

Newsletter

Winter 2022



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President's Message Honoring Tom Lightfoot Annual Appeal Challenge New HVAC System for Lighthouse Sill Room and More!



Sodus Bay Historical Society & Lighthouse Museum

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President's Message

Happy 2022 to all of you! This article is bittersweet. As we welcome the New Year, this edition will be in memory and a tribute to our President, Tom Lightfoot. Most of us probably have a cache of stories or fond memories with Tom. Our Board agreed that, in the sincerest fashion, this newsletter would be an opportunity to share them and celebrate Tom.

As a man of stories, myself, I am drawn back 30 years ago to my first encounter with Tom and Martha. It was at a small country auction, and it was clear that these folks were new to the scene. It was later in the auction that upon exiting, Martha asked me what was so special about the piece that I had paid so much money for. Over a piece of Jugtown Pottery in the shape of a bean pot, a friendship was forged.

As the story's chapters were unfolded, we began spending many afternoons and evenings sharing meals at El Rincon and talking about Sodus Point history. I shared my teenage years spent as a tour guide at the lighthouse and my magical childhood growing up on Alasa Farms. We would talk for hours. I was always inspired that they were willing to trade in their past lives to live more remotely from their professional lives in Rochester to start their story together in Sodus Point.

It was a great time and the idea to blend Tom's vision to open an art gallery with my dream of opening an antique shop quickly came to fruition. For seven years, our *White Pillars Gallery* was open on weekends in the summer, and quickly developed into a social place where folks would drop in from far and near. Conversations were bountiful and a deeper sense of community was taking hold. We all began to belong, just a little bit more.

In true Tom fashion, there were no strangers. Everyone had a story. Conversations about art and food and travel and place and friendship were plentiful. It was one of the best chapters of my life.

As I get older and witness how life comes full circle, I am grateful that I had one more, final Tom chapter. I can remember standing on the front lawn of the Dwelling House at Alasa Farms waiting for a school bus tour of children when the phone rang, and it was Tom. "Hey Derek, how would you like to join the Sodus Bay Historical Society board?"

Thanks, Tom. Thanks for being a mentor, friend, making room at the table and letting me be part of your tribe. Sodus Bay Historical Society is even more special because of your artistic vision,



Photo of Tom by Aylish Lightfoot.

your attention to detail and your strong ability to lead. You will forever be a valuable part of our history.

On January 19th, our board had its first meeting of the year. I am humbled to inform you that I was elected President, and Dan McIntosh was elected Vice President and Martha Smith-Lightfoot was elected as our new Secretary. Congratulations to all.

I am pleased to report that we were able to fill officer positions as well as passing the proposed 2022 budget. It was a productive meeting with an ambitious agenda. I personally look forward to working with this group of highly talented and dedicated volunteers. Together, I am confident we will carry the torch and work in the best interest of the Lighthouse and museum.

The SBHS Board is pleased to announce that in December of 2021, the Sodus Bay Lighthouse Museum was recognized by the Landmark Society of Western NY with a Preservation Award for our organization's continuing historical stewardship. This is an important distinction that will have a positive impact on the ongoing lighthouse preservation efforts in the future.

Finally, as I close, I would like to thank all the members who participated in the Annual Appeal/Williamson Challenge. We were fortunate to secure another \$12,000 in matching funds initiated by Dave and Sue Williamson. Thank you! Thanks also to the generosity of all our renewing and new members. We have a great next chapter ahead.

Derek H. Poole

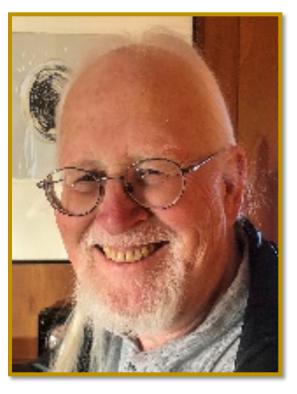
President

Editor's Message

Working on this issue of the SBHS Newsletter, I can't help but reflect on my friend and historical colleague, Tom Lightfoot. As we began working on the SBHS newsletter a few years back, we often turned to each other to spin ideas, proof each other's work, plan the scope of the next newsletter, and have enlightening conversations about local history.

