

Newsletter

Fall 2021



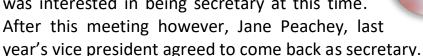
Summer Memories - Photo Credits: Julia Banfi (left, top right) and Sue Bassage (bottom right)

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President's Message

The Sodus Bay Historical Society officers were elected at the first board meeting of the year on September 15, 2021. Through a unanimous vote of the board, Sue Bassage, longtime treasurer for SBHS, was elected for another year and newly elected board member, Derek Poole, was elected Vice-President. Derek's family history goes back generations in the Sodus Bay area with strong connections to Alasa Farms. I was elected President. No one was interested in being secretary at this time.





Dan MacIntosh was elected as a trustee at the annual meeting in August. A retired California lawyer, Dan and his wife, P. Amanda Parsons, now reside in Rochester and have a cottage on Thornton Point. Amanda (Patti) grew up in Sodus and Sodus Point. Her mother, Elsie Parsons, was very involved with the lighthouse and SBHS for many, many years. Mary Quinn was also elected for her second term. Mary will continue overseeing the Gift Shop at the lighthouse, where she has done a phenomenal job making the remodeled shop very successful this past year. (To view my biography visit:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/11AZ3elOO5SnGQ9q79GG--rF6NN8evoceTsARftc M5I/edit)

The year is winding down after an incredible summer season. Anxiety over whether we could open at all because of COVID restrictions to the fear that all the renovations, cleaning, setting up displays and stocking the expanded gift shop would not be finished in time soon gave way to relief and then excitement as everything came together. The first visitors came through the door at the end of May for a great beginning to our sesquicentennial year. Visitor after visitor, whether new or old friend, marveled at the "new and improved" lighthouse. It is with incredible gratitude, I thank all the people who worked well beyond anything that could be expected of volunteers along with the friends and families who lent a hand when needed or just put up with the hours their spouses, partners or family members put into their "full-time job" at the lighthouse. While I started this journey with them, I had to have major back surgery and left them to finish up. What a fantastic job they did. They should all be very proud of what they accomplished in a year. What could have been a year off, something extraordinary happened instead. Thank you! I know all our members thank each of you as well. A special thanks goes to last year's SBHS President, Bill Singer, who, under great duress, got us through the toughest year anyone could imagine.



Sodus Bay Historical Society & Lighthouse Museum

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Museum

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As if this phenomenal effort wasn't enough, much more was accomplished. We hired two new staff members: Julia Banfi as Administrative Assistant and Chelsea Koehler as Visitor Services Associate. I hope many of you have met these two wonderful women who came on - just as we opened - and carried us through the summer season. With the uncertainty surrounding COVID, we decided to cut back on some of our usual summer programming, only offering Sunday Concerts, knowing this would result in lost income. To counteract this, a few board members shifted into high gear applying for numerous grants. Much to our surprise we started receiving one after another from a Federal PPP grant/loan to a Pomeroy grant to name a few. These provided the much-needed money to move forward on our renovations and daily operations.

These efforts are continuing into the new year. We have recently received word that we are being honored with the Stewardship Award from the Landmark Society of Western NY for our ongoing care and repair of the lighthouse. Looking forward, the board is hoping to finalize the effort begun more than a year ago to add central air conditioning to the lighthouse to stabilize the climate and better preserve our collection. We are planning on tower repairs - pending receipt of additional grant money. Discussions have begun on updating our By-Laws and it is time to develop a new Strategic Plan.

Very shortly we will begin to consider hiring a new Director. At the same time, we need to continue doing all that we already do: maintaining the beautiful grounds under Sue Williamson's guidance, schedule weddings, book musicians for 2022 Sunday concerts, bring back the 5K race, and prepare for next year's 4th of July extravaganza. With the commitment shown over the past year by the board, volunteers, and the help of our staff, all of this is possible and will make SBHS and the lighthouse museum stronger and better than ever. It is my hope that many more of you will join us as volunteers and supporters of the biggest and best attraction in Wayne County.

