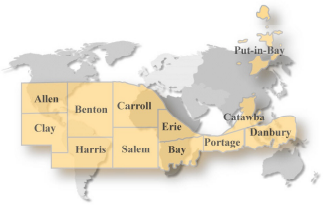

Ottawa County Historical Society

www.ottawacountyhistory.org Second Quarter 2026

A House Worth Modeling

The Marblehead Lighthouse Historical Society has had on display for a number of years a model of the Wolcott Keeper's House. As they are renovating their exhibit area to focus on lighthouses, the model has been returned to the Ottawa County Historical Society and will be on display in the Annex at the Wolcott Keeper's House.

A hefty weight, the model is an exact replica of the Wolcott Keeper's House. The roof can be opened offering an interior view of the individual rooms---the parlor, kitchen, two bedrooms, hallway and pantry. Who did the model? Creighten Eugene "Tommy" Thompson sculpted the piece in the early 2000s and donated it to the Ottawa County Historical Society. Mr. Thompson may be best remembered as owner of the Enchanted Park on Catawba Island, now part of the Lake in the Woods development. The fantasy park was a popular family fun destination in the early 1960s and included a miniature golf course, canoeing, water bikes and amphibious cars. In addition to the Wolcott Keeper's House, Mr. Thompson sculpted a miniature of the Port Clinton Lighthouse and its keepers house. Both pieces are currently on display at the Ottawa County Museum.

The Wolcott Keeper's House inspired another sculptor, Terry Murray of Toledo, Ohio. Although lighthouses are Mr. Murray's specialty, he made a sculpture of the Wolcott Keeper's House, donating it as one of the OCHS fall festival raffle items. Paul and Joan Chamberlain were the lucky winners. Joan donated the piece to Shores & Islands Ohio in memory of Paul, and it is now on display at the Shores & Islands Welcome Center-West on Route 53.

The Wolcott Keeper's House---a house worth modeling.

---*Linda K. Huber*, April 23, 2026

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Day in the Life of a Lighthouse Keeper
Ottawa County, Ohio
June 6-7-8, 2026

The Ottawa County Historical Society in collaboration with Lakeside Chautauqua and Port Clinton Lighthouse Conservancy are pleased to bring author, storyteller, historian, and naturalist Brian Ellis to Ottawa County for **free** performances of "Day in the Life of a Lighthouse Keeper." As sunset approaches, what are the duties, daily chores and expectations of a lighthouse keeper? Ellis steps into the role of this most important job, bringing the audience back to the earliest days of our history on the Great Lakes. From the point of view of a Revolutionary War veteran, who was also an eyewitness of the War of 1812 (what many call the second American Revolution), we will get a glimpse of the first chapters of our life on the Great Lakes. Through diaries and letters the audience gets an insider's perspective on the daunting daily duties, the humor and pathos, of this often lonely, but always life-saving job. Weather the storms, carry the barrels of whale oil to the top, keep the wick lit and maybe, just maybe, it will be an uneventful night.

- Saturday, June 6 at 2 pm at Port Clinton Lighthouse, 1868 E. Perry Street, Port Clinton, OH;
- Sunday, June 7 at 2 pm at South Bass Lighthouse, 2368 Langram Road, Put-in-Bay, OH; *Performance funded in part with a grant from Shores & Islands Ohio.*
- Monday, June 8 at 7:30 pm at Lakeside Chautauqua-Orchestra Hall, 122 West Second Street, Lakeside, OH.
  NOTE: Lakeside gate policy in effect.

About Brian Ellis

Brian Ellis has worked with The Denver Museum of Science and Nature, The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, The Field Museum and dozens of other museums across the country. He is a frequent keynote speaker at regional and international conferences including the International Wetlands Conservation Conference, National Science Teachers Association Conference, and the North American Prairie Conservation Conference. Ellis has hosted, produced, researched and written several documentaries for PBS. He is the author of more than 30 books including three books of poetry, a series of biographies, and a collection of folklore. Many of his stories are available on his podcast and YouTube channels, Fox Tales International and History in Person. Currently he is Director of Outreach and Membership for the Illinois Audubon Society, where he edits their quarterly magazine.

Peach Tree Honors
Catawba Islands History

On April 16 in our nation's 250th year, Catawba Island Historical Society planted a Red Haven peach tree on the museum grounds. The peach tree was donated by Howell Orchards and planted by David Howell. The peach tree is also a nod to Catawba Island since peaches were once commonplace throughout the island. In fact, there were over 200,000 peach trees on Catawba around 1900. In a couple years, this tree will be bearing fruit as it reminds us of our history on Catawba.