We first met when Tom and I served on the SBHS Board of Directors together in 2015. The Lightfoots and Foxes became very good friends over this short time. Our mutual passion for Sodus Bay, local history, learning, dreaming, and laughing brought us together in many ways. Research and preservation were the two factors most common in our lives that created a quick and strong bond.

Tom's passion and eye for beauty as an artist, transformed easily to a passion and eye for local history. Clarity, inclusion, and a good story were qualities Tom sought in his quest to provide the reader or listener a bountiful trip into the past. Tom was immersed in history, from his childhood spent at Cape Cod to his adulthood exploring a variety of living venues to his retirement years embedded in life at Sodus Point. The local art and antique scene, sailing,



youth programs, and the lighthouse were nourishment in his quest to expand his knowledge and savor a great life at Sodus Bay.

Preservation is the key to Tom's legacy. Tom was instrumental in so many local preservation projects, most recently the acquisition and renovation of the Schooner LOTUS, a project he entered with great thought and determination, becoming a major force in moving the LOTUS project forward. As Village Historian, Tom pursued the challenge of securing for the Village of Sodus Point listing in the National Parks Registry of Historic Places. Though that application did not come to fruition, Tom's valiant efforts, and collaboration with others in the field laid the groundwork for a future application to secure Sodus Point this well-deserved distinction. As far as the Sodus Bay Lighthouse, it is clear to all, this was Tom's beloved passion. Tom spent many hours through many years dedicated to helping create an environment and character of place which so much contributed to the museum and organization's great success.

Tom's gentle, kind, thoughtful, and patient qualities will continue to benefit the Sodus Bay community, as we are all reminded to take gentle steps like Tom's and reach out to preserve those elements of our community we hold dear. Thank you, Tom, for everything!

Rosa

Williamson Challenge Report

Gerry Palmer, Board Member

At our August annual meeting, David and Susan Williamson made an offer to match any member who donated \$1000 to the Sodus Bay Historical Society. A condition of the Williamsons' offer was that the monies be used for a specific identified purpose.

The SBHS board identified the most pressing need was repair of the lighthouse tower's windows. The situation is so bad that during rainstorms, the windows leak and water settles on the inside sills which causes them to rot. The widow repair must be in accordance with our National Historical Society designation. Vinyl, aluminum, or wooden windows cannot be used. The existing windows must be *repaired* using the same type of material as the original windows. The cost for this project is



estimated to be approximately \$18,000 which includes the rental of a bucket truck to facilitate repairs from the outside. Work on an historic building is more intricate and detail-oriented and must allow for consistency with the original structure, so we must find a professional familiar with this type of work

We are happy to report that twelve SBHS members contributed \$1000 each and the Williamsons matched that amount giving us \$24,000 to tackle this job. Any remaining money will be earmarked for additional lighthouse tower repairs.

The board wishes to thank those donors and David and Sue Williamson for their generosity.

Landmark Society Preservation Awards

The Landmark Society of Western NY recently presented Preservation Awards for exemplary work for ongoing preservation of historically significant buildings during a Zoom Awards Ceremony in December. Wayne County was strongly represented at the awards program. Local recipients were the Sodus Bay Lighthouse Museum, the Lyons Peppermint Museum, and Newark homeowners Matt Clingerman and Joe O'Toole. Visit the Landmark Society website to learn more about this prestigious honor.

https://www.landmarksociety.org/preservation-awards-program/

A Cool Place to Visit!

Bill Singer, Past President, SBHS

As Lake Ontario and Sodus Bay struggle to freeze and create an icy wonderland, and the frigid winds blow hard on shore, there is some pretty cool work going on inside the old lighthouse while it's "Closed for the Season".

