

SODUS BAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY Newsletter

Fall 2020



President's Message

When the gardens at the picturesque Sodus Bay Lighthouse get put to bed for the season, it won't be long before we begin to see random snowflakes blowing on the shore with the cold wind from across the lake. It's that time. Seasons are in transition and it's time to be sure the fireplace is at the ready and there is an ample supply of dry firewood and kindling. Morning coffee conversations transition from lake water levels and salmon fishing to anticipation of fall hunting, Sodus Bay ice fishing, and recipes for apple and pumpkin pies. The migration South is evident. Butterflies are gone, birds are going, and the local snowbirds are winterizing their summer nests and packing their favorite casual summer clothes for the trip to warmer places South and West.

Meanwhile, at the Sodus Bay Lighthouse Museum, there may appear to be little going on, but behind the thick limestone walls there is often a beehive of volunteer activity. We now have 20 different committees led by dedicated SBHS Board of Trustee members managing the day to day Historical Society and Lighthouse Museum needs and engaged in planning a menu of activities and events for next year.

The freshly painted gazebo is now dressed in new winter white. Thanks to all who helped with



the makeover. The Pomeroy Fund grant has been successfully concluded. \$6000 was raised in just seven weeks. Again, thanks to all who donated so generously.

Plans are being drawn to expand interior lighthouse space for new historic exhibits. The Curatorial Committee is meeting weekly to update our collection records and catalogue donated artifacts. Soon the committee will begin designing interesting exhibits for the new exhibit areas. We are searching out grants to help fund a central air conditioning system to protect our collections from damaging seasonal swings in temperature and humidity.

Our Gift Shop Committee has been running sales to move out older inventory and make room for lots of fresh merchandise which will soon be featured on our Sodus Bay Lighthouse website.

Outdoor garden weddings for the 2021 and 2022 seasons are being booked. We are also contracting talented musical groups for our free Sunday concerts on the lighthouse lawn for the 2021 season.

Membership renewals are constantly being worked on and needed membership revenue is on the rise. We have welcomed six new **SBHS Lifetime Members** so far this year!

Thank you to everyone who generously helps in so many ways.

Hope everyone has a great fall and winter!

Bill Singer

President, Sodus Bay Historical Society

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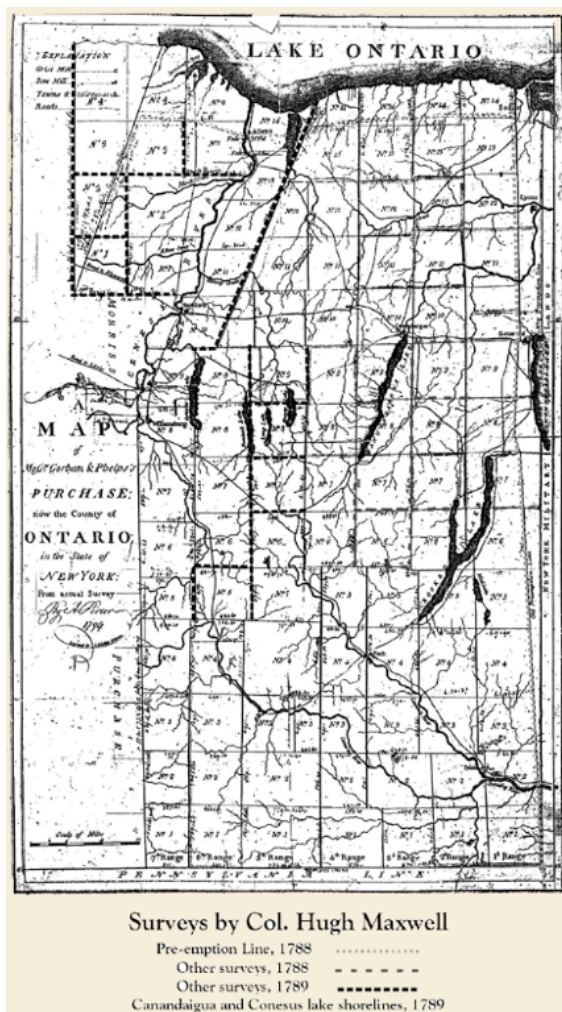
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In addition to grants, our funding comprises donations and membership dues, which are tax-deductible as allowed by law.

Enslaved on Sodus Bay Part 1

Tom Lightfoot, Sodus Point Historian

On May 4, 2019 there was a wonderful gathering to celebrate the installation of a roadside marker in front of Steger Haus restaurant on the corner of North Geneva and Halcus Roads in Sodus. The marker commemorates what has become known as the Maxwell Settlement. Sixty acres in this area developed into a black community starting about 1813 with the people enslaved by Peregrine Fitzhugh who were freed by his wife Elizabeth after his death in 1811. Others joined this community with some seeking refuge from slavery. The community was viable into the early part of the 1900s. In her book, *Final Stop, Freedom!* Marjorie Perez relates numerous stories about those who lived in this settlement. While many of the descendants of this community have scattered across the country many others remained and their descendants are part of Sodus and the neighboring communities.



