PENTWATER PRIDE



PAST*PRESENT*PROMISED!

FALL NEWSLETTER

FALL 2021

UTOPIAN OCEANA By Amy Vander Zwart

requently in history, people make decisions, but do not record their ideas or reasoning behind them. Thinking that people will want to know the answer as to why a decision was made one hundred years in



1876 map of Oceana County showing the boundeirs of the 16 Townships.

the future probably does not cross many people's minds. Historians can only conjecture the why behind many past decisions, with the actual answer always remaining a mystery.

In fact, the naming of Oceana County has been and continues to be a mystery. Even as far back as 1831 when the Territorial Legislature

of Michigan passed an Act defining the boundaries of Oceana County, it was acknowledged that, "the name preceded to this section any of the pioneers now living in the county." (Hartwick, Tuller 13) There was not one living person in 1831 who knew the significance behind calling this area, "Oceana"; suggesting the name originated many decades if not centuries earlier. There are two thoughts behind the origin of the name of the county that encompasses Pentwater. "Oceana" comes from ancient Greek and means, "ocean". One belief is that, like the name of our state, which means, "great waters", Oceana was also named after the vast amount of water that makes up the Great Lakes and looks like an ocean. The second possibility is a bit more complex. According to an article writ-



ten in the Oceana Herald by Caleb Jackson, "The word, "Oceana" also appears as the name of a fictional country in a book written in 1656 by an Englishman named James Harrington. The book itself was called "The Commonwealth of Oceana" named after the fictional country that it was about, and it embodied Harrington's ideas of a Utopian common (Continued on page 11.)



entwater has definitely changed since I was born in 1944. Many of the old family homes

have been torn down, are rentals, or have been remodeled. We didn't go by street names to tell where families lived when I was growing

> up. We knew where people lived by so and so's house. As a kid, I enjoyed spending time with family as they all lived within two blocks



Don Graham

of us.

I helped my grandpa build houses in town as a young boy. As soon as I got older and thought I should get paid, he said that he didn't need me anymore. I hung

out with my buddies at Duke's Bakery. He would let us carve our names in the wood booths. Just our names were allowed or we were in big trouble! Another favorite spot to hang out was the corner drugstore because there was a jukebox and soda fountain.

My dad, Otho (Buck) Graham, worked for the village for 32 years (Continued on next page.)

(Family Village Continued.)

as the sewer, water, and street Superintendent. He was the only policeman in town until Don Lamb joined him. I remember my dad having to breakup bar fights. He also had to help the state park out with unruly beach goers. He didn't seem to mind being called to get the topless girls off the beach.

Don Lamb (also a town cop) knew every family in town and their children. He used to entertain us by blowing his siren much to our delight. Between Don Lamb and my dad, they kept a very close eye on all of the kids in town. My dad remembered sliding down the big slide into the channel and helping at the old swing bridge.

I remember one day my dad taking my new pole to go fishing off the city dock. Unfortunately, he lost it in the lake. The next day I saw him using the fire department's grappling hooks to find it.

Yes, Pentwater has changed, but the wonderful beach and quaint village remain. It is so rewarding to see people enjoying the beach and town as I did when growing up. Pentwater remains a little piece of Heaven. Hopefully, families will keep the family tradition and continue coming or living in the place I love and enjoyed growing up in.



The Board of the PHS extends their heartfelt gratitude to Mark Shotwell and Terry Roach

for their years of service on the Pentwater Historical Society Board. We are happy to say that even though their time on the Board is over, they both contnue to contribute to the betterment of the PHS and Museum by volunteering their time and services. Thank you Mark and Terry!

PORCHES & PARLORS OF PENTWATER

By Beth Russell

he architectural walking tours departed four times during the summer of 2021 with a variety of participants: teenagers, retirees, Pentwater natives, long-time residents, and campers from the state park. The tour offered a unique look at the homes and businesses that have been in Pentwater for as long as 150 years, as well as the stories of their inhabitants. Participants learned about a local horse racing enthusiast who plowed his own race track in the village, the town butcher and his family as well as founding businessmen who built their homes in the village.