Identified in past museum assessments as a major improvement opportunity, controlling the museum's interior temperature and humidity fluctuations would be a significant benefit to preserving museum artifacts. In prior years, multiple window air conditioners and portable fans worked overtime to keep the sweltering interior temperature and humidity at tolerable levels.

Over a year ago, the SBHS Board of Trustees decided that it was a priority to try to address this problem and alleviate the potential damage to our artifacts and improve the comfort for our staff, volunteers, and visitors. As you can imagine, installing air conditioning and humidity control on three levels and thirteen rooms in a 150-year-old lighthouse built with two-foot-thick limestone walls and no existing ductwork would be a daunting challenge, and cost serious money.

But not to be deterred by degree of difficulty or lack of sufficient money, we proceeded. Grant opportunities were identified, and multiple grant applications were written. Qualified HVAC contractors were consulted, and multiple proposals and bids were obtained.

Davenport Hatch Foundation awarded us a very generous grant covering over half the estimated total cost. The balance needed was identified from available on hand funds.

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(Cool Place Continued from page 6)

After two rounds of bidding, including the need to upgrade our electrical capacity to handle air conditioning systems, the contract was awarded to VanHook Service, a commercial and industrial HVAC company headquartered in Rochester.

After waiting for delayed equipment delivery from factories, installation was begun in December. Two complete Unico systems have been installed, with one air handler in the lighthouse attic and one in the basement. Each system delivers cool air through a unique system of 24 high velocity, high efficiency flexible vents installed inconspicuously in floors and ceilings. Two 2-ton condensers were installed on the north side of the lighthouse, and two Wi Fi thermostats will allow remote monitoring and adjustment of temperatures from a cell phone or computer.

So next summer, be sure to visit the lighthouse and gift shop on a warm day and you will notice that it's a lot more comfortable inside. As you tour the interesting exhibits and learn more about the unique history of the Sodus Bay area, or browse thru the latest gift shop merchandise, hopefully you will think it's all "very cool".



Rooms of the Lighthouse – The Sill Room – Part 1

Second in a Series on the Lighthouse Rooms
Rosa Fox

In the Fall 2021 issue of the SBHS Newsletter, Tom Lightfoot began a series about the exhibit rooms of the lighthouse. We wish to continue that series in the spirit Tom intended: to shed light on the history behind each room; the people whom the room is named in honor; and some information on the exhibits found in each room.

Narina. In 1986, the Sodus Bay Lighthouse "Sill Room" was named to honor William "Bill" Louis Sill who passed away in 2008 at the young age of 55. Bill's passion for sailboat racing, boat building, and living on the water was something passed to him through many generations. Bill's father, grandfather, and great grandfather were true lovers of Sodus Bay and the many gifts the area provided. These men and their families gave a tremendous amount of love and countless contributions to the Sodus Bay community. To fully appreciate the historical significance of the Sill Room, let's look back at Bill's ancestors.

John Sill came from England to Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1637. John and his wife Johanna had two daughters, Elizabeth and Judith, and one son, Joseph. A military man, Captain Joseph Sill (1636-1696) and his first wife Jemima Belcher had four sons and two daughters in Cambridge. Following Jemima's death in 1675, Joseph moved to Lyme, Connecticut where he married Sarah Clark in 1676. They had two children - Joseph and Zechariah. It is from Joseph the New York State Sill story develops.