L-R: Craig Korepel, David Howell, David Wonnell, Jane Spriesterbach, Donna Wonnell

Ottawa County-America 250
Things to See & Do
<u>May, June, July-2026</u>

'Ohio Goes to the Movies', 'Day in the Life of a Lighthouse Keeper', President Re-enactments, Countywide Picnic, and fireworks are a few of the events and programs scheduled for May, June and July to celebrate America's 250th anniversary.

<u>May-</u>

16- Harris-Elmore Union Cemetery 'Call to Duty Salute' marker trail dedication ceremony

18-Elmore & Genoa Libraries scavenger hunt through September 12

19-Riverview Healthcare Campus "Performances in History' concert

21- Lakeside Chautauqua 'Ohio Goes to the Movies' festival showcasing actress Loretta Clemons Tupper
23-Oak Harbor Public Library Saturday programs feature 'Theatres---Film and Stage'
28- *Lakeside Chautauqua* on exhibit Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall through June 1
Month-*Liberty Aviation Museum* on exhibit "Ottawa County Celebrates America's 250 Years of Freedom"

June-
6-*Union Cemetery, Oak Harbor* Cemetery walk
6-*Port Clinton Lighthouse,* "Day in the Life of a Lighthouse Keeper" performance by Brian Ellis
7-*South Bass Lighthouse,* "Day in the Life of a Lighthouse Keeper" performance by Brian Ellis

15-*Lakeside Chautauqua,* American President series, Herbert Hoover, performance by Brian Ellis
27-*Lakeveiw Cemetery, Port Clinton* Cemetery walk
29-*Lakeside Chautauqua,* American President series, John Adams, performance by Brian Ellis
Month-*Shores & Islands West* on exhibit "Ottawa County Celebrates America's 250 Years of Freedom"
Month-*Oak Harbor Public Library*, "Oak Harbor Antique Road Show" (no appraisals)

July-
1-17 *Lakeside Chautauqua* on exhibit "Ottawa County Celebrates America's 250 Years of Freedom"
4-*Marblehead Lighthouse,* *"A Patriotic Fourth" orchestra concert*
5-*James Park, Marblehead,* 1870s vintage ball game between Spiegel Grove Squires and the Marblehead Stonecrushers
13-*Camp Perry, Port Clinton,* CMP National Matches "First Shot"
13-*Lakeside Chautauqua,* American President series, Abraham Lincoln, performance by Kevin Wood
18-*Johnson's Island,* Friends & Descendants of Johnson's Island Civil War Prison "Pop Up" museum

19-31 *County Fairgrounds, Oak Harbor* on exhibit "Ottawa County Celebrates America's 250 Years of Freedom"

26-*County Fairgrounds, Oak Harbor* Countywide Community Picnic

26-*Lakeside Heritage Society,* American President series, Rutherford B. Hayes, performance by Paolo DeMaria
Month-*Oak Harbor Public Library*, on exhibit "Oak Harbor Time Capsules"

Lakeside Chautauqua Weekly Themed Programs:
May 31-June 6: Alaska and Hawaii
June 7-June 13: Rocky Mountain West
June 14-June 20: Great Plains
June 21-June 27: Southwest
June 28-July 4: New England
July 7-July 11: The South
July 12-July 18: Great Lakes-Wisconsin, Michigan, parts of Minnesota
July 19-July 25: The Midwest and Inner Midwest of Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio
July 26-August 1: West Coast-parts of Washington, Oregon, California, Nevada

Trails:
History/Mystery – travel throughout the County experiencing stunning natural landscapes, find unique landmarks, learn more about the rich cultural history of the region, and pay homage to the five American Revolutionary War veterans interred in the County.

Tracking the Troops: **Tippecanoe and Perry, Too!** – a five-county collaborative project (Ottawa, Seneca, Sandusky, Wood and Wyandot) following the trail of General William Henry Harrison as he made his way to Lake Erie during the War of 1812.

View the 2026 Program Guide at
www.ottawacountyhistory.org/america-250/
for details on these and other events.

Wolcott Keeper's House Upcoming Events/Activities

Saturday, May 16 @ 10 a.m. – "**Spring Cleaning**". In preparation for the opening of the house for the season, this is the annual sweep up and clean out at both the Wolcott Keeper's House and the Annex. Come and join the scouts of Danbury Troop 331. Bring cleaning supplies such as dusters, brooms, window cleaner, containers of water, extension cords, and sweeper. Pizza at noon!

