

Sodus Bay Historical Society



2026 Winter Newsletter



Morning Light Contemplation
By Mark Ketcham



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& Lighthouse Museum**

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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
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Letter from the President

Dear Friends of the Sodus Bay Lighthouse & Historical Society,

As we move through another meaningful season at the Lighthouse, I am continually reminded that this organization is more than a museum—it is a community bound together by shared history, service, and a deep commitment to preserving one of Wayne County’s most treasured landmarks. Because of your ongoing support, the Lighthouse remains a vibrant place where the past and present connect for residents and visitors alike.

This quarter, our progress has been fueled by dedicated volunteers, engaged members, and a Board focused on strengthening the foundation for the future. From expanding community partnerships and sponsorships to enhancing the visitor experience, we are positioning the Lighthouse to thrive for generations to come. Thank you for believing in our mission and for standing with us as we continue this important work.

It is with both sadness and gratitude that I share news of the passing of our dear friend and trustee, Bob Legge. Bob was an extraordinary asset to this organization. He brought wisdom, steady leadership, and a generosity of spirit that elevated every conversation and every decision. His love for the Lighthouse was evident in both his service and his presence, and his contributions have left a lasting imprint on our path forward. I am deeply appreciative of his time with the Lighthouse and will miss him so much.

While we deeply feel his absence, we also want to celebrate a life defined by commitment to community and heritage. In honor of Bob, we invite you to join us for a Celebration of Life on Saturday, July 11th, from 4:00–6:00 p.m. on the Lighthouse grounds. This gathering will offer us an opportunity to share memories, reflect on Bob’s impact, and recognize the legacy he helped build.

Moments like these remind us that the strength of the Lighthouse has always come from its people. Every volunteer hour, every membership, every sponsorship, and every visit contributes to something far larger than any single individual. Together, we ensure that the story of Sodus Bay continues to be told with care and pride.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, thank you for your dedication, your generosity, and your belief in the future of the Sodus Bay Lighthouse. I look forward to seeing many of you in the months ahead and, hopefully, on July 11th as we gather to honor a remarkable man who helped guide us forward.

With appreciation,

Helen A. Dunlap

President, Sodus Bay Historical Society

Letter from the Executive Director

Winter greetings from the Lighthouse!

During the depths of winter, I often think of the resilience and playfulness of the people of Sodus Bay throughout history. As temperatures drop and the bay freezes over, our forebears not only found ways to survive the winter but thrive in it. Skating, ice fishing, and even ice sailing were common pastimes that brought liveliness and fun to this challenging season. I see glimpses of this spirit from outside the Lighthouse Museum windows – from neighbors walking their dogs in the snow on our grounds, to the cheerful holiday lights that still light up the village, the urge to find little joys in winter speaks to the buoyancy and strength of the people of Sodus Bay.

As we enter the New Year, I am eager to look towards the programs and events that we are planning for 2026. This year, we are thrilled to offer ten free concerts from May to October for the community to enjoy, featuring old favorites and new voices to the Lighthouse lawn. We will be offering more members-only events, and new opportunities to go behind-the-scenes with our priceless artifacts that tell the stories of our community. We are especially excited to host new special events that bring family-friendly fun, engaging educational experiences, and opportunities to make memories to last a lifetime. As we weather through the winter, join me in dreaming of the warmth of the summer and all the wonderful experiences we have in store for you this year.

With gratitude,

Mary Challman

Mary Challman

Sodus Bay Historical Society & Lighthouse Executive Director



Ice boat regatta on Great Sodus Bay.

Sodus Bay Lighthouse Museum Collection

We are deeply saddened to share the passing of dedicated Sodus Bay Historical Society Board of Trustees Secretary Bob Legge. Bob's keen eye, strategic vision, and boundless enthusiasm for the Sodus Bay Historical Society has left an indelible mark on the organization. His presence will be deeply missed. Bob's family and friends are in our hearts after this terrible loss.