Because of this significant community in our midst, we have some knowledge of enslaved people and their enslavers during the early years of Sodus Bay.

Captain Peregrine Fitzhugh, a Maryland plantation owner and aide-de-camp to George Washington during the Revolutionary War, was one of the wealthiest people in the country. Plantation land was becoming depleted throughout the south from growing the same crops year after year, exhausting the nutrients in the soil. This along with other economic pressures were very likely on Fitzhugh's mind when Colonel Charles Williamson came along promoting the vast amounts of virgin land in New York that he was charged with selling for the London Association (also known as the Pulteney Association). Fitzhugh bought land from Williamson on the south shore of Sodus Bay. Moving first to Geneva in 1799, he and his family moved to Sodus Bay within a few years after the land was cleared by the 30 enslaved people he brought from Maryland. (More about Fitzhugh

can be found at <https://historicsoduspoint.com/?s=Peregrine+Fitzhugh>)

Colonel Charles Williamson is better known to us, locally, because he founded Sodus Point in 1794. Williamson believed it was necessary to have accommodations in place to attract and support new buyers and settlers. Williamson built a mill, a storehouse, a wharf, and a tavern. (The tavern was on the site of present-day Silver Waters Bed and Breakfast). This was the beginning of the Village of Sodus Point. The London Association owned 1,264,000 acres purchased in 1791 from Robert Morris who had bought the 6,000,000-acre Phelps Gorham Purchase. Phelps and Gorham purchased the land from Massachusetts and from the Haudenosaunee. This territory went from the Pennsylvania border to Lake Ontario and from the pre-emption line to the Genesee River. Today's Pre-emption Road follows the pre-emption line and marks the border between Sodus and Huron.

Williamson's first forays into the area started along wagon routes from Albany. Once he reached what is now Utica, his expedition plunged into deeper wilderness and had to follow Indian trails. Williamson switched from wagons to sledges to finally get to the association's land. Later, this trail was widened into a road for wagons but before that, Williamson opened a southern route into the land along the Susquehanna River and through the Appalachian Mountains to what is now Painted Post, NY. This arduous task was undertaken with workers recruited from Germany enticed by promises of land. They were led by experienced frontiersman and Daniel Boone's cousin, Benjamin Patterson. Once he established these routes into the territory, Williamson quickly went about building inns about a day's journey apart for travelers to eat and rest. Eventually, towns grew up at these key points.

Even though Williamson spent a lot of the London Association's money and put tremendous effort into making the territory more palatable to buyers, sales were slow. He decided to approach southern plantation owners whom he had met during preparations to forge his southern route. He was impressed by the slave economy in the south and thought it might work for the association land. While Fitzhugh was the first person he approached, there were others. Captain William Helm, a plantation owner from Prince William County, Virginia bought land on the southeast shore of the bay. Much of what we know of Helm is documented by one of his formerly enslaved people, Austin Steward, who wrote the book *Twenty-Two Years a Slave and Forty Years a Freeman*. In his book, Steward relates stories of his life on Helm's plantation in Virginia, the move to Sodus Bay, then to Bath, NY, his escape from Helm, his successful life as the first black businessman in Rochester, and black community he helped develop in Ontario, Canada called the Wilberforce Colony. Steward was also a mentor to Frederick Douglas and a staunch abolitionist. (See Rosa Fox's article for more about Steward.)

Steward tells many stories that reveal a lot about enslaved people's lives and treatment in New York as well as about the enslavers, especially William Helm. Captain Helm employed someone to oversee his enslaved people, preferring to engage in more pleasant activities himself. The overseer on his Sodus Bay property was particularly cruel. Being in New York, where slavery was in the process of being eliminated, made the

relationship between the owner, overseer, and the enslaved people different than in the south. Steward relates the following story.

Williams, enslaved by Helm was strong, athletic, and a good workman. Williams worked on Helm's land on the east side of the bay. One day the overseer found him on the west side visiting some other men.

He immediately walked up to him and asked him some question, to which Williams made no reply. Attended, as he always was, by his ferocious bulldog, he flourished his cowhide (whip) in great wrath and demanded an instant reply, but received none, whereupon he struck the slave a blow with the cowhide. Instantly Williams sprang and caught him by the throat and held him writhing in his vise-like grasp, until he succeeded in getting possession of the cowhide, with which he gave the overseer such a flogging as slaves seldom get. Williams was seized at once by the dog who endeavored to defend his brutal master, but the other slaves came to the rescue, and threw the dog into a huge fire which was nearby, from which, after a singeing, he ran off, howling worse than his master when in the hands of Williams.

