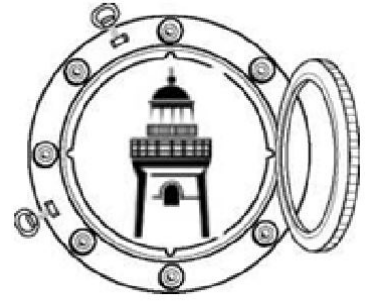


A VIEW THROUGH THE PORTHOLE



Fairport Harbor Historical Society

Vol. XXXVIII No.4

November 2023

From the President's Desk

Marty O'Gara

PRESIDENTS LOG

The Fairport Harbor Marine Museum ended its season on September 17. 2023 Community Day in the Village. Even though our season is over, activity still continues at the museum. On October 7, another wedding took place on lighthouse Hill. A few hours later Pat Haberman from Windom, Minnesota conducted a paranormal investigation in the museum and tower. Pat has done investigations in 25 states. He had always wanted to do one in a lighthouse. He was also intrigued by the story of our ghost cat. Pat, accompanied by several lighthouse volunteers spent almost 6 hours in all parts of the tower and keepers house. Pat was pleased with his findings; he told us he had some "great responses" on his recordings when he played them back. He was not able to verify the presence of Sentinel, our ghost cat. He is thinking of returning here in the spring to try again!

October 14, the village held "Witches Day Out"; the museum participated; all volunteers were in costume, and Greg Major decorated our "Haunted Tower" for all to enjoy. The weather was awful, but we moved the activities inside: facepainting, Tarot card readings, and grilled hot dogs were available.

On October 17, 2023 we and the Finnish Heritage museum co-hosted a quarterly meeting of the NEOIMC (Northeast Ohio Intermuseum Council). Nearly 90 people attended. Tours were given of both museums; dinner was held at the VFW, catered by Rego's. Dessert was an ice cream sundae bar with ice cream and topping from the Fairport Creamery. Mums on the table from Flowers by Julie, also served as door prizes. Many thanks to Commander Steve and the membership for letting us use their hall for the event. Museums from all over Northeast Ohio attended.

The night of October 31, we opened the haunted tower to any trick or treater's brave enough to climb. It was a cold and miserable night, but about 80 people ascended the tower. Hopefully, they all returned! (It's OK - we checked before we locked up!)

In addition to all these happenings, we also had two more large private tours. Thank you Dan Maxson, John Ollila, and Bob Manross. We were open for the Village Holiday Open House; thank you Cindy Shega and Mike Shaulis. Chris Yano at the Senior Center let us have a table at the annual Craft Fair; thanks to Jan Merrick for being there to sell merchandise.

Just after Thanksgiving, the Bertones and their elves will be making the museum and tower aglow for Christmas. We will be open for Harbor Holidays on December 2, waiting for the Grinch.

We have had some other issues; we had to replace the hot water tank and the boiler. The wooden yard of the USS Michigan mast broke in two pieces due to deterioration of the wood; it has been taken down and will be repaired. We have new tower steps and exterior basement stairs. Next year, we will need to replace the roof on the garage and keeper's house. We will be looking into grants for additional funding. We have also re-assessed our membership fees and packages. Thanks to Cindy Shega and her committee.

We have had just under 4000 visitors from all over the USA and several countries. We have had a very busy year and appreciate the support of all our members and the community. As always, donations to the annual fund or specific projects are greatly appreciated. All of us at the marine museum want to extend a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Peaceful New Year to everyone.

Come and visit us when we re-open in May 2024. Look for some new and exciting changes as we continue to preserve and tell the stories of Fairport Harbor and the Great Lakes.



Restoration of the USS Michigan's Mainmast

The upper section of the USS Michigan's mainmast the wooden crosspiece, (the yard) broke in half due to deterioration of the wood and was taken down after it suddenly broke in October. The historical society was planning to do some restoration work in the spring but the wooden mast broke and was hanging and causing a safety issue. The repair and restoration work will cost in the thousands of dollars and will seriously deplete our restoration funds. We don't know how long the restoration will take. The wooden mast is made of mahogany, which must be special ordered. We will be seeking grants and donations to offset the repair costs.

In the picture John Ollila inspects the broken mast of the USS Michigan. The USS Michigan was the first iron-hulled ship in the U.S. Navy. It sailed the Great Lakes during the Civil War. It was later re-named the Wolverine. When the ship was scrapped in 1949 members of the FHMM were able to salvage the foremast. You can follow the progress of the restoration on our facebook page.



