

# A VIEW THROUGH THE PORTHOLE



Fairport Harbor Historical Society

Spring 2026

## From the President's Desk

Marty O'Gara

### PRESIDENTS LOG

Hello everyone. After a brief respite from subnormal temperatures, snow and ice, it looks like winter has returned. Phil the groundhog got it right after all. The lighthouse is still closed but we have resumed our monthly meetings on the fourth Wednesday of each month. We did have to reschedule the January meeting due to the a forementioned nasty weather. Hopefully we will be back on track.

Let me just re-cap the news since our last newsletter in November. December 6 was Harbor Holidays in the village. This year there were more events throughout the day. A 5K walk/run was held at 9AM. Costumes were encouraged. Jim Sasak won the costume contest. He generously donated his \$500 prize to the lighthouse. He asked that part of the winnings be used to help purchase the Grinch books for the library to give out in December 2026. The day ended as usual with the Grinch reading the beloved Dr Suess book from the top of our tower. Many thanks to Mayor Tim Manross for removing the tower decorations just in time to avoid the big storm.

December 12 we held a Volunteer Appreciation party at Rich Bowling Lanes. It was a fun afternoon. Who knew we actually have some very good bowlers in our midst? We can never thank our volunteers enough for all the time and energy they give the museum. Without them we could not keep the doors open.

We did receive reports from the two restoration companies who visited us in October; Buckeye Construction and Restoration , and ICC Preservation. The next step is for the trustees to review the findings and develop a plan. The work will of course require funding so we will be pursuing grants and other funding to complete the repairs. We will be keeping members aware as the plans unfold.

On February 17, after the Mayor's State of the City address, your president gave the Lighthouse Annual Report for 2025. After writing it and presenting it to the Village Council I understood why we were all so tired after closing in September. We were extremely busy not only with our usual visitors but with private tours, participating in Village events, and celebrating our 200th Anniversary. We were on two Cleveland television shows and interviewed by several magazines, And to cap off our busy season we presented the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald attended by over 240 people and was well received by the community. Well done Fairport Harbor Marine Museum!!!! And again thank you to all the members who made it possible,

As always we will be opening for the season on Memorial Day weekend. Before that we will be cleaning, and organizing in preparation for opening. We are a site on the Ohio River/ Lake Erie Trail which is part of Ohio's commemoration of America 250 celebrating the 250th birthday of our country. Follow us on Facebook for upcoming events.

*See you in May for opening day.*



**Grinch Costume Winner Jim Sasak Donated the \$500 Prize to the Museum**

## US Coast Guard Service Celebrates 150 Years in Fairport Harbor

The U.S. Coast Guard Station Fairport was established 150 years ago. The first entry into the log book was made by George Francis Babcock in the year 1876. Frank Babcock, as he was known, was the brother of Joseph Babcock who was the lighthouse keeper for many years.

Frank was the keeper of the lifesaving station at Fairport until his death in 1899. Niels Rasmussen was then appointed keeper and served until 1915. In 1915 the U.S. Lifesaving Service and the Revenue Cutter Service were combined to form the U.S. Coast Guard.

On February 14, 2026 the Fairport Harbor Historical Society presented the history of Station Fairport to a packed room at the C.G. Auxiliary meeting. Please keep your eyes and ears open for information on the Annual Open House to be held in May at U.S. Coast Guard Station Fairport.



*Fairport Life Saving Station - circa 1910*

## Fairport Harbor Lighthouse Featured in PBS Documentary

On March 18, 2026 a documentary titled “I’m Goin’ Home” will be screened at Lakeland Community College at 6:30 PM in auditorium H-134. The producer, Skip Church visited our lighthouse last summer to film and gather information about Fairport’s role in the Underground Railroad.

Skip also interviewed Dan Maxson during the visit. Dan is featured in the documentary discussing how the Fairport Lighthouse was an important part of the Underground Railroad. This is a free event.



## City Directories - Some Interesting and Historic Finds in the Village

**Bitzer Furniture Company** is listed at 411 High Street [circa 1923-circa 1929].

**Stanton Motors** is listed at 701 High Street in 1924.

**The Fairport Land Company and the Fairport Gas Company** is listed at 544 Third Street in the early 1900s. [Now it is a vacant lot behind/part of 301 East Street]

The official address for **Harding High School** in 1924 is 430 Third Street, because the original main entrance to the school faced Third Street.

