

A VIEW THROUGH THE PORTHOLE



Fairport Harbor Historical Society

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November 2021

From the President's Desk

MaryAlyce Gladding



PRESIDENTS LOG

As the end of the season is here, it is time to thank our faithful volunteers who kept the lighthouse & museum open. Without these volunteers working week after week, the Society would be hard pressed to keep it running. To our members, wherever you are, thank you for your membership, gifts-in-kind, support, and overall generosity.

The 2021 season was very good. The count was 2,692 visitors which included 40 private tours. We had media coverage from channels 5 and 8 that helped to contribute to the season's success.

One air conditioner was replaced last year and we will be replacing the other one this year. We received three estimates from local companies. Costello's Heating and Air Conditioning was awarded the contract by the trustees.

Work is being finished at the museum. We hired a lift to scrape, oil primer, and paint the eaves. This will be paid for from the Nelson Foundation Fund.

In September 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 didn'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 \$1400.00 in sales.

We participated in Community Days this year. New this year, Marty O'Gara and Linda Toth donated the pulled pork sandwiches and we made a profit of \$182.00. We also sold souvenirs and raffle tickets in the park. Thanks to all who volunteered in the park and gift shop.

Our museum and gift shop will be open Saturday, December 4th for Harbor Holidays from 11:00-4:00 pm. This year we will be selling our Christmas ornaments and Christmas cards. We will have a small Chinese Auction and clearance table. A variety of Bill Csatory prints will be on sale. Bill donates his works to our lighthouse and has given us exclusive rights to sell his works. The Grinch will read "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" at the top of our tower at 5:45 p.m.

Once again Tony & Carol Bertone and their group of elves will be decorating the lighthouse & museum for the holidays. They have been doing this for the last 20 plus years. Anyone interested in helping is welcome. We hope to start on November 13th weather permitting or November 20th.

In January the nomination committee will be looking for members interested in running for office. Please think about running for a position with the Society when you are called. Enclosed is the membership form for 2022. Please complete and return

*The Officers and Trustees of the Society want to wish all of our members and their families a very Happy Thanksgiving, a very Merry Christmas, and a Happy and Healthy New Year!
We hope to see you all in 2022*

Local Railroad History Author Visits the Historical Society

A presentation by local author Dan Rager on October 27th about the Fairport Harbor railroad lines along Water Street dating from 1835-1900s. His latest book "Building the Lake Branch" Complete History, includes information and pictures of Fairport Harbor's connection to the rail systems in Lake and Geauga Counties and beyond. Dan is a railroad historian who has written four books on early railroads in the area. He provides presentations and lectures throughout the state on his books.



Photo from the October 27 Fairport Harbor Railroad History Program held at the lighthouse. with Author Dan Rager (Chardon Ohio)

Membership Renewal for 2022

*It is time to complete your membership form for 2022 and return it with your payment. The form is enclosed with this Newsletter or attached to the email sent. *Lifetime memberships do not need to return the form.*

Preservation Committee

The Preservation Committee has been looking into some guide lines about covering our uniforms in the museum. We are looking for some clean, 100% cotton sheets to cover our displays. Please call Marty O’Gara at 330-853-1827 if you can donate.

Membership Committee

Hello members! We are asking you to renew your Historical Society membership again this year. Our membership numbers are down and we depend on your dollars to help pay the bills and to keep our Lighthouse and Tower buildings clean and safe. Please consider gifting a membership to loved ones, family members and neighbors. There is so much here to explore. As a member, you may attend our meetings and may volunteer to work in the gift shop during the summer. You may want to learn how to be a tour guide! We encourage all members to offer suggestions as how we can improve our service to our members. In the Spring, we will be asking for members to run for office. Requirements include attending so many meetings a year. Plan to attend as many meetings as you can to learn more about the organization and how you can help.

Our current numbers are 162.

Respectfully submitted, Melanie Zavrl

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.

Edmund Fitzgerald lost 46 years ago November 10, 1975

The Edmund Fitzgerald was the largest vessel built on the Great Lakes when launched in 1958 in Michigan. Measuring 729 feet long with 75-foot beam and a depth of 39 feet, she had a capacity of 30,000 tons. The vessel weighed over 13,000 tons and at the time cost \$8.4 million. The “Fitz” tragically sank during a powerful Lake Superior storm on the evening of November 10th 46 years ago in 1975. Among the twenty nine men aboard the Fitzgerald that night was 47 year old Fairport resident Eddie Bindon. Eddie was a 1946 graduate of Harding High School. He was an army veteran and was an assistant engineer on-board the ship.