The swing on your porch is a better life than the chair at your desk. Terri Guillemats

If you can't run with the big dogs, stay on the porch. Anonymous

Marriages may be made in heaven but we believe in giving the old fashioned porch-swing some credit. *Robert Gonzales* Pam VanderPloeg, an Architectural Historian and the tour guide, had this to say about the Pentwater walking tours: "It was my great pleasure to lead walking tours this summer. My goal is to unearth and share details that bring to life the beautiful homes and buildings in this historic village. When you research a building, it always becomes a story about people. On each of the four 2021 tours, at least one or two curious current owners came out to greet us. Suddenly, we were hearing about resident ghosts and learning details that aren't written down any-

where. Once, standing in front of a classic Greek Revival home, we were invited in for an impromptu tour. This summer I was honored and humbled to meet tour participants whose families have been coming here for generations, some since the 1860s. My greatest joy is always in knowing more at the end of the tour than at the beginning."

Some of our tour attendees had these things to relay about the tour:

"(I) really enjoyed learning about the architectural details of the houses and the histories of some of the inhabitants. I highly recommend this tour, and if another one is offered next year (I) would be eager to participate."

"Pam did a good job of digging into the history surrounding certain buildings and homes and that was very interesting. I know she had a lot to cover and she was very enthusiastic about wanting to pass on to us what she learned."

"Pentwater has such a rich history for such a tiny village, and it was absolutely delightful and even astonishing to hear all the goings-on of the past. (We) were both glad to have participated."

We hope you can join us for a tour in 2022. Come and see the architecture and hear the stories of the porches and parlors all around us!

The Museum Expansion Update

By Norm Shotwell, Vice President

xpansion plans approved. The Pentwater Historical Society (PHS) membership has approved plans to expand the Society's Museum. The expansion will double the available display space, provide meeting space for the Society and community groups, and enhance the research capability of the Society and its guests.





ABOVE: An architectural rendition of the addition to the museum. The addition attempts to integrate the design, color and style of the present structure.

LEFT: The floor plan (main floor) shows how the new addition merges with the present building

Focus groups forming.

In parallel with fund raising, the PHS Board is establishing focus groups in order to develop details for various aspects of the expansion. Below are listed the groups currently planned. Focus Groups that need your input. ✓ Fundraising ✓ The exterior look ✓ The Mechanical/electrical system

- ✓ Building structure system
- ✓ Artifact layout in display areas
- ✓Attifact presentation ✓Events
- ✓ Displays in the museum
- ✓ Kitchen layout and function
- ✓ How to create usable space in the north east open area
- ✓ School needs ✓ Researcher needs

If you would like to participate in a group, contact Norm Shotwell via email: **shn1607@gmail.com**

Fundraising begins.

Actual design and construction will begin after the fundraising phase, which has already begun. The first phase of the project will cost about \$400,000. The Society has matching pledges of \$135,000 and pledges towards that match are being made.

Donations. The PHS is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. If you would like to donate towards this exciting addition to Pentwater's character, please do so via the Community Foundation of Oceana County, stating that it is for the PHS Expansion Project. You may also donate stock or IRA funds to the PHS Expansion Fund via the CFOC. For more information contact the CFOC at (231)-869-3377.

Repurposed building

materials. The PHS will attempt to incorporate materials from structures that may be demolished or repurposed. PHS has already captured some Pentwater bricks from a demolished structure in Hart, and additional brick could be recovered from the Pentwater Community Hall building if it were to be demolished. The feasibility of removing the old basketball court flooring for use in the expansion is under review.

Summer Museum Report

By Dan Hoekstra, Sr, Museum Director

he museum had an excellent year although our numbers were down a bit compared to past years. The "Covid hangover" and the variant scare that many were concerned about

was most likely the major factor. 1,010 guests came through the museum and we received some great reviews.

