



Newsletter

Winter 2021



Photo by Mark Fornalik

Happy New Year!

May 2021 be filled with hope, health, and happiness!!

*May we all join in a joyous celebration
of 150 years of this historic Sodus Bay Lighthouse!*



President's Message

As we turn the page on another year, and watch 2020 fade into the recent past, most would agree that it was a difficult year in many ways. At times it seemed like it would never end. I don't recall another year when so many were so anxious to have the year be over. But a few times it seemed to move too fast - like the fine grains of sand racing to the bottom of a three-minute egg timer. As we get older, the weeks, months and years seem to speed by like a fast-moving bullet train. Isn't life short enough without being in such a hurry to move on to the next big thing?

Although 2020 certainly had its challenges, we are moving on at the Sodus Bay Lighthouse Museum. As you've probably read before, early in 2020, after a lot of discussion, the SBHS Board of Trustees made a difficult decision to not open the Lighthouse Museum for its normal season and events. We did not feel confident in our abilities to adequately protect the health of our thousands of visitors and hundreds of volunteers within the tight confines of the Lighthouse Museum. Little did we know that the pandemic would continue to get worse. Part of that difficult decision was also a commitment to not just stand by and wait for things to get better, but to make good use of the diverted time forced upon us.

We reviewed multiple opportunities to make changes to improve the museum – to tackling things we just never found enough time to do during a more normal year. Well, we found plenty to do! Using our existing SBHS mission statement as our guiding North Star, we made plans to not only survive the shutdown, and the accompanying dramatic cuts in admission and event related income and staff, but to invest our time in efforts to improve some things that were done for years out of habit. We undertook a renewed effort to strengthen and build our membership. We would improve member communications (like this newsletter). We made some exterior improvements to the buildings...painted the gazebo and the front porch and replaced some windows. We regraded the north side of the lighthouse to divert water away from the building and removed a couple big rotting trees.

We reexamined how we were using interior lighthouse space. As a result, we are converting the "apartment" space into new museum exhibit space, allowing for new exhibits with new interpretive signage. We are expanding the gift shop and restocking it with fresh, new merchandise. (You can order online at www.sodusbaylighthouse.org). We have obtained quotes to add climate control inside the museum. This will help us regulate temperature and humidity levels needed to better preserve our building, artifacts and collection. Now we are working to find the money needed to pay for the installation. While tearing apart some old plaster and lathe walls, we even discovered a significant quantity of 150-year-old DUST! I wonder if we should put the dust on display in the museum as an original Lighthouse artifact!

We have written numerous grant applications to help fund some of the changes and to help pay our normal operating expenses. We have received several grants totaling over \$18,000 for the year. This is a vital and ongoing activity for a mostly self-funded non-profit such as ours. We undertook two very well supported rounds of fundraising. Along with a strictly managed austerity budget, we got through the year, were able to pay all our ongoing bills and did not incur a deficit or drain our modest financial reserves. Our Annual Appeal effort started in December and is just wrapping up. (It's still not too late to contribute).

A lot of time is being devoted to updating our computer data bases and collection records, which had fallen well behind when day to day lighthouse events and activities took priority. We have reviewed some policies and procedures, instituting a few new ones needed to give us better ongoing control of our operations.

Being the lighthouse's 150th year of existence, we will be celebrating our Sesquicentennial all year! We even have a new logo to help us celebrate and promote it, which takes its place in the banner of this newsletter.

As I have detailed above, we have accomplished a lot during our closed year. We have much left to complete. Almost everything we have accomplished has been done by teams of board members and dedicated, hardworking volunteers. To avoid the risk of leaving someone out, I won't name names, but that does not lessen the gratitude and respect for the dozens who have contributed so much and who continue working hard as we finish what we've started and initiate new plans and activities needed to prepare us for opening next season. Given the uncertainty of where the pandemic world will be in the next five months, we are cautiously optimistic, with an abundance of hope, as we plan ahead, but with flexibility to adjust timing as needed.

If all this sounds like too much fun, please check out our "Help Wanted" section on page 25 of this newsletter. We do need the help of people with diverse skills, talents, and ideas. Let us know if you would like to join our fabulous team! You will be rewarded by knowing that you share in accomplishing a lasting service for our beloved lighthouse and organization.

While winter still lies ahead, we look forward to spring and the reawakening of our beautiful lighthouse gardens, refreshed and reinvigorated after a long winter's nap. I'm sure the Garden Committee is already making their lists. We eagerly await reopening and are optimistic that as the year progresses, we can get back to enjoying our special place. We look forward to attracting many visitors from many places to our special community. We will again host our many fun events, such as free Sunday concerts, Fourth of July Celebration, Lighthouse 5k Race, and more.

SBHS is grateful for the continued support from our membership, our sponsors, our supporting friends, and the foundations who respond affirmatively to our requests and needs. 2021 has every opportunity to be a much-improved year in many ways. We are anxious to share the year with all of you. May it be healthy, happy, and provide us with positive memories.

As it has for the past 150 years, the Sodus Bay Lighthouse Museum, perched on the small bluff near the entrance to beautiful Sodus Bay, perseveres and continues to stand...strong and well-tended. One more time, thank you to everyone who helps make that happen year after year... in good years and in bad.

Sodus Bay Historical Society President
Bill Singer

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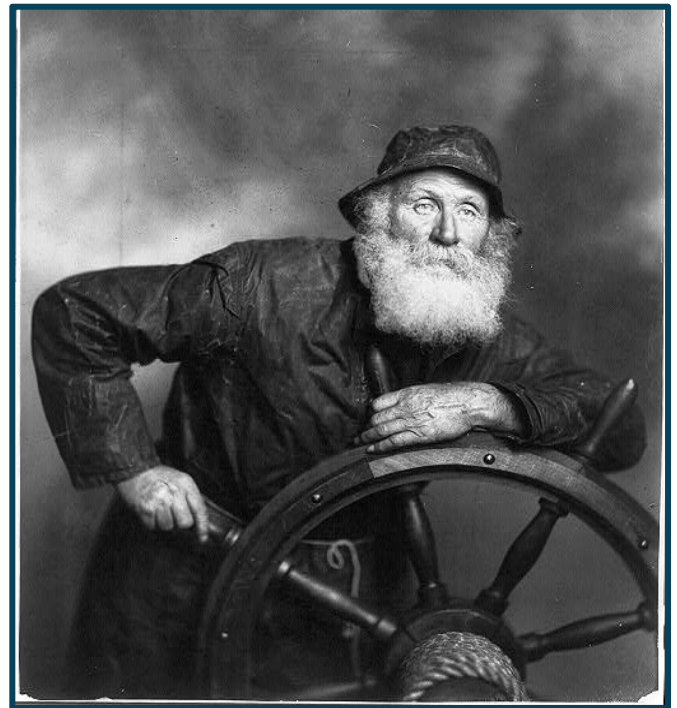
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*Library of Congress. Night Trick. 1907.
<https://lccn.loc.gov/2003668069>*

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Reverend Purdy's Dock and Sawmill