Mid-1920s, the “**Diamond Bowling Alleys**” are found at 614-618 High Street.

Before moving to 306 High Street [circa 1930], the **Fairport A&P** was located at 413 High Street [circa 1924 or earlier], then at 606/608 High Street [circa 1926].

A **Kroger Grocery & Bakery** is listed at 215 Third Street [1926].

The **Fairport Dairy** is at 820 Plum Street, and a grocery store is next door at 816 Plum Street, for a few years in the 1920s.

There is a **Flower Shop**, then a **Fish Market** at 415-419 Third Street [1920s].

The **Fairport VFW Post** was originally located at 310-312 High Street [Today 310 High Street is Julbeans! ].

**Knights of Pythias Lodge** is at 411 High Street,

**American Legion Post** is at 511 High Street in the 1920s.

Dan & Libby Zapp owned a **Dry Cleaning** business at various High Street locations before they owned the **Gulf Service Station** at High and Sixth Street.

Varying years from 1924-1939 there are **Three Financial Institutions** on High Street

There were none in town 1939-1957. **Peoples Savings & Loan** opened in late 1957.

At varying times there are at least Three known **Drug Stores** on High Street.

There are at least three “**Coal Yards**” in town in the early 1900s.

Fairport had its own **Lumber Yard** in the latter 1800s, near Courtland & High Streets

*Research submitted by Lee Silvi - February 2026*

# Documenting the 1867 Bark CLOUGH by Jack Papes

In February 2026, the National Museum of the Great Lakes (NMGL) announced the identification of a 19th-century shipwreck discovered roughly 19 miles west of Fairport Harbor, Ohio, as the bark CLOUGH. The site was located by the Cleveland Underwater Explorers (CLUE), a group dedicated to Lake Erie shipwreck research and discovery. This article summarizes my role in documenting and confirming the wreck's identity during the 2024 and 2025 dive seasons. See [nmgl.org](http://nmgl.org) and [clueshipwrecks.org](http://clueshipwrecks.org) for more information.

I have volunteered with Ohio's Maritime Archaeology Survey Team (MAST) since 2001, primarily supporting field operations such as shipwreck surveys, buoy deployment and retrieval. Through MAST workshops held annually in April at the NMGL, I received training in vessel construction, ship parts, maritime law, survey logistics, and documentation techniques skills that proved critical during this project. See [ohiomast.org](http://ohiomast.org) for more information.

Tragically, on June 1, 2024, CLUE co-founder and maritime archaeologist



Mr. Dave VanZandt

David M. VanZandt passed away following a medical event during the first exploration of a newly discovered Lake Erie shipwreck located off of Cleveland, Ohio. In the weeks that followed, I agreed to confidentially assist CLUE with documenting the site.

On July 4, 2024, my dive buddy James Moseley and I traveled from my dock in Fairport Harbor to the wreck site lacking any details other than its coordinates. Sonar imaging quickly revealed a large, well-defined wreck standing prominently above the lake bottom. After carefully marking the site's footprint to avoid anchor contact, we conducted a photographic and observational dive with limited but workable visibility of 10–15 feet.



Grindstone Deck Cargo

Training from MAST guided our systematic identification process. The wreck is heavily constructed of wood and carries a deck cargo of large cut stone and grindstones. Broken mast remains and mast holes in the deck indicated a three-masted sailing vessel. We observed five rigging eyes at the foremast and three at both the mainmast and mizzenmast, consistent with a barkentine configuration, square-rigged forward with fore-and-aft sails aft.



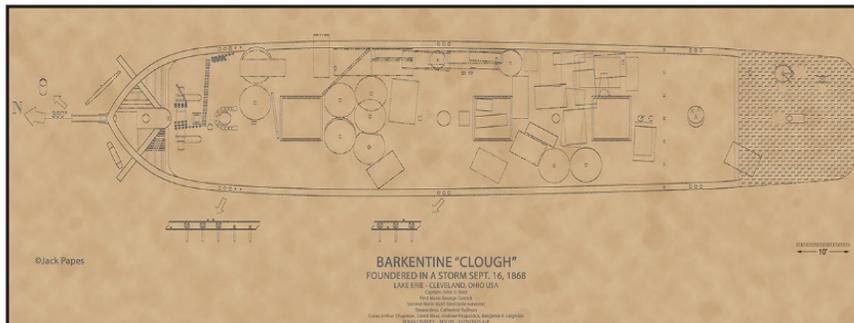
Example of a Lake Barkentine

The stern section is heavily damaged from impact with the lakebed during the sinking, while the rest of the hull remains largely intact. We recorded a length over the collapsed stern of 142 feet, presuming the original length was shorter, and a width outside the rails amidships of 26 feet.