We are excited for next Spring! We will be opening three new exhibits with a strong local flavor. The Village along with the Village Police led by Chief Laude Hartrum, graciously have donated quite a bit of past police equipment, uniforms, and pictures. They have donated the Pentwater Police awning that was in front of the old Police Station as well. Along with this exhibit, the Township Fire Department and past Chief Terry Cluchey, have loaned us interesting memorabilia. We are very excited to share with the



Dan's up on a ladder saving the old Polic Dept. sign.

community the past inside workings of what has kept our Village residents safe for centuries!

Our last new exhibit will be past signs, buoys, markers, benches, and memorabilia from Charles Mears State Park.

Manny Valdez and Chris Bush from the DNR have been very helpful in donating some interesting items including a bench seat with carvings from many local kids. This exhibit will be a walk down memory lane from the channel to the top of Old Baldy right inside of the Pentwater Historical Society Museum. Thank you to all the guests, docents, and folks behind the scenes that allow this Society and Museum to keep getting larger and stronger! We are here to serve the community, and this would not be possible without the generosity and hard work of the volunteers and guests.

Become a PHS Board Member!

The Board of PHS has announced a position to serve as a member of the board.

We are looking for an individual who would like to be part of preserving Pentwater history. No special managerial skills are needed, but experience or interest in fundraising would be a bonus. Interested? Contact us today with any questions.

info@pentwaterhistoricalsociety.org

Attention GLE Customers!

Are you a GLE customer? The PHS is actively applying for grants from utilities and other institutions that put a priority on enhancing the life of communities through the humanities and other worthy causes.

One grant opportunity is dependent on you! GLE has a People Fund, and periodically asks its customers to vote on worthy projects. If you "round up" your GLE bill, you will make a small monthly contribution to these grants for the good of our community and those nearby. Go to: gtlakes.com/people-fund/

MAY 25JUNE 10AUG 24FOR UPDATES, INFORMATION AND EVENTSSPRINGGARAGESUMMERCHECK OUT THE FACEBOOK PAGEDINNERSALEDINNEROR WEBSITE AT: www.pentwaterhistoricalsociety.org

History in the Summer with Boat Tours and History 101-

By Ron Beeber

uring Pentwater's 2021 summer season, residents and visitors came to better appreciate our community's resilient past by either taking the one-hour History Cruise on the water taxi (its third year of operation!) or catching one of the pilot "Pentwater History 101" sessions at Channel Lane Park. Although the History Cruise had a late start because the boat was under repair for much of June, the cruise proved to be as popular as ever once things got going.



This is Ron Beeber, speaking at one of the early "Pentwater History 101" sessions at Channel Lane Park in June or July of 2021. The photo was takn by one of the audience members.

Volunteer docents, Bart Zachrich and Ron Beeber, reported seeing plenty of smiles on the faces of passengers as they disembarked after each cruise, often leaving a donation for the Historical Society. It's hoped that the Lake Sturgeon water taxi boat will be back in the water in 2022 so the History Cruise can continue.

Bart and Ron also took turns several times a week providing their Pentwater History 101 tour commentary at Channel Lane Park. A change of venue is being considered for 2022.

Bart and Ron really enjoy volunteering their time to support the PHS in this way. Besides the goodwill that's created toward the Historical Society, their audiences generously contributed a total of \$1,200 to the PHS this summer.





Pentwater residents have found that their summer guests enjoy a couple of hours being on the water or looking at historical homes and hearing about local history. Next summer, think about sending friends to the museum tours-they'll love it!

BECOME A DOCENT

Do you enjoy talking about Pentwater history and are comfortable speaking to small groups? Think about volunteering to become a docent ... get in touch with Ron at: **ron.beeber@gmail.com**





The end of another perfect day in Pentwater.



Doc Williams, the PTW dentist for over 40 years, was downtown training Danzer for traffic and people.



The Brass Anchor, the former newspaper building, is undergoing major repairs to the parapet wall and ironwork.



When the Village and Township offices moved, the bell, formerly at Bell Park, moved to the Cemetery.



The old movie theatre is also having repairs made to the parapet wall and some new brick work on the sides.



Runners take off at the start of the Stout & Stumble race during Octoberfest.