Robert Scott Legge Obituary

Robert ("Bob") Scott Legge of Lyons, NY, and formerly of Brighton, NY, passed away on January 23, 2026, after a brief illness. Bob was born in Rochester, NY, to Richard C. and Patricia (Roney) Legge. He grew up in Pittsford, NY, and attended the College of Wooster in Ohio. During college, Bob, along with brother Rick, bought and restored a 48-foot wooden staysail schooner named "Maya" that had sunk in Lake Ontario which touched off a lifelong love of sailing. Bob later earned an MBA and a Masters in Communications from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He went on to work as a management consultant for Hays Associates in Chicago, IL.

Bob returned to Rochester in the 1980s where he continued to work as a consultant and later joined Sentry Group as VP of Human Resources. Bob launched his own consulting practice, Legge & Company, in 1998. His clients included Fortune 500 companies as well as many mid-market companies in the Upstate New York region.

When Bob retired in 2018, he continued to pursue his love of sailing and became active with the Sodus Bay Historical Society. His greatest joy was his family, particularly the summer reunions at the family home on Sodus Bay, affectionately known as "The Cottage." The Cottage was the setting for many of Bob's favorite moments—sitting on the porch overlooking the water, listening to all kinds of music, savoring wine and cheese, and sharing laughter while playing games of Dominoes or Yahtzee. Bob especially cherished time with his grandchildren, delighting in teaching them magic tricks, telling funny jokes, and watching them learn to sail.

Bob is predeceased by his parents and his brother Richard (Rick) C. Legge. Bob is survived by his loving wife Elizabeth (Lisa) Nadeau; his son, Robert (Bobby) S. Legge, Jr. (Sarah), his daughter, Katherine (Katie) Ebbeson (Peyton), his step-daughter, Cordelia (Corey) McHugh (Kevin Prindle); his sister Diane Legge; cousins Rob Lyon (Gabriel Davidson) and Stacy Lyon (Maureen Condon); seven treasured grandchildren and several nieces and nephews and their families.

A celebration of Bob's life will be held in the summer of 2026. In lieu of flowers, kindly consider a contribution to the Sodus Bay Historical Society or the Sodus Bay Junior Sailing Association.



Letter from the SBHS Newsletter Editor

Dear Reader,

It is a pleasure to welcome Great Sodus Bay story-teller Chris Arney to the pages of the Sodus Bay Historical Society Newsletter! Chris has compiled a wonderful history of the Arney family in six parts from their beginnings in New York State in 1855 through the days of running Arney's Marina. It is truly a blessing to have the Arney story told by an Arney descendant.

About five years ago, in the Fall 2021 issue, Tom Lightfoot began a column in this newsletter to tell about the people behind the names of the exhibit rooms in the Lighthouse Museum. Tom wrote about the front room of the lighthouse - the Chamberlain Room. Shortly after that publication, we lost our beloved friend. In honor of Tom's idea and commitment, I continued the series with the next two newsletters (Winter and Spring 2022) with the story behind the Sill Room. Then the Wayne County Bicentennial became my center of focus, and Sodus Bay research and writing were not in the cards for me with the next room, which would be the Arney Room. I am so pleased Chris was willing to dig in and offer us the awesome history of the Arney Family. Chris's biography follows Part I of the Arney saga and includes a little about the Arney room exhibits. My sincerest thanks to Chris for taking the time to write this story of a family so dear to all of Sodus Bay!

The chart below is a new find through the New York Public Library Digital Collection - one of my favorite places to search for historical documents. Taken from a chart of the entire Lake Ontario, this chart section shows a portion of the south shore of Lake Ontario. The blue arrow points to Ontario, NY's Bear Harbor, where the subjects of our featured story about the Arney family first settled in New York State in 1855. You may want to refer back to this chart as you read Chris's story beginning on the next page. You may also wish to view the complete Augustus Ford 1836 Lake Ontario chart at New York Public Library Digital Collections where you can scroll in and see much more detail. [<https://bit.ly/3NzKT1F>]

Historically yours,

Rosa Fox

Editor, SBHS Newsletter



Section of 1836 Chart of Lake Ontario by Augustus Ford.