Over ten dives across two seasons, totaling nearly eight hours of bottom time, I gathered measurements, sketches, photographs, and video. Using this field data alongside historical enrollment records and period news accounts, the wreck was confidently identified as the CLOUGH (1867–1868).

A summary of findings was provided to CLUE and supported their formal announcement of the discovery.

See my webpage for more information on the CLOUGH including the details of her sinking and a bibliography: [www.n2junkie.com](http://www.n2junkie.com)



Rough Sketch of Survey Data (2024-2025) - Jack Papes and James Moseley.



Wheel of the Clough

## MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

It is time to renew your membership. The renewal membership is valid from January 1 - December 31, 2026. included is the renewal form. This year you can also join or renew online with credit card. Thank you for your membership renewal. This helps with all the expenses of keeping the Lighthouse and Museum open.

**\$10 Student:** (Free admission for One named Student for the year)

**\$25 Individual:** (Free Admission for One named individual for the year)

**\$45 Individual Plus ONE:** (Free Admission for Two named individuals for the year)

**\$75 Family:** (Free Admission for Four named individuals plus 1 guest all year)

**\$300 Lifetime:** (Free Admission for One named individual for Life)



*Scan the qr code with your phone to join or renew online.*

Our volunteers spent over 5000 hours working in the museum, doing paint and repairs, giving tours and all the other tasks that keep the museum running. Our 5564 visitors came from all over the USA and 6 foreign countries: Australia, Italy, Mexico, France, Germany, and Canada.

We conducted 26 private tours, and had two Friday Night Lights, our very popular walk up tour. We hosted 2 groups of paranormal investigators.

### Current Membership Totals:

Individual+1: 27 x 2 = 54 People

Individual: 43 Student 2

Lifetime: 92 Honorary: 3

Family: 3 x 4 = 12

**Total as of March 2026: 206**

## Happenings 2026

**National Museum of the Great Lakes** - Beneath the Surface (Exhibit) 1701 Front St, Toledo, OH (Newly discovered Lake Erie shipwreck) February 18 - April 19 [marketing@nmgl.org](mailto:marketing@nmgl.org)

**I'm Goin' Home** - Documentary of the Underground Railroad In North East Ohio Lakeland Community College Wednesday, March 18, 2026 6:30 PM H-134 Auditorium

**Tour Lake County** - State of Travel and Tourism Breakfast April 10, 2026 7:30 AM Springbrook Gardens Park - All things travel and tourism in Lake County for 2026 6775 Heisley Rd Mentor Tickets \$20 [Elyse@tourlakecounty.com](mailto:Elyse@tourlakecounty.com)

**Ohio Local History Alliance**- Regional Meeting April 11, 2026 Burton, Ohio 9AM to 4PM Fee \$35 614-297-2538

**Lake Erie Lighthouse Fair** - Marblehead Lighthouse State Park - Learn about the history of lighthouses on Lake Erie. Saturday April 25, 2026 12 PM to 4PM 567-366-0049 RSVP

**USLHS Lighthouse Tour** June 6-13 2026 Downeast Maine 25 lighthouses Visit: [USLHS.ORG](http://USLHS.ORG) 415 362-7255

**Taste of History 2026** Amherst, Ohio June 19-20 2026 9:00AM - 5:00PM Military Living History Event 300 Re-enactors: The daily life of US Soldiers across all eras. Free Admission Contact 440-521-0576

**\*\*\* Stars, Stripes, and Harbor Lights \*\*\***

Fairport Harbor, Sunday - July 5, 2026

Live Music, Family Activities, Local Vendors, Food, Fireworks, and Community Pride on the shores of Lake Erie.

**Volunteers needed** Contact <https://kiwanisfh.org/independence-celebration/>

## A VIEW THROUGH THE PORTHOLE

"A View Through The Porthole" 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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