

# A VIEW THROUGH THE PORTHOLE



Fairport Harbor Historical Society

Vol. XXXVII No. 1

February 2022

## From the President's Desk

MaryAlyce Gladding



### PRESIDENTS LOG

It has been another challenging year. We are now looking at a 2022 recovery. Hopefully all members who live in the area were able to see the beautiful Christmas decorations on the Lighthouse and keeper's dwelling. A big "thank you" is due Carol and Tony Bertone, Mayor Tim Manross, Sharon Chamberlain, the Fairport Harbor Fire Department, and the students from the school who helped bring up our decorations from the basement, put together our trees, and carried up the 69 steps to the tower all of our decorations. Since what goes up must come down, the society wishes to recognize John Ollila who always takes down the decorations after January 1st.

His helpers this year were Chip Saalfield, Greg Major, Linda Toth, Mark & Mary Elsing, and Marty O'Gara.

We participated in a very successful Harbor Holidays, December 4, 2021. Thank you notes were sent out to all those who donated to the Chinese auction. We sold Bill Csatory prints, Christmas ornaments and cards, t-shirts, and had a discount table. Thank you to Louise Nagy, Chip Saalfield, and Jan Maxson our volunteers for the day. During the day the Grinch went around to businesses and stole gifts. Later that night he read the story "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" from the top of our lighthouse tower.

The Society added substantial improvements in 2021 Our biggest improvement was scraping the loose paint on the eaves, priming and painting them. We had to hire an aerial lift for a month for this project. The cables on top of the tower were welded. Also the deck and the garage were repaired and painted. We replaced one of our air conditioners (\$7,640.00) and the other one was replaced the previous year. At the end of the year we experienced a power surge and had to replace our copy machine and computer. We held several successful events this past summer; Our annual Garage sale, Community Days, and Harbor Holidays.

Although it is still early in the year, PLEASE look at your calendar and put aside a few hours for volunteering. It takes a lot of work to keep our organization moving along, and all of our volunteers are greatly appreciated. As we go into a New Year, I wish to thank you in advance for any "extra" effort you can render to help us in 2022 and beyond.

We do not have hours as yet to when we will open on Memorial Day weekend. Our days will remain the same, Wednesdays, Saturdays, Sundays and all legal holidays. So check us on our website, e-mail or call us if you have questions. Phone 440-354-4825, fairportharborlighthouse.org or keeper@fairportharborlighthouse.org

### 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.*

## 2022 Fairport Harbor Lighthouse & Marine Museum Events Calendar

**Friday Night Lights** Enjoy an after hours museum visit & sunset tower climb,  
8:00pm - 10:00pm May 27, June 17, July 22 & Sept. 9 Adults \$10 Under 17 - \$5.00

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*2022 Pre-register events starts mid-May.*

**Village Walking Tour & Lighthouse Visit** with Fairport Harbor Creamery Visit at Conclusion \$16 per person  
Program max. is 18 per event. Sun., June 12 4:30 - 6:00pm & Thur. August 11 (Full Moon) 7:00pm - 9:00pm

**Sunset/ Full Moon Tour** - Lighthouse Preservation Fundraiser  
7:30pm - 10:00pm Tour, Raffles and other surprises TBD  
Wednesday July 13th Adults only - \$20 donation per guest (25 max.)

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**Community Day** - Sunday, September 25th Noon - 5:00pm

**Harbor Holidays** - Saturday, December 3rd TBD

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### CANDIDATES/ELECTIONS

The Candidates running for positions this term were unopposed. Thus, there is no ballot enclosed. They were all elected by default.