The Arney Family of Sodus Point

Part 1: 1855-1900 - Fishing Life and Discovering Home

From Aargau, Switzerland to Sodus Point via Bear Creek

Before there were Arneys in Sodus Point, there were Aerni(s) in Switzerland. Their homestead was in Brittnau, Aargau, Switzerland. It was in 1855 when the second (of three successive generations of Samuel Aerni) came to America. Samuel (II) (1811-1881) and his wife Barbara Suter (1817-1894) immigrated with children Samuel (III), Sophia (Whitmer), Marie, and Louisa (Dadwell). By the end of their long journey, they became the Arney family of the Ontario/Bear Creek Harbor area of Wayne County, New York.

Birth of a Lake Ontario Fishing Family

New immigrant (age 18 in 1855) Sam Arney (III) (1837-1924) quickly established himself as a good Lake Ontario fisherman out of Bear Creek Harbor. However, there was a significant interruption in his profession. Seven years after his arrival in the US, he enlisted in the Union Army and fought in the Civil War (1862-1865). His military expertise was in training and handling the horses that pulled the artillery pieces. Shortly after the war, Sam (III) married Catherine Fox (1851-1886). Their family quickly grew with the births of Emma (1871-1961), Ward (1874-1961), Alice Mae



Sam Arney (III) and Catherine Fox

(1883-1974), Charles (1881-1973), and George (1884-1968). After, the passing of Catherine at age 36, 50-year-old Sam Arney (III) refocused his skills and interests to spend time training horses in the Lincoln area. All three boys of the family became commercial fishermen.

One Arney fisherman remembered in the Walworth Historical Society Newsletter of July 2009 was Ward. “The fish peddler who came every week was very welcome. Ward Arney lived at Bear Creek Harbor in Ontario. He fished in Lake Ontario and had a route that he traveled regularly to sell his catch. He had a big box on a wagon (later he used a truck) that was filled with big chunks of ice among which he packed the fish. He delivered as far south as Jacobs Road. He brought only the best fish – big white fish, salmon, walleyed pike, and other varieties. They were so fresh they often flopped among the chunks of ice.”

(Arney Family continued on next page)

Commercial Fishing Over 120 Years Ago

It was a warm, breezy evening in early May 1897, when a 13-year-old boy rowed his boat onto shore to set camp for the night. He had already caught several nice perch by hook and line. It wasn't long before the boy had his dinner eaten, his boat secured, his bed roll ready, and his mind excited for continuation of his move along the south shore of Lake Ontario from Bear Creek Harbor to the Oswego River, and then upriver to Oneida Lake where he would join his brother Charlie in a fishing business. On this night, however, this young fisherman couldn't overlook the highlights of the place where he stood – the shore of Great Sodus Bay.

Great Sodus Bay was the place his father and brothers told him so much about. The bright blinking lighthouse beacon over the waters of Lake Ontario at the entrance to Sodus Bay mesmerized him, and he wondered how many lives the structure had saved. As he walked the shoreline and gazed at the bay's silvery waters, he was impressed by the tremendous size of the bay. Like most of the small villages on the south side of Lake Ontario, there were several fishing businesses along the bay and several builders of lake boats. While he would become a practical, no-nonsense man, the boy in George Arney was caught up in the feelings of magic and beauty experiencing his first views of Sodus Bay. Those feelings of beauty and amazement would eventually bring him back to this place to live his life.

The next morning just before sunrise, George began rowing his heavy and awkward flat-bottomed boat along the big lake's shoreline. Soon, he and his brother Charlie would be fishing on Oneida Lake. They were skilled fishermen despite their young ages of 13 and 16, were full of excitement, and were ready for the challenges of adulthood. They thought of themselves as mature businessmen ready to enjoy their lives on the small lake with its growing market for their catch.