Williams quickly rowed off in a boat with the overseer trying to shoot him from the shore without success. After this incident, the overseer left Helm's service. From then on Helm took on the overseer's duties himself and soon moved from Sodus Point to Bath where he bought two or three established farms. Steward is very revealing about his owner's character as well. "Capt. Helm was not a good businessman," says Steward, "unless we call horse racing, fox-hunting, and card-playing, business." This eventually led to Helm losing everything once he was in Bath. He went into debt, his slaves ran away, and he lost his property. Captain Helm ended up a broken man and in jail for trying to rebuild his fortunes by capturing runaway slaves for bounty and kidnapping free blacks in New York and selling them into slavery in the south.

Enslaved on Sodus Bay - Part 2 will appear in the Winter issue of the SBHS Newsletter.

HELM – WILLIAMSON FRIENDSHIP

The following funny but morbid story from Austin Steward reveals Helm's relationship with Williamson.

Captain enjoyed himself in receiving calls from wealthy neighbors, and in drinking what he called 'grog,' which was no more nor less than whiskey, of which he was extremely fond, notwithstanding his cellar contained the choicest wines and liquors. To show his partiality for his favorite beverage, I will relate an incident which occurred between Capt. Helm and Col. Charles Williamson. The Colonel, believing wine to be a healthier beverage than whiskey, accepted a bet made by Capt. Helm, of one thousand dollars, that he would live longer and drink whiskey than the Colonel, who drank wine. Shortly after, Col. Williamson was called home by the British government, and while on his way to England, died, and his body, preserved in a cask of brandy, was taken home. The bet Capt. Helm made considerable effort to get but was unsuccessful. Austin Steward, *Twenty Years a Slave and Forty Years a Freeman*

Colonel Williamson not only sold land for the London Association but he bought land for himself. He was also given quite a bit of land by the association as compensation for his work when he was replaced by Robert Troup in 1801. Given his close relationship with enslavers and his own need to clear and cultivate his land, it is not a surprise to find out that Williamson became a slave owner as well.

Austin Steward – From Enslavement to Entrepreneur and Social Reform Leader

Rosa Fox, Town of Huron Historian

*Note: This article was composed a year ago for inclusion in a 2019 SBHS **Flash!** to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Steward's death, February 15, 1869.*

The very same year Frederick Douglass was born to enslavement in Talbot County, Maryland in 1818, a grocery and dry goods store opened on the east bank of the Genesee River in Rochester, New York (then Brighton) on the corner of Main Street across from the present-day Riverside Convention Center. The owner and operator was Austin Steward, the first African American to open a business in this soon to become bustling canal town. Some thirty years later, the two men would meet - advocates for political reform, especially the rights and freedom of African American enslaved persons.



Austin Steward was born in 1793, his parents were the slaves of Captain William Helm of Prince William County, Virginia. Helm, a habitual gambler of both card playing and horse racing, sometimes experienced sizeable monetary losses. To escape his debt, Helm sold his Virginia plantation. At the encouragement of his friend, Colonel Charles Williamson, Helm journeyed north to Genesee Country where he hoped to find a more profitable life. His seventy to one hundred slaves joined him on the journey. History books are in conflict as to the date Helm arrived at Sodus Bay. McIntosh's **History of Wayne County 1789 - 1877** notes Helm's arrival at Sodus Bay around 1796. Other writings say Helm came north around 1801. Steward would have been eight in 1801, more ready for his job as Helm's errand boy. Steward's autobiography, **Twenty-two Years a Slave and Forty Years a Free Man** details his life as an enslaved person, his transition to freedom and becoming an activist for the cause to end enslavement.

Helm and his accompanying travelers spent a night or so at Moses and Jabez Sill's inn located at what was to become Troupville in 1801 and then in 1826 Sodus Point. Helm bought considerable property at the head of Sodus Bay at what is now Resort. The Jim

Thomas Farm along Ridge Road, Resort, was part of the "Helm Plantation". Helm's plantation may have gone as far north as the old Catchpole Farm - now Oak Park Marina and also included property on the west side of the bay.