Sincerely,

Tom Lightfoot SBHS President



The following story was discovered in the files of the Huron History Center/Museum. Typed on yellowed paper from possibly sometime around 1950, no name or source is related to the papers. A story of hope, family connections, and devotion, the tale is also a good yarn for this time of year. The setting could easily have been near Lake Ontario or another lake shore during the mid-19th Century. This story has been condensed and edited by Huron Historian, Rosa Fox. If someone recognizes this work from another source, please contact Rosa at rfox@townofhuron.org. Thanks so very much.

Untitled Ghost Story By Ghost Writer - Anonymous

Yes, it is true, the house was haunted. I should know, as I am the Spirit involved. Please don't use the word Ghost. I have wished only good to the people who have shared the house with me.

I will start at the beginning. I was born in the house in 1861, so of course I call it home. I had a younger brother. We explored the fields, the woods, and the lake shore. The lake was my favorite spot for idle times. When I became sixteen and left school, I chose the lake as my second home and signed on as a sailor on a lake steamer. I loved the lake, the sky, the ship, my shipmates - - - everything. I was very happy.

I had been with the "Sea Scout" nearly two years. I was proud of my blue uniform seamen were allowed to wear after a year of service. It had brass buttons and a gold braid on the cap. The crew were my friends. The food was good. The Chinese cook was a special friend.

It was October and we had made our last run and were heading for harbor and the winter layoff. I had money saved and was looking forward to seeing my family. There was also a neighbor girl I wanted to see. In fact, I had a ring on a chain around my neck which I planned to give her at Christmas time and to ask her to wait for me until my sea hitch was over.



Steamship in a Storm, Man Overboard - Artist - Alfred R. Waud (Alfred Rudolph), 1828-1891, Library of Congress

It was October 10, 1879, as we headed for port when a sudden storm came up. High winds, hail and sleet made the deck dangerous as waves ten foot and more washed over us. The ship tossed and leapt like a mad thing. As I came up to stand my watch, the captain ordered lines strung about the deck to prevent accidents. I was lashing a line to a stanchion when the ship gave a terrific lurch and I slid down the sloping deck into the water.

I heard the cry "Man Overboard!" A buoy and line were

thrown to me, falling just short. I swam to reach it, but it was just beyond my reach. A boat was

launched, and two crewmen came to my aid. I was chilled and nearly exhausted. Just as they were trying to haul me into the boat, a severe cramp came in my chest. Another wave nearly capsized the boat and washed me twenty feet away. I sank and was drowned. My crewmates were unable to recover my body, but it did not seem to be of any concern to me. I found myself on the deck – unseen and unheard. I heard the captain read the service for the dead. I heard the men telling my good points over and over. I saw the Chinese cook light Joss sticks and heard him recite Chinese prayers for my soul.

The storm blew over. The ship reached port. The captain detailed Frank, my best friend to carry my belongings to my home and to tell my family how I died. Of course, I went along with Frank. My mother and father took the news calmly. I guess when I went to sea, they had been prepared for such a fate. My brother mourned and begged them to find my body so I could be brought home for burial. That was not possible. I tried to comfort him and get him interested in other things and to make him laugh. Father got him a violin and he began to play it well. I always sat close by while he practiced and often hummed the tunes he played. He sometime looked puzzled, but never imagined it was me.

Christmas came. I tried to get everyone to carry on with all the usual festivities. Neighbors came. Mother played the parlor organ, my brother the violin, and all sang carols. I was able to join in with no one noticing.

Time passed. Sometimes I went with my brother when he played at dances. Although I did not dance, I enjoyed myself. I often urged a man to ask some wallflower to dance or tripped a fellow who was holding a girl too close. In the square dances, I sometimes caused everyone to become greatly

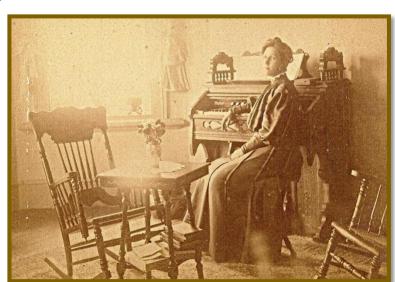


Image from Huron History Center files.

mixed up – just for fun. Sometimes I blew the skirts of a pretty girl nearly over her head as a lark.

