President’s Message

2019 was a busy and productive year at the lighthouse, and I am proud to inform you that more lighthouse windows were rehabilitated and the floor repairs in the Chamberlain room were completed. A water line for our spectacular gardens was installed in addition to other repairs and maintenance. Personally, I love the changes, reorganization and enhancements to the second-floor library. Please visit and spend time browsing this year. The season’s lecture and concert series were very successful and well received by all who attended.

The 2019 high-water level stressed all of us, but thanks to all the volunteers and members and their continued support, efforts, and financial contributions, the Lighthouse Museum was able to continue keeping the lights on, offer new exhibits, lectures and concerts, and continue to be a valuable community resource.

The lighthouse is the most visited tourist attraction in Wayne County, and we strive to make it an anchor to the community. The Lighthouse Museum will open on May 15th. There will be new merchandise in the gift shop.

Although the weather is not yet outdoor concert worthy, rest assured the Sodus Bay Historical Society Board of Trustees and Director are hard at work preparing a series of events for 2020. The outdoor concert series is planned. Watch for a new date for our 5k race/walk. There will also be a member-only tour, a cocktail party at Sodus Bay Heights on June 13th, the History Alive! lecture series and, of course, our Annual Meeting in mid-August. We will be planting trees on the grounds this year to address the need of more shade for visitors.

Consistent with the SBHS mission to disseminate historical information, the organization plans to revive and publish a series of newsletters. Special thanks to Tom Lightfoot, Village of Sodus Point Historian, and Rosa Fox, Town of Huron Historian, for their initiative and organizing this first issue.

As always, general and current information can be found at www.sodusbaylighthouse.org.

I look forward to seeing you all at the lighthouse in 2020.

Jane Peachey
Greetings and happy 2020!

I’m sure this is going to be a great season at the Sodus Bay Lighthouse! We are getting all of our fun events planned. Our Summer Concert Series at the Lighthouse will feature new bands that have not performed at the lighthouse before, and our “History Alive!” lecture series will feature many interesting topics. On that note, we are very fortunate to have two public historians involved with our organization. Rosa Fox is the Town of Huron Historian, and Tom Lightfoot is the Village of Sodus Point Historian. They are both excellent researchers and are enthusiastic about the history of the Sodus Bay area. As you can see from this newsletter they created, their articles are well-written and informative. I’m sure you’ll enjoy learning about iceboating, about Silvanus Jenkins Macy, and about Caw-Caw and Joey.

It is only by learning about the past that we can truly understand how we got where we are in the present. Enjoy reading and enjoy the rest of the winter. I look forward to seeing you at the lighthouse this season.

Joe O’Toole, Sodus Bay Lighthouse Museum Director
The Macy in Macyville

Silvanus Jenkins Macy breathed new life into Sodus Point when he arrived in 1874. Macy only lived in Sodus Point for a short time but the eventual success that resulted from his vision and persistence for the railroad changed Sodus Point to a great extent. The railroad and businesses connected with it provided employment for many Sodus Point residents. The Malt House, Coal Trestle, iron ore dock and grain elevator in Macyville brought commerce to the little town on the bay. The passenger service brought visitors and tourists from all over to appreciate its beauty and enjoy the activities of the bustling harbor and lakeshore. While the train is gone and the railroad businesses have all closed, the enjoyment of this unique village by residents, visitors and tourists alike persists thanks to the potential Silvanus Macy saw in a small bankrupt railroad that came into our small village our beautiful bay.

Silvanus was from a wealthy New York City family who were descendants of Thomas Macy. In 1659, Thomas led a group of Quakers and others who were persecuted by the Puritans to Nantucket. They were the first European inhabitants of the island, which they bought from Thomas’ cousin Thomas Mayhew. The whaling industry soon became Nantucket’s lifeblood. (See Why Whales?) Silvanus’ grandfather, Josiah, was a shipping merchant who sold whale oil, candles and spermaceti around the world and brought back essential goods to the island’s residents.