The Car Show, part of Octoberfest, is becoming a destination event for aficionados of antique, classic and hot cars and trucks.



The Pentwater Yacth Club building was torn down and is being replaced with an all new structure that will be opening summer of 2022. Built in 1912 as a warehouse and later used as a basketall gym, the building bcame the Club's home in 1935. Pictured above are Museum Director Dan Hoekstra at right and PYC Vice Commodore Joe Guenther and Commodore Russ Cross.



Joe and Dan carefully take down the iconc sign, made by Gary Pleva, that faced the Village Green for 31 years. Interior woodwork, fixtures, and furniture were saved to use in the new building and flooring is being repurposed into bartops at the Artisan Center.



The last few truck loads of the Yacht Club are about to be hauled away and gone forever. Make Plans to Attend the **Spring Dinner**

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 At the VFW Hall

> 5:30pm Appetizers & Social

6:00 pm Greetings from Dick Warner *President, PHS*

> 6:15pm Dinner is Served



At 7:00 pm Enjoy a Special 40th Anniversary Presentation and the Museum Expansion Plans.

ONLY **\$20.00** per person (BYOB)

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT: Decor by Sandra & Jilly's

Questions or information Contact Deb Deward at: 231-869-2230

MUSEUM VISITORS

f you have not had the good fortune of being a docent at the museum during the summer months, you may want to think about signing
up for 2022. You do not need any special skill

set or know all there is to know about Pentwater history. You only need to share a smile or two!

This summer our docents were a tireless group of enthusiastic volunteers. They greeted visitors and directed them to different exhibits around the museum. The most rewarding part of the time spent as a docent has come from talking with the visitors who have come from all parts of the world.

One of our docents reported a visitor from Sweden who entertained her and others by elegantly playing the piano and organ during a visit. Other visitors relay memories sparked by artifacts displayed around the museum.

Another docent relayed a sweet story

of two young sisters visiting the museum. Olive (6) and Etta (5) Carlson from Cincinnati, Ohio, came to the museum and participated in the museum scavenger hunt while spending time with their grandparents, Mark and Diane Carlson. They had a wonderful time searching for items and gathering a small token after the hunt was completed. The next week they were back again, but this time it was to



Olive and Etta Carlson at their lemonade stand.

place some hard-earned cash into the donation box. The girls had left the museum the week before and had set up a lemonade stand in their grandparent's yard. They had fun selling the lemonade to friendly passersby. When they finished all their hard work, they asked to donate to the Pentwater Historical Society Museum! They were excited to donate, even if they were a little shy about telling their story.

This is just a quick snapshot of some of our wonderful visitors this year. Each visitor is unique and brings with them special reasons as to why they are visiting Pentwater and the Museum.

If you would like to share a smile or two and volunteer to be a docent during the 2022 summer season, please contact Joan at 231-869-2323 or jandjgehringer@gmail.com for more information.



And there are exciting plans for Museum expansion!

Your skills in fundraising, grant writing or marketing are needed !

Please contact: info@pentwaterhistoricalsociety.com

Help Wanted

The Pentwater Historical Society Board is in search of two more Board Members. Responsibilities include one meeting a month (with the exception of some winter months) and contributing ideas to help better serve the Pentwater Community through the Historical Society and Museum. You do not need to be a full-time resident of Pentwater or have any prior knowledge of Pentwater history to become involved! Contact Norm Shotwell at: shn1607@gmail.com

ARE YOU A CHARTER MEMBER?

If you joined PHS in1983, we would love to meet you and hear your recollections of the very beginning of the Historical Society!

> Do you know a charter member? Call Deb Deward Today! 231-869-2230

A LONG BRIDGE TO THE BOATHOUSE

By Beth Russell and Amy Vander Zwart

t is the first restaurant that greets you on your way into the Village of Pentwater from the south. Sitting across from Pentwater Lake and Long Bridge, it has long been a stopping point for tourists and anglers for years. Before it was The Boathouse with famous soups and karaoke, however, it was known as Johnny's Tavern or Johnny's Long Bridge Inn and had a much different vibe to it.