Saturday, June 20 @ 11 a.m. – "**Pioneer Day**". Hearth cooking is an art as much as a science. Come and hear how the early settlers made meals using a hearth fireplace. For a different spin, members of the Black Swamp Spinners Guild of Northwest Ohio will demonstrate spinning yarn.

Saturday, July 11 @ 11 am to 3 pm – "**Summer Music**".

Balladeers Steve and Lisa Ball return for another season of music. Specializing in the music of the American Civil War and of Stephen Foster, Steve and Lisa play using vintage instruments, mainly guitars. Both House and Annex will be open for tours.

Saturday, October 10 @ 11 a.m. – **"Fall Festival/Civil War Encampment"** This annual festival will celebrate America's 250th anniversary with an appearance by U.S. Grant. Re-enactor Curt Fields will share Grant's experience as military commander during the Civil War. Program begins at 1:30 p.m. Throughout the day, music by the 73rd Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment Band and re-enactors of the 14th Ohio Volunteer Infantry. Bean soup, corn bread, and cider will be available.

Sunday, November 8 @ 11:30 a.m. – *"***Fall Luncheon Meeting".** Annual business meeting of the Society with election of officers at Catawba Island Club. John King will join as Abraham Lincoln. Mr. King is with "We Made History-Cleveland" and will share Mr. Lincoln's experience as 16th President of the United States serving during America's Civil War. Reservations required; cost $25 person; check payable to Ottawa County Historical Society and mail by November 2 to OCHS, P.O. Box 385, Port Clinton, OH.

Other Local Events

Stop by the OCHS information table at the Portage River Festival on June 28 and Port Clinton Lighthouse Festival on August 15.

Saturday, August 15 @ 10 a.m., Port Clinton Lighthouse Festival table/booth

The Ordinance of 1787
Its Background, 1783-1787
Excerpts From an Essay
by Paul C. Moon - April 2026

VI - Ordinance of 1787

In previous discussions the cession of the Virginia lands was mentioned[50] and it was these cessions which made possible the formulation of a system of survey and sale, the Ordinance of 1785. These Virginia claims included the present Wisconsin, Minnesota and the northern one half of Michigan; Wisconsin and southern Michigan were held jointly with Massachusetts. All of Ohio, Indiana and Illinois had been held by Virginia; lands between the forty-first degree parallel and a line extending west to the Mississippi from Detroit were held jointly by Virginia and Connecticut, with the cession of the Massachusetts lands on April 19, 1785 and acceptance by Congress of the Connecticut lands on September 14, 1786[51] and, although the cession of Connecticut was objected to yet ultimately accepted,[52] the air was cleared for those who wished to think in terms of government for the total area.

By 1785 there were present in the Northwest Territory and the Ohio country in particular, a substantial number of settlers; there were estimated to be about five hundred at the mouth of the Scioto and nearly 1,500 at the mouth of the Miami,[53] this fact too would have given reason for discussion of the government.

[50] See pages 7 & 9 of this paper
[51] C.E. Sherman, 19
[52] Burnett, 41, the delegates of Connecticut to the Governor of Connecticut, Mathew Griswald, New York, February 24, 1785. The technicality involved was the fact that the lands offered in the Connecticut cession were the same lands held jointly by Virginia and ceded earlier, also some of these lands had been purchased from the Indians. It was felt that the United States could not accept land which she had already acquired.
[53] Burnett, 155, William Grayson to James Madison, New York, June 27, 1785.

It will be recalled that in the discussion of the Pickering plan of 1783, it was stated that the Pickering plan had a very logical connection with that of the final ordinance. The provisions of that plan might be again referred to.[54]

During the winter of 1785-1786 there was held in Rutland, Massachusetts a conference between two men interested in the affairs of the west, General Rufus Putnam and General Benjamin Tupper, the Surveyor General of the United States. From this meeting was conceived the idea of the Ohio Company of Associates,[55] not to be confused with the earlier Ohio Company of the 1750s. Selected delegates met in Boston on March 1, 1786 and at a tavern known as a "Bunch of Grapes"[56] a committee consisting of Rufus Putnam, Reverand Manasseh Cutler, Colonel John Brooks, Major Winthrop Sargent, and Captain Thomas Cushing was appointed to create a working plan for the association.