Josiah faced serious challenges avoiding blockades that both the British and Americans put up to control shipping during the War of 1812. Trying to slip through the war ships to avoid capture and impressment of his crew or negotiating with both sides for safe passage became increasingly difficult and dangerous. (left)
After many close calls, Josiah put his ships in drydock up the Hudson River until the end of the war and took up farming. With the island’s sandy soil, farming barely provided a subsistence living. After the war, he resumed his shipping business.

The shipping business in Nantucket was, however, no longer as profitable. A sandbar crossed the Nantucket harbor channel. This bar wasn’t an obstacle for the original, small whaling ships that plied the coastal waters. With the inevitable decline in the whale population from very successful whaleing, whalers had to make longer trips further into the ocean. New, larger vessels would often have to go out for years to harvest enough whales to make the business profitable. These big ships loaded with their valuable cargo prevented them from entering the harbor at Nantucket. Ships had to off-load their cargo outside the harbor onto smaller boats. Furtive attempts were made to dredge a channel but kept failing because there wasn’t a breakwall to keep the sand from filling in again. They didn’t have enough money to build a wall, so the shifting sands continued to thwart shipping in and out of Nantucket. An unusual method to combat the problem was tried for a few years: a ship camel. (left) The camel was a floating dry dock. A hollow wooden structure was built to surround the hull of the ship. Filled with water, the camel would sink enough for the ship to float into it. Pumping the water out of the camel would raise the ship enough to cross the sand bar. The camels were very cumbersome and prone to damage, needing constant repair. Shipping profits continued to decline, and ships went to alternative harbors, like New Bedford.

Josiah Macy’s business suffered as well. He depended on these whalers and his own larger ships. Josiah’s family became part of the exodus of 600 people from the island between 1820 and 1830 to seek better opportunities elsewhere. The opportunities for these Macys were in New York City where Josiah had many clients and associates. In 1823, at the age of 17, Josiah’s oldest son, William Henry Macy, moved to New York City where he found work in the counting room of Samuel Hicks, one of his father’s business associates. Once of age, he started his own shipping business and married Eliza Jenkins the daughter of another of his father’s business associates and good friend, Silvanus F. Jenkins. In 1828, Josiah joined his son creating the business Josiah Macy and Son.
Father and son continued trading whale oil and other products, prospering and growing to a point where they had more than a hundred ships traveling all over the world. Josiah’s family joined the wealthy elite of New York City. As family members grew up, they joined the company. (left)

With the discovery of petroleum in Ohio and Pennsylvania, whale oil was soon replaced by kerosene. This shrewd Quaker family changed with the times and built an oil refinery, Long Island Refinery Company in Long Island City, which became the 2nd largest in the United States. They also owned Devoe Manufacturing Company that canned the oil for shipment around the world. When John D. Rockefeller’s Standard Oil of Ohio started buying up the competition in the 1870s, the Macys sold him their oil businesses in exchange for stock and seats on Standard Oil’s board.

Shipping and oil were the original mainstay for this Their keen business sense and respected reputation led them to other lucrative opportunities. They became very involved in the banking and insurance industries. In 1845, William became the director of the Leather Manufacturers’ Bank and its president in 1855. Starting as a trustee for The Seaman’s Bank for Savings in 1848. (right) he became vice-president in 1851 and president in 1863 until his death in 1887. William was also vice-president of the United States Trust Company, director of the Bank of Commerce, the City Fire Insurance Company, the National Fire Insurance Company, the Atlantic Mutual Company, and others.

The oldest son of William H. Macy, Silvanus Jenkins Macy, worked his way up in the family company as well as in banking. Marrying Caroline Ridgway of Philadelphia in 1853, they had five children and Caroline died in 1869 at the age of 35. Silvanus then married Juliet Wasson, also from Philadelphia, in 1873 and they had two children. By this time Silvanus was a senior partner in the family business and a respected banker. Very soon after marrying Juliet, in 1874, Silvanus was awarded receivership of the newly opened but floundering Sodus Point and Southern Railroad between Stanley and Sodus Point, NY. (below)

The Macy in Macyville Part 2 will continue in our next newsletter.
Why Whales?

