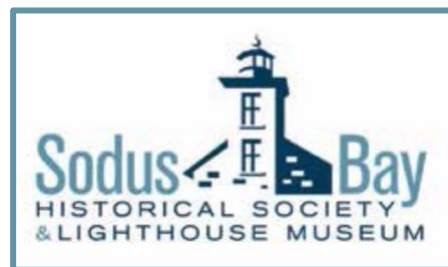


# *SBHS Newsletter*

*Spring 2024*



## *The Moment of Totality During the Solar Eclipse At the Sodus Bay Lighthouse Museum April 8, 2024*



*Photos contributed by Donna Stern*

## Letter from the President



### Sodus Bay Historical Society & Lighthouse Museum

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Museum

The SBHS Newsletter is published by the  
Sodus Bay Historical Society, a 501(c)3  
nonprofit organization. In addition to  
grants, SBHS funding comprises donations  
and membership dues, which are tax  
deductible as allowed by law.



Gathering on the lawn of the lighthouse during the April 8<sup>th</sup> Total Solar Eclipse, the museum staff hosted over 350 people to experience this once in a life-time event. 16 United States were represented, including a couple from Alaska, and folks came from as far away as Belgium and England.

Even though the sun was behind the clouds it did not dampen the enthusiasm of the crowd. The eclipse, especially totality, was a spiritual experience collectively shared. We were so lucky to have a large video screen, donated by a few generous sponsors, so we got to see the total eclipse starting in Mexico to Maine. As the crowds left, I heard from many that I met give the event and the Lighthouse Museum a big thumbs up!

We are now preparing for the re-opening of the Lighthouse Museum for a new season. The official opening will be May 25<sup>th</sup>. The board of trustees' principal role is to be good stewards for our 153-year-old building. Lighthouse Museum Director, Elaine Comarella, secured a grant from the Davenport Hatch Foundation to replace the crumbling chimney. That work was started on April 15<sup>th</sup>, making the building more appealing in appearance and safe. We are grateful for their generosity.

On May 24<sup>th</sup> the Lighthouse will participate in the United Way Day of Caring. We already have over 40 volunteers from Paychex coming to give the garden club a big head start, making our gardens look beautiful for the upcoming season. We have never had this many volunteers come forward so early, but we had such a good time last year, many are returning.

We have many exciting happenings at the Lighthouse this summer. Please look for our calendar of events on both the Sodus Point Lighthouse and Historical Society website. Please check our Facebook page often, Harrison VanDeWalle is updating it often. It holds information on upcoming events, but Harrison has included historical facts from the area. It is a fun read.

I hope to see many of you in the Museum and on the grounds over the season!

Happy Spring!

*Donna F. Stern*

Donna F. Stern  
President of the Board of Trustees

## *Letter from the Executive Director*

Happy Spring!

We are preparing for the opening of the Lighthouse & Museum on May 24<sup>th</sup>. We are preparing a few new exhibits for our opening. I learn something new every day about the fascinating history of our area. We hope to share that incredible history with all of you.

For those of you who haven't seen our new mural on the second floor depicting the journey of the Free Trader, the freight schooner out of Sodus Point, captained by George Garlock, please stop by and see it. The Free Trader along with lumber or ore, also transported Freedom Seekers to Canada in the mid 1800's. It was created by a local artist, James Zeger. We also have the Blocks from the Free Trader on display, a gift from Elsie Parsons to the Museum.

We have redesigned our library, making it more welcoming and comfortable to sit and read one of the hundreds of books ranging from boat building, the history of the area, the history of the Great Lakes, local legends, etc. Thank you to the Sodus Methodist Church for the donation of 2 big comfy chairs and other chairs to make the library complete.

We have many great events planned for this year. Our Sunday Concerts will resume on July 6<sup>th</sup> and every Sunday until September 1<sup>st</sup>. On Friday evening, July 5<sup>th</sup>, the Finger Lakes Orchestra will perform on our lawn. The 5k will take place on July 6<sup>th</sup>, and the Golf Tournament on August 12<sup>th</sup>.