Captain Helm is considered the first "settler" in Huron. Steward writes: "Provisions were scarce and could not be procured for cash in that section. There was no corn to be had, and we had but little left. We had no neighbors to assist us in this trying time, and we came near starvation. True, the wild, romantic region in which we were located abounded in game — elk, deer, bear, panther, and wolves, roamed abroad through the dense forest, in great abundance, but the business of the slaves was not hunting or fishing, but clearing the land, preparatory to raising crops of grain the coming season."¹

Helm's slaves were not skilled or of a physical stamina necessary for the work of felling trees nor for living in such a wilderness. The nearly impossible living conditions resulted in Helm moving to Bath in Steuben County, where he was able to purchase two farms in a territory far tamer and more populated than Sodus Bay. Bringing his family north and aided by the hard labor of his slaves, Helm settled at Bath to a life more akin to his tastes.

The tale of Austin Steward's fortunate escape to freedom in 1814, and the people who assisted him along the way is an extensive story. Through much desperation and determination, Steward eventually wound up with Otis Comstock in Farmington, New York, a notable Quaker abolitionist. Steward was treated kindly by Comstock, achieved his freedom, and "acquired quite a knowledge of reading, writing, arithmetic, and had made a small beginning in English grammar."¹

Of 1817, Steward wrote:

"commenced a new business—that of peddling in the village of Rochester such articles as my employer, Mr. Comstock, desired to sell: the products of his farm - wheat, corn, oats, butter, cheese, meat, and poultry - all of which met a ready sale, generally for cash at liberal prices. That market was then but little known to the generality of farmers, and the enterprising gentlemen of that place, were desirous of encouraging commerce with the surrounding country, offered every encouragement in their power. Hence, we found it a profitable business, which I continued in for several months."¹

Though it pained Steward to leave the Comstock family, he decided to go into business for himself, building a store on the land he purchased in the town of Brighton (soon to become Rochesterville, and finally Rochester) where Steward continued to sell goods supplied by his friend Otis Comstock.

Slavery was fully abolished in New York State on July 4, 1827. In Rochester, Austin Steward was chosen to deliver the Emancipation speech on July 5, 1827 at Johnson's Square, now Washington Square Park near the Strong Museum. Local Steward researcher, Chester Freeman says Steward's "oration encouraged people of color to educate

themselves, become entrepreneurs, and live lives of integrity based on faith."² An advocate for voting rights, temperance, and for the abolition of slavery, Steward continued to host reform meetings. He was a subscription agent for **Freedom's Journal** distributed across upstate New York via the Erie Canal. Steward was elected Vice President of the first national "Colored Convention" in Philadelphia in 1830.

Slavery continued to be an important cause to be eliminated. Much work needed to be done, even in the north and in Canada. In 1831, Steward left Rochester to help the Wilberforce community in Canada. Named after William Wilberforce, who endeavored to abolish slave trade in England, the Canadian colony was established in 1829 as a refuge for American enslaved persons. Steward spent six years at Wilberforce, returning to Rochester in 1837, a decade before Frederick Douglass would arrive. During the years prior to the Civil War, abolitionist activities brought the two men together. Steward served as a strong and inspirational mentor to the younger abolitionist.

Steward moved "home" to Canandaigua after his store in Rochester was destroyed by fire in 1838. He "taught school, lectured, wrote, and worked with anti-slavery groups."² Steward's autobiography **Twenty-two Years a Slave and Forty Years a Free Man** was published in 1857, nearly a decade before the end of the Civil War. Editions continued to be released, with a fourth edition released in 1867.

Steward died in 1869 - four years after the Civil War ended. There are several sites in Rochester dedicated to the memory of Steward. In February 2019, there was a celebration in Canandaigua of the 150th anniversary of Steward's death. At the event made possible by Ontario County Historical Society, a historic marker was presented. Dedicated to Steward, the marker is placed at Steward's gravesite in the Canandaigua West Avenue Cemetery. Referred to as an "Unsung Hero", Austin Steward's role in history, his moral strength against adversity, and his capacity as a leader of reform truly places him in the family of great individuals who had a positive and lasting impact on our nation.

1. You can read Steward's autobiography, **Twenty-two Years a Slave and Forty Years a Free Man**, online at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/11137/11137-h/11137-h.htm>.
2. **Austin Steward - A Man of Integrity** by Chester Freeman may be read online at <https://www.lifeinthefingerlakes.com/austin-steward-a-man-of-integrity/>

Forecastle Explorations

The forecastle of a ship is directly aft (behind) the bow of a ship and forward of the foremast - used for shelter and storage for lines, anchors, machinery, or – uncomfortable as it may seem - quarters for sailors. The SBHS Newsletter Forecastle Explorations will provide additional sources of information relevant to the featured articles and more, and to further discovering the vast history of our Great Sodus Bay and surrounding region.