From the 18th into the 20th century, whales provided many usable products.

- lamp oil (from sperm oil)
- margarine and cooking oil (from whale oil)
- candles, soaps, cosmetics and perfumes (from sperm oil)
- corsets and umbrellas (from whalebone)
- whale-meat for human consumption
- animal feed (from meat meal)
- fertilizer (from bone meal)
- string for tennis racquets (from tendons)
- lubricating oil

Whale oil was used in machinery and even in car transmissions. An urban legend about NASA using spermaceti oil in their spacecraft arose after it was banned in 1973. NASA debunked this and only uses synthetic oils.

The most important products were whale oil and candles made from spermaceti, a waxy substance from the spermaceti organ in the head of the sperm whale. It is believed that this organ focuses the sound produced by the whale for echolocation and communication. It may also play a role in the whale’s ability to dive to great depths.

The reason that spermaceti candles were much more desirable than others was that they would burn brighter, produce less odor, and little smoke. This was particularly important to people striving for a cleaner source of light. These candles were also far superior during the warm summer months because they were more resistant to heat. Unlike tallow candles, these high-quality candles would not bend and warp due to the heat and humidity. Because these candles were far superior to the typical tallow candle, they were very expensive and would typically be purchased by those who could afford the luxury.

Patrick Waters
https://adverts250project.org/tag/spermaceti-candles

The quality of light produced by a spermaceti candle was so good that Candle power (CP), the light given off by a spermaceti candle, became the measure of light brightness from 1860 - 1948.

Also see a video - Whale Oil Light, https://youtu.be/AnCTEDbg_G
Ice Boating on Great Sodus Bay
By Rosa Fox

Speed . . . Sails . . . Wind . . . Thrills . . . Hard Water! The mention of these words brings to mind a sport that captures the spirit of riding the wind with extreme velocity that requires a certain willing craziness. Historically, a sport enjoyed by wealthy patrons like the Rockefellers on the Hudson River near Poughkeepsie, as well as by common folk in Upstate New York and any region of our globe that gets cold enough. A sport that should be part of the Winter Olympics, but due to the uncertainty of conditions and definite requirements like cold, wind, and ice, this particular sport has not met Olympic committee approval - yet. That sport? Yes, Iceboating!

Historically, Sodus Bay has seen its share of ice boat enthusiasts. A February 6, 1875 Newark Union newspaper report for Sodus Point provides one of the first historical mentions of iceboating in our area: "Ice boating not good owing to deep snow, which prevents the boats from running." By 1877, iceboat racing was becoming quite popular on Sodus Bay. Throughout the past one-hundred fifty years (or so), iceboating has waxed and waned. There is at present, an eager group of ice boaters on Sodus Bay, at this writing, awaiting some sailable hard water (a.k.a. ice).

The Dutch settlers brought iceboating to America and in particular to the New York Hudson Valley. Putting runners - or blades - on their boats, the Dutch were able to move goods and people across the ice. Eventually, a competitive sport evolved from this winter mode of transportation and commerce, with the boat builders of the Hudson Valley at the forefront. A new iceboat, named “Whiff” was introduced at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, and was famed in that era as the “finest yacht in the world”. Constructed by prominent Poughkeepsie, New York iceboat builder Jacob Buckhout, the slim wooden hulled “Whiff” has been set out upon the ice to race into this millennium.

Article from Newark Union March 24, 1877.
Conditions are critical for successful ice boating. Foremost is four or more inches of what ice boaters call "hard water". Cold weather, wind, no snow on the ice, and preferably not in the air, as well as a personal sailing disposition toward tolerance, love of speed, quick wit, and being a little crazy are all factors necessary for a good day on the ice.