In 1706, Joseph (1677-1765) married Phebe Lord (1688-1774). Joseph and Phebe had twelve children. Two of the twelve offspring have Sodus Bay connections. Ninth born, Jabez Sill (1722-1790) was the father of Moses and Jabez Sill who managed a tavern during the 1790s for Captain Charles Williamson in Troupville (Sodus



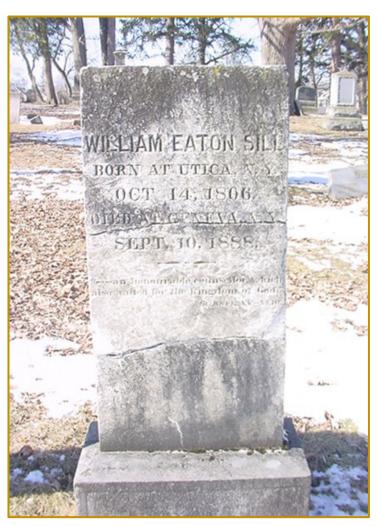
Captain Joseph Sill grave marker in Duck River Cemetery, Lyme, Connecticut. Photo from Find-a-Grave by Karlynn Gustafson.

Point's early name). Moses and Jabez moved away from the Sodus Bay area in the early 1800s. Joseph and Phebe's youngest child, twelfth born, Elisha Sill would sire the family line to eventually wind up fostering five generations of Sills on Great Sodus Bay.

Dr. Elisha Sill (1730-1808) married Mary Heaton (1746-1816). Dr. Sill attended Yale Medical School, graduating in 1754. He began military service in 1771, serving as a surgeon

in General Oliver Wolcott's Connecticut Volunteer Brigade during the Revolutionary War. Elisha and Mary had four children, including Elisha Eaton Sill. Elisha Eaton dropped the "H" in his middle name given in honor of his mother's family.

Elisha Eaton Sill (1774-1812) settled in Utica where he was a merchant. He married Susan Miles Hopkins Dwight (1782-1860). They had three children, one of whom was Samuel Hopkins Sill (1812-1895), who in 1839, married Susan Ann Rose (1814-1848). Susan was the daughter of Robert Selden Rose and Jane Lawson Rose of Geneva for whom the Town of Rose is named, and who has a history of land ownership near Sodus Bay. Samuel and Susan had four sons. Elisha and Susan's second child, William Eaton Sill (1842-1898) became an attorney in Geneva, bought property and moved to Sodus Point. On January 2, 1867, William married Elizabeth Selden Mather (1848-1934) at her parents' home in Sodus Center.



William Eaton Sill grave marker in Washington Street Cemetery, Geneva, NY. Photo from Find a Grave by Paul Sutton Kamalsky.

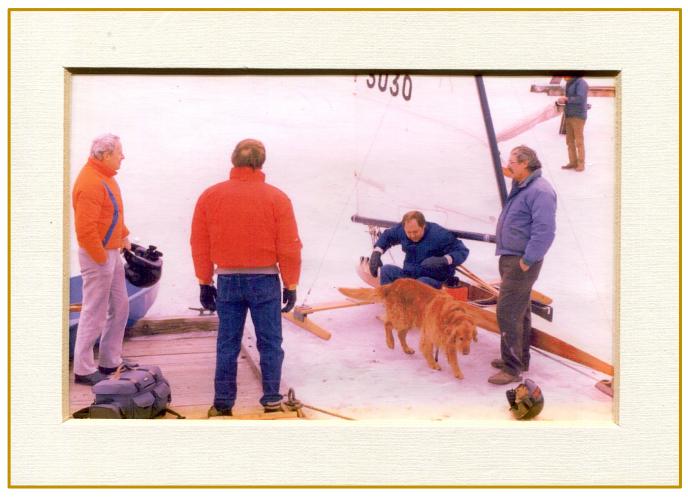
Purchased from the Peregrine Fitzhugh estate, William Eaton Sill owned property along Sodus Bay's west shore between First and Second Creek. In an August 1, 1894, Arcadian Weekly Gazette article titled "A New Breathing Place" Sill christened this property "South Shore". William made extensive improvements to this farm tract, including roads, an icehouse, and a horse barn. He laid out lots for purchase and development, planted trees, and built a wall of riprap along the shore to protect the bluff from erosion.