William G. Pomeroy Foundation Historic Marker for Town of Huron

Rosa Fox, Town of Huron Historian

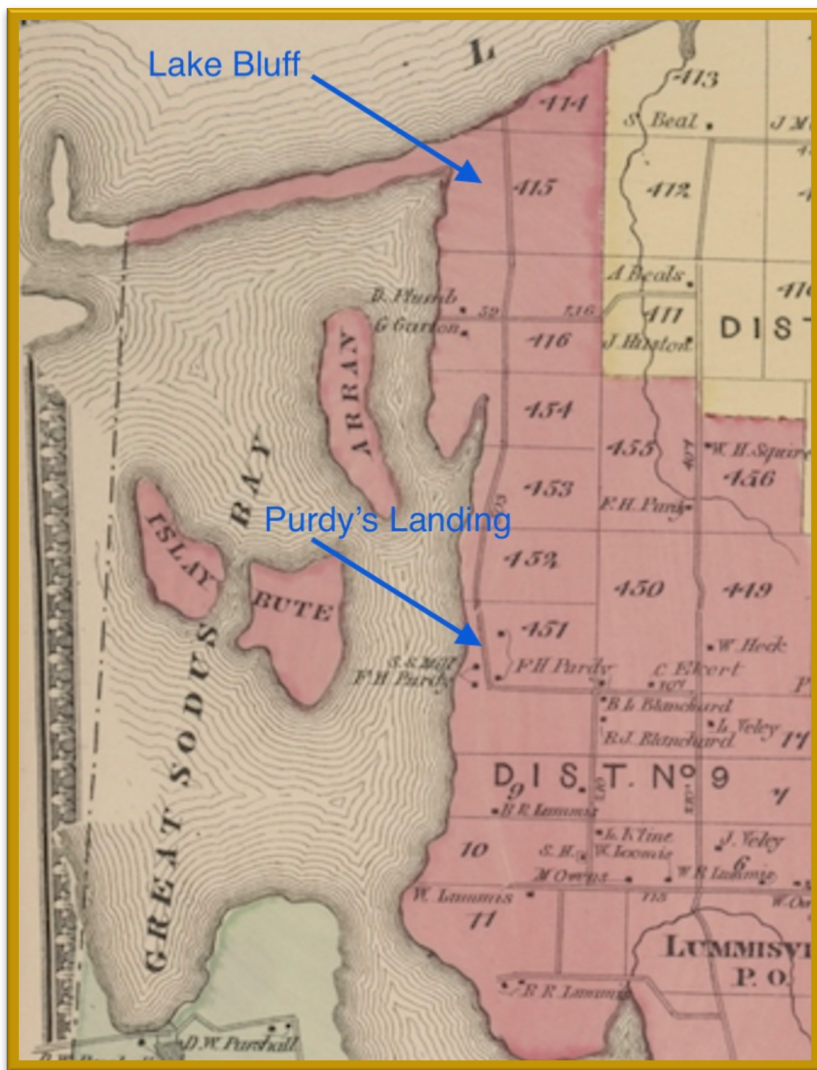
Reverend Fay Hovey Purdy (1816-1894) was a prominent land and business owner on Sodus Bay during the late 19th Century. Purdy owned two Central New York State Military Tracts - tracts established east of the Pre-Emption Line for Revolutionary War veterans as a way of payment for their service. A review of local abstracts reveals Purdy owned Military Tract lot # 451, which is the site of a new



historic marker for the Town of Huron. Located on Lake Bluff Road along the east side of Sodus Bay near Skipper's Landing, this marker designates the site of Purdy's dock and sawmill built in the 1870s. Purdy also owned Military Tract # 415, located on both Lake Ontario and Sodus Bay known as Lake Bluff. *(see map on next page)*

Reverend Purdy was a well-known mid to late 19th century Methodist evangelist. He delivered sermons and promoted the gospel of the Methodist Church throughout New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. Purdy's evangelical activities were part of an expanding movement in Central and Western New York, including the Finger Lakes region, which led to this area being called the Burned Over District. It was said that people were so hot with religious ideas the area was thought to be afire.

Quakers settled throughout the region in the very early 1800s and played a major role in abolition and women's suffrage. In 1820, at fourteen years of age, Joseph Smith of Palmyra witnessed the vision of the angel Moroni. Seven years later, Smith received the golden tablets



Section of Map of Huron from Beers 1874 Wayne County Atlas showing lot numbers – corresponding to military tract numbers. Purdy owned lots # 415 and # 451 on Great Sodus Bay. The historic marker is located on lot # 451, at S.S. Mill (Steam Sawmill). Please note: The islands Arran and Bute are mislabeled on this map. Arran – is the Scottish name for Eagle Island (lower) and Bute is the Scottish name for LeRoy Island. Islay, known today as Newark Island is labeled correctly.

(continued)

the Book of Mormon was written upon. In Rose in 1822, the Neversweats (a.k.a. the Standalones) began having a new kind of religious meeting, speaking in tongues and having meetings that “held on ‘til morning while they never sweat a drop.” Shakers came to Sodus Bay in 1826, establishing a productive farm on 1400 acres of prime land. Had it not been for the anticipated Sodus Canal which was to connect Sodus Bay to the Erie Canal, and was to go through the Shaker tract, this group

of industrious individuals may have stayed well past their 1836 departure. Millerites gathered in Sodus and elsewhere in 1844 – awaiting the end of the world. From 1844-1846 a group of social and political activists called Fourierists took up residence at the former Shaker Farm, which they called the Sodus Bay Phalanx. Many of the Fourierists were Quakers, abolitionists, and women’s rights advocates. The Fox sisters gave rise to the birth of Spiritualism in 1848 at Hydesville in the town of Arcadia after hearing the rapping of what was believed to be a dead peddler buried in their house. In 1877, two-thousand people gathered in Huron to witness the advent of the Freethought Movement, a group of abolitionists, agnostics, women’s rights activists, and people who believed in the separation of church and state. All this fervent social, political, and religious activity was going on while Fay Hovey Purdy was coming of age and establishing himself locally as a religious leader and local businessman.

In 1873, Reverend Purdy developed lot # 415 on the shores of Lake Ontario and Sodus Bay as a religious camp. People from around New York State visited Sodus Bay to attend Reverend Purdy’s Summer Lake Bluff Camp revival meetings. Visitors during those early years of camp meetings would come to Sodus Point by way of the Lake Ontario Shore Railroad running the northern section of Wayne County, the Sodus Point – Southern Railway, running

between Sodus Point and Stanley, and lake steamers from Rochester, like the **Norseman** and **Falling Water**. From Sodus Point, camp attendees could catch a steamer, rent a rowboat, paddle a canoe, or sail to the eastern shore at Lake Bluff. (see **Story Corner** – **ODD FELLOWSHIP** - later in this issue – for a journey aboard the **Norseman**.)

In a February 22, 1873 **Newark Union** article, the writer, extolling about Purdy's efforts to ready the property for guests, comments, "a romantic place in the town of Huron, fronting upon Lake Ontario and Sodus Bay, having a very agreeable beach on the lake side, and a pleasant shore upon the bay side. The grounds, pleasant in themselves, are covered with a growth of chestnut and many varieties of other beautiful trees." By 1878, Lake Bluff was a popular religious destination. Purdy "is a queer genius. ... charges 15 cents for letting a person go onto his Bluff. Fifteen cents for what? For the privilege of climbing a steep precipice by a wretched sheep path, for the enjoyment of tumbling at every step over boulders left there when Methuselah was a boy . . .?" (**Newark Union**, August 15, 1878) For that fee, the guests did enjoy splendid company, a great sermon, and ample food. (Note: By today's monetary values that 15 cents in 1878 translates to about 4 dollars in 2021. I'm sure there are many Bluffers who would consider that a proper fee to charge now.)

In the 1873 **Newark Union** article, mentioned earlier, reference is made to Purdy's dock. "Mr. Purdy is now building an excellent wharf upon piles, securely driven, extending three hundred feet from the shore, and to be of forty feet frontage at the water end. That value of this wharf will be from six to seven hundred dollars, but as Brother Purdy owns a good sawmill and heavily timbered lands, the cost in cash may not be so immediate to him." The site of Purdy's dock is the location of the newly installed historic marker on the east side of Sodus Bay, located along Lake Bluff Road. The historic marker honors Purdy's contributions to the growing economy of the area around Sodus Bay during the late 1800s. Purdy's dock served as a point of shipping for local farmers. Flour, apples, lumber, and other produce were transported from Purdy's Landing to Sodus Point and then to other ports on Lake Ontario.