A short notice in the Arcadian Weekly Gazette (January 23, 1901), announced: “James Harris, of Sodus, has completed his ice-boat which he has been carefully building and it is a great success. It is the largest one on the bay." James ran the Harris House in Sodus Point with his wife Mary in the early 1900s.

Accidents were a big concern for iceboaters, who in the late 1800s to early 1900s did not have the safety equipment many of modern day iceboaters assure they have on board. A 1908, January 16th, Newark Courier news clip tells that Sodus Bay's east side boat builder, "Edward Correll of Huron had a narrow escape from drowning. He ran into a large air hole on Sodus Bay while running his ice boat. Correll climbed the spar and called for assistance. Fred Day heard his cries and came to his rescue with a ladder."

Ice boating clubs eventually formed on Sodus Bay - the first club (reported in newspapers) was started around 1909: "About 30 owners of ice boats have formed a racing association at Sodus Point. They adopted a blue flag with a white star as the pennant." Officers of the 1909 club are familiar historic Sodus Point names: Commodore - Carl Morley; Vice Commodore - Elliot Harris; Secretary - Leslie Freeman; Treasurer - Claude DoVille; Fleet Surgeon - Dr. Frank. L. Wilson; Fleet Captain - Hurd DoVille (1909, January 21 Newark Courier). By the following fall, the anticipation of ice boating was on the rise. In an article titled "Sodus Point - Waking Up" listing improvements not limited to summer visitors, there is mention of the Sodus Bay Ice Boat Club's anticipation for a fine season ahead. "There are twenty or thirty good ice boats at least in the fleet, and the racing events last winter were very exciting." (1909, October 23 - Union Gazette)

Sodus Bay Ice Boating Clubs have come and gone over the years, supporting the efforts of those who seek the thrill of wind, speed, and ice. The present Sodus Bay Ice Boat Club (SBIBC) was formed in 1962. Members, at that time, were mostly racing Arrows, a 16-foot fiberglass hull, seating two people. Eventually the club began racing
the smaller and lighter DN iceboat. In 1937, the **Detroit News**, for which to boat is named, held a competition for designs to be submitted for an ice craft that would be affordable and simple enough to be built by most anyone. The DN would become one of the most popular iceboat designs and remains a popular racing ice boat today.

SBIBC continues its nearly 60 year run with strong membership - holding monthly meetings, plying their runners to the hard water - when they can find it, and sharing sport and craft with others who want to become part of this special alliance. At a recent club meeting held at the Sodus Bay Sportsmen's Club, SBIBC members told tales of their experiences on the ice. When asked what got them started in ice boating, a common theme among the SBIBC members was that a parent or special mentor got them involved.

Marti Tertinek shared a close-to-home story, reminiscing that her mentor for ice boating when she was a kid was the late Carl Eaton, avid sailor, ice boater, and past Commodore of the Sodus Bay Yacht Club. Carl had a DN he would let the local kids borrow. Marti and her two friends, Kay Penneycoff and Mary Sargent, would go out for runs, taking turns, and enjoying the freedom of sailing on the ice. Marti shared that Herb Kallusch had a potbellied stove in his marina, and when the kids finished a run - they would go to Kallusch's to warm up. Atop his potbellied stove, Herb kept a pot of hot chocolate! A sure enticement and certainly the stuff of warm ice boating memories!

For additional entertaining stories filled with humor, local history, passion, and information on iceboating as told by SBIBC club members, listen to the club interview, conducted by Rosa Fox and recorded by Edith Farrington, online At the Town of Sodus Historical Society website: [http://townofsodushistoricalsociety.org/interviews/part-2/sodus-bay-ice-boat-club-2019/](http://townofsodushistoricalsociety.org/interviews/part-2/sodus-bay-ice-boat-club-2019/).

