



Historical Perspectives

PORT WASHINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Volume 21, Issue 1

Spring 2010

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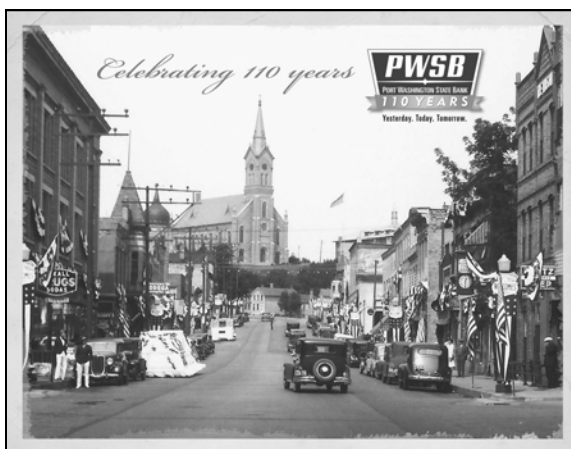
Membership

\$20 Individual
\$30 Family
\$10 Student
\$150 Business
\$150 Lifetime

110 YEARS OF BANKING HISTORY

The Port Washington State Bank has been a fixture on Franklin Street in Port Washington since September 11, 1899. Though the exterior has undergone several changes over the years, the one fact remains the same—the bank is still the oldest independent bank in Ozaukee County. Join us at the Quarterly Meeting to

of Franklin and Main Streets. Please enter through the Main Street entrance.



hear some wonderful stories about the history of PWSB, how the bank has remained in the family since the founder Clarence Hill first began until the present with the Schowalter family. Mark Schowalter will give a pictorial and historical glimpse of the past century of Port State Bank's operations.

A display of artifacts from the Bank's collection as well as those of the Port Washington Historical Society will be set up for viewing. Members and their guests are welcome to bring any articles to share.

The Quarterly Meeting will be held in the Wilson House Dining Room located at the Northeast corner

Quarterly Meeting
April 21, 2010
7:00 pm
Wilson House
Northeast corner of
Franklin and Main
Streets
in Port Washington

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President's Message

It is spring by the official calendar so that means for many of us who are gardeners, it is time for GROWTH. We do a daily check of our flower beds and gardens awaiting the first signs of GROWTH. I hope that this year of 2010 will also be a year of GROWTH for the Society.

We will be celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Light Station. I hope the event will bring attention to our Society and an awareness of how important it is to work to save our heritage. I also hope that it will encourage people to become members of PWHS and support our mission. All of which will lead to a GROWTH of our membership..

Another opportunity for GROWTH and support from our community - **the Fire Engine House**. The building is now on the State and National Register of Historic places. Signs to declare the designations have been ordered by PWHS and the PW Fire Department. We have always voiced an interest to the city planners to obtain that building as a permanent home for the Society when vacated by the Senior Center. It could be a museum for our fire department and the rich maritime heritage of the city. Surely that is GROWTH.

The goal to obtain the Fire Engine House is a lofty one, but not an impossible one. It was hard work and determination by PWHS to save the Light Station so we know impossible dreams can come true. Let's have another dream, another goal. Let us work together and GROW an awareness in the community to gain support for our next dream.

Since this is my last President's Message, I would like to extend a special thank you to those who have served on the Board of Directors during the past three years. It has truly been a pleasure working with all of you.

Geri Zehren, President



Abe Lincoln To Visit Port -- Again!



You read that correctly! On November 6th, 2010 the Port Washington Historical Society will co-host A CORNU-COPIA OF HISTORY--an event that will focus on Port's history during the period when Abe Lincoln visited Port Washington and stayed with Wooster Harrison. A highlight of the event will be a visit by a wonderful portrayer of Honest Abe, Mr. Robert Rotgers. The evening will include music by Pike Creek bluegrass band, and samplings of food that would have been served in the Lincoln era. Proceeds from the event will benefit the Courthouse restoration, the Society and the Judge Eghart House. If you would like to help with the planning of this event, please contact our office: 262-268-9150.

Port Washington Fire Engine House

The Port Washington Fire House represents an important part of the rich history of the City of Port Washington. Just to the east of this site was the location of the 1882 fire house that stood until the construction of the 1929 Fire Engine House. These sites have hosted 128 of the 158 years of firefighter history. This building served as the Port Washington Fire House for 39 years. Over the years, many men and women put their lives on the line, serving on the Fire Department of Port Washington. With the future possible relocation of the Senior Center, an opportunity exists to create a city museum that would give testimony to these ultimate volunteers and feature other aspects of city history.