A little family trivia. On June 16, 1841 Purdy married Caroline Hall from Palmyra. Caroline had one sister two years younger than she - Clarissa. Clarissa was married on April 5, 1849 to Leonard Walter Jerome, who was a "flamboyant and successful" financier on Wall Street. Clarissa and Leonard had four daughters. On April 15, 1874, the Jerome's second daughter, Jennie, married Lord Randolph Churchill. On November 30, 1874, Jennie and Randolph had a son – Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill. Yes – that would be Sir Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of England from 1940 to 1945 and 1951 to 1955. With the exception of the time between 1922 through 1924, Churchill was a member of Parliament from 1900 to 1964. The Reverend and Mrs. Purdy were Winston's great uncle and aunt.

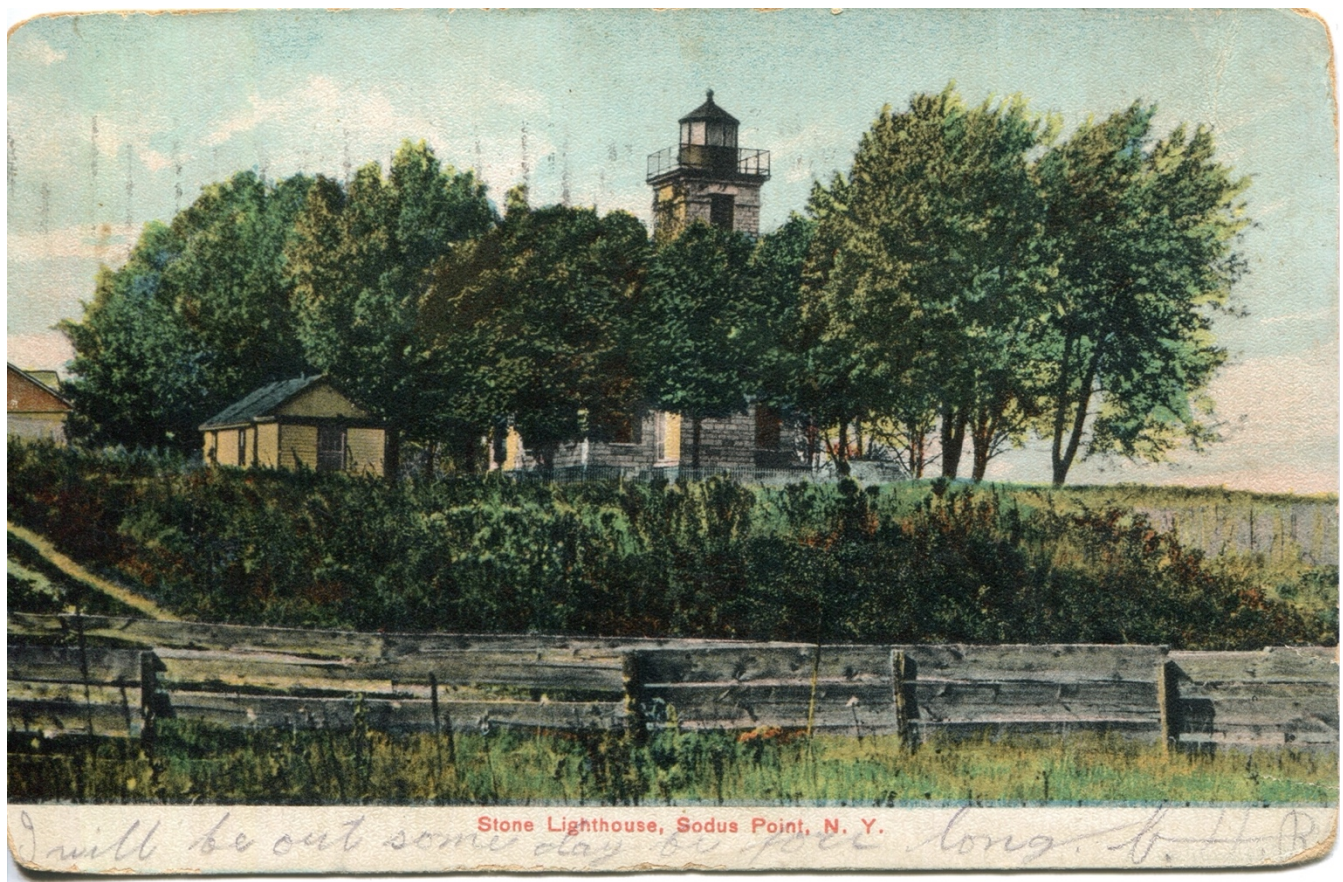
Purdy was truly a remarkable person, giving so much to the economic development of this area, as well as to the religious communities near and far. Selling his properties, and leaving the Sodus Bay area around 1880, Purdy spent the rest of his life in an area of the Mid-Atlantic coast he enjoyed throughout his days of preaching - the Ocean Grove, Red Bank,

Chapel Hill region of New Jersey. Purdy died June 7, 1894 in Chapel Hill. He is buried with wife Caroline in the Purdy family plot at the Palmyra, New York Cemetery.

The Purdy Dock historic marker was made possible to the Town of Huron through a 2020 New York State Historic Marker Grant from the William G. Pomeroy Foundation. This is the first historic marker for Sodus Bay. Many thanks to Cathy and Paul Stewart of Lake Bluff Road, Town of Huron for their assistance and encouragement of this project. Thank you also to Huron Highway Supervisor, Gerrit Reyn and his crew for installing the marker on December 31, 2020! What a great way to close the year!

See **Story Corner - ODD FELLOWSHIP** - on page 21 for a news story about a trip aboard the steamer NORSEMAN from Rochester to Sodus Bay.

Historic Sodus Bay Lighthouse Postcard - 1909



*Postmarked in Alton August 10, 1909 and again in Lyons August 10, 1909.
this divided back postcard was published
by the Rochester News Company through Leipzig-Berlin, Germany.
A view of the 1871 lighthouse from the Lake Stones estate grounds of Colonel Enos Blossom Parsons.*

Apples Through Time

Nellie Gardner

Driving through the countryside on my way to Sodus Point, the familiar aroma of apple harvest brings me back to my childhood, fallen leaves and apples in old orchards, gathering “drops” for cider. I sat next to the barrels of cider on the back of a '47 Dodge Army surplus pickup, riding back from the cider press housed in an old building that was perched on the edge of a power supplying creek. As I drive along Lake Road. I look for the barns and farmsteads that remind me of my days growing up in Vermont and Nova Scotia. Traces of the past are everywhere, old storage sheds, outbuildings and barns, large, ancient apple trees, laneways through abandoned orchards. I wander out of Camp Beechwood Park and find a huge old apple tree loaded with small red apples. I bite into one that's on the ground, crisp and juicy, I recognize the flavor, a Winesap!!



We grew almost all our own food including apples from the old trees that were on the Cape Breton property when we moved there. We had Wolf River, Duchess, and Russet varieties that had to be preserved for the winter. With no refrigeration, they had to be dried, pressed for cider and vinegar, or made into applesauce and canned. For drying we peeled apples by hand, cored them with a little hand corer, sliced them as thin as possible and hung them on dowels above our woodstove. They were a staple during the winter, and as I found out later, dried apple pies were an early American dessert.

When I move to Spencerport, I found out that there were many apple dry houses all along the canal from Buffalo to Rochester and in neighboring hamlets. Thus, began my hunt for traces of a life gone by.