**First Vice President** - Louise Photo Wayner

**Secretary** - Ellen Brown

**Trustee** - Tony Bertone

**Trustee** - John Ollila

Other terms and their expiration:

**President** - Mary Alyce Gladding – Expires 2023

**Treasurer** - Sharon Chamberlain – Expires 2023

**2nd Vice president** - Martha O’Gara – Expires 2023

**Trustee** - Dan Maxson – Expires 2023



*Pictured are the students who helped out decorating the tower for the holidays.*

### TRUSTEE: John Ollila

John Ollila graduated from Mentor High School and received his B.S. Ed in Physical Education from Bowling Green State University, and a M.S. Ed. From Cleveland State. He taught in the Berea schools for 29 years. John is a Life Member of the society and is presently serving as Trustee and Historian. He also served on the Building & Grounds, Display, and Programs Committees. John’s wife, Barbara is also a FHHS Member. They are both active with the Finnish Heritage Museum. John’s passion is sailing and he enters many competitions on the Great Lakes.

### TRUSTEE: Tony Bertone

Tony Bertone is a graduate of Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, with a degree in Architecture. He is a member of Fairport Harbor Village Council. He is serving as Chairman of the Building & Grounds Committee. Tony also handles the landscaping and beautification of the society’s grounds. Tony and family are all members of our society. They have been decorating the lighthouse for Christmas for the last 24 years.

### SECRETARY: Ellen M. Brown

My husband and I have been residents of Fairport Harbor since 1984. I grew up in Richmond Hts, graduating from Brush High School. We have 5 daughters and 11 grandchildren from the ages of 3 months to 18 years. I worked for National City Bank for nearly 30 years, starting as a teller, then in the International Wire Dept and finally as an Executive Administrative Assistant to 18 corporate offices in the Capital Markets Department. I was laid off in 2009 with the PNC merger and retired shortly thereafter. In 1994 I was elected to the Fairport Harbor School Board. I served on the board for eight years, and served as president for four years. I also was appointed to the Auburn Career Center board. I was appointed Vice President. I enjoy time with my grandchildren, crafts, sewing, convertible cars and most of all traveling with my husband. I attend most village council meetings and was appointed to the BZA, Board of Zoning Appeals 4 years ago.

## How Did They Do It? *by Lee Silvi*

If you are like me, you may have wondered how they built the 1871 lighthouse and keeper dwelling on the same site as the 1825 lighthouse and dwelling. Between escorting group tours during the summer of 2021 I did a lot of reading through some of our old files, and came across that answer and much more.

First, let us recall the original lighthouse was built in 1825. That lighthouse was built with an inadequate foundation, found to be just two feet deep! By 1869 the tower was found to be in “hazardous condition”.

One of the iron bands that were designed to help support the brick tower had fallen off due to the severe strain on the tower and foundation. The original keeper’s dwelling was also found to be in poor condition. In 1868, temporary repairs were made to both structures to help them survive the approaching winter, while awaiting plans and funds for the future.

To answer the question as to how a new tower was built on the same site, I found that a temporary tower was built near the 1825 tower. On December 10, 1869 a light “was first exhibited in the temporary structure”, and at some point after that the 1825 lighthouse was demolished over the following weeks. So this temporary light allowed a beacon to continue to be shone from the harbor during the demolition, and subsequent construction progress of the new tower.

On April 4, 1870 work began on the new lighthouse tower. This time, they wanted to avoid the problems found with the 1825 lighthouse, so earth borings were first performed. Based on the borings, it was determined that the tower base would be excavated to a depth of 11’ 4” and “piles were driven flush with the bottom of the pit”. The upper portion was encased in a one foot slab of concrete. On top of the slab a “grillage of two courses of twelve inch timber was placed” On top of that, foundation limestone was added, “which extended to the surface of the ground” where the tower itself was to begin.

Work continued from April 4 until September 5, 1870. This was due to an Act of Congress of July 1870, which directed unspent funds be returned to the treasury. Work stopped for several months, and the uncompleted tower was protected by placing a “board roof-covering over it”. At this time of this work stoppage 29 of the 45 courses of Berea stone had been laid, and 32 of the 69 steps completed. During the pause in construction it was determined that it was necessary to replace the keeper’s dwelling, rather than attempt repairs.