The Port Washington Historical Society Board proposes that this wonderful opportunity be used to create a city museum that would host collections honoring volunteer firefighters, maritime history of the area, and the city's 175 years.



An opportunity exists to create a city museum hosting collections honoring the city's volunteer firefighters, maritime history, and Port Washington's 175 years of history.

A committee, led by Marc Eernisse, will explore the options of acquiring the 1929 site to create a city museum and resource area. As a Society this is an opportunity to preserve a public building as a public resource. As a city this is an opportunity to add another attraction to be enjoyed by residents as well as visitors.

Those seeking to join in this endeavor of preservation can contact the committee at 262-268-9150 or at portwashhistsoc@att.net



As a city, this is an opportunity to add another attraction to be enjoyed by residents as well as visitors.

News from the Center on Grand

by Jackie Oleson

There is a hum of activity and life down at the Office/Resource Center these days. President Geri Zehren spent nearly two years getting organized in the working area of the Office and we are now reaping the benefit. Files and records were organized; computers have been updated through donations and the assistance of Ray Wagner; and a rhythm of doing things has settled into our Office Center.

In the Resource Center the hum centers around the volunteers that show up on a weekly basis. It may be someone who comes in to help twice a month, to those that come once a week and those that are there both Monday and Thursday. This winter we were fortunate to have two young college aged women helping with the Resource Center; filing news items, organizing frequently used resource materials, putting identification numbers on items, and learning to work with *Pastperfect*. Kellie Barber has worked as a

guide at the Light Station in the summer and now works Thursday in the Resource

Center; Colleen worked this winter on Mondays. We have been fortunate to have their services over these months. With these efforts we have been able to tackle some of the donated items that have accumulated over the past couple of years. Several of our volunteers come in at other times to work on aspects of what we do. Our thanks to the

following volunteers that make the Resource Center possible:

Mary Flierl
Marlene Richart
Rick Smith
Kellie Barber
Jackie Oleson

Kay Goodwin
Geri Zehren
Linda Nenn
Colleen Jurkiewicz

There are numerous others that are on call when there is need to fold brochures or walking tours. These individuals respond to that request from the Office.



Wanted! Ghost Stories

Is your building or business haunted? Have you heard about haunting in your neighborhood? Ghost stories are part of our folklore that many people find fascinating. Stories collected may become part of an historic haunted tour.

Send stories to portwashhistsoc@att.net or 429 W. Grand Avenue, Port Washington, WI 53074

Board of Directors April Elections

by *Mary Flierl*

At each April quarterly meeting, our society has elections for positions on the Board of Directors. Board members serve a three-year term and may serve a second consecutive three-year term.

Angie Cope and **Mike Keller** will seek re-election for a second full three-year term. Angie's brings her expertise to the production of the Society newsletter as well as the website. Angie is also scanning and preserving materials from the Dan Muller collection. She is looking forward to serving another three years on the Board.

Mike Keller's has been an invaluable member of the Board and has also expressed an interest in serving an additional three year term.

This year, Nominations Committee presents **Patricia Moren** as the candidate to fill the vacancy created when Geri Zehren, our President, steps down following her second three-year term on the Board. Pat and her husband Bill moved to Port Washington in 2004 to be closer to family. She brings years of experience having volunteered for the Iowa Radio Reading Information Service for the Blind and Print Handicapped in Des Moines, a volunteer at the schools in the libraries, PTA, Music and Drama Boosters, in Des Moines, Drake University Adult Literacy Program and as a reader to residents at the Wesley Acres Retirement Center. She continues her volunteer work in Port Washington at the Food Pantry, the Port Washington/Saukville Arts Council, Main Street and the Feith Family YMCA. We hope that her background in theatre as a professional actress will inspire additional

ideas in her future role in our Society.

The election will take place at the Quarterly Meeting, Wednesday, April 21, 2010 at the Wilson House Dining Room.

*Port Washington Historical Society
Members are cordially invited
To a meeting sponsored by
The Judge Eghart House*

Monday May 3, 2010

7:00 p.m.

Police Headquarters Building

365 N. Wisconsin Street

Port Washington

*Please park on the street or in the Senior
Center parking lot.*

*A short business meeting will be fol-
lowed by
a presentation on*

Antiques

*By Gordon Kirsten
Owner of Gordon's Antiques*



*Bring your antiques for identification and
evaluation.*

*Guests are welcome
Refreshments will be served*

Cruise Ship to Visit Port Washington This Summer

An incredible light house adventure tour will bring 82 passengers to Port Washington this

June aboard the 110 foot cruise ship ***Keweenaw Star***. The *Great Lakes Lighthouse Keepers Association* (GLLKA) is sponsoring a five-day light-house excursion around Southern Lake Michigan beginning Sunday, June 27th and ending Thursday, July 1.