Thank you to all of our supporters and to the hundreds of people who attended the Eclipse Event at the Lighthouse on April 8<sup>th</sup>. Visitors were here from all over the country and the world. It was a great day! Hope to see you at the Lighthouse!

Sincerely,

*Elaine Comarella*

Elaine Comarella

Sodus Bay Lighthouse Museum Executive Director

### **Mission of the Sodus Bay Historical Society**

Founded in 1972, the mission of the Sodus Bay Historical Society is to:

- collect, preserve, and exhibit records, writings, historical items, and artifacts.
- preserve and disseminate information in the field of history connected with the Sodus Bay area.
- serve the educational and cultural needs of the Sodus Bay area.
- support the preservation of historic structures, sites, and monuments.
- maintain a museum in the historic lighthouse, with an emphasis on local maritime history.

# Schooner Lotus Restoration

## April 2024 Update

Submitted by Holger Stave, Friends of the Schooner *Lotus* President

The 1918 vintage Schooner Lotus has deep roots in Sodus Bay and upstate New York. Having sailed out of Sodus Bay since 1972 as a Sea Scout ship, dozens of scouts between the ages of 14 and 21 sailed and trained on this gaff rigged two-masted schooner. Her 48 feet of deck length allowed groups of Sea Scouts and their adult leaders to take long trips to Alexandria Bay and even New York City. These adventures live in the hearts and memories of many of you reading this article.

The Friends of the Schooner *Lotus* (FOTSL) achieved ownership of the vessel from the BSA in December of 2021 with the purpose of restoring her to seaworthiness as a tall ship accessible to all. Finding the vessel to be in dire need of repairs in 2017, estimates proposed a reasonably



comfortable price tag of \$365,500 to accomplish the restoration. The restoration of the Schooner Lotus has begun. FOTSL was awarded grant #220031 in the amount of \$266,687 by the New York State Department of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation through the Environmental Protection Fund. This grant requires a match of \$98,813 which may be acquired through cash donations, in-kind donations and labor, and grants from other entities. Since the release of the grant in December 2023, FOTSL has raised over \$24,000 towards that goal.

The restoration contract was awarded to Cayuga Wooden Boat Works near her home of Sodus Point. Thorough exploratory disassembly of the keel section has revealed that the original keel sole was not replaced in 1993 and has completely rotted out down the center of the boat. Actually, not bad for being over 100 years old! New wood was added below the original in 1993, and the steel ballast keel was then drawn up to that assembly. At this time, all the stainless steel keel bolts are being removed to allow the old keel sole to be removed and replaced. This requires dropping the ballast keel, a rather precarious operation! You will find pieces of the original keel sole for sale on our website as soon as that work is accomplished.

The Schooner *Lotus* is an historically valuable asset to the Sodus Bay area and will be a substantial attraction for tourism. The Village of Sodus Point is in the process of planning a public access dock which will facilitate the Schooner *Lotus* as a viable tourist activity. Youth groups will be a particular focus for training and educational sails. Frequent tours of Sodus Bay for tourists and enthusiasts will be available almost daily, with longer trips booked for groups and the public.

Pictures and videos of the restoration will go up on our website [www.lotusny.org](http://www.lotusny.org) shortly so you may follow the process. Cayuga Wooden Boat Works is located at Beacon Bay Marina in Cayuga, NY. FOTSL is asking for your support by giving directly to the Friends of the Schooner *Lotus* and sharing this information with your circle of family and acquaintances.

Thank you!



# 30 Years Ago

From the Chronicles of the 1994 SBHS Newsletter

Looking back on “old” SBHS newsletters can be informative and just a little nostalgic. Before you continue reading, think back on 30 years ago – 1994! What do you remember?