My brother married the girl next door at the second Christmas. This made me happy as she came to live with us.

One night in February, the house caught fire and burned to the ground. I was not able to prevent the fire, but I did awaken all the family, so they got out. In the Spring the house was rebuilt, exactly as it had been before the fire. That idea I put into Father's head as I was afraid of not finding my way about in a strange place. The family came back. I roamed the house at will – generally at night. I was careful to disturb no one.

My mother was taken ill and for many weeks did not leave her bed. I spent every night in her room. She would have no one else stay with her, saying she was not lonely. After she died, I was able to communicate with her for a short time and then her Spirit left me.

After she died, my father became difficult to get along with. His mind became impaired, and he often told them of seeing me on the stairs or in his room. I guess, as the realities of life recede, the mind can perceive those of us who are no longer here in body. After the old man died, he and I spent many happy hours together. We were closer than we had ever been in life. He soon left to join Mother.

No children came to bless my brother and his wife. I always enjoyed young folks as I am only just past eighteen forever. My dear brother died suddenly. His Spirit left at once. Possibly God needed him to play violin in the Heavenly Orchestra.

The house was closed as my sister-in-law went to care for her elderly parents. I was left alone and lonely. A little boy told of seeing a young man in a blue suit with brass buttons on the porch. Word was the house was haunted. After five years, the house was opened again. The garden was plowed, the lawn mowed, and I soon learned that my sister-in-law was married and would be living here again.

Her husband was a widower with two children — a boy and a girl. How happy I was. I played pranks on the children, hiding their toys, and causing their pets to perform unlikely deeds. For a few years, life was pleasant, but again death came. The husband and father died, and his Spirit left at once, as of course his roots were not here. I was now the only one left who was born here.

The aged mother of my sister-in-law came to live with us. Sometimes there was company and one year the schoolteacher came to board here. I caused the geese to hiss at her and a crow to follow her to school. I went to school often, as I enjoyed being with the children. I am afraid I suggested many pranks to the young ones. I also kept them out of danger and punishment. I caused the neighborhood goats to climb on the schoolhouse roof, to bleat to a tune, to climb trees, and to dance together.

Years passed, paint peeled, trees died, the house was unhappy. At last, the old lady died and there was an auction. The place was sold to strangers. Soon a young couple came with two boys. I was no longer careful not to disturb them. I sat by the boys' bed, I met people on the stairs, and I played pranks on company. Now everyone was telling of seeing me.

The young man was a heavy drinker. I caused him to swear like a sailor when he was out of his senses. One day his wife packed up and left. I did not enjoy being with him. He certainly did not enjoy me as I pestered him day and night, appearing and disappearing until he thought he was losing his mind.

One winter day, he had a fire in the living room stove. His bed was behind the stove. The stove pipe fell while he was asleep. Again, the house was on fire. I had trouble getting him out as he was a heavy sleeper.

Now there is no one to rebuild. I am homeless. My time is gone on earth. I shall leave to seek the Spirits of my parents and my brother. Who knows – maybe I shall find the "Sea Scout" captain and some of her crew.

Rooms of the Lighthouse – The Chamberlain Room First in a Series by Tom Lightfoot

ost exhibit rooms in the Sodus Bay Lighthouse have been named after significant Sodus Bay people. This is the first of a series to provide a little background about these people and examples of what is displayed in each room.