On June 26, 1870, William and Elizabeth brought their first child into the world - Arthur Gavin Sill. Arthur had two siblings - Elisha and Katherine. Arthur would inherit the Sill farm and manage the property. When he wasn't engaged in farming pursuits or his law practice, one could find him racing one of his well-known sailboats in Yacht Club regattas on Sodus Bay. Arthur married Laura Adelle Stillman at Sodus Point in 1904.

They had two children, Stewart Stillman Sill (1906-1979) and Naomi Sill Taylor (1911-2007).

Stewart Sill Sr. married Dorothy Esther Arney in 1933. Stewart and Dorothy had two children - Stewart Stillman Sill Jr. (1935-2012) and Susanne Arney Sill (1936-1976). Dorothy died in 1936. Stewart remarried twice more over the years. With his third wife Jeanne, son, Steven Stewart Sill (1951-2010) was born. Sill Sr. was instrumental in the building of several

major bridges such as the Veterans Memorial Bridge in Rochester and the Thousand Island Bridge at the St. Lawrence Seaway. He operated tugboats on Sodus Bay for many years and was engaged in marine construction including work on the Sodus Bay channel lighthouse and piers. Son, Steve became involved in the marine construction business with his dad and took over the business remaining an active force in marine construction on Sodus Bay for many years.



Clockwise: Bill Sill in the iceboat with one of the popular Sill golden retrievers, Bill VanGee, Stew Sill in red jacket, Ernie Kirkpatrick. Photo courtesy Dawn Sill.

Stewart Jr. - "Stew" - while growing up, worked with his dad in the marine construction business and as part of that business, drove the tugboats to turn the large coal boats around. In addition to his youth work detail on the bay, Stew raced sailboats, one of which, an R-boat, *Kathea II*, which he raised from the bottom of the bay, restored with a lot of elbow grease and determination, and raced her all over Lake Ontario. Stew loved the water and racing on the water - from sailboats to iceboats and antique power boats. In 1952, Stew Jr. married Dawn Yantz. They had one son - William Louis Sill, for whom the Sill room was dedicated July 4, 1986, and a daughter Charlene. Stew started Sill's Marina in 1954, and ran the business for 43 years, renting slips and doing engine and boat repairs. Sill's Marina was a family business at which both Dawn and Bill worked side by side with

Stew.¹ Charlene went on to follow a Sill practice of becoming an attorney, like her great grandfather, Arthur Gavin Sill, and her great-great grandfather, William Eaton Sill.

Back to the Sill Room. As the room was dedicated in 1986 in Bill's honor, the name on the plate over the door to the room carries generations of history. The Sodus Bay community is indeed incredibly honored that the Sill family decided to call this great bay home. Sodus Bay Lighthouse is honored to have a room named in honor of Bill and his amazing ancestors.

Many thanks to Bill's mom, Dawn Sill, for taking time to fill in the gaps, share photos and provide great conversation about her family. Much of the genealogical research for this article was from tracing the family lineage on Family Search, Ancestry, Find a Grave, and newspaper obituaries and articles.

1. For a delightful biography on Stew Sill, Jr. by Bill VanGee of Katlynn Marine - visit - http://www.katlynnmarine.com/stew-sill-part1/. Be sure to note - there are eight parts to Bill's story. After part 3 - keep clicking the "next" button until you reach part 4.

The Spring Issue of the SBHS Newsletter will continue the Sill Room story with Exhibit Highlights: Erie Canal Boat Stove; Restored Painting of the Lighthouse; 1812 War Showcase. In adding to the Sill family story, if anyone would like to share photos or stories about the Sills, please send those to Rosa Fox at foxmuse@aol.com. She will see they are added to the archives at the lighthouse. You may also contact the Lighthouse at info@sodusbaylighthouse.org.



Hoarfrost Morning - January 22, 2022. Photo by Lizzie Fox.

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

The Curatorial Committee welcomes Carol Sergeant. Carol brings experience from working with the Town of Sodus Historical Society archives and the Sodus Library. During the fall and winter months, the committee continues to organize and catalog items in the attic. At some point, we will enter the newly cataloged items into Past Perfect collections museum software. Some of the items we are cataloging include newspaper articles, photos, and artifacts that are on display in the museum.