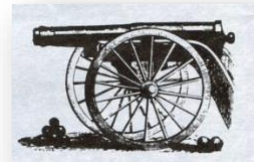
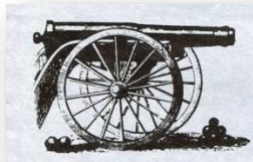
Some tidbits from May and June 1994 when the officers were: Margi Beale, President; Elsie Parson, Vice President; Nancy Mangan, Secretary; Bob Marsh, Treasurer; and Dick Palmer, Museum Director.

SBHS member, Bob Marsh, constructed a multi-media display highlighting Sodus Bay industry – ship building, sawmills, gristmills, ice houses, and more. Marsh also constructed the diorama of the first lighthouse (1825) and the lightkeeper’s dwelling. These display units still continue to tell the story of Sodus Bay industry for lighthouse museum visitors every year.

A letter from Senator Nozzolio appeared in the May 1994 newsletter. He wrote to newsletter editor, Jean Seymour, that he had appropriated a \$26,000 grant for the preservation of the Schooner **Lotus**. In his remarks, Nozzolio said, “The schooner not only serves as a training vessel for young people in the Sea Exploring Program, she is also a glorious symbol of Wayne County and a source of pride for all its people. **Lotus** represents Sodus Bay and Wayne County at regional, national, and international maritime events, and serves as a floating exhibition of the history and heritage of our region.”



During the summer of 1994 – Sodus Point celebrated the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its settlement. (The village was not officially incorporated until December 30, 1957, making it the oldest – yet youngest village in the county.) The June issue provided a full page poster of festivities running from June 16<sup>th</sup> to July 2nd, planned by the Sodus Point Community Association. Beginning with a “Candlelight Welcome of the Tall Ships” on June 16, the weekend’s events included a Revolutionary War Encampment and Battle, open-air church services, re-enactments of the Battle of Sodus Point, U.S. Postal Cancellations, parades, a carnival, and, of course, fireworks! The Sodus Bay Yacht Club hosted the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Antique Boat Show that weekend, which included a parade of boats on the bay.



# Williamson's Grand Stand

Jean Seymour

Originally published in the June 1994 SBHS Newsletter

- shared in this SBHS issue for all to enjoy once again.

**W**hile casting about for a topic of historical interest in connection with Sodus Point's bicentennial celebration, I've spent some time reading portions of Walter Henry Green's **Great Sodus Bay** (1947) and McIntosh's **History of Wayne County, New York – 1789-1877**. As most of us have heard or read, Captain Charles Williamson had a pretty grandiose vision of what was to become Sodus Point: "A great city on the shores of Lake Ontario and the bay." While we all know that Captain Williamson's vision never became a reality, what many of us may not know (I certainly didn't) is that at least for a short time, Sodus Point was not only the "premiere" place in the Town of Sodus but was also the focus of some pretty intense international attention.

It seems that back in 1794 when Williamson was beginning the work of improving the Great Sodus Bay region (he built roads from Phelpsstown and Palmyra to Great Sodus Bay and had a survey made and a city plotted), the Governor of Canada, John Graves Simcoe, protested the settlement of the area by sending a messenger with an order to "vacate the country within the Old French Line." (Green) The messenger was to return in ten days and requested a conference with Williamson at that time. It seems that although the first settlements at Sodus appeared long after the end of the Revolutionary War, boundary lines (as well as the permanence of the new government) were a source of uncertainty and uneasiness. The British did not give up the fort at Niagara until 1796 and, until that time, claimed the territory along the lake. They occupied Oswego until 1798. Simcoe's order seems to have been an attempt to prevent settlement in what he considered British territory.