By Congressional Act of March 3, 1871 funds were appropriated to complete the tower and erect a new brick keeper’s dwelling, now home of our museum and offices. Funds were also included for an oil house, but it seems the iron oil house on site today was not added until 1904. (I am not sure if there was another oil house in the interim.) In May 1871 work resumed on the tower, and the light in the new tower was first lit on August 11, 1871. The new keeper’s dwelling was finished in October 20, 1871. The total cost for the tower and dwelling was just under \$29,000.

As early as 1838, a Lt. Platt of the US Navy recognized the need for a beacon at the end of the pier, instead of the 1825 (and later 1871) lighthouses. But no action on this idea was taken on Lt Platt’s idea for decades. In fact, improvements to the 1871 lighthouse are noted between 1880 and 1902. Some of the improvements included painting of the dwelling and fences (1880), a 235 foot plank walk on the south side (1891), piped water from the village waterworks (1892), addition of the handrail in the tower (1892), and in 1895 a roof was added over the walkway between the dwelling and the tower. 1917 was the beginning of the end for the service life of the 1871 lighthouse. By Act of Congress that year, \$42,000 was appropriated for what we know today at the West Breakwater Light, and the original plan called for the 1871 lighthouse to be eventually demolished. (As I understand it, it was common practice for demolition funds to be encumbered when a new lighthouse was built, to ensure funds were available for future demolition.) World War I and other factors delayed construction, thus the new west breakwater lighthouse was not completed for almost eight years after the 1917 Act. The new light was placed in service on June 9, 1925.

Of course, as we all know, the 1871 lighthouse and keeper’s dwelling was not razed as planned. Through a combination of protests and other efforts, both were saved and are home to our wonderful museum today. How this came about is a story unto itself, and there is not enough space in this newsletter to go down that road in this issue.

*Credit: Much of the information herein is obtained and condensed from a much longer 1971 report authored by “Pearl E. Killinen, FHHS Historian”.*



## Membership News

If you are a Lifetime Member, you do not need to send in a membership application every year. But, if your address, name or e-mail address changes, please notify us so that you may continue to receive your Newsletter. We automatically send out our membership forms with the November Newsletter. Currently, we have 93 lifetime members, 4 Patron level members, 13 single members and seven couples who have paid for 2022.

A special "Thank You" goes out to member "Anonymous" who secretly donated a crisp \$100.00 bill to our Annual Fund Drive. This was a much-appreciated surprise. The Annual Fund raised \$2034.54 in 2021. This money will be used for improvements and additions to our beloved Lighthouse, and we truly appreciate your support. Thank you!

In November, 26 Harding High School students received 1 year of free membership in the Fairport Historical Society and Lighthouse for helping to move Christmas decorations from the basement to the Tower. The Lighthouse was decorated in its traditional green attire for the reading of the favorite Holiday story "The Grinch Who Stole Christmas" from the Tower. The event was well attended, as always.

I would personally like to invite all members to consider attending our monthly meetings. We share valuable information regarding the brick and mortar of the Lighthouse and how much time and expense it is to keep it in tip top shape. In order to run for any office, you need to attend three meetings a year. Our senior membership is aging, just like everyone else! We want to keep this organization running far into the future and we won't be able to do this without your help! If you are considering retiring soon or if you have time in your day to help keep our history alive, please call Mary Alyce and let her know. We are very open to new ideas and new faces! Thanks in advance for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,  
Melanie Zavrl, Membership Chair

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## IN MEMORIAM

Janet (Olle) O'Janpa, age 87, passed away on January 3. She graduated from Fairport Harding High with the class of 1952. She was a proud alumna of Miami University's undergraduate program and Kent State University's graduate program where she received her Master of Education. She taught English and Physical Education throughout her teaching career. She is survived by her daughter, two grandchildren, brother, and sister. She was also a member of the Historical Society. Funeral services were held at Zion Lutheran Church. Memorial donations may be made to the Finnish Heritage Museum, P.O. Box 1121, Fairport Harbor, 44077.

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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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