Wayne County was once the center of the dried apple industry where 30% of the crop was dried and half of that was exported. Apples were grown widely in New York State until a hard freeze in the 1930's wiped out many orchards inland. I learned this from an older gentleman riding on the canal boat I was running in Spencerport. As we passed by his farm in Adams Basin, he told me about how his mother would say, “you can go to bed a rich man, and wake up a pauper.” The trees would freeze so hard that they would burst apart at night and it sounded like cannons going off. For this reason, most of the fruit trees are now grown close to climate moderating bodies of water.

Join me on my journey through the orchards and towns of Wayne County to follow the evolution of the apple industry.

The apple growing and processing industry grew, spreading from New England and across New York. The rich soils and warming effect of Lake Ontario were ideal for fruit growing. Apples provided fresh fruit, cider and vinegar, could be preserved by drying, and provided a perfect product to ship around the world. The land was cleared of huge trees and crops were planted. Wheat was the first crop sown, then fruit trees started to replace grain as people brought trees with them, and they became available locally. Pultneyville used to be called Apple Boom as apple trees were grown there near the water's edge and reached out over the water like a ships' boom.

The largest nursery in the world in 1860 was the Ellwanger & Barry nursery on Mount Hope Avenue in Rochester, which eventually reached a size of 700 acres. They developed and propagated fruit varieties and shipped them throughout the frontier, utilizing the Erie Canal and Great Lakes. Before Ellwanger and Barry, as early as the 1830's, Asa Rowe had developed a successful nursery with fruit varieties in the town of Greece, NY.

There were thousands of varieties of apples with wonderful names. Here is a small selection of these heirloom varieties: Sweet Rhubarb, Ben Davis, Baldwin, Tallman Sweet, Gill Flower (Gilliflower), Canada Red, Greening, Spitz, Baldwin, Cox's Orange Pippin, Arkansas Black, Ashmead's Kernal, Black Gill Flower, Blue Pearman, Chenango Strawberry, Winesap, and Northern Spy. Some were early eating apples, some were winter keepers, others were best for drying or cider.

Fruit trees lined Ridge Road as it ran across western New York out to Sodus Point. Apples were picked from tall 3-legged ladders into canvas apple picking bags, packed tightly in barrels in the orchard, hauled to rail cars, canal boats, and shipping ports along Lake Ontario, then shipped to eastern cities and throughout the world. In the late 1800's 50,000 barrels of fresh apples and 10,000 barrels of dried apples were shipped from the Port of Palmyra.



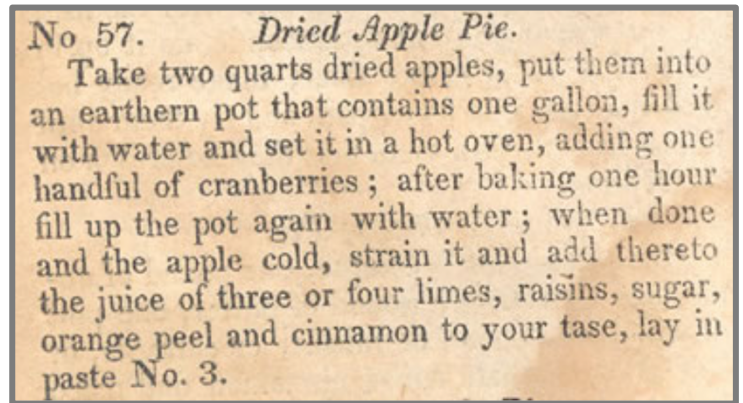
In MacIntosh's "The History of Wayne County" there were at least 4 dried apple dealers in the town of Sodus, and "more dried fruit was bought firsthand in Sodus Village than at any other place of equal size in the world." In 1894, 7.5 million pounds of dried apples were shipped from Sodus, and 15 million pounds from Northern Wayne County. Of Note: In 1894, Wayne County shipped over 1,000,000 pounds of dried berries.

Apples were heavy to transport and refrigeration had not been invented yet. So drying fruit was a good option for making the product lighter for shipping, and also for preserving. There are many recipes using dried apples in old cookbooks.

Norma Stewart, Wolcott town and village historian, remembers her father, Donald Woods, working at an apple dry house owned by the Kitchen family in the town of Huron. So many apple barrels were made in Wolcott that the town was once named Puncheonville, as puncheon can refer to a large cask.

The process of Apple drying

Apple dry houses could be a simple barn with a slatted drying floor with a wood stove underneath (a "box-dryer"), or a complex apple drying house with hot air towers, or drying tunnels. Many renditions of apple dry houses existed. In fact, the "Warner Dry House" with passive heat, developed by John Warner in 1855 was sold all over upstate NY. The largest apple dry house in the country was on Willits Road in the



*A Double Crust Simple Dried Apple Pie
with an Old-Fashioned Twist.
The Cook Not Mad, Knowlton & Rice, 1831.*



Dry house with hot air towers. Photo Courtesy of Town of Huron.



Dry house workers. Photo Courtesy Town of Huron

town of Ontario. Heat was provided by burning wood and coal. Coke was also used and produced a hotter fire sometimes resulting in catching the drying barn on fire. There were hundreds of simple “box dryers” on farms where mostly women and children hand peeled, cored and sliced apples.

As dry houses became larger commercial businesses, people were hired, mostly women and children, to peel, core and slice apples, or run machines that accomplished those

jobs. Wages were \$.50 a day for a woman, \$.75 a day for a “strong boy,” and \$1.00 per day for a man. It was one of the first places a woman could work outside the home. A quote from the 1896 Annual Report for the New York State Agricultural Society, in a discussion about apple drying equipment and quality of dried apples states, “It does not seem to be any particular kind of drier that makes fruit that will grade as choice or fancy. But it does take a particular kind of man, and sometimes that man is a woman.”

After the apples were sliced, they were ‘bleached’, with burning sulphur to maintain color, then “kiln’ dried, either on a slatted floor or in an upright tower, a steam drier, a hop-kiln, or hot-air lay-down flue. They were then put in cloth bags and packed in 25- or 50-pound boxes and sold to “sellers” and exporters. The apple waste was saved, dried and sold to make apple jelly, as the pectin is concentrated in the peels and cores. I remember my mother boiling the cores and peels from making applesauce or apple pies then using the pectin to jell low pectin fruits or make apple jelly. I loved seeing the juice magically turn into jelly as it boiled on the wood stove.

The International Society of Apple Parer Enthusiasts, (yes, they are in Mt. Vernon, Ohio), reports that the area between Sodus and Brockport alone produced over 50 different apple peeling machines! There was more apple



A large fruit farm with an evaporator (apple drier) belonged to B. J. Case, listing his address on Central Ave., Sodus, NY. 1914.