Apparently, Simcoe was not one to be taken lightly. Green tells us that the Governor had no love for Williamson, having vowed to clap him in irons and ship him off to England if he ever made so bold as to set foot in Canada! Small wonder then, that Williamson's friends urged him not to meet Simcoe's messenger. Williamson was determined to do so, however, and could not be dissuaded. Determined he may have been but foolish he was not! He agreed to a meeting with Simcoe's messenger but arranged to have one Thomas Morris receive the messenger on the beach and escort him to the log cabin where Williamson sat at a table "on which lay a brace of loaded and cocked pistols within easy reach." (Green)

As it happened, Williamson's precautions were unnecessary. The meeting was apparently amicable and brief. The messenger, a Lieutenant Sheaffe of the British army, delivered Simcoe's protest and Williamson vowed to ignore it, saying, "he should prosecute the settlement the same as if no such paper had been delivered to him; that if any attempt should be made by force to prevent him it would be repelled by force." (McIntosh)

Williamson clearly felt that trouble loomed on the horizon, for he immediately took steps to protect the settlers in the Genesee and Sodus Bay regions. He sent messages (via post rider) to Governor George Clinton in Albany and to Edmund Randolph, Secretary of State, and General Knox, Secretary of War, in Philadelphia (seat of government at that time) regarding Simcoe's protest. In the message to General Knox, he noted that "for some time past, quantities of military stores and amunition (sic) have been forwarded to Oswego" and warned that Lieutenant Sheaffe might attempt to "take forcible possession of Sodus on his return." That said, he asserted his intention to go on about his business in Sodus "without relaxing ... until drove off by a superior force" and not to be intimidated by "this unparalleled piece of insolence and gross insult to the government of the United States." (Green)

Lest you think that Sodus Point was too insignificant to catch the attention of the highest officials in the land, Green says that "the Simcoe-Williamson episode and the Williamson-Sheaffe conference at Sodus Point were of such moment that they could not be ignored nor belittled and caused a ripple of excitement at the seat of government." In fact, on August 30, 1794, President Washington wrote to John Jay, the American minister in London, regarding Governor Simcoe's protest "against our occupying land far from any of the posts which long ago they ought to have surrendered, and far within the known, and until now, the acknowledged limits of the United States." The President characterized the protest as "the most open and daring act of the British agents in America" although not the most cruel. (He was convinced that all of the problems with the Indians, "their hostilities, the murder of helpless women and children along our frontiers," were instigated by agents of Great Britain.) (Green)

As it turned out, nothing came of Simcoe's protest, which was the last display of British authority on the shores of Sodus Bay until the War of 1812, and Captain Williamson returned to his improvement of the Sodus Bay region.

Others shared Williamson's optimism about the future of Great Sodus, among them Captain William Wickham, whose general store was the first built in the Sodus township. There were other merchants, as well as a shoemaker and a blacksmith. Colonel E. W. Sentell constructed the lighthouse at the north end of Ontario Street in 1820 and Sentell and William Barckley began work on the first piers in 1828. (Green)

When Williamson was replaced as agent of the Pultney Estate by Colonel Robert Troup, Great Sodus became Troupville. The first post office was established under that name, probably in 1810; the name was changed to Sodus in February 1826 and in December of that same year, it was again changed, this time to Sodus Point. (Green)

*Jean Richards Seymour grew up in Sodus, graduating from Sodus High School in 1957. After graduating from the University of Rochester in 1961, Jean taught High School English in Newark. Jean and husband Bud were active in many Sodus Bay/Sodus Point organizations including Sodus Bay Historical Society. Jean was editor of the Sodus Bay Historical Society Newsletter for many years, contributing her unique style of research and historical prose for readers to enjoy. Jean now resides at Parkwood in Macedon. Many thanks to Jean's good friend Susie Earl for sharing the information about Jean.*

## Annual Appeal Donations

Gene & Liz Bavis  
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John & Harriet Bonin  
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### In Memory of Larry Williamson

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### In Memory of Larry Williamson (con't)

Rebecca McKee  
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### In Memory of Anita Vonhold

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Gregory and Mary Sue Switzer  
Sue Bassage

### In Memory of Joseph Sina

Charles G. Copeland

### In Memory of Pamela Miller

Gene Bassage

### In Memory of John Nesbitt





Thank you to all who  
helped make the  
2024 Eclipse  
"Fun-Raiser"  
a huge success!



