marblehead

We need help with the annual inside cleaning of the Keeper's House and Annex. Bring light cleaning supplies (brooms, rags, Windex, buckets, rakes, etc.). We'll be sweeping out the cobwebs inside the Keeper's House and Annex. Pizza will be served at noon. All welcome!

Questions call Dave O'Neal at 419-898-2000.
Thanks so much!!

Hearth Cooking at the Keeper's House

June 8th - 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Come learn about how frontier cooking was done with an open hearth. Sample our hearth cooking.

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

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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 website.

OTTAWA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES – Membership year January 1 through December 31

Levels and Dues: (check one)

____Single ($20) ____Family ($35) ____Sustaining ($50) ____Patron ($100 or more) ___Lifetime ($500)

Name_____

Address_____

Phone Number_____

Email_____

Additional Donation: You may also use this form to make a separate donation. You may select from the following funds. Please specify the amount of your additional donation.

____OCHS General _____ Scholarship _____ Wolcott Keeper's House

Total enclosed_____ Date_____ Check #_____

☐ I am interested in volunteering.

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

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