After a few years of Oneida Lake fishing with Charles, George remembered the magic that he had seen on Sodus Bay, so he decided to continue his fishing profession in the new century (1900) on the big Lake Ontario. After traveling back to Sodus Point with his boat and gear, George soon had a shack and a fish house on the lakeside sand (near 4th Street in today's geography). Commercial fishing on Ontario was productive for the young man. He was learning and how to make and fish with both gill and trap nets. The fish, especially whitefish and ciscoes, were plentiful. Both the local markets via a horse-drawn fish cart and big city markets via railroad transportation of fish iced in wooden boxes were growing. George also used traditional methods, like smoking, to preserve the fish for his customers.



Dory fisherman gill net fishing

Wikimedia Commons

George involved himself in the activities of the area. There were boarding houses and restaurants. There were ships coming in and out of the bay filled with goods from other Lake Ontario ports. In the winter, in addition to some ice fishing on Sodus Bay, especially for ciscoes, blue pike, and perch, George harvested bay ice for his well-insulated icehouse. With all its natural beauty, harvests from its water and shores, growing businesses and good people, Sodus Bay and Sodus Point became home to George Arney.

Part 2 of The Arney Family of Sodus Point will explore the world of commercial fishing on Lake Ontario.

About the Author – Chris Arney

Chris Arney grew up in Sodus Point and had a commercial fishing setline license ages 8-14 and fished with his grandfather. Chris left Sodus Point in 1967 to attend the United States Military Academy at West Point. While in the Army for a 34-year career, he attended Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, obtaining graduate degrees in Mathematics and Computer Science. He served as an intelligence officer and a mathematics professor at West Point until 2001, retiring from military service as head of the Academy's math department with the rank of Brigadier General.

Putting away his Army uniform, Chris became dean and then later acting vice president of education at College of Saint Rose until 2004. His career changed again as he moved to direct research programs in mathematics, networks science, artificial intelligence (cooperative systems), and collective intelligence at the Army Research Office in North Carolina until 2009. Chris returned to West Point to teach as a civilian professor for 9 years until full retirement from government service in 2018. During his years as a mathematician, he founded and directed a large international contest in interdisciplinary problem solving for college students, developed software for air frame design, and wrote over 25 technical books on mathematics, computer science, and history. He also enjoyed his on-line teaching for 20 years with Excelsior University.

Chris was happy to return to the Sodus Bay area (living on Blind Sodus Bay) to work for a short time at Arney's Marina until it was sold. His teaching at SUNY Oswego was interrupted by the Covid epidemic. He spent time managing the restoration of the *Georgette Belle* and caring for farm animals. Sodus Point was always in Chris. Long ago, he

helped the Sodus Bay Historical Society establish the museum by sponsoring the naming of the Arney Room. For the Arney family, that room honors the roles of the Arney fisherman and fisherwomen who lived and worked on Sodus Bay. During the 51 years he was living and working elsewhere, Chris returned to Sodus Point whenever he was able to spend time at working at the family's marina or frying fish for My Brother's Place while his family (wife Sue, adult children Kristin, Dan, Lisa, Katie) vacationed or worked at the restaurant. Chris has written several books about the history of the Bay and a historical novel set in the Sodus Bay area during the 18th and 19th centuries entitled *Son of the Silvery Waters*. Any errors or too-tall tales in these articles are caused by his unsound memory and an active story-telling imagination inherited from his father, grandfather, and probably some Swiss ancestors named Sam Aerni.



Chris Arney



Wanted!
Writers & Photographers!



If you have a local story or image you might like to share about a Sodus Bay event, person, place, or “thing” – please consider submitting it to SBHS editor for use in a future issue of the SBHS Newsletter.

Contact Rosa Fox – rfox@hurony.gov

**Have a passion
for sharing history?**

**Join us
as a volunteer educator!**

For more details –

email info@sodusbaylighthouse.org
with the subject line **"Volunteer!"**

2026 is a Commemorative Year!!