Additional Reading on Abolition and the Underground Railroad

- **Final Stop, Freedom!** by Marjory Allen Perez – The story of the Underground Railroad experience in Wayne County. available through Sodus Bay Lighthouse Museum Store
- **Freedom: A Shared Sacrifice** by Marjory Allen Perez – The story of the African America men of western New York who served in the Union Army between 1863-1865.
- Historic Sodus Point website - (www.historicsoduspoint.org). Articles and poetry by local authors.

Wayne County Bicentennial Musings

Wayne County was established April 11, 1823. In the last issue of the SBHS Newsletter, eight towns established before 1823 were listed with the dates they were erected.

Palmyra & Sodus – 1789; Williamson – 1802; Ontario –1807; Wolcott – 1810; Lyons & Galen –1811; and Macedon - 1823. Palmyra, Sodus, Wolcott, and Galen were the first four parent towns. Williamson and Lyons divided from Sodus. Macedon divided from Palmyra.

After the 1823 formation of Wayne County from Ontario and Seneca Counties, the following towns were established:

Savannah – established from Galen November 24, 1824

Arcadia – established from Lyons February 15, 1825

Marion – established from Williamson March 18, 1825

Rose – established from Wolcott February 5, 1826

Huron – established from Wolcott February 25, 1826

Butler – established from Wolcott February 26, 1826

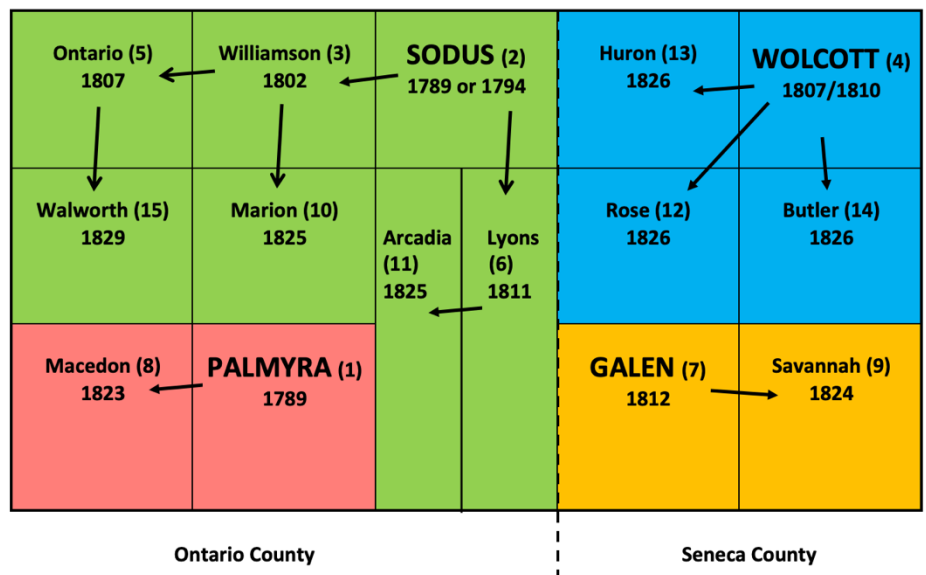
Walworth – established from Ontario April 20, 1829

Reflecting on this transition over forty years from four towns to fifteen, a map of the division process was created to help envision the changes.

For more information or to schedule a program on the Wayne County Bicentennial -

Visit

<https://web.co.wayne.ny.us/index.php/wayne-county-bicentennial/>



Story Corner

By You

Great Stories from Around Great Sodus Bay

A Special Invitation: We invite you – the reader – to submit stories about unique reminiscences, events, experiences, news, and other Great Sodus Bay related tales. Please send your creative offerings to Rosa Fox – foxmuse@aol.com. Our newsletter team will review submissions for inclusion in future issues.

*Note: Last issue's excerpt of **Sodus Bay the Beautiful** by Lewis Morris Philo can be enjoyed online at the Sodus Bay Lighthouse YouTube channel. The complete Philo travelogue, narrated by Rosa Fox, is accompanied by historic postcards and photos. On the YouTube channel, you will also find a delightful tour of the Sodus Bay Lighthouse Gardens compiled by Tom Lightfoot.*

“Chestnuts are Ripe and Chestnut Thieves are Plentiful!”

Rosa Fox

While looking for something totally unrelated, I came across the line above, which struck me as a little more than unusual, really quite interesting, and just a little appropriate for the season. The short item, found in the **Sodus Record** of October 25, 1901 continues - “The price paid (for chestnuts) is three dollars per bushel.” Yes, you read that right – three dollars per bushel!

The poem below was published a year later in the November 7, 1902 **Sodus Record**.