According to deeds found in the County Clerk's Office in Hart, the property at 5164 Monroe has had a long history traceable back to 1896. The Bouton family owned multiple properties in and around Pentwater in the late 1800s, and Wallace Bouton, with his wife Mabel (Nickerson) received the property after the 1896 death of his

aunt, Homeria (Bouton) Tabor, of Coxsackie, New York. Wallace was the only surviving son of Norman Bouton. Homeria, one of his sisters, was a school teacher in Pentwater for three years, but as reported in the Newberry News (1895) left to become a traveling salesperson for the Pentwater Bedstead Co. This job was short-lived, as she married a Mr. Charles Sowers in 1897.

Other families that owned the property included George J. Verbeck Senior and Junior; first

the father and then the Verbeck son owned the property between 1907 and 1920. Another Verbeck family, Frank and Elizabeth, purchased the Arbor Rest hotel in 1915 and established the Verbeck Tavern at that time, located in the block that now contains the Pentwater Post Office and the new Village Hall. (Reference 2017-Summer PHS Newsletter).

It is unclear exactly when the current building was erected, but an educated guess would be in the early to mid 1930s around the time it switched hands from Fred Greene to John Gerrard. Johnny Gerrard was a Private First Class in the US Army born in 1893. Looking back, Chris Alvesteffer remembers Johnny's as being a dance hall in the 1950s. Some remember being served delicious taco pizza.

Most remember it being called Johnny's Tavern or Johnny's Long Bridge Inn. But EVERYONE remembers it being run by a man named Barney who was featured on local t-shirts.

The nicest way to describe Barney Fahy according to Bill Daggett was to say that Barney was a little salty. Bernard Bartholomew Fahy and his wife, Ann, the only sibling of Johnny Gerrard, established joint ownership of the property with Mr. Gerrard through a quit claim deed entered into in 1970, giving Ann and Barney right of survivorship for the princely sum of \$1. John Gerrard passed away in Kokomo, Indiana soon after in 1972. Ann Fahy, and her husband, Barney took over full ownership of the establishment upon his death. Unfortunately, only two years after her brother passed away, Ann Fahy also passed leaving her husband Barney with the sole responsibility of managing

Johnny's Long Bridge Inn in

Barney was an opinionated fellow. He loved watching the daily

1974. Barney was the face of Johnny's Tavern according to local patrons. The vibe in the establishment wasn't a warm and fuzzy one, but that didn't stop people from visiting, in fact, it may have lured people there.

soap opera, Days of Our Lives, and did not welcome interruptions of any kind while watchi ng the Horton family's drama play out. According to Jerry Carlson, if you wanted a beer,

you had to wait for the commercial. He would allow customers to watch some sporting events at times but if the teams had players he didn't like the channel was changed.

Barney exercised his power of ownership on many occasions; closing the bar at odd times because it was too busy, too loud, or he just felt like it, not caring if you had just received your food or not. According to Harold Gwillim, Barney didn't like a lot of business. If it got too busy he would close up and have everybody leave, or sometimes he would have everybody leave except just a couple of people that he knew well. Barney also did not hide his opinions about people's appearances. Joel Mack remembers Barney locking the door if he didn't like the color or type of car or if you were on a motorcycle. Chuck Cloutier recalls being kicked out of Johnny's along with his friend for having (Continued on page 11.)



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CALLING ALL FALCONS! WE NEED YOUR YEAR BOOKS!

If you have any of the following years and are willing to donate your yearbook/s we would greatly appreciate it!

Need of years:

1938, 1939, 1941-1945, 1947-1950, 1952, 1964, 1968, 1977, 1991, 2008, 2016 and 2017.

Please contact:

info@pentwaterhistoricalsociety.org

MEMBERSHIP DUES FOR 2021 ARE DUE

If you see "20" following your name on the mailing label it is time to renew your membership. The dues amounts are shown on the Membership Application Form on the last page of the newsletter. <u>Please send your check to:</u> Pentwater Historical Society

PO Box 54, Pentwater, MI 49449

(Oceana County continued.)

wealth society. The work was seen as displeasing to the British Royals of the time and it was ordered to be seized while printing on the press. Harrington however, managed to secure a copy and was able to get his book printed successfully in 1656, an event that would cause King Charles II to order his arrest, and which ultimately resulted in James Harrington hiding out on an island until his death in 1677."

