

# A VIEW THROUGH THE PORTHOLE



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Fairport Harbor Historical Society

Vol. XXXV No. 2

November, 2020

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## From the President's Desk

MaryAlyce Gladding



### PRESIDENTS LOG

We were able to open the lighthouse and museum on July 1, 2020 and closed September 20, 2020. The society would like to thank all those who volunteered during this time.

It takes a lot of work to keep the operation moving along and all of our volunteers are greatly appreciated.

We had a trustee's meeting in October. It was decided not to participate in Harbor Holiday's inside the museum because of social distancing. The tower is not open at this time to the public because of the hook up inside the tower with Christmas lighting. Also, it is too cold outside to make people wait to come in to the gift shop. Now is the time to be smart and

safe. If there is a special gift you would like to purchase from the gift shop before Christmas please call me @ 440-357-7239 and I will arrange a visit for you.

Once again Carol and Tony Bertone, Kristin McKinney and their elves will be decorating the lighthouse & museum for the Holidays. This year we will start Saturday, November 14th @9:00A.M. Anyone interested in helping is welcome.

The bricks purchased in 2019 have been installed. They are placed off the sidewalk between the life car and the flagpole. So, if you purchased a brick come and see it. Your brick will be here at the lighthouse for years to come. Thank you for your support.

The officers and trustees of the Society take this opportunity to wish our members and their families a Happy Thanksgiving, a very Merry Christmas, and a healthy Happy New Year.

**75th Anniversary – On March 2, 1945**, a group of public-spirited citizens met at village hall and organized the Fairport Harbor Historical Society. On March 17th, 1945, the society was formally incorporated. Now, seventy-five years later this all-volunteered group still serves preserving and perpetuating the historic traditions of the Great Lakes region. We invited a small group to celebrate with us. The event followed all Governor and local Health Department guidelines in place at the time of the event.

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## GARAGE SALE

On September 12, 2020 we held our annual garage sale. All items sold were donated by a couple who are members of our society. They give us 100% profit on what we sell. When the sale is over they take back what we don't sell. So we don't have a mess afterwards to clean up. Our volunteers did a wonderful job of setting up and taking down. This year we made \$2,000 plus in sales. This is one of the events we were able to do because of the COVID 19 Virus.

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## *Fairport Harbor man among the crew members lost on November 10, 1975*



### **The Edmund Fitzgerald: by John Ollila**

Fairport Harbor and the Great Lakes - they are inseparable. The lakes have always played a major role in the lives of those people living along their shores. From the very beginning they have provided a means of transportation and commerce. And from the very beginning, furious storms have taken their toll on the sailors and families of those who ventured out in her waters.

The first ship to sail the lakes was LaSalle's "Griffin" in 1679. She left the shores of Lake Michigan with a load of furs and a crew of six on September 10 of that year. That night gale force winds churned up the waters, and she was never seen again.

By the 1800's, trade and commerce were thriving at Fairport Harbor and on all of the Great Lakes. Many ships were lost due to collisions and fires aboard the new steam-powered vessels. And then, there were always the storms. By the beginning of the 20th Century, naval architects had designed bigger and safer ships, and navigation had improved. There were fewer fires and collisions, but there still was the weather. There was the storm in November, 1905, when 15 ships were wrecked on Lake Superior. Then there was the "big blow" that centered over Lake Huron in 1913. It lasted from November 7th through the 11th. Twelve vessels and their crews vanished forever; 25 vessels were driven ashore, and over 250 lives were lost. October 20, 1916, became known as "Black Friday" on Lake Erie. Four boats went down on the lake that day. In 1940 a storm hit on Armistice Day, 27 years to the day after the 1913 storm. Seven ships went down or were wrecked on Lake Michigan.

The Fitzgerald was a record setter from the day she first touched the water. On June 8, 1958, the largest crowd ever to witness a launching was on hand at River Rouge, Michigan, to see the largest vessel ever built on the lakes slide into the water. There was a Fairport Harbor connection present that day in sailor Bill Simko, who was part of the crew of the Fitzgerald. Being the pride of the American Fleet, assignment to the Fitzgerald was reserved for only the best officers and crew. Most sailors of that era would jump at the chance to be assigned to the "Fitz." Her captains over the years were the most experienced on the lakes. In the fall of 1975 she was finishing her 17th year on the Great Lakes. 29 sailors, including officers and crew, manned the Fitz. 14 were from Ohio. On the last day of October the Fitzgerald sailed from Toledo to Silver Bay, Minnesota. They loaded taconite pellets for Ashtabula. While in Ashtabula, many of the Ohio sailors were able to visit with family and friends. From Ashtabula she was upbound to Superior, Wisconsin. There on November 9 the Fitzgerald loaded 26,116 tons of taconite at Burlington Northern Railroad Dock #1. Shortly after 2 p.m. she set outbound for Detroit. Several hours later the Arthur M. Anderson was sighted, also downbound with a load of taconite.

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### **NEWSLETTER**

This newsletter can be emailed to you. It is in color if you receive it in your email. Pictures are gorgeous. If you want to be added to the email list, please contact the lighthouse at [keeper@fairportharborlighthouse.com](mailto:keeper@fairportharborlighthouse.com).

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During that night, Captain McSorley and Captain Cooper of the Anderson kept in contact over the radio. They took the longer but safer northern route across the lake due to the warnings they had just received concerning the weather. Throughout that night and into the morning of November 10, they worked their way down the lake in ever increasing wind and waves. By noon both had made alterations in their courses to head in a more southeasterly direction toward Whitefish Bay. By this time the faster Fitzgerald was about 15 miles ahead of the Anderson. Shortly before 3 p.m., a heavy snow began to fall, and the wind, now blowing from the northwest, increased to a steady 43 knots. Although the Anderson could not see the Fitzgerald in the storm, her radar showed that the Fitzgerald was still 16 miles ahead.