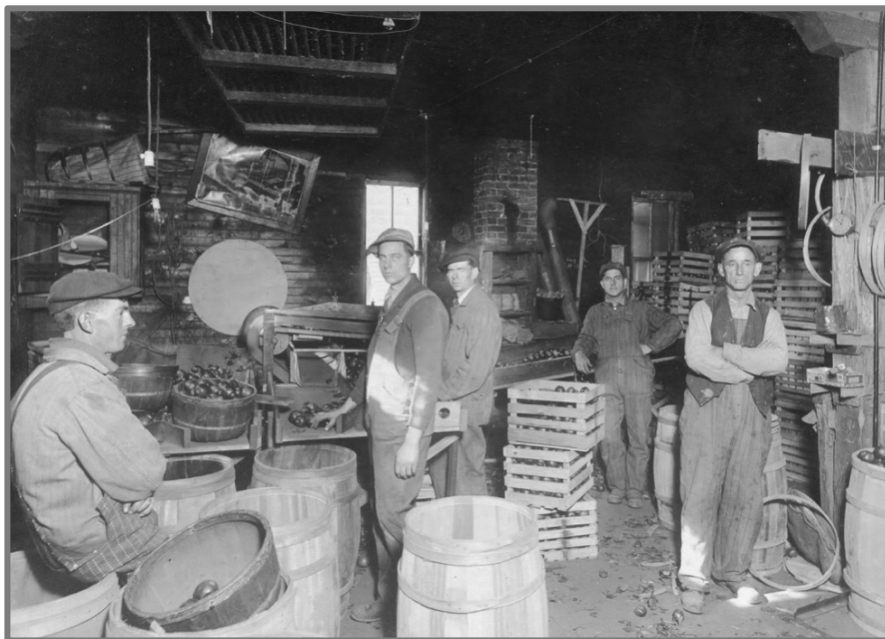
Photo Courtesy Sodus Library

processing equipment shipped from this area than from anywhere in the world. In fact, the F.B. Pease Company of Rochester was a world leader in production of apple processing equipment and produced the first power operated machine in 1925. The company is still in operation in the same building and is run by Pease's grandson, Dudley. The A.J. Rice company in Sodus patented an apple slicer in 1889. One is on display at the Heritage Square Museum in Ontario. The evolution of the equipment can be seen at Heritage Square, where there is also an example of an apple dry house.

Besides New York, dried apples were produced in quantity in California and competed with local dried apples. Much emphasis was put on local growers to increase quality in order to demand a higher price and remain competitive.

Dried apples were replaced with canned and fresh apples as canning became popular and refrigeration was developed. Today there are no fruit evaporators on the East coast, but plenty of fruit producers. Wayne County now ranks third in the country in apple production with New York State ranking second behind Washington State. Washington State is also home to the only commercial apple drying operation in America. Diced dried apples and dried apple powder are

added to some foods, and crunchy dried apples are enjoying a bit of a comeback as fruit snacks. We still eat a lot of apples, just in different forms. Now back to making my dried apple pie.



Apple dry house workers. Photo Courtesy Town of Huron.

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Discussion with Dudley Pease, great grandson of F.B. Pease from the F.B. Pease Company.

Enslaved on Sodus Bay Part 2

Tom Lightfoot, Sodus Point Historian

Along with Fitzhugh and Helm, who were discussed in Part 1, Captain Williamson enticed other plantation owners to buy London Association land. Gavin Lawson, Robert Rose, and John Nicholas were encouraged by Fitzhugh, a relative (*See Family Ties*), to leave the south and move north. They bought land around Geneva and Sodus Bay. John Nicholas was a lawyer and member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Virginia from 1793-1801. He became known for his condemnation of the Sedition Act of 1798 because it squashed the freedom of the press. Both Rose and Nicholas became New York State legislators soon after arriving in New York. John Nicholas also became a common court judge in New York.

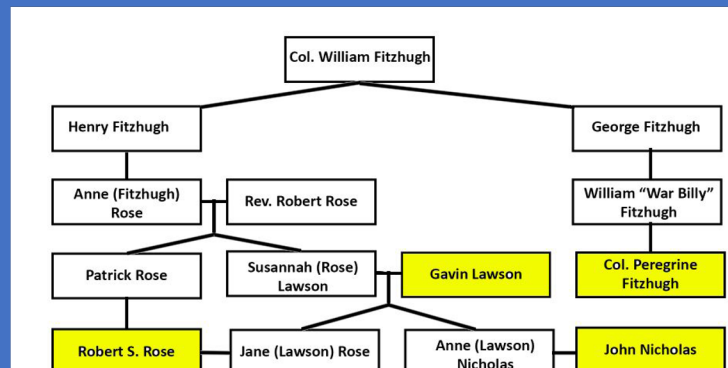
Rose and Nicholas in Geneva, NY



Rose's House at Rose Hill

Robert Rose established himself on the east side of Seneca Lake where he created a plantation just like those in Virginia. The original Rose home, seen here, still stands but was moved aside and converted into the carriage house for Rose Hill Mansion. The mansion, which was built by William Kerley Strong of New York City in 1837, is now a museum run by the Geneva Historical Society. An archeological excavation at Rose Hill established that Rose had transplanted the style and operation of a mature southern plantation into upstate New York. The quarters for his enslaved people were almost identical to those found on his father's plantation in the Piedmont region of Virginia. Using enslaved labor, just as they did in the south, Rose grew wheat at Rose Hill instead of tobacco, which was the main crop grown in Virginia

FAMILY TIES



Piedmont style slave quarters

With slavery coming to an end in 1827 in New York, the enslaved began to be freed. In the 1810 census, Rose had 37 enslaved people, which went down to 9 by 1820. Many of the manumitted (freed) people formed a black community in Geneva. One of these people was Henry Douglas who was still enslaved by Rose until 1820. After gaining his freedom he continued to work for Rose. Eight other freemen lived in Henry's house. In some cases, the young, freed people were declared indigent immediately after being freed and indentured back to their previous enslaver until they reached maturity. The following story about Cassandra, who was enslaved by Nathaniel Rochester, describes the situation.

CASSANDRA

Nathaniel Rochester, who founded our closest city, Rochester, was not only a slave owner but also a slave trader in Hagerstown, Maryland. He brought his slaves with him when he moved to the Genesee country. He freed one of his slaves, Cassandra, who was 14 at the time. She was immediately declared vagrant by the court on the same day, having no means of support, and indentured back to Nathaniel Rochester until she was 18. This was legal and common practice. It was argued by some that this assured the care of the former slaves. Others contended this was nothing more than legal means to continue slavery.

John Nicholas established his plantation called White Springs on the West side of Seneca Lake. White Springs was the capital of the Seneca Nation until Major General John Sullivan, at General Washington's command, destroyed it in 1779. His forces killed, captured, or forced the Seneca and all the other Haudenosaunee people to flee. The Indian village at White Springs had large tracts of land planted with corn, squash, and beans (the three sisters). Twenty years after Sullivan, when Nicholas bought the property, the land required little effort for him to start farming. Taking over native land that was already cultivated by the indigenous people was a regular practice for these early white settlers.



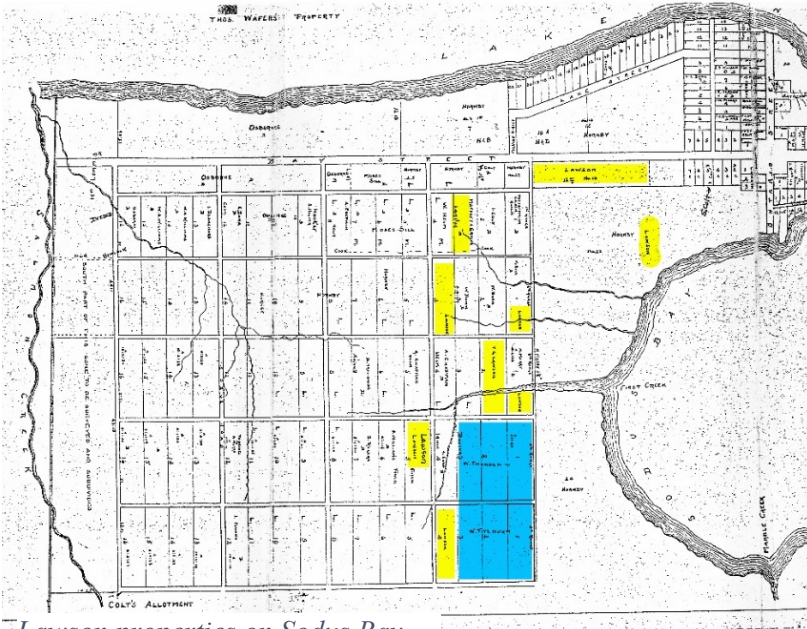
Nicholas' Home at White Springs

In addition to growing wheat like his brother-in-law, Nicholas had a large flock of sheep and built a carding mill to process the wool. His original manor house burned down, and he

never rebuilt it. Another mansion was built by new owners in 1901. It is now part of the Belhurst Castle properties.