Leaves and Chestnuts

Now the autumn leaves are falling,
Falling, falling fast;
Soon the happy days to wander
Woodlands will be past.
Over hill and valley glitters
Glory as the sun.
Touches, range or tree with splendor
As of conquest won.
When away now to the mountains,
Who will get there first?
Burrs are bursting, leaves are crimsoned –
O! the spirit thirsts.
For the rustle of the dead leaves,
As the squirrel bears

Nuts to sore for winter cracking –
Wonder how he fares.

Leaves are brown and leaves are yellow,
Leaves are purple, leaves are red,
Yonder are the burrs of challenge,
Get a club, beware your head!

Chestnuts, forest leaves, and weary
Feet are ours when day is o'er,
But we glow, and we are stronger,
And this autumn comes no more.

May our lives be all as joyous
Ere cold death the body grieves –
Joyous as the autumn forest,
Ripened nuts and crimson leaves.

Leaves and Chestnuts was “borrowed” from a magazine called **Green’s Fruit Grower** - published from 1881 to 1917 in Rochester, New York by Charles A. Green. Green (1843-1924) was a prominent Rochesterian who, among his many endeavors and community services, was a nurseryman, art collector, and editor.

By 1940, disease had wiped out the American chestnut. From the “Observer” column of the **Sodus Record**, October 10, 1940:

“How many can remember the parties we used to have to collect chestnuts in this section? Years ago, the chestnut crop in this locality, especially around Sodus Bay, was large and after the first heavy frost we used to drive to the bay section to pick up chestnuts that had fallen to the ground. After we had picked up as many as we could find, we would throw clubs into the trees to jar loose the nuts that had not fallen in spite of the frost. I used to enjoy those trips and I presume quite a few of my readers did. I recall with pleasure those chestnut parties of years ago. I hardly ever see any chestnuts on the market. It was quite different in the old days when Charlie Gramkee had his windows filled with these delicious nuts at 5 cents a bag. Times have changed. Indeed, they have.”

The “Observer’s” essay provides some explanation of the fifth stanza of the poem -
Yonder are the burrs of challenge,
Get a club, beware your head!



*Engraving by John Andrew
Chestnutting, September 29, 1870*

The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF) website states that “more than a century ago, nearly four billion American chestnut trees were growing in the eastern U.S. They were among the largest, tallest, and fastest-growing trees. The wood was rot-resistant, straight-grained, and suitable for furniture, fencing, and building. The nuts fed billions of wildlife, people and their livestock. It was almost a perfect tree, that is, until a blight fungus killed it more than a century ago. The chestnut blight has been called the greatest ecological disaster to strike the world’s forests in all of history. The American chestnut tree survived all adversaries for 40 million years, then disappeared within 40.”

The SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry at Syracuse hosts an American Chestnut Project. The program has developed a blight-tolerant American chestnut tree and is working to restore this treasured cultural symbol to the forest ecosystems of the eastern United States. To learn more about this valuable program and The American Chestnut Foundation online, see the resources below.

Old chestnut stumps still attempt to grow new trunks. As the new sprouts grow, they are attacked by the blight after a few years, killing the new sprouts back to the stump. The remaining hardy roots try to grow new sprouts again which continue to die back. This has been going on go decades. There are a few hardy wild natural chestnut trees that have survived to this day. Nuts from those trees are grown and their offspring are producing trees that are hoped will be blight resistant.

Let us imagine a day when our descendants will be able to harvest a crop of American chestnuts, have the pleasure (ouch!) of stepping on one of those burred nut shells, and enjoy roasting chestnuts over an open fire. As far as throwing a club at the tree to plummet the undropped fruit to the ground – well that is another discussion altogether!



The American Chestnut Foundation:

<https://www.acf.org/the-american-chestnut/history-american-chestnut/>

SUNY College of Environmental Science & Forestry American Chestnut Program:

<https://www.esf.edu/chestnut/>

SUNY ESF Video on the Chestnut restoration project

<https://ensemble.syr.edu/hapi/v1/contents/permalinks/a9A7BmLz/view>.

*Library of Congress
L. Prang & Co., publisher
1885*

Reading Room

By Martha Lightfoot

Blue Mind by Dr. Wallace J. Nichols
Little, Brown, and Company, 2014

Water attracts and fascinates us. We know almost instinctively that being close to water can reduce stress, increase feelings of peace, and increase creativity. Why does proximity to water calm our minds and set our bodies at ease?

Blue Mind, written by Dr. Wallace J. Nichols, transforms how we think about the benefits of being on or near water and how our bodies can experience positive changes. Nichols documents current breakthrough neuroscience and medical facts with convincing personal stories from prominent scientists, athletes, military veterans, and artists. He interviews numerous



researchers from Jacques Cousteau's grandson and granddaughter, Fabien and Celine Cousteau, to Van Curaza, a successful businessman who coordinates a program called *Amazing Surf Adventures*. Celine Cousteau says, "The sea, once it casts its spell, does indeed hold us in its net of wonder forever." She continues to relate that being near to water can enhance performance and personal success, decrease anxiety, induce peace, tranquility, and expand compassion.