Witches Day Out and the Haunted Tower

On Saturday, October 14th the Historical Society participated in Fairport Harbor's first Witches Day Out. The museum was open Noon till 6:00pm and we sold hot dogs, chips and water. Visitors could climb the Haunted Tower, have a tarot card reading, or have their face painted. There was also a photo op with Frenchy the Pirate. Volunteers dressed in Halloween costumes and decorated the museum and tower for the event. The Haunted Tower was also open on Halloween night. Children could enter the tower if accompanied by an adult and possibly have an encounter with Sentinel the ghost cat.

Thank You to everyone who helped make this first Witches Day Out and Halloween night a success.

Harbor Holidays and A Day With The Grinch

The Grinch returns to the lighthouse tower on Saturday, December 2nd. Fairport Harbor's annual "A Day With the Grinch" starts at 11:00 a.m. The Grinch will make his way through town and at 5:45 p.m. he will climb to the top of the Lighthouse to read "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" by Dr. Seuss. From 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. there will be a tree lighting in Veterans Park followed by a visit from Santa.

**The Museum and Gift Shop will be open
Saturday, December 2nd
Noon - 6:00pm during
Fairport Harbor - Harbor Holidays**



The Lighthouse & Museum Hosted Another Wedding Ceremony on the Lighthouse Hill

The day began with gray skies, chilly temperature, and rain. But by the time the ceremony began, the weather was clear. Once again, the grounds provided a lovely setting for Kristen and Bryce to exchange their vows witnessed by a lovely wedding party and an audience of family and friends. The bride and groom climbed up the lighthouse tower as a married couple to wave to well wishers.

Best wishes to them in their new life together.

Fairport Transportation History, part 3 by Lee Silvi

This is the third in a multi-part series that will provide an overview of the various public transportation options that have been known to exist in Fairport history. Part 2 appeared in the August 2023 issue of A View Through the Portal.

As mentioned in part 2, the Depot-Fairport Line (aka the Painesville-Fairport Railway, among other names) was formed in 1893. It was one of many point-to-point “local lines”. Another nearby example would be the Ashtabula-Harbor Line. But within a couple years all of this would start to change, as various companies, such as the Everett-Moore Syndicate would start to purchase many of these local lines and connect them to their developing regional systems. The entire system could allow one to travel (with connections to other lines) from Fairport to Painesville, then east to Ashtabula, west through Cleveland to Toledo, south into Central and Southern Ohio, and points beyond. One could even travel to other states, using transfer points. As a side note, despite urban legend, one could not take the Interurban south of Painesville direct to Chardon, or anywhere in Geauga County. That trip would require going west to a transfer point on Cleveland’s east side.

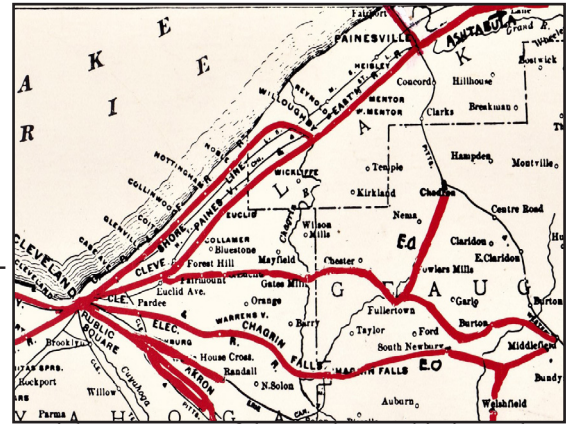
There were several interurban systems. The system that served the lakeshore areas of Northeast Ohio, including Fairport Harbor, was the Cleveland, Painesville, and Eastern (CP&E). The CP&E was chartered on 4/25/1895 and took over the Depot-Fairport line on 7/1/1896. In 1896 the massive trestle over the Chagrin River was completed, allowing travel west to Willoughby, and the Ivanhoe Station in Cleveland. The Interurban also had freight and mail cars, so it was not just for passengers. The original CP&E main line had stations in Euclid, Wickliffe, Willoughby, Mentor, and Painesville, with many designated stops in between. In October 1903 a subsidiary line, the Cleveland, Painesville & Ashtabula (CP&A), extended the route further east to Ashtabula, where passengers could transfer to other interurbans traveling to Erie and Buffalo.

Interurban transportation was not without tragedy. On August 7, 1918 CP&E Car 35 was traveling over the St. Clair Street bridge where a collision occurred between it and a horse drawn wagon. Reports state the wagon was knocked against a girder on the iron bridge, and the bridge fell twenty five feet to the water. There were no fatalities, and the two horses pulling the wagon swam to shore. The bridge was rebuilt as a concrete arch bridge, and the line reopened.