In 1995 on the 4th of July the 200 pound bronze ships bell of the S.S. Edmund Fitzgerald was raised, restored and is now on permanent display at the Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum in Michigan. It is used each November 10th in the bell-ringing ceremony in memory of the 29 crewmen of the Edmund Fitzgerald. The bell was replaced on the sunken ship by a new bell inscribed with the names of the twenty nine men lost.

“Queen of the West” Artifacts Donated to the Museum



The “Queen of the West” is one of the most well-known shipwrecks in Lake Erie near Fairport Harbor. Recently some artifacts from that wreck have been donated to our museum. The largest is the ship’s whistle seen in this picture, along with diver Bud Edwards who made the donations.

The 215’ “Queen of the West” was built at Bay City, Michigan in 1881. Her wooden hull was made of oak, and she carried a single propeller powered by steam.

Early on August 20, 1903 after a short stop, the “Queen of the West” left Cleveland. She was loaded with 1500 tons of iron ore that had been taken on in Escanaba, Michigan. Her destination was Erie, PA. At about 4 am, a serious leak began to fill the boat with water. The pumps could not keep up and soon Captain Massey ordered the flag set to half mast as a distress signal. An attempt was made to launch the lifeboat, but high waves and strong winds capsized the small boat.

Fortunately, the Steamer Codus, headed westward, came upon the scene. She was able to transfer all 15 persons on board to the Codus. Because of the high seas and strong winds, several were almost lost.

At 5:00 am the lookout at USLSS Station Fairport saw the distress signal. The lifeboat was launched, and the harbor tug Kitty Downs was called upon for a tow out into the lake. When they arrived on scene, Captain Massey and two mates boarded the Kitty Downs and were taken to Station Fairport. All others remained on the Corodus and were landed in Cleveland.

Later that morning, another harbor tug the James Byers took Captain Massey and the two mates back to the sinking ship. They recovered some clothes and valuables. Shortly after completing this task, the “Queen of the West” sank in 12 fathoms of water about 8 miles NW of the harbor at Fairport.

In 1975 Bud Edwards and several other divers made 4 dives on the wreck of the “Queen of the West”. Bud has donated the whistle along with several other artifacts from the wreck. In addition, we have copies of his dive log for each dive to the site.

Note: Description of events are based on information from the Logbook of USLSS Station Fairport.

Long Live Local

2021 proved to be a slow renaissance for the Lighthouse and Marine Museum. Attendance improved almost three-fold from the pandemic low of 939 in 2020. While programming was a hit (Village History Walking Tours) or a miss (Sunset Wine & Cheese Events), tours by appointment returned to near normal levels. There were 40 tours booked in 2021 with the USCG District 9 visit in March opening the season while several late October out-of town requests closing the public portion of the year. A limited number of bus tours returned. From weekly beach camp visits to homeschool, adapted or senior tours Fairport Harbor history never grew old as more than 475 guests made the call to book a private tour of the 1825 lighthouse. Thanks to our newest tour guide Lee Silvi who came nearly every Wednesday to assist in tours as well as long time docent John Ollila..



Pictured is Lee Silvi and a group of summer campers atop the tower

Upcoming Events

Harbor Holidays

Saturday, December 4th 11:00am - 7:00pm (Hosted by the Fairport Harbor Heritage Foundation)

The Museum and Gift shop will be open from 11:00am - 4:00pm

The Grinch reads “How the Grinch Stole Christmas” from the top of the Lighthouse Tower at 5:45pm

IN MEMORIAM

Anthony “Tony” Lunka, 99, passed away on September 10, 2021 at the Preserve at Mentor. He was born May 12, 1922, in Fairport. He graduated from Fairport Harding High in 1940, attended the Aviation Academy of Cleveland, then enlisted in the Navy. Tony served as President of Lunka Brothers Construction Company for over 47 years. His firm was responsible for many projects in the area including Lake West Hospital, Lubrizol Corp., Fairport Marina, and Lake County YMCA. Tony became a Life Member of the Society in 1988 and volunteered in the gift shop. He is survived by his wife of 68 years Jeanette, 5 children, 11 grandchildren, and numerous great-grandchildren.

Joann C. Valentine, 87, passed away on September 29, 2021, at Vista Springs Quail Highlands in Concord. She was a life-long resident of Fairport and graduated with the class of 1953. She was an active member of the Fairport Mardi Gras, and was a Life Member of the Fairport Historical Society since 2003 where she volunteered in the gift shop and for special events. She was also an active member of St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church. In 1998 she retired from the Lake County Sheriff’s Office working in records. Joann is survived by 5 children, 16 grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren. Mass of Christian burial was held at St. Anthony’s.

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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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