For a nominal membership fee, SBIBC club members may use the club's iceboats and be part of an avid and knowledgeable community of iceboaters. To find out more about the Sodus Bay Ice Boat Club, contact Jay DeWispelare [dewispelarejay@yahoo.com](mailto:dewispelarejay@yahoo.com) or call 315-573-3111. Many thanks to the members of the Sodus Bay Ice Boat Club for taking the time to share their memories and history of local iceboating on Great Sodus Bay.
Forecastle Explorations

The forecastle of a ship is directly aft (behind) the bow of a ship and forward of the foremast - used for shelter and storage for lines, anchors, machinery, or – uncomfortable as it may seem - quarters for sailors. The SBHS Newsletter Forecastle Explorations will provide additional sources of information relevant to the featured articles and more, and to further discovering the vast history of our Great Sodus Bay.

Recommended Reading

Be sure to visit www.historicsoduspoint.com. Just type “Doodle-Bug” into the search box and you will connect to a photo and news article of a Sodus Point built motorized ice contraption wonder - that reached speeds of 100 mph on the ice! Also, search the winter topic of “ice harvesting” and discover an article originally published in the SBHS newsletter written by Jean and Bud Seymour.

Recommended Listening to Tales of Days Gone By

Are you curious about the early days on Sodus Bay? Do you enjoy listening to interviews and talks - especially with folks who lived the history? Bruce and Edith Farrington have made enjoying the local storytellers possible online through the Town of Sodus Historical Society website. This newsletter will provide information about the local history story tellers, and a link to these important historical chats. With this issue we will begin with George Arney.

A member of several family businesses in Sodus Point and former town supervisor, George Arney was a great storyteller of days gone by. Hear George explain how the Sodus Point beach area developed, tell about the first pier built where the Pit Stop gas station is now, and how farmers brought in wagon loads of rocks to reinforce the shoreline causing the sand to build up creating the land that is now Wickham Blvd. and the numbered streets. This break wall built up land and protected Sand Point. George also tells fun stories about some of the people who lived in Sodus Point and how the community worked together to create the ball diamond – the Oscar Fuerst Field. George Arney interview:
Great Stories from Around Great Sodus Bay

A Special Invitation: We are very excited to invite you – the reader, and your friends and neighbors to submit stories about unique reminiscences, events, experiences, news, and any other Great Sodus Bay related tales. This is a new endeavor to encourage members to share their amazing stories from around the bay that may be a just little different, as well as foster some creative writing. Please send your stories to Rosa Fox – foxmuse@aol.com. Our newsletter team will review submissions for inclusion in future issues. The first “tale” is by Town of Huron Historian and longtime Sodus Bay resident, Rosa Fox.

Caw-Caw and Joey (circa 1960)

A tiny mound of land between the mainland at Lake Bluff Road and the east approach to LeRoy Island Bridge, called Hog Island, has been the site of some very interesting characters. A 1939 Town of Huron Field Assessor's book referenced this knoll in the middle of a swamp as Hodge Island. Probably some individual named Hodge had a shack there, following Harlow C. LeRoy's sawmill circa 1900. Hodge, or Hog Island, as it has been called for the past 60-70 years, is surrounded by swamp on the east, north, and south, and Sodus Bay on the west, and is a place of a few uncommon stories.

Growing up on LeRoy Island in the late 50s through early 70s, one of my favorite childhood activities was to walk down to the old wooden LeRoy Island Bridge, walk across the bridge to Hog Island, and visit Florence Cotton's little convenience store. There, I'd enjoy an ice cream bar, some penny candy, and chips. I may have been sent to pick up a loaf of bread, a can of tuna, or some milk. Florence had a pretty unique store just perfect for the east side of the bay. Cottagers from LeRoy Island, Lake Bluff, and Crescent Beach frequented her little bayside store for treats and essentials. Florence also carried a good supply of beer, soda, Slim Jims, and pickled sausages. She also rented rowboats for fishermen.

On Sundays from April to October, my mom and I would walk down to Florence's together so mom could pick up a newspaper. I remember one particular Sunday in May - my birthday - walking down to do our "shopping". Before we stepped into the store, we received the anticipated catcall whistle - "fwit - fweooo" - from across the road. This exclamation of attention was delivered by a crazy mynah bird who roosted on the front porch of a Hog Island hut belonging to Sadie Wolven.