Signage is an important component of the museum exhibits. Once the collection is more organized and entered appropriately in Past Perfect, we will design and expand the current signage on both floors to include interpretive panels. We are also working on an information binder to be used next summer for training docents and are compiling material for a self-guided tour of the lighthouse exhibits.

Continued coordination with Sodus Bay Lighthouse Buildings & Grounds is ongoing to repair holes in walls throughout the lighthouse left from the display changes last season, as well as other needed repair factors throughout the lighthouse.

Three blueprints for the Robin class sailboat, designed by retired naval architect, Benjamin B. Wood are currently being framed at Sherry's Framing in Seneca Falls. They will be hung near the Robin display on the second floor in the boating room. The Robin was a special class sailboat designed by Wood, commissioned by the Sodus Bay Yacht Club, and especially formulated to the conditions for sailing on Sodus Bay.

Lighthouse Museum Gift Shop - Mary Quinn & Sue Coco, Co-Chairs

As our annual in-store shopping year ended, we prepared the Lighthouse Museum Gift Shop for the Wayne County Winter Wonderland Fling event. We learned what a commitment being a part of this entailed and worried, due to supply chain interruptions, that our merchandise offerings would be less than we anticipated. Luckily some items ordered in July and August finally, and for us triumphantly, arrived a week prior to this event. We hustled to add everything to our inventory system, get them priced and displayed for sale. Many terrific volunteers helped us prepare.

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(SBHS Committee News - continued from page 12)

We had a tremendously positive response from the public and did well during the sale. A popular addition was an ornament featuring the Lighthouse Museum, which arrived two days prior to this event. Thanks to our President Tom Lightfoot's artistic design and the Cat's Meow company's super willingness to work with us, we received this unique collectible ornament, and it was a hit! Customers asked us to sell ornaments year-round. We have decided that a small holiday section would be a great addition to the gift shop going forward. Gift Cards will also be available for in-store purchase and our online store is open for shopping all year.

We want to thank each of our volunteers and customers who supported us this year and look forward to seeing everyone again in 2022.

Happy New Year!

Membership - Jane Peachey, Chair

Welcome new members:

Edward and Jill Mundy Spencer Shull, and Scott Forsyth and Margie Spence

2021 was a good year for SBHS membership. It certainly helped that the museum was open with new exhibits and an enhanced gift shop. People enjoy the summer concerts and see that as a reason to join. Thank you to all who renewed and a special thank you to those who increased their level of membership. I also need to thank my fellow board members who put a lot of effort into letting others know about SBHS and encouraged them to join. Membership revenue is used for general operating expenses which can vary greatly from year-to-year. All your donations and contributions help us staff the museum, maintain the lighthouse, and offer community events that so many people enjoy! Thank you for your support!

Finally, I know this edition of our fabulous newsletter is dedicated to Tom Lightfoot and I would be remiss if I didn't add that he was such a pleasure to work with. When the pandemic was raging and the future of all small non-profits was uncertain, the board knew we had to step up and get things done. We no longer had the benefit of staff. Tom worked on many things including helping me figure out how to use our electronic mailing system and communicate with membership. He was his typical kind, patient, and humorous self. I miss him but am very grateful to have known him and for all he did for SBHS.

2022 SBHS Lighthouse Events

The Sodus Bay Lighthouse Museum will be open Friday, May 27, 2022, through Columbus Day, Monday, October 10, 2022.

Hours will be made available in the next newsletter and will be posted on the lighthouse website.

Sunday Lighthouse Concerts

All concerts are at 2 PM on the lighthouse lawn.
Bring your own chair!
Refreshments available!
Best of all, the concerts are FREE!

July 3	Gap Mangione and His Big Band
July 10	Mitty and the Followers

July 17 Brass Inc.