As you enter the lighthouse you step into the Chamberlain Room. The Chamberlains became involved with what is now Alasa Farms/Cracker Box Palace through DeWitt Parshall's daughter, Katherine, who married a doctor and prominent citizen of Lyons, Dwight Scott

Chamberlain. Parshall, from Lyons, started the Palmyra Bank of Lyons which was renamed the Lyons Bank and finally the Lyons National Bank. Parshall owned the farm on Sodus Bay from the 1860s until his death in 1880 leaving the farm to his daughter and his bank to his son-in-law, Dwight Scott Chamberlain. Dwight Scott then left the bank to his two sons, Dwight Parshall Frederick Chamberlain and Chamberlain. Eventually, the Parshall/Chamberlain descendants sold the farm in 1925 to Alva Strong. In 1989, Dwight Rodes Chamberlain, the great grandson of Dwight Scott and Katherine Chamberlain, donated \$8000.00 to the Sodus Bay Historical Society in honor of his father, D(wight) Russell Chamberlain. D. Russell Chamberlain, shown on the right with his fish catch, lived on Sodus Bay most of his life from his birth in 1896 until about 1966. After that he seems to have split his time between Kennebunkport, Maine and Long Boat Key, Florida, passing away in 1985 in Sarasota, Florida. Dwight Rodes Chamberlain, our lighthouse benefactor, was a renowned philanthropist. Living in Indiana, Chamberlain passed away in 2007.



The room named for the Chamberlains is devoted to the history of the lighthouse itself. It contains artifacts and photographs of the lighthouse, both interior and exterior, the lighthouse keepers, and artifacts related to keeping the light burning both at the light on the pier and our lighthouse on the bluff.

At first, the lights were fueled by whale oil. The keepers transitioned to lard and finally kerosene before electrification. Electrification came too late for our lighthouse, which was decommissioned in 1901. The active light for the bay entrance was then only the Pier Light. Electricity was not installed in our old stone lighthouse until about 1925.



On the left are a few artifacts on display in the Chamberlain Room. These various sized brass oil containers were used to transfer and measure the amount of oil used in the lighthouse, which had to be accounted for to the government.

On the right are some photographs of some of the lighthouse keepers and their families.

These are just a sample of the exhibit items related to the lighthouse you will find in the Chamberlain Room. In the next issue we will highlight the next room you encounter during your tour of our cherished Sodus Bay Lighthouse - the Sill Room.





A Barque, a Brig, and a Schooner... Shape History Podcast Review Martha Lightfoot

In the spring of 2020, a friend recommended that Tom and I join Tall Ships America because of our historical interest in large sea vessels and our involvement in trying to save a historical 1918 William Hand gaff rigged schooner that has resided on Sodus Bay for many years - *Lotus*. Over last several months I have so enjoyed the educational programs that have been presented on the *Tall Ships* website and have learned a great deal from audio podcasts to Zoom educational programs.

Tall Ships America is a non-profit organization focused on youth and adult education, leadership development, and the preservation of the maritime heritage of North America. Founded in 1973, Tall Ships America is commended by Congress as the national sail training organization representing the United States. The Tall Ships organization supports and promote the ships, people, and programs of sail training through scholarships for youth, professional services and advocacy, the Annual Conference on Sail Training and Tall Ships, the annual TALL SHIPS CHALLENGE® series of races and events, and the biannual publication of *Sail Tall Ships!* - the world's definitive directory of sail training.

A fascinating part of Tall Ships educational programs are monthly podcasts that present historical material on many aspects of sailing life from the type of sailors that were attracted to the sea life, what was it like living for long periods of time on these vessels and how the sailors coped with incredibly hard lives and dangerous work.

One of my favorite audio podcasts is an interview with Brooke Grasberger, a PhD candidate in history at Brown University. Grasberger is currently at work researching information for her dissertation on the oceanic faith of sailors throughout the nineteenth century. What were the spiritual lives of sailors including religion, luck, and superstition? "What does the sea do to people, and what do people see in it?"

Grasberger states that her dissertation, tentatively entitled "Spirits of the Sea," revolves around the ways in which natural forces and the built-in environment contributes to the creation of a localized faith on board a ship. "My interests are in the spiritual lives of sailors, and particularly what combinations of what is deemed superstition or folklore and what is deemed religion occurred in the unique physical and metaphysical space of the ship at sea."