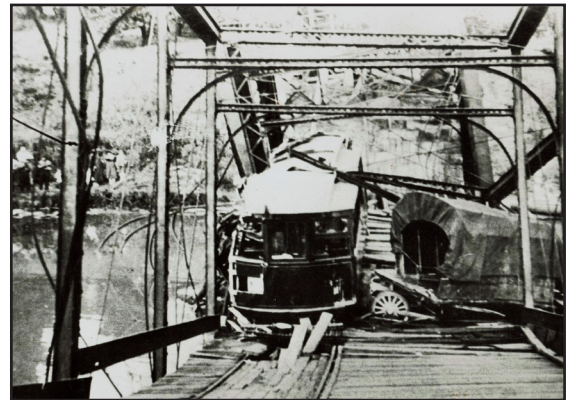
As trucks became more popular in the 1920s interurban freight transport declined. Likewise buses and private autos led to rapidly decreased ridership. Financial losses in 1923 and 1924 spelled the beginning of the end for the CP&E. The spur from Fairport to Painesville was abandoned in 1924. The CP&A shut down in January 1926 and the CP&E made its final run on May 20, 1926. In many areas the tracks were not pulled up, and were merely paved over. That could include some of the former trackage right here in Fairport. As a nearby example, in August 2019 tracks were uncovered during construction work in the middle of the road, in front of Perkin’s in Painesville.

Some CP&E properties in Lake County have been repurposed. The carbarn for the Fairport-Painesville spur can still be found on Railroad Street in Painesville, but the turntable is gone. Up to six passenger cars and one baggage car were kept at this location, as needed. The CP&E Headquarters and ticket office in Willoughby was moved forward to 4069 Erie Street. Sol is located in a former powerhouse, and the former Willoughby Brewing Company was the car barn. The Mentor ticket office and waiting room at 8706 Mentor Ave is now a tattoo parlor. Many other examples exist but are not included here due to space limitations.

Next issue: Bus transportation and a horrific bus/train tragedy



Partial system map of the Northeast Ohio interurbans



1918 St. Clair Street bridge collapse



Interurban making the turn from Second St. to High St.

Membership Information

It is time for our Annual Membership Drive. We appreciate all who have joined and continue to join every year. Our Society runs solely on funds received from our Annual Membership Drive, Annual Fund Drive, Grants, Donations, Admission fees, and Gift Shop sales. We are volunteer run and are always looking for more volunteers.

We have updated and changed the membership categories to be more in tune with the needs of the members and to help attract new members. Listed below are the new membership categories for 2024.

NOTE: Membership is annual and runs from January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024 (no matter what time of the year you send in your membership fees or join). Will need to be renewed each year unless a Lifetime Member.

\$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)

Membership includes:

- Free Admission as noted above.
- Quarterly Newsletter either via email or mail depending on what you indicated on your membership form.
- 10% discount on all gift shop items.
- Ability to attend our monthly membership meetings.
(4th Wednesday of each month at 6 pm at the Marine Museum (except November and December))
- Potential to run for office on Board or as a Trustee after attending 3 meetings in a year.

Volunteer Opportunities: Working in gift shop when museum is open.

Helping with Building and Grounds.

Helping with Publicity.

Helping with Preservation.

Helping with Digitization of our many records and artifacts.

Leading Group Tours.

Newsletter.

Fundraising.

Special Event Help.

Current Membership Totals:

Regular: 50 - Couples: 27

Patron: 5 - Life: 95

Honorary: 3

Total as of October 2023: 207

Thank you for your continued and new support of our wonderful Society.

In Memoriam

Louise M. Nagy, age 87, of Fairport Harbor, passed away Nov. 23, 2023, at Ames Hospice House after a long illness. Born Oct. 28, 1936, in Painesville to John and Margaret (nee: Veres) Nagy, she had been a lifelong area resident of Fairport Harbor. Louise was a private secretary with Maxus Energy, formerly the Diamond - Shamrock Corp., retiring after 37 years. She graduated from Fairport Harding High School where she was the Head Majorette for four years before graduating from Lakeland Community College. She was a lifelong member of the Hungarian Reformed Church in Fairport where she was an active member of the Women's Fellowship and Bible Study and was the organist from 1963 to 1972, continuing as the substitute organist until recently. Louise was a member of the Fairport Harbor Historical Society where she was a former Trustee and Membership Committee Chairwoman.

A funeral service will be held at 11am on Tues, Nov. 28, 2023, at the Hungarian Reformed Church, 601 Plum Street, with burial to follow at Evergreen Cemetery in Painesville. Friends may call from 10:30am until the time of the service at the church on Tuesday. Donations suggested to the Hungarian Reformed Church or the Fairport Harbor Historical Society. Obituary, online condolences and memorial gifts are available at www.marcfburfuneralhome.com

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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