During this same time, Fr. Jacques Marquette, a Jesuit missionary explorer, landed in Canada and made his way to the eastern shores of Lake Michigan. In 1675 Marquette died near the river we now know as Pere Marquette (pere means father in French). It is speculated that Marquette brought with him ideals from "The Commonwealth of Oceana," to educate and reform what he believed to be savages in the area. Perhaps dreaming he could create a Utopian society; he dubbed the area, "Oceana" after the controversial book.

The reasoning and significance behind the naming of Oceana County may have been lost to the past, but maybe the true answer isn't important. Maybe it is the mystery that forces people to search for answers, uncovering more history and stories is what is most important.

(Johnny's Tavern continued.)

long hair and he wasn't the only one!

Barney sold Johnny's Tavern in May of 1987. It seems the surly bartender had his fill of cold Michigan winters and moved to warmer weather where he spent his last years in Grayson, Texas until passing away at the age of 91 in February of 1994.

The company that purchased Johnny's Tavern from Barney Fahy went under the name Pentwater Escape and Spring Pond Inc. John Lellos Jr, William J. Tutlewski, James Dundas, and William R. Koch were all part owners of Johnny's from 1987 until it was purchased by the Murphys in 2000. During that time, rumors about the new owners spread quickly around Pentwater. The talk was that the new owners were from Chicago and were friends with the football legend Dick Butkus who was a silent partner in the deal. Some of the owners were from Chicago or had dealings in Chicago at one time or another, but whether Dick Butkus owned a part of Pentwater could not be confirmed.

One would never guess when walking into this unassuming building that it holds so many years of history. If the walls could talk, they would have story after story to tell about food, drink, friends, gatherings, celebrities, singing, dancing, and drama. As the community waits to see what fate holds for the building, hopefully it will facilitate more stories and drama for generations to come.



Hans Munson is identified with a "X", the big tall guy identified as "Big Joe".

WHAT'S GOING ON?

Back in the day you could have a penny post card made from your photograph. This is a post card from Hans (Grandpa, identified with an x) Munson to George Munson in Detroit. It is dated April 8, 1914 just two days after America officially entered WWI. What has drawn a crowd of all men? Could it have to do with the war effort? What building are they standing in front of? The awning says "Bakery & Ice Cream". What is that contraption with the large wheel the man is happily pushing with what looks like paper spilling out? Could he have come from the post-office?

The sign on the curb says "J. A. K. ROHN AT PENTWATER" which might be the man above or the photographer's "staging" for this photo. What's going on?

WHEN HORSES WERE TRANSPORTATION



A group of young men are having fun on "A Bully Ride at Pentwater". The person on the left front seat is identified asWade Maynard.



The first motor cars in the area had their fuel brought to them by horse drawn tank-wagons. (These happen to be mules.) The sign on the tank says "Standard Oil" and "Crown Gasoline Products Most Power". The back of the card describes the photo as: "Hi Crowner & the first oil and gas delivery." The sign on building reads: "Arthur Hunter Grocery Store".





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The caption on this photo says: Sands & Maxwell Bass Lake Delivery. They not only owned the lumber business but also had a general store in the village. The back of the card says: Millard Ryckman from Uncle John Wakefield. The driver of the delivery carriage-pulled by a team of handsome mules-might be Millard. He's properly

dressed with a tie and garters on his shirt sleeves. Roads to parts of Bass Lake at the time may have been so rough that delivery to early resorts on the lake might have been easier to go along the beach.

This is Parm Buck proudly standing next to his very early motor truck. The sign on the truck says "PARM BUCK • GEN. MDSE. It's loaded to the top with maybe the wife or daughter sitting on top. Photo also says: Bucks Corners, Mich. A careful look at old county maps doesn't show a "Bucks Corners".

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