The audio podcast can be found at:

https://www.audible.com/pd/Podcast/B08K573ZZL

You can also follow Tall Ships Challenge on Facebook at:

https://www.facebook.com/groups/8966927042/

SBHS Committee News

The SBHS Board of Directors has several 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, archives, collections, and museum gift shop. Sodus Bay Lighthouse Museum visitors experience a historic site of great significance to our region through the lens of beauty, care, education, and conservancy - thanks to the work of the volunteers on these committees.

Curatorial – Martha Lightfoot, Chair

In January of 2021, crewmen working on the installation of the sewer lines along Wickham Boulevard in Sodus Point unearthed a piece of Sodus Bay history from the early 1800s. In 1838, a breakwall was constructed to protect Sand Point from lake storms and erosion. That breakwall ran from what is today Oscar Fuerst Field on Bay Street east to the Coast Guard Station where the breakwall met the channel's west pier. The lake shore prior to the breakwall ran from the old stone lighthouse to Sand Point. The numbered streets off Wickham Boulevard did not exist until after the breakwall was constructed, taking many years of sand accretion before streets or cottages were built. In the process of the land accretion, that original 1838 breakwall was buried.

Thanks to the sewer construction crew, Sodus Point Village mayor, Dave McDowell, and local history lover, David Fox, some of the breakwall timbers were salvaged. These logs generally measured 13-feet in length with 12-inch diameters. Most logs were used as is, with

no attempt to square them up when put in place as cribbing. They were tenoned on each end. The length of the Sodus Point breakwall was roughly 2000 feet. A matching breakwall on the east side, coming from Charles Point to the channel's east pier was roughly 1500 feet. The two channel piers extended north into Lake Ontario measuring 800 feet each. That was a lot of logs to tenon. One of the logs saved during this process was from a cross member – making the break wall 13 or 14 feet wide.

The Sodus Bay Lighthouse Museum is pleased to be able to display a tenoned section of one of these seasoned logs. Having survived over 183 years in the water or under the sand since construction of the breakwalls, and with an age of over 220 years at harvest (as a seedling prior to 1618), this section of breakwall timber is now the oldest artifact on exhibit at the Sodus Bay Lighthouse Museum.



Lighthouse Museum Gift Shop – Mary Quinn, Chair

A Museum Gift Shop Upcoming Event!

The Sodus Bay Museum Gift Shop will be participating in the Wayne County "Winter Wonderland Shopping Fling" to be held November 12, 13, and 14, 2021 from 10:00-5:00 each day. We are looking forward to this occasion and hope you will join in the fun. Shopping locally for your holiday gift giving supports the Lighthouse Museum, neighbors, and community. Come see the new varieties of merchandise we are offering - many made by local artisans. Be on the lookout for the event brochures that will be available soon from Wayne County Tourism!!!

The Museum Gift Shop is now offering gift cards in \$25, \$50 and \$100 denominations. Sue Coco and I want to thank everyone for their support of the museum gift shop during our first-year volunteering to run the shop. We appreciate your loyalty to buying local.

Membership - Jane Peachey, Chair

Membership is vital to the overall health of the Sodus Bay Historical Society. Our membership is strong, but we can and should strive to make it stronger.

The new exhibit space and displays give us something fresh and exciting to offer visitors. As a result, this year we experienced visitors joining our organization after touring the museum and visiting the expanded gift shop. Our members also expressed how appreciative they were to have the concert series return. We are very grateful for all the support given to our organization - even when we were not open and then throughout this year.

As the weather gets cooler, the Sodus Bay Historical Society Board of Trustees begins work on various planning activities such as next year's budget, community events, maintenance, and a host of other activities. Regarding membership, we are looking at once again offering a members-only tour, a membership challenge, as well as other efforts to expand our membership. We will reach out to overdue members to encourage them to renew. We are always so appreciative when we get a new life member. New members are always welcome and it's fun to learn why they joined. You can help by encouraging neighbors and friends to join the Sodus Bay Historical Society. Any board member can provide membership materials, which are available at the lighthouse and by visiting sodusbaylighthouse.org.

