

FAIRPORT HARBOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL REPORT



FEBRUARY 18, 2025

This year, 2025, we will be celebrating the 200th Anniversary of the Fairport Harbor Lighthouse site. As most of you know there have been two lighthouses on the site. The first one was built in 1825. It was replaced in 1871 with the current tower, built of Berea Sandstone, and the brick keeper's house. It was decommissioned in 1925. In 1945 the village citizens formed the Fairport Harbor Historical Society (FHHS) to prevent the buildings from being torn down. The FHHS, totally comprised of volunteers, has been preserving and maintaining the lighthouse ever since. The lighthouse is leased from the village every year for one dollar.

The lighthouse income is generated by membership dues, donations, grants, bequests and fund raising events. No government funding is received on a regular basis.

- At the end of 2024 the membership was 207 members.
- Volunteers, officers and Board members logged in 4900 hours of service to the museum.
- We had 4777 visitors from 22 States, six countries (Chile, Canada, Israel, Ukraine, Turkey and the United Kingdom)
- 28 docent led tours.
- There were 4 Friday Night Light walk up tours.
- The Lighthouse was open on Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 12-6pm and open all legal holidays.

In April:

April 5th thru April 8th the Lighthouse celebrated the Solar Eclipse. Five raffle winners and their guests climbed to the top of the tower to watch the Solar Eclipse.

In May:

- We held our annual Spring cleaning, assisted by volunteers from the Kirtland Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.
- On May 25th the lighthouse opened for the 2024 season.

In July

- We had a float in the Mardi Gras parade. The theme for the parade was "Christmas in July" and the lighthouse theme was "The Christmas Tree Ship", a Victorian true story about a ship that delivered Christmas trees to families on the Great Lakes. The parade float was designed and organized by Jan Merrick.

In August:

- The Village Fest was August 12th . One of our big fundraisers was held during the Fest. We sold raffle tickets July through September. The prize was a weekend at the Lighthouse Cottage . It also included a large selection of gift cards and gifts from local merchants. The raffle was arranged and sponsored by Melissa Crockett Willis. All the proceeds went to the museum and lighthouse.

In September:

- The Bowling Green PBS Station visited the lighthouse to collect information on the lighthouse history for a documentary they were developing on Great Lakes lighthouses. Part of their documentary was an interview with John Ollila. The documentary will air in the fall of 2025.

In October:

- We had a booth at Community Day.
- On Oct 12th the museum staff dressed as witches for “Witches Day”. Part of the festivities was tarot card readings and a guest appearance by “Sentinel” the ghost cat.
- Oct. 22nd Austin Kraska, a paranormal investigator visited the lighthouse. You can view his visit on his YouTube Channel “The Ghost Files”.

In November:

- In preparation for a visit from the “The Grinch”, Mayor Tim Manross, Tony Bertone and firefighters decorated the tower.
- Bill Farroni, Greg Major, Wendy Kertesz and Marty O'Gara decorated the grounds.

In December:

- The Grinch visited the lighthouse and read his story “The Grinch Who Stole Christmas” from the top of the tower.

Repairs:

- The Pilot House roof was repaired.
- The museum and garage were re-roofed.
- The copper flashing for the chimney was donated by Terry Vale.
- Roofing was installed by Vale Roofing.
- The USS Michigan mast was refurbished and returned to the grounds.
- The air conditioner required multiple visits from Costello Heating and Cooling.
- Costello 's covered a portion of the labor costs as a donation to the lighthouse.
- New ground lighting was installed by Kenco Electric to enhance our buildings at night.

Gift Shop:

- Utilizing “Square” a touch screen for all sales enabled us to keep more accurate records and accept credit cards for online payments.
- The shop was freshly painted, new shelving and honeycomb blinds were installed.

Funding from Lake County Visitors Bureau and the Village:

- Two interactive touch screen displays were built and installed by RGI Creative.
- New exterior signage was installed (Innovation Creations).
- We leased an offsite storage Unit, which enables us to free up room in the museum as well making it easier to rotate our collection.

Digitization Project:

- Allows us to digitize our paper documents into searchable PDF files.
- Currently all Historical Society meeting minutes, newsletters and over 1000 photographs have been scanned.

Advertising:

- Cindy Shega and Vance Todd have increased our use of social media (Facebook)
- Lake Erie Living (July/August issue) featured a sketch of our lighthouse on the cover.
- Inside the Lake Erie Living publication was a sketch of Frenchy the Pirate.
- The sketches were done by Beth Lynn Gregerson, local artist.

2025:

- Opening Day May 23rd, at noon with the re-dedication of the USS Michigan Mast
- June 14th – Boat Parade and Blessing of the Fleet
- June 21st - 200th Anniversary Gala

I would like to thank the Mayor and the Council for all their past and present support.

I invite you to come and visit and enjoy our towering view.

Respectfully submitted,

Marty O'Gara

FHHS President