Sodus Bay Holdings

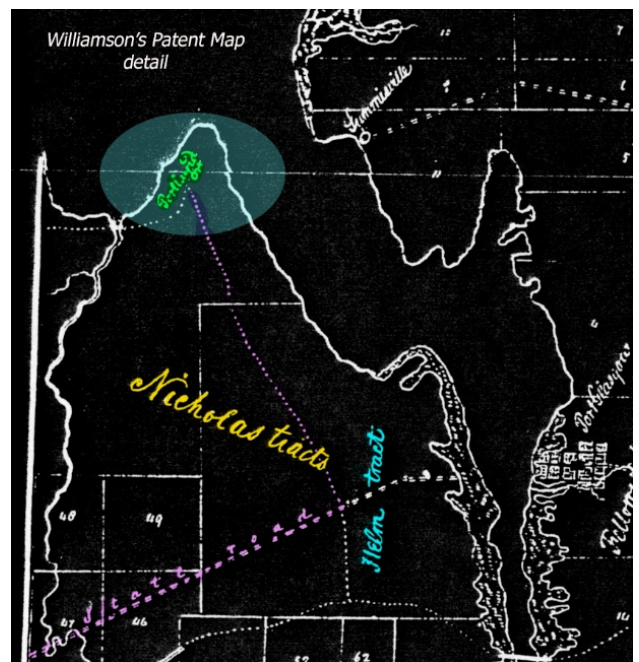
Robert Rose, while not owning land right on Sodus Bay owned the land where the Town of Rose is today. He did not appear to use that property. The people who did settle in this area honored him, however, by naming the town after him.



Lawson properties on Sodus Bay

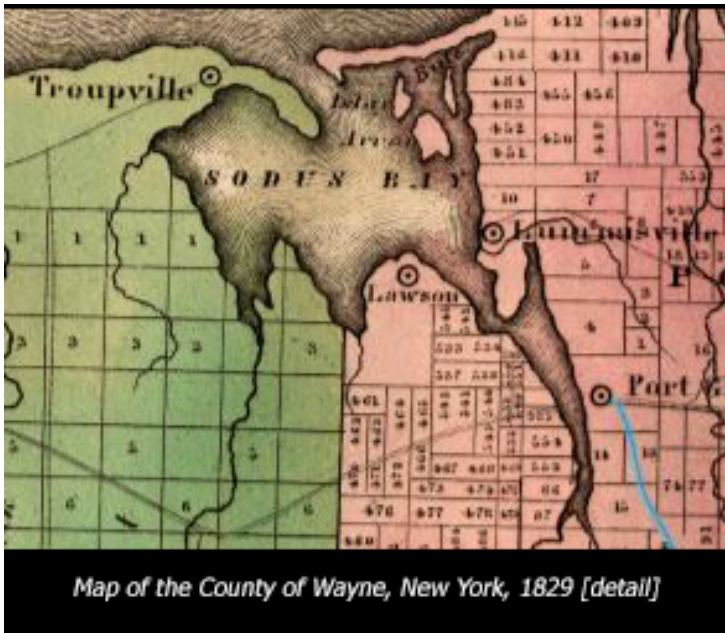
John Nicholas was the main connection to the bay among these three men. He bought the property between Peregrine Fitzhugh's property on the southwestern shore and William Helm's main holdings on the southeastern shore of the bay. Nicholas' enslaved people cleared the land and tilled some of it for wheat and rye. Most of what is known about Nicholas' use of the property is described in Shaker documents from when they bought the farm from his heirs. There was a mill on Second Creek along with a warehouse, wharf, and tavern on what became known as Nicholas Point.

Gavin Lawson was quite old when he and Susannah came to this area and did not seem to have a farm around Geneva or Sodus Bay. A survey of Sodus Point from 1813, however, shows Lawson properties on the south side of Bay Street (now Lake Road) where the water treatment plant stands as well as other parcels scattered around Sodus Point and the Fitzhugh farm. When this map was drawn both Gavin and Peregrine had died, so this property was owned by their heirs.



Williamson's Patent Map

At the end of Nicholas Point was a settlement, which was called Portland until Nicholas renamed it Lawson, presumably for his wife and father-in-law. It is unclear exactly how many buildings were built by Nicholas on his farm but there were enough buildings to house the seventy-two Shakers when they bought the property from Nicholas' heirs.



Having a tavern in Lawson suggests that this was an active stop for travelers and traders coming by ship or road. A road from Lawson went due south to Ridge Road. Ridge Road crossed Geneva Road, which goes straight to Geneva and the Rose and Nicholas plantations. Williamson's plan to create a viable trade route between the London Association's land to the Chesapeake Bay and Baltimore never came to fruition. Nicholas used his Lawson wharf for shipping goods through Lake Ontario. British warships, however, threatened American shipping on the lake until the conclusion of the War of 1812. In fact, Nicholas' wharf and warehouse

were burned by the British along with their sacking of Sodus Point in 1813. Nicholas did rebuild them but once the Shakers bought the property it appears that its use for shipping ended.

Plantations based on slavery turned out not to be as viable in the north as they had been for hundreds of years in the south. Enslaved people were useful for clearing the virgin land for farming. Cold winters, however, were not productive, yet the enslaved people still needed to be housed and fed. With slavery in New York due to end in 1827, many of the enslavers manumitted their enslaved people before they had to comply.

The opening of the Erie Canal in 1825 created a cheap and better route to and from the London Association land that was then known as the Pulteney Estate upon the death of Sir William Pulteney. While this might have boded well for the northern plantation economy, it halted the direct migration of more plantations to the north. The canal also changed the migration pattern from wealthy, southern plantation owners with families and enslaved people to a much wider spectrum of people. Irish immigration exploded. These immigrants were hired to build the canal, and many stayed here afterward providing a ready work force. People from all over with diverse backgrounds traveled along the canal and brought with them new ideas. Some of these ideas were expressed through a religious fervor that made the area into the Burned Over District. This area of New York saw the creation of Mormonism and Spiritualism along with the spread of Millerism (Adventism). Communities like the Shakers and utopian communities like the Fourierists offered alternatives to traditional thought. This diversity accelerated at an even faster pace with the coming of railroads. The society that accepted slavery as the norm, could no longer stand in the face of such an awakening.

With slavery still legal in the south, many enslaved people escaped to New York for freedom. They were welcomed into the black communities like the Maxwell Settlement in Sodus and the black community in Geneva. Some of those seeking freedom were welcomed and supported by abolitionists, particularly in Quaker communities. This changed with the 1850 passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, which was an attempt to calm the growing tensions between slave and free states. As a result of the law, a new wave of problems developed in New York and other free states. The horrors created by this law are heartbreaking. Those who had escaped to New York could legally be captured and returned to their former enslaver for the bounties placed on them. The law did not require anything but an affidavit claiming someone was a runaway. Because little to no proof was required, the bounty hunters would also capture free blacks and sell them into slavery. *Twelve Years a Slave* by Solomon Northup describes his experience as a freeman sold into slavery. There was no due process. At the same time, the law required everyone to help or face fine or imprisonment. Activity with the underground railroad increased significantly in order to help these vulnerable people escape to freedom in Canada. Many homes in the Sodus Bay area have evidence of tunnels or hidden rooms that may have harbored those escaping enslavement in the south.