NEW MEMBERS

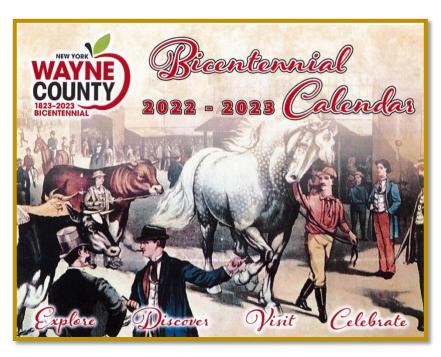
Barbara Burke Karl Stocker
Nancy Stocker Vicki Fisher
James and Donna Glogowski
Jane Clewell Tina Mogab
Derek Poole

NEW LIFE MEMBERS

Sonya and Carl Christensen
Janet and Michael Foley
Jane Loson
Sharon and James Maher

Wayne County Bicentennial Update

The Bicentennial Two-Year Calendar (2022 & 2023) is now on sale throughout the county, including the Town of Sodus Historical Society and the Wayne County Museum of History. This full color calendar has historic Wayne County tidbits for each day of the two years - over 750 historic facts. Each month has a thematic collection of photos. The calendar is the creative effort of Loreen Jorgensen (Palmyra) and Chris Davis (Newark). Kyle Meddaugh (Red Creek) created the graphics design. The Bicentennial Calendar will be a terrific holiday gift as well as a special



commemorative keepsake of the Wayne County Bicentennial.

- Bicentennial T-shirts are available through the Town of Sodus Historical Society and the Wayne County Museum of History. Sales of the Bicentennial Calendar and T-shirts benefit both the future projects of the Wayne County Bicentennial Committee, as well as the local historical society selling the items.
- The *Bicentennial Memories Book* committee continues to collect stories, poems, and visual arts. The deadline for submissions is December 31, 2021. You can find information about this project at: https://web.co.wayne.ny.us/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Book-of-Memories-1.pdf.
- For more information or to schedule a program on the Wayne County Bicentennial Contact:

Gene Bavis <u>genebavis71@gmail.com</u> or call 315-573-2768 Rosa Fox rfox@townofhuron.org or call 315-573-4493

Website: www.waynecounty200.com

Facebook: Wayne County NY Bicentennial 2023

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/waynecounty200/





Thank You to These 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 this past year, it is important to show your appreciation by supporting these businesses. Their continued support will help the Sodus Bay Historical Society and Lighthouse Museum move forward and continue to make possible future events and activities. Thank you!

Diamond

Empire Tree Surgeons Sodus Rotary SPINCO Metal Products

Platinum

Gold

The Heights Restaurant
& Banquet Facility
Krenzer Marine
Mark Ketcham and Werner Lutz
Nick's Family Restaurant
Northwind Harbor
Wegmans

Silver

Computer Support
by Cathy Contant
Copper Ale House
A Gentle Breeze
Imprint Coffee Roasting
Marshall Farms Group
Missy Blues Wine & Spirits
Reliant Community Credit Union
Three Schooners Landing
Ward Steel

Bronze

The Bay Street Bonnie Castle Farm Bed & Breakfast Burnap's Farm Market & Garden Café Captain Jack's Goodtime Tavern Cole Income Tax Service Fowler Farms Franklin House Tavern Lyons Veterinary Clinic MacDonald Air Conditioning P.A.T.I. Fire Paton's Market Place Peake Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram Fiat Phelps Veterinary Hospital Q's Power Equipment Skipper's Landing Restaurant Sodus Bay Heights Golf Club South Shore RV Park

Stone Goose Market & Cidery

Youngman Orchards Farm Market

The Apple Farm Stand

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