The Straubing Family

Hamilton AV

ALTRA (for the use of their generator to power the video screen )

Mark Ketcham & Werner Lutz

Nick's Family Restaurant

Tomas Harrington (for the Tower bid)

Thank you to all the Board Members, Staff, Volunteers and Community Services  
that worked so hard to make this event a success.

## 2024 SODUS BAY LIGHTHOUSE MUSEUM

### 5K RACE/WALK

Saturday, July 6, 2024



Check-in: 7:00 AM

Race Start: 8:00 AM

Check in location:

Sodus Bay Lighthouse Museum

7606 North Ontario Street

Sodus Point, NY 14555

Phone: (315)483-4936

#### FOR REGISTRATION AND INFORMATION

<https://runsignup.com/Race/Register/?raceld=30642&eventId=839983>



Save the Date!!!!

Sodus Bay Lighthouse Museum  
Golf Tournament

August 12, 2024

at Sodus Bay Heights Golf Club!!



# Thank You!

## to these

### Sodus Bay Lighthouse Sponsors

In addition to our loyal members, the Sodus Bay Historical Society appreciates the generous support from area businesses and foundations. Their ongoing contributions help the Sodus Bay Historical Society and Lighthouse Museum move forward with the summer concert series, student activities, exhibits, and other programming. Please be sure to show your support by visiting these local establishments and let them know how important their support of Sodus Bay history is to you!

***Thank you!***

*Auburn Public Theatre Re-grants Program  
with Support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature*

*Bay View Bed & Breakfast*

*Robert G. Boehmler Community Foundation*

*Big Dog Country • Captain Jack's*

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*Sodus Bay Historical Society Members*

## *WACK Radio*

*Sodus Bay Historical Society presents the*



# 2024 Free Summer Concert Series At The Lighthouse

**NEW** Friday Evening,  
July 5th 6:30-8:30 pm  
Finger Lakes  
Orchestra

## JULY

- 7 Midnight Storm
- 14 Don Griffin & Friends
- 21 The Dady Brothers
- 28 Brass Inc.

## AUGUST

- 4 Johnny Bauer
- 11 Li'l Anne & Hot Cayenne
- 18 47 South
- 25 Flint Creek

## SEPTEMBER

- 1 Chris Wilson



**Sundays 2:00-4:00 p.m.**

♪ 7606 North Ontario Street, Sodus Point, NY ♪

**Concerts are FREE**

**Bring your own seating for the lawn**

**Refreshments are available at the**

**Lighthouse Concession Area**





7606 North Ontario Street  
Sodus Point, New York 14555  
(315)483-4936  
[www.sodusbaylighthouse.org](http://www.sodusbaylighthouse.org)

## 2024 Annual Events Calendar

### May

- May 18      Wedding Event  
May 24      Opening Day at Lighthouse & Museum

### June

- June 21      Summer Solstice Member Event

### July

- July 5      Finger Lakes Orchestra Evening Concert on the Lawn  
July 6      Sodus Bay Lighthouse 5k Run/Walk  
July 6 & 7      Artisan Fair  
July 7      Sunday Concert-Midnight Storm  
July 13      Wedding Event  
July 14      Sunday Concert-Don Griffin & Friends  
July 20      Wedding Event  
July 21      Sunday Concert-The Dady Brothers  
July 28      Sunday Concert-Brass Inc.

### August

- August 4      Sunday Concert-Johnny Bauer  
August 11      Sunday Concert-Li'l Anne & Hot Cayenne  
August 12      Sodus Lighthouse & Museum Golf Tournament  
August 18      Sunday Concert-47 South  
August 24      Wedding Event  
August 25      Sunday Concert-Flint Creek

### September

- Sept 1      Sunday Concert-Chris Wilson (Last of season)  
Sept 7      Wedding Event

### October

- October 27      Closing Day at the Lighthouse and Museum for the Season.

### \*Lighthouse & Museum Hours\*

May 24 thru Labor day –Sundays 12-5pm, Wed thru Sat. 10-5 pm  
Labor Day thru Oct. 27-Friday, Saturday and Sunday 12-5pm