Two Masted Schooner similar to Garlock's Free Trader

Type of ship used by Captain Garlock

Captain Garlock brought many slaves to Canada on his ship, the **Free Trader**. Other Captains and ships from Pultneyville were just as active in aiding this cause. The Erie Canal was also a major transportation route on the Underground Railroad to get these people to Buffalo so they could cross the Niagara River to freedom. In 1865, with the end of the Civil War, the nightmare of slavery for four million people in the United States ended.

While slavery ended, imagine what might have happened had Williamson's southern route to the Chesapeake opened instead of the Erie Canal.

While the movement to end slavery as a social relationship and emancipate enslaved people (or at least their children) was gaining momentum throughout the Northeast, it was not at all clear in 1802 how the western frontiers would be shaped, what the boundaries of slavery would be, and where the great ports of the United States would develop. The Virginians who came to the Genesee Country, if John Nicholas is a reasonable example, hoped to create a society focused on the Tidewater. The never-completed Susquehanna Navigation would have linked the Finger Lakes to Chesapeake Bay via the Susquehanna River, making

Baltimore a primary port of entry into the interior of the United States. Had this, rather than the Erie Canal, become the waterway linking the Great Lakes to the Atlantic, the path of slavery might have been very different indeed. While it may seem that the abolition of slavery throughout the Northeast was inevitable by the early 19th century, had the Nicholases, Roses, and Fitzhughs actually transformed the Genesee Country into the breadbasket of the Tidewater, this outcome may not have been so clear. *Delle, James A. and Fellows, Kristen R. (2012) "A Plantation Transplanted: Archaeological Investigations of a Piedmont-Style Slave Quarter at Rose Hill, Geneva, New York.*

Understanding our past may help “us understand and grapple with complex questions and dilemmas by examining how the past has shaped (and continues to shape) global, national, and local relationships between societies and people.” [Univ. of Wisconsin-Madison, Dept. of History Catalog](#) “The past causes the present, and so the future..... Only through history can we understand what elements of an institution or a society persist despite change.” [American Historical Assoc, Why Study History?](#)

Slavery is part of Sodus Bay’s history.

It played a part in creating Sodus Bay’s present. Can we control how it impacts our future?

Historic Sodus Bay Lighthouse Postcard



*Thinking about lighthouse keepers in the past –
and how the catwalk was needed - regardless of rain, shine, sleet, or snow.
Circa 1907.*

Wayne County Bicentennial Update

Larry Ann Evans – In Memoriam

The Wayne County history community mourns the loss of Larry Ann Evans who passed away in December 2020 from a brief but difficult battle with cancer. Larry Ann was Executive Director of the Wayne County Museum of History in Lyons. She was also a talented writer and actress. Larry Ann served with Walworth Historian, Gene Bavis, as co-chair of the Wayne County Bicentennial 2023. A vivacious individual who brought so much to the history of this county, Larry Ann will indeed be missed. She has left a lasting legacy with her many gifts of history writing, plays, and contributions to youth theater and the local history community. As the Bicentennial Planning Committee moves forward, we keep Larry Ann always in our hearts and souls, remembering the history she so dearly loved.

Upcoming Wayne County Bicentennial Event

Wayne County Bicentennial PowerPoint Program
Wednesday, January 27, at 7:00 PM via Zoom

Hosts – Gene Bavis, Town of Walworth Historian
Rosa Fox, Town of Huron Historian

Registration is required and will be limited to the first 100 people. To register, please send an email with your name included to:

bicentennial@waynehistorians.org.

Please include the words “PowerPoint Registration in The Subject Line.

You will receive a confirmation email containing the Zoom link.

The program will be 30 to 40 minutes in length followed by a Q & A session.

For more information or to schedule a program on the Wayne County Bicentennial – Visit:

www.waynecounty200.com

Facebook –

[Wayne County NY Bicentennial 2023](https://www.facebook.com/WayneCountyNYBicentennial2023)



Wayne County is



Historic to the Core!

Story Corner

By You

Great Stories from Around Great Sodus Bay

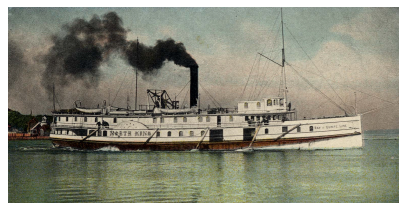
A Special Invitation: We invite you – the reader – to submit stories about unique reminiscences, events, experiences, news, and other Great Sodus Bay related tales. Please send your creative offerings to Rosa Fox – foxmuse@aol.com. Our newsletter team will review submissions for inclusion in future issues.

Note: The following article is in abbreviated form - from the Democrat and Chronicle, August 5, 1873.

This article refers to the Lake Bluff Camp that Purdy was working on opening in 1873, as related in the article on Purdy. The wharf in this article is not the landing where the new historic marker is located.

ODD FELLOWSHIP

*THE GRAND PICNIC AT SODUS POINT
(actually, at Lake Bluff)*



NORTH KING formerly known as the NORSEMAN built in 1868. Side wheel steamer. 160 ft. overall, 26 ft. beam, and 10 ft. draft.

In July of 1873, a few prominent members of Newark Lodge number 250 I.O.O.F. conceived the idea of a grand union picnic at some central place, where Odd Fellows from Wayne and adjacent counties could meet for a day's enjoyment and social intercourse to strengthen the bonds of friendship and extend the acquaintance of members of the different lodges that exist in the central counties of that section of Central New York between Syracuse and Rochester. A committee was appointed by Newark lodge, consisting of Messrs. J. Wilson, E. P. Soverhill and M. F. Hamm. After consultation with several lodges throughout this portion of the state, it was decided to have the picnic at Sodus Point on the 4th of August.

Yesterday witnessed one of the most enjoyable day's recreations it was the good fortune of many of the participants ever to experience. Newark Lodge, although the prime mover in this matter, was not expected to act wholly in the sense of host. Other lodges bore their part of the necessary expense.

The steamer NORSEMAN was chartered to convey the excursionists from this city to Sodus Point. She left the landing [Rochester] at half-past 7 with some 225 on board, and stopping at Charlotte, took on board 100 more. All being in readiness, the ropes were cast off, and at 8 o'clock the noble steamer with its happy living freight floated gracefully into the lake. The weather was all that could be desired. A few clouds were visible, but they were so fleecy that they merely serve to relieve the monotony of a changeless sky.

Thus far, all had been smiles of gladness. Ladies in anticipation of a few hours respite from home cares had left "blue Monday" duties for another day. Soon, however, a change came over the spirit of their dreams. A paleness gradually spread over their visages. A languid, longing glance towards the receding shore might be detected by the casual observer. Conversation grew less cheerful. Indeed, among many of them, it soon ceased altogether. A mutually pensive

expression stole over their countenances. Deep and solemn subjects seemed to occupy their thoughts. The inclination of the heads tended to confirm this belief.

Soon, however, the course of this strange demeanor, so inconsistent with the spirit of the occasion was made manifest: not by any declaration on their part, but in other ways, fully as demonstrative and convincing. A nervous twitching of the hands, an involuntary reaching after something that was not, and a sudden desire to see their reflection in Lake Ontario gave unmistakable evidence that their feelings and impulses could no longer be restrained. They "hove to" though the ship did not. In short, they were deathly seasick. Sympathizing relatives and friends were near to offer assistance, and their proffered aid was readily accepted. This state of affairs continued during most of the passage but was not alone confined to the gentler sex. Strong, healthy men were likewise afflicted, and from manly bosoms, all around the deck could be heard the agonizing "Oh My!" as they suddenly stared to view their images in the waters. As we neared Sodus Point, however, hope revived and the feelings of the excursionists grew more cheerful. By the time a landing was effected [sic], nearly all evidences of the recent disagreeable experience had vanished.