Dr. Nichols is a marine biologist, activist, and research associate at the California Academy of Sciences. He has written scientific research papers and articles on the benefits of being close to water and that mental health and happiness can be significantly improved for even short periods. Through his and other marine biologists' research, we gradually understand that one's brain is hardwired to react in a positive manner to water.

At an early age, Nichols recognized that the ocean stirred a sense of peacefulness for him. From playing as a child in all kinds of water close to the New Jersey shore to scuba diving expeditions, Nichols understood that enjoying the water was far more than an amusing and fun pastime. It was a lively and natural way for him to rest and revitalize his emotional and physical health. Nichols realized anyone can naturally achieve their own "blue mind" with ongoing effort. Throughout the book, he references how a "blue mind" can be achieved to decrease life stresses.

"Blue mind" describes the mildly meditative state we all experience when near, on, or under water. "Red mind" describes the anxious, overstimulated, and chaotic world around us. Nichols provides a long list of the benefits of a "blue mind" - giving an overall sense of well-being, lowering blood pressure, heart rate, and increasing breathing efficiency. Being close to the water can increase happiness, boost creativity, enhance conversations and dialogue, and provide a backdrop for important life issues. Sitting near the water quietly is beneficial for everyone.

Neuroplasticity is the brain's ability to change and grow throughout life. The human brain has a unique ability to reorganize itself by forming new connections between brain cells (neurons). A change in neural pathways and synapses occurs due to certain factors, like behavior, environment, or neural processes. During such changes, the brain engages in synaptic pruning - deleting the neural connections that are no longer necessary or useful, and strengthening the necessary ones. Our environment can change our brain for good or bad - blue or red. When we are close to water, the remodeling of the brain enables us to learn more effectively and appreciate new experiences. We forget the bad experiences such as failure or job stress and we can easily convert and transition to a "blue mind" state and state of happiness.

Nichols mentions that in, the United States, a new field of study is currently being developed as a career path - Aquatic Therapy- which is used to support treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), anxiety disorders, addiction, autism, and other disabilities.

Blue Mind reveals how to utilize water's remarkable benefits from oceans to swimming pools and reinforces our incredible connection to a vast natural world. As Nichols might say, by focusing on the good stuff in life, we can push the "red mind" out and live in the "blue mind"

world for a long time. “No matter where you live on this blue marble, it’s time to get your brain on water.” Sodus Bay and Lake Ontario provide an incredible resource that can refresh your body, mind, and soul. A good read!

To learn more - you may want to check out Dr. Nichols’ broadcasts found on numerous programs like National Public Radio (NPR), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), National Geographic, and Animal Planet relating the benefits of water and the transformations that occur – influencing all walks of life and diverse populations.

SBHS Committee News

The SBHS Board of Directors expands to include a number of committees working diligently to assure the “jobs” of the Lighthouse Museum are completed. Many capable hands provide care and maintenance for the grounds, building - inside and out, artifacts and collections, and museum store - just to name a few - a work of passion, productivity, and preservation. Sodus Bay Lighthouse Museum visitors experience a historic site of great significance to our region through the lens of beauty, care, education, and conservancy. The following committee news will give you an idea of how busy SBHS members have been this season.

Board Development – Tom Lightfoot

The Board Development Committee is responsible for finding and recommending candidates for board vacancies. With a vacancy opening after Bill Singer became President, Rosa Fox was recommended for the seat and approved by the board to fill the rest of Bill’s term, which ended in August. Four candidates: Nellie Gardner, Rosa Fox, Gerry Palmer and Deb Lattime were proposed and approved by the board to replace members who would finish their final term. Bill Singer and Tom Lightfoot were nominated and approved by the board for second terms. All of these candidates were approved by the general membership at the annual meeting on Zoom in August. At the first board meeting in September the committee nominated, Bill Singer for President, Jane Peachy for Vice President, Sue Bassage for Treasurer and Deb Lattime for Secretary. They were approved by the board and are this year’s officers.

Curatorial – Nellie Gardner & Martha Lightfoot

For the past six Friday afternoons, we have been working on coming to an understanding of the curatorial aspects of the Sodus Bay Historical Society and Lighthouse Museum. Our main job so far has been to orient ourselves as to how the collections are received, recorded, tracked and accessioned. We attended a meeting at the Sodus Library with other local historians and librarians to discuss collections management. Rosa Fox joined us to let us know what had been done previously and has agreed to rejoin the curatorial team. We are tracking down items which have been loaned out or are stored off-site. The Lighthouse Museum has wonderful artifacts representing the vibrant and industrious life and history around Sodus Bay. We hope to catalog these items so we can sort them and have more rotating displays showcasing a variety of aspects of life on Sodus Bay. We will be reaching out in the future to request artifacts for certain categories and displays. If you are cleaning your attics, barns, basements, or garages, we would love to see what you have!