Sadie was an unusual old character. She had all sorts of wild animals - every kind of bird imaginable. She had a fenced in run from her humble little abode to the
swamp where her pet mink could run back and forth from a pen at the side of her home to the swamp. I used to by huge earthworms from Sadie for fishing. Lots of perch, blue gills, and sunnies made it into my bucket with the help of those monster worms. On this delightful May day - I was in for a fantastic surprise, which changed me forever. With the anticipation of visiting Sadie to buy some worms to later go fishin', Mom and I stepped into Sadie's back porch to be greeted by the most raucous rendition of Happy Birthday I had ever heard - or have ever heard since for that matter!

Well, like I said, Sadie had all manner of animals residing on her tiny postage stamp property on Hog Island. Who sang Happy Birthday to me? Two jet-black crows named Caw-Caw and Joey! Sadie had rescued the pair at some point the previous year. She worked with them through the winter, teaching them to talk - and sing. I can't remember the particulars about Sadie's technique, except that she commented she had slit their tongues. Research on this topic reveals that it is not necessary to slit a bird's tongue for the avian wonder to talk (or sing) like a human. Anyone interested in this topic is certainly welcome to research that. But surely, in reminiscing about my childhood, growing up on Sodus Bay - characters like Florence Cotton, Sadie Wolven, Caw-Caw, and Joey certainly add to the color of a most unusual island on Sodus Bay! Oh yes, I have been a huge fan of crows ever since!

Sodus Bay Historical Society Upcoming Event

“Going the Extra Mile”
Fundraising Cocktail Party
for the Sodus Bay Lighthouse Museum to usher in our 36th season
June 16, 2020

Heavy hors d’oeuvres, coffee and sweets, cash bar, door prize.

The Heights Restaurant and Banquet Facility,
7030 Bayview Drive, Sodus Point.

More information will be forthcoming.
Thank You to Our Sodus Bay Lighthouse Event Sponsors

In addition to our loyal members, the Sodus Bay Historical Society relies on the generous contributions from area businesses and foundations for the Summer Concert series, History Alive talks, and Fourth of July Extravaganza. Please show your appreciation by supporting these businesses, which support and make possible the events and activities of the Sodus Bay Historical Society.

Diamond
Fleet Feet Sports
SPINCO Metal Products

Platinum
Classic Hits 99.3

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Bronze
Bonnie Castle Farm Bed & Breakfast
Burnap’s Farm Market & Garden Café
Captain Jack’s Goodtime Tavern
Concord Ford
Franklin House Tavern
Lyons Veterinary Clinic
MacDonald Air Conditioning
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Sodus Bay Heights Golf Club
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Sodus Bay Historical Society Members
Town of Huron
Town of Sodus
Village of Sodus Point
Lighthouse Museum Events

Spring Shopping Fling
Friday, May 1 through Sunday, May 3; 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
Sodus Bay Lighthouse & other locations in Wayne County
www.waynecountyshoppingfling.com

Opening Day at the Lighthouse
Friday, May 15; 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Sodus Bay Lighthouse, 7606 North Ontario Street, Sodus Point, NY

“History Alive!” Lecture featuring Karen Shughart
Wednesday, May 27; 6:00 p.m.
The Heights Restaurant, 7030 Bayview Drive, Sodus Point, NY

Going the Extra Mile Fundraising Cocktail Party
Saturday, June 13; 4:30-6:30 p.m.
The Heights Restaurant, 7030 Bayview Drive, Sodus Point, NY

Lighthouse 5-K Run
Saturday, June 27; 9:00 a.m.
Registration and Start at the Sodus Bay Lighthouse

Independence Extravaganza
Friday, July 3 through Sunday, July 5
Sodus Bay Lighthouse Museum
7606 North Ontario Street, Sodus Point, NY