On reaching the wharf we were informed by those interested in running the tugs that the NORSEMAN drew too much water to allow her to land her passengers at Purdy's wharf which is situated at the foot of the high bluff on the eastern shore of the bay. On inquiry, however, after reaching the village wharf it was thought best to venture the trail and David Rogers, an old resident of Sodus, offered to pilot the vessel over. It should be here stated that there were several small steamers which carried passengers to and from the picnic ground for twenty-five cents each way. A safe landing was effected [sic], and the party were met at the wharf by the committee from Newark Lodge. The grounds selected have been prepared for an extensive camp meeting which opened today.

After refreshments, the pleasure seekers assembled in front of the speaker's stand where the meeting was called to order. [What follows in the article is a report listing officer nominations, elections, remarks, and musical discourse.]

A vote of thanks was then given to David Rogers, who kindly relieved the excursionists from a perplexing dilemma by piloting the NORSEMAN safely through the bay to Purdy's landing. At half-past four, the steamer FALLING WATERS conveyed the excursionists to the village, where the NORSEMAN lay. After some delay all was in readiness to start for home. The passage home was unusually pleasant. The moon shone brilliantly, and the water was much smoother than in the morning. [The article conveys that the ride home continued with singing to the accompaniment of Miss Nellie Wilder at the piano.] Reaching Charlotte about 11 o'clock, street cars were ready to convey the weary travelers to their homes. [The article closes out with a multitude of acknowledgements.] We are indebted to Captain Crawford of the NORSEMAN, J. Wilson of the Newark Courier, and Messrs. Dodd and Brewster, proprietors of the dining rooms on the ground for special courtesies.

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.

Curatorial – Nellie Gardner & Martha Lightfoot



The model ice boat, pictured left, was donated to the Sodus Bay Lighthouse Museum by Sodus Bay Historical Society Board Member, Nellie Gardner. In very good condition, the ice boat measures approximately 18-inches long, 4-inches wide, with a mast that is 24-inches tall. This interesting model will make an unusual and welcome addition to museum’s boating and recreation exhibit. We are hopeful to learn more about model ice boats. If you or anyone you know have any information about this ice boat or other model ice boats, we would love to hear from you. Please email Martha Lightfoot - msmithlightfoot@gmail.com.



*Library of Congress. 1908 chromolithograph.
<https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/ppmsca.46088>*

Buildings & Grounds

Tom Lightfoot

Timber!!!! Two trees have been taken down on the roadside of the museum, making safe our buildings, walkways, and parking areas. Many thanks to Empire Tree Surgeons for their expertise and work on this area of improvement to the museum grounds.

Demolition!! The museum interior has entered into a state of renovation. During this first phase - demolition – the efforts of so many hands pitching in to help is so very appreciated. Soon we will be past the demolition and begin the rebuilding phase. It will be gratifying to see our plans for the future of the lighthouse museum begin to come to fruition. We should all be proud of what is being accomplished with our own hands and at minimal expense. What we are working hard to accomplish will undoubtedly make the lighthouse museum an even better place to visit as we celebrate our sesquicentennial year. We have a long way to go to completion, but our incredible team of volunteers is getting it done. Thank you to everyone.



Lighthouse Museum Store – Mary Quinn

The New Year brings a new array of items to the Lighthouse Museum Store. Currently under construction, as part of the museum interior renovation, we will do our best to fulfill your online orders. Visit the Lighthouse Museum Store - <https://www.sodusbaylighthouse.org/collections/all>

Membership – Jane Peachey

Happy New Year! With this new year - let's hope for a return to gathering together safely. While it is not known when we be able to safely gather for concerts and special events at the lighthouse, we look forward to doing so with each and every one of you as soon as possible.

Over the past few years, the membership committee has organized a day trip to a local place of interest. These events have been quite enjoyable, a nice opportunity to see some local sites, as well as to get to know other members. We would like to have a member only tour this year, perhaps in the Fall when it is safe to gather and enjoy each other's company.

We are always looking for new members, new residents to invite to the lighthouse and show them what we are all about, and volunteers to help us with the multitude of activities undertaken at the museum. If you have ideas for new members and/or know any neighbors who may be interested in volunteering, please let any board member know or send an email to admin@sodusbaylighthouse.org. Remember - your membership allows you free access to the museum.

Finally, on behalf of SBHS, I'd like to extend a heartfelt thank you to each and every one who renewed their membership this past year, upgraded their dues contribution, or decided to become a life member. Your generosity is very much appreciated and is what makes the Sodus Bay Historical Society/Lighthouse Museum sustainable. Thank you!!!



June 2019 member-only tour to the Seward House and Willard Memorial Chapel

VOLUNTEERS WANTED!

Sodus Bay Historical Society & Lighthouse Museum
is looking for interested volunteers with assorted skills:

Office Secretary with Computer Skills

Copywriter

Graphic Designer

Fund Raising/Grant Writing

Wedding Coordinator

Board of Trustee Members

Board Secretary

Be a Lighthouse Volunteer! Join Today!

Respond by email to: admin@sodusbaylighthouse.org

2020 Membership & Gifts

Sodus Bay Historical Society welcomed the following New Members in 2020

Tina Bartucca and Jared VanKouwenberg
Harold Cheetham
Amy Dean
Philip and Linda Eygnor
Nellie Gardner
Susan Greene
Annette Hawver
Carrie Hennessey
Thomas Jackson

Carol Jacobs
Scott and MyLinh Johnson
Jim L'Hommedieu
Karen Proctor
Christine and Cristino Rodriquez
Noula Stathopoulos
Lynn Thayer
Sharon Therkildsen

New 2020 LIFE Members

Cynthia Cuddeback
Susie Earl
Philip and Linda Eygnor
Scott and MyLinh Johnson
Sally, Sue and Dana Ketcham
Wendy Ketcham

Life membership is a one-time payment of \$1000.00. Annual renewal is no longer necessary. Half the life member fee is deposited into an endowment fund to help with the long-term financial viability of our organization. Life member names are included on a plaque, which hangs in the Chamberlain Room at the Sodus Bay Lighthouse Museum.

2020 Memorial and In Honor Donations

In memory of Bud Seymour

Deborah and Alan Lattime
Suzanne Crothers Earl

In memory of Gary Marshall

Gerry and Beth Palmer
Sue Bassage

In memory of Philip McMullen

Phil Gustafson
Brent and Michelle Cring

In memory of Tim Bonin

Suzanne Crothers Earl

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!

Diamond

*Empire Tree Surgeons
Fleet Feet Sports
Sodus Rotary
SPINCO Metal Products*

Platinum

Classic Hits 99.3

Gold

*Fowler Farms
The Heights Restaurant
& Banquet Facility
Krenzer Marine
Nick's Family Restaurant
Northwind Harbor*

Silver

*The Bay Street
Computer Support
by Cathy Contant
Copper Ale House
A Gentle Breeze
Imprint Coffee Roasting
Marshall Farms Group
Reliant Community Credit Union
Skipper's Landing Restaurant
Ward Steel
Wegmans*

Bronze

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

Additional Generous Support

*C. H. Stuart Foundation
Claude G. and Geraldine A. Wright Family Fund
Finger Lakes Community Arts Grants
Augustus and Jennie D. Hoffman Foundation
Mark Ketcham and Werner Lutz Do It Now Fund at Our Fund
Humanities New York
New York State Council on the Arts
Peter C. and Mable Browne Family Charitable Fund
Robert G. Boehmler Community Foundation
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Town of Sodus
United States Lighthouse Society
Village of Sodus Point
William G. Pomeroy Foundation*