July 24 Matt Chase and Thunder Canyon

July 31 Chris Wilson
August 7 The Ripcords
August 14 The Flyin' Column

August 21 Drew Frech August 28 Dean's List

September 4 Ron and Nancy One Song





Sodus Bay Lighthouse 5K Run/Walk

Saturday, July 2, 2022 Check in: 7:30 am

Race start: 9:00 am

Check in: Sodus Bay Lighthouse Museum

7606 North Ontario Street

Sodus Bay Historical Society 2022 Golf Tournament

Monday, August 15, 2022

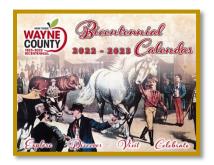
Start: Noon (Shotgun)

Location: Sodus Bay Heights Golf Club

7030 Bayview Drive



Wayne County Bicentennial Update



☼ During the holidays, the Bicentennial Calendar found its way to many people near and far who love Wayne County History. This two-year (2022-2023) calendar is still available for purchase online through the Wayne County Museum of History and is also available at local town and village halls and some historical societies. If you didn't get yours, sources may be found at:

https://web.co.wayne.ny.us/DocumentCenter/View/3171/Where-to-Find-a-Calendar-PDF?bidId=

- The *Bicentennial Memories Book* committee has collected an assortment of stories, poems, and visual arts submitted by people of all ages from around the county. The committee is now in the process of reviewing the materials and discussing the book's layout. Due to be released in the fall of 2022, in time for the holidays, this volume will be a treasure for years to come.
- ▲ A Bicentennial Activity Book for Kids was recently completed. The creation of Marion Historian, Caryn Devlin, the book is a wonderful overview of the history of each Wayne County town, with puzzles, coloring pages, and more. The activity book will be distributed

to all fourth graders in Wayne County. It will also be available at libraries and through historical societies throughout the county. Best of all – it will be free.

- Be sure to follow Wayne County Bicentennial activity on Facebook! Passing the one-year mark in November 2021, we delight in over 2700 followers. Of note to Sodus Bay history, the most popular post this past year was the November 5th posting of the 50-year anniversary of the Sodus Bay Coal Trestle fire with photos taken by Bill Huff.
- For more information or to schedule a program on the Wayne County Bicentennial – Contact:

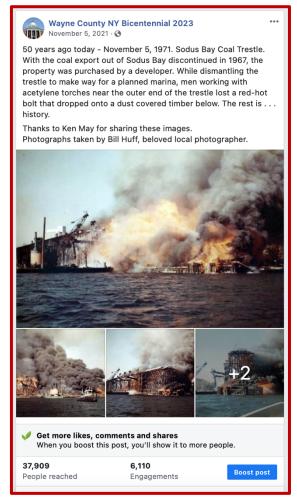
Gene Bavis <u>genebavis71@gmail.com</u> or call 315-573-2768 Rosa Fox <u>rfox@townofhuron.org</u> or call 315-573-4493

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

Platinum

Gold

The Heights Restaurant & Banquet Facility Krenzer Marine Northwind Harbor Wegmans

Silver

Computer Support
by Cathy Contant
Marshall Farms Group
Missy Blues Wine & Spirits
Three Schooners Landing
Ward Steel

Bronze

The Apple Farm Stand
The Bay Street
Bonnie Castle Farm
Bed & Breakfast
Captain Jack's Goodtime Tavern
Cole Income Tax Service
Fowler Farms
Lyons Veterinary Clinic
P.A.T.I. Fire
Paton's Market Place
Peake Chrysler Dodge
Jeep Ram Fiat
Skipper's Landing Restaurant
Stone Goose Market & Cidery
Youngman Orchards Farm Market

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Humanities New York
Mark Ketcham and Werner Lutz Do It Now Fund at Our Fund
Neighborhood Association of Sodus Point
New York State Council on the Arts
Peter C. and Mable Browne Family Charitable Fund
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