At 3:30 p.m. Captain McSorley reported to the Anderson that the Fitzgerald had a fence rail down, two vents lost or damaged, and a list. He was also slowing down so the Anderson could keep in contact.

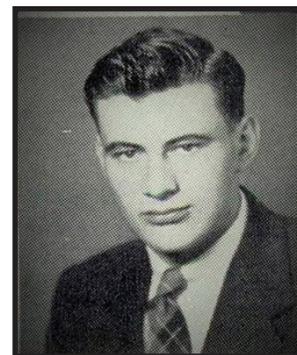
At 4:10 the Fitzgerald radioed the Anderson that both radars were out, and they needed navigational help. For the next several hours, the Anderson and the Fitzgerald discussed their positions and course headings.

At this time the locks at the Soo had closed because of the weather. Winds in the area were reported at 70 knots gusting to over 80.

The last contact with the Fitzgerald came at 7:10 p.m. when asked by the Anderson "How are you making out with your problem?", Captain McSorley replied "We are holding our own." Those were the last words heard from the Fitzgerald. As the snows eased up and visibility improved, the lights of the Fitzgerald were nowhere to be seen. There was no image on the Anderson's radar screen where the Fitzgerald should have been. Only God and those on board will ever know exactly what happened that night.

The news of the tragedy spread throughout the Great Lakes area and throughout the nation. Of the 29 men aboard the Fitzgerald, 14 were from Ohio. Fairport Harbor lost one of its own First Assistant Engineer, Eddie Bindon. He lived here all of his life. He graduated from Harding High School in 1946. He was a well-respected citizen of this community, a member of St. Anthony's Church, and a friend to many in the village. The Fairport Harbor Historical Society is dedicated to preserving and perpetuating historic tradition in the Village of Fairport Harbor and the Great Lakes area. There is hardly a family in this town that hasn't been touched by what has happened on the lakes. The stories abound: grandfathers who shoveled the iron ore at the docks; fathers, brothers, and sons who sailed or are sailing on the freighters; and those who worked the fishing boats or tugs. Eddie Bindon sailed the lakes for 27 years. He will forever be a part of that bond between Fairport Harbor and the Great Lakes.

Fairport Harbor will always remember Eddie Bindon and the men of the Fitzgerald. On November 10, 2020 we had a small gathering honoring the 29 men aboard the Fitzgerald.



First Assistant Engineer, Eddie Bindon  
Fairport Harbor, Ohio

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## 2020 MEMBERSHIP

**LIFETIME: 93**

**Honorary: 4**

**Regular: 36**

**Couple: 31 couples (62 people)**

**Patron: 2**

**TOTAL: 197**

**Note: 34 people did not renew their membership in 2020**

It is time to complete your 2021 membership form and return with your payment. Form is enclosed with Newsletter or attached to email sent.

## ANNUAL FUND DRIVE 2020

I am pleased to report that the Annual Fund received \$1925 in donations for 2020.

**THANK YOU** to all that have supported us throughout the years.



## MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Membership forms are enclosed for the coming year. We ask that you return them by January 1, 2021. Return envelopes are enclosed. If you are requesting a "Couple" membership, please list both names. Membership forms do not pertain to our life members, so disregard. Please keep us informed of your address changes.

## BUILDINGS & GROUNDS

Our sign "The light that shown for 100 years" was painted this year. Also all the bricks were installed by the lifesaving car and the flagpole. The high winds took off a lot of the shingles on the museum roof. These were replaced. The pilot house (Frontenac) has been completed. It was stripped of about 20 coats of paint, all holes repaired, new visor installed, and painted the original color. This should last for quite a few years to come.

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Tuesday is our work day. Join us and help with miscellaneous tasks and chores that are necessary to keep the lighthouse functioning with all volunteer help.

- Preservation Committee. Join us in an important part of our existence.
- Gift Shop Volunteer.
- If interested in helping out, please call the lighthouse. ALL help is appreciated.

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## IN MEMORIAM

Julia Lehto, 95, passed away on October 7, 2020. She was a member of the Society for 40-plus years. In that time she held every office except President. She also served as Membership and Accessions Chairman for several years. We can always count on Julie being here when there was work to be done, be it spring cleaning, working in the gift shop, preparing the newsletter, or special events. She was also a regular of the Tuesday "work gang". To honor her for her many years of service, the Society bestowed Julia the title of "Honorary Member". In 2012 she received the Fairport Civic Club Golden Beacon Award for her community service. She was a member of the Hungarian Reformed Church, Order of Eastern Star, and Ladies Auxiliary of VFW post 7754.

She and her husband Sam volunteered at the museum as well as Laurelwood Hospital. During WWII, Julia served in the US Navy as a WAVE. She is survived by her daughter, Pam Lausin, two grandchildren, and four great grandsons, all members of our Society. A graveside service was held at Riverside Cemetery on October 15th. Donations in memory of Julia can be made to the Hungarian Reformed Church in Fairport Harbor, or to the Fairport Harbor Historical Society.

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is the official newsletter of the Fairport Harbor Historical Society.

The newsletter is produced quarterly for members of the Society: February, May, August and November. If your address changes, please notify us. To be informed about upcoming events, tours, and Fairport Harbor Lighthouse news send us your e-mail address and we'll add you to our E-News list soon.



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