***250th (Semiquincentennial)
Commemoration of the United States!***

***200th (Bicentennial)
Commemorations for***

Marion

&

***Butler, Huron, Rose,
With their parent town Wolcott!***

***200th Commemoration of Gates Hall
in Pultneyville!!***

Sodus Bay Historical Society Mission

TO TELL THE STORY OF SODUS BAY

We do that by:

- *Actively maintaining a museum where we collect, preserve, and exhibit records, writings, historical items, and artifacts;*
- *Preserving and disseminating historic information about the Sodus Bay area;*
- *And maintaining a historic lighthouse.*



Sodus Bay Historical Society Vision

Within 3-5 years, our work will have a strong regional focus, including Sodus Bay and the surrounding communities. Our educational activities will involve presentations, speakers, videos, and both group gatherings and opportunities for individual learning. We will serve both children and adults with both interactive and online education, as well as regularly changing museum displays with helpful docents available. And, in addition to our historic lighthouse, we will feature a multi-use facility with revolving museum exhibits and a place for gatherings three seasons of the year, to support our educational and regional focus.

Memorial Donations

In Memory of Ella Neverless

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James and Dale Brady
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Charles and Caroline Gregorius
Raymond and Sandra Hardy
Michael and Susan Muscolino
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In Memory of Robert Legge

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Image Courtesy Mark Ketcham

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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!

American Schooner Association

Auburn Public Theatre Regrant Program

with Support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature

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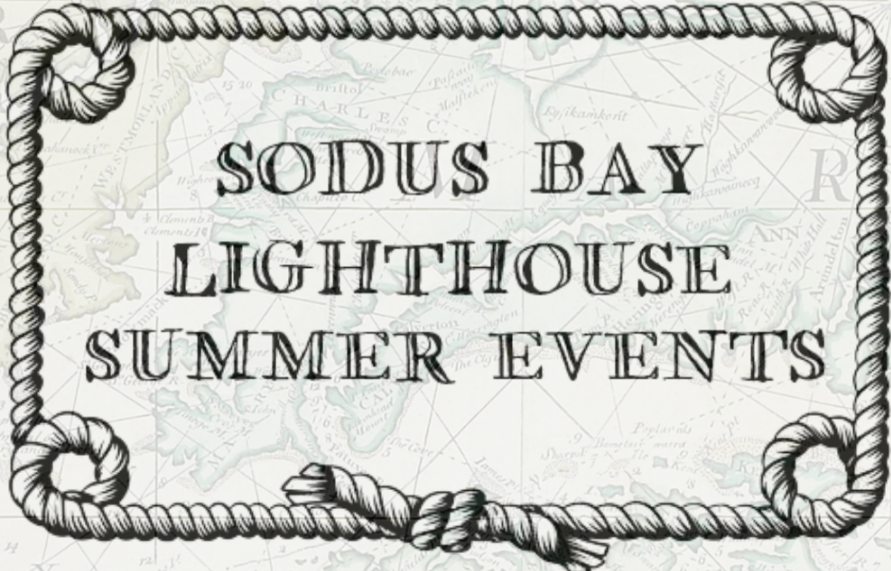
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Sodus Bay Historical Society Member



SODUS BAY LIGHTHOUSE SUMMER EVENTS

- MAY 29 CONCERT

- JUNE 7 CONCERT

- JUNE 13-14 ECHOES OF SODUS BAY
HERITAGE WEEKEND

- JUNE 26 CONCERT

- JUNE 29 GOLF TOURNAMENT

- JULY 3 INDEPENDENCE DAY
FAMILY FESTIVAL

- JULY 4 5K WALK/RUN

- JULY 19 CONCERT

- JULY 24 CONCERT

- AUGUST 1-2 ARTISAN FESTIVAL

- AUGUST 9 CONCERT

- AUGUST 19 ANNUAL MEETING &
MEMBER CELEBRATION

- AUGUST 28 CONCERT