The following was their plan:

1) Establish a stock company of one million in Continental currency
2) To purchase land northwest of the Ohio to that amount.
3) Each share would be worth $1,000 dollars in Continental currency and $10 in either or both gold and silver certificates.
4) Directors and agents would be appointed.[57]

[54] See page 6 of this paper
[55] Lindley, 22
[56] Theodore Roosevelt, the Winning of the West, Part V, New York and London, G.P. Putnam's Sons, the Knickerbacker Press, 1903, 31-33
[57] Lindley, IBID

Although the purpose of the association was to convert the certificates into homes,[58] they were as much interested in the government of the land.[59] The first agent sent to New York from the association was General Samuel

Parsons; his mission was to purchase land valued at one million dollars and governed under the terms of the petition of 1783.[60] Although government of the area had previously been discussed in Congress,[61] there was a very definite area of dissention. The letters of James Monroe, both to Thomas Jefferson, convey this feeling.[62,63] Perhaps it was for this reason that General Parsons, who had opened negotiations on the tenth of May, 1786,[64] ultimately failed and returned to Boston.[65]

The next agent of the association, Reverand Manasseh Cutler, was not to arrive in New York until July 5, 1787.[66] Previous to that time there had taken place the following actions pertaining to the ordinance.

With regard to the exclusion of slavery, Rufus King had made advances on this subject, being inspired by Timothy Pickering. A letter from the latter to the former tells of the great moral principles involved and of the great influence of Mr. Pickering had had on the committee.[67] Inspired by Pickering, Rufus King moved that slavery be excluded forever from all further states; the entire motion was almost the same form and structure as had been used by Thomas Jefferson previous to the Ordinance of 1784. On April 6th of 1786 a committee had incorporated into motion a fugitive slave law.[68] King, however, withheld his original motion until the passage of the Ordinance of 1785, which had gained top priority at that time.[69]

Relevant to the matters of population requirements and government, we rely almost entirely upon the correspondence of Monroe who seemed most interested in these subjects. Monroe was concerned over the fact that the intended governmental setup would govern the people by a congress in which they had no representation.[70] Continuing, Monroe relays that as soon as lands are sold the government of council, judges, secretary of council, and others would be appointed. The governor and council would have power until that time when population becomes such that representation to a general assembly would be elected. This general assembly would compose the lower house, the governor's council then becoming the upper house. These territories could expect to become states when their population became equal to the least populated of the original thirteen.[71]

[58] Marshall, 35.
[59] Roosevelt, IBID.
[60] Cutler, IBID.
[61] Burnett 342, James Monroe to John Jay, New York, April 20, 1786.
[62] IBID., 286, James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, New York, January 19, 1786.
[63] IBID, 404, James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, July 16, 1786.
[64] Marshall, IBID.
[65] Cutler, IBIB.
[66] "The Diary of Manasseh Cutler," as quoted in Lindley, 23-25.
[67] Burnett, 94, Rufus King to Timothy Pickering, New York, April 15, 1785.
[68] IBID., XI.
[69] IBID., 110, William Grayson to James Madison, New York, May 1, 1785.
[70] IBID., 286, James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, New York, January 19, 1786.
[71] IBID., 359, James Monore to Thomas Jefferson, New York, May 11, 1786.

Disgustedly Monroe again writes that there are certain factions who wish to change the enabling requirement of population to one thirteenth the free population of the United States. He felt that such a move would drive the people of the area into the hands of the British; reasserting that we cannot take action without consent of the people of the area. He felt so strongly on the subject that he would have proposed a convention denying the right of the United States to act contrary to the requirements stated in the Ordinance of 1784; the qualification here being sixty thousand.[72] His assertions were undoubtedly heard and probably heeded for sixty thousand is the status within the ordinance. It was suggested on May 11, 1786, that the states to be formed would consist of not more than five nor less than two.[73] Jefferson is later informed by Monroe that a resolution calling for not more than five nor less than three eventually passed.[74]

As we stated before, General Parsons was the first agent sent to New York by the Ohio Company of Associates; his mission ultimately failing. Manasseh Cutler, educated in medicine, law and theology, became the second agent, arriving in New York on the fifth day of July 1787. He wasted little time for by the ninth of July he had secured the appointment of a committee for the revision of the ordinance; this committee consisted of Colonel Edward Carrington, Nathan Dane, Richard Henry Lee, Temporary President of Congress Grayson and Melanchton Smith.[75]

[72] IBID., 404, James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, New York, July 16, 1786
[73] IBID., 359, James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, New Yori, May 11, 1786
[74] IBID.,404
[75] "The Diary of Manasseh Cutler" IBID.