Buildings and Grounds – Tom Lightfoot

The end of the summer was a very active time for a few weeks. A great crew of scrappers, sanders and painters answered the call to spruce up the front porch and stain the gazebo. Here are a few pictures so you can see the results of the hard work put in by all.



The crew: Bill Singer, Jane Peachey, John Coco, Nellie Gardner, John Cooper, Tom Lightfoot, and the dynamic duo of Sue Bassage and Beth Palmer. Apologies if I missed anyone.

Other recent buildings & grounds news:

David Fox put a new door handle and lock on the front door. A new dehumidifier went into the basement. We've received 3 estimates for a full building air conditioning system that the board is looking to keep the building cool and help preserve all our artifacts, books and papers.

We are looking forward to a busy fall if we decide to install the air conditioning and make some proposed changes to room usage.

Special Buildings & Grounds Note: At the end of the summer, Tom Lighthouse and Sue Williamson presented a wonderful documentary on the Gardens of the Sodus Bay Lighthouse. If you have not had a chance to view that video, you may by going to this link.

<https://www.sodusbaylighthouse.org/blogs/news/sodus-bay-lighthouse-garden-walks>

Lighthouse Museum Store – Mary Quinn

On September . . . members of the Museum Store committee held a very successful yard sale on the Lighthouse grounds. The SBHS and LH Museum is hosting a virtual sale while also adding locally sourced merchandise weekly. “BEE” the first to know about our selection of honey products, perfect for Fall baking and holiday stocking stuffers. Check out our selection of Lake Ontario sea glass earrings and photographs of our beautiful lighthouse and area taken by a local artist. New t-shirt, sweatshirt and hoodie designs are arriving just in time for holiday gifting. Plan your online shopping with the Museum store in mind!

We truly appreciate your business and thank you for your support.

Visit the Lighthouse Museum Store - <https://www.sodusbaylighthouse.org/collections/all>

Membership – Jane Peachey

Thank you, members!!

It’s certainly been a difficult year! We are all facing new and different challenges. Making the decision to close our lighthouse and cancel special events this year was difficult but appropriate. The Board knew revenue from special events, museum admissions and gift shop sales would be lost this year. We immediately went into an austerity spending plan.

I am pleased to say that many of our members have continued to pay their annual membership dues, some increased their level of support, some renewed early and we recently acquired 5 new members. Of special note is the fact that we also acquired six new life members. Life membership is a one-time payment of \$1000. Life members no longer have to renew their membership. You are a member for life. The board now puts half of the \$1000 life membership payment into an endowment account to help with the long-term financial stability of our organization. We believe life members are worthy of special recognition and include their names on a plaque in the Chamberlain Room at the lighthouse.

Please consider becoming a life member in the future. Feel free to reach out to any board member for more information and your membership renewal notice includes the life member option. Such a contribution has such a positive effect!

Please let me extend my heartfelt thank you to everyone who joined us, renewed, increased their dues and especially to our new life members. We are so appreciative.



Thank You to Our Sodus Bay Lighthouse Sponsors

In addition to our loyal members, the Sodus Bay Historical Society relies on the generous contributions from area businesses and foundations for support. Given the economic toll the COVID-19 virus continues to take on our local businesses, it is important now, more than ever before, to show your appreciation by supporting these businesses. Their continued support will help the Sodus Bay Historical Society and Lighthouse Museum get through this difficult time and make possible future events and activities for post-COVID-19 seasons ahead. Thank you!

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A Gentle Breeze
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Skipper's Landing Restaurant
Ward Steel
Wegmans*

Bronze

*Bonnie Castle Farm
Bed & Breakfast
Burnap's Farm Market
& Garden Café
Captain Jack's Goodtime Tavern
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Sodus Bay Historical Society Members
Town of Huron
Town of Sodus
United States Lighthouse Society
Village of Sodus Point
William G. Pomeroy Foundation*

Humanities New York Grant

SBHS received a CARES grant from Humanities New York to help with our operating expenses during this pandemic. They asked us to produce a short video about the lighthouse and our work. In the linked video, graciously recorded by videographer Natatyana Conner, Board member Susie Earl talks about the lighthouse and the grant.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1C2z0sNfIRhfMozdMWaF6mBFkzknxnmIQ/view?usp=drivesdk>