Cutler ultimately had two purposes in mind, the purchase of lands to the value of one million in certificates and the introduction and/or modification of an ordinance.[76] He undoubtedly instructed the committee to that effect. The slavery clause had in the meantime been dropped; no effective reason could be given for this happening, for like the religion, knowledge and freedom clauses, it seemed to be sine qua non.[77] Then with the convening of the committee, the anti-slavery clause reappeared. At the time of the passage only eight states were represented: Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia. The clause passed with little evidence of sectional feeling.[78] Nathan Dane wrote in July 16, 1787 that he had no idea that such a measure could pass. Massachusetts being the

only New England state present, he omitted from the draft, but the house seemed so favorably disposed on the subject that he moved the article and it passed without opposition.[79]

After revision by the committee the document received its second reading on July 12; the third reading and passage took place July 13, 1787.[80] An entry in the Cutler diary of July 19 states that the amendments which he proposed all passed save one, and that was better qualified. It is thought that these amendments dealt with government rather than landed problems[81] for Cutler was opposed to the land measures as clearly evidenced in a separate land policy submitted to the Board of Treasury on July 24, eleven days after the passage of the ordinance.[82] It was through the agency of Cutler that the revisions and final polishing was accomplished between July 9 and13. Cutler had secured great lobbying power and held the office of governor before General St. Clair in seeking passage.[83] Congress had long dreamed of the sale of western lands and the decrease of debts. When the agent of the Ohio Company of Associates appeared and offered to purchase six or seven million acres between the Ohio River and Lake Erie east of the Scioto River[84] the Congress moved for quick passage of the Ordinance of 1787.[85]

76 Marshall, IBID.
77 Cutler, 29
78 Roosevelt, 33-34
79 Burnett, 622, Nathan Dane to Rufus King, New York, July 16, 1787
80 IBID., ZLII
81 "The Diary of Manasseh Cutler," IBID.
82 Lindley, 26
83 IBID.
84 Marshall, IBID.
85 Burnett, IBID.

VII. Conclusion

As the completed Ordinance of 1787 or Northwest Ordinance stands it is divided into three general sections. The first dealing with property and inheritance rights, the second with government and the third are the articles of compact which in effect was a bill of rights. The ordinance called for sweeping freedoms and rights of religion, education, habeas corpus, trial by jury of peers, equal distribution of estates of intestates, moderation of fines and punishments, eminent domain and legal obligations of private contracts.[86] A complete copy of the ordinance will be found in Appendix II.

The final word on the problem of authorship should be mentioned. We will remember that Pickering first put forth the plan of 1783, Jefferson, after David Howell of Rhode Island, proposed the Ordinance of 1784. Jefferson's immediate influence on the Ordinance of 1787 is doubtful since he was in France from 1784 it 1789.[87] One source cites Webster in his reply to Hanye as attributing the authorship to Nathan Dane.[88] Examination of that speech reveals no such reference; it is the Webster commentary on the Foote Resolution which gave this credit.[89] Dane, however, can be credited with little more than drawing up the ordinance, not actual authorship. Dane's letter to Rufus King gives this same impression.[90]

86 Marshall, 37-38
87 Lingley, 18
88 IBID.
89 Daniel Webster, "The Reply to Hanye," in Ivbing Fryer's Famous Orators and their orations, Cincinnati, The Ridpath Historical Society, 24-31
90 Burnett, 622, Nathan Dane to Rufus King, New York, July 16, 1787

Dr. Manasseh Cutler can be credited with some of the government clauses and particularly with the influence which caused the immediate passage. The ordinance cannot, in my estimation, be attributed to any one person. It was the work of all the aforementioned persons, all contributing in some way to its final form.

Although the Ordinance of 1787 was superseded by the Constitution it has remained with the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence one of our foremost legal documents. Many of the thoughts expressed in the Articles of Compact were immediately incorporated into the first ten amendments to the Constitution. The anti-slavery clause has never been repealed. A similar fugitive slave law was passed by Congress in 1793. Only one Pennsylvania code calling for one witness rather than two has changed the clause on wills and private contracts. Eminent domain still remains. And the Ordinance of 1787 is still the ultimate authority on the navigation rights and harbor regulations for inland waterways of the United States.[91] The Ordinance of 1787 though in answer to an immediate need, with its amazing ability to adapt to the future, has satisfied governmental and legal needs for nearly two hundred years.

91 "Annotations on the Ordinance of 1787," is William D.H. Page's, Page's Ohio General Code Annotated, Vol. XI, Cincinnati, the H.W. Anderson Co., 1939

Note: "**See OCHS website tab 'Virtual-Museum, Publications-News' for the complete essay listed in the 'Research Papers' section.**"

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