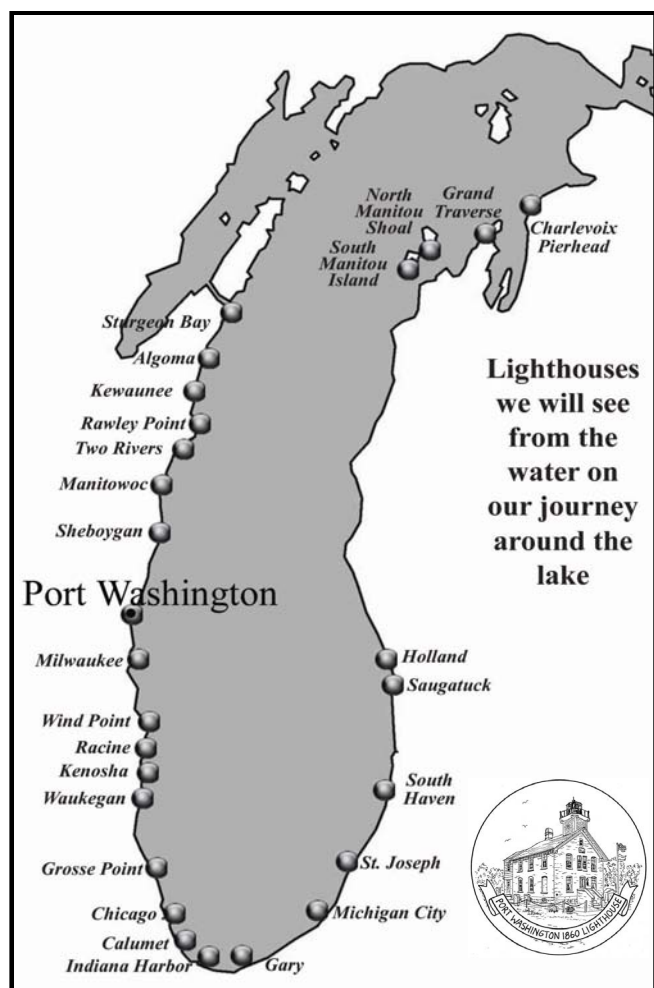
Promoted as a lighthouse adventure, this tour will land in Port Washington on the evening of June 28th when participants will stay the night at a local hotel. The following morning, June 29th, 82 participants will tour the 1860 Port Washington Light Station.

All in all, the tour will take in 35 lighthouses and 7 intake crib lights, including the very difficult to see lights on the steel mill piers and at Racine Reef. As the Port Washington Historical Society celebrates the 150th Anniversary of the 1860 Light Station, tours such as this demonstrate the appeal that an historic structure and museum have for the community.

To view the complete description of this excursion go to the GLLKA website here:

<http://www.gllka.com/excursions/>

Anyone interested in helping out with this tour or any of the other five tours already scheduled for this summer at the Light Station, please contact Linda or Rick. Phone 262-284-7240 or email



Show you care with "WE CARE"

The Port Washington Historical Society is a participant in the Pick 'N Save "We Care" Community Dollar Program. Our Organization will benefit when our members list the number 620430 of the Historical Society on their Advantage Plus Savers Club

**PWHS
"We Care"
Number
620430**

Card application or a change form are available at the service counter of any Pick 'N Save store. A percent of all purchase dollars will be donated to the Historical Society.

Thank you to those who have already signed up.

Maritime Heritage Festival

August 20-22, 2010

The Port Washington Historical Society will once again offer extended touring hours at the 1860 Light Station. Rick Smith will feature his amazing maritime collection as a maritime museum located this year in the larger space of the former Leuptow's Furniture store.

This year features tall ships: The Unicorn (with an all woman crew), Roseway, The Lynx, Pride of Baltimore II and the "Mystery" Ship.

Watch for more information in the July *Historical Perspectives* newsletter.

Abstracts Moved To Ozaukee County Historical Society

Through the efforts of Mary Flierl and John Enright, the Ozaukee County property abstracts have been processed and 13 boxes moved to their new home at the Ozaukee County Historical Society Archives. This major project took many months as Mary Flierl indexed information for Northern Ozaukee County. Mary coordinated the transfer of the abstracts to the Ozaukee County Historical Society and on March 3rd John Enright and Mary met Ruth Renz, the Ozaukee County Historical Society Archivist, who accepted the abstracts for their new home.

Property abstracts are a collection of legal documents which chronicle activities associated with a particular parcel of land. Generally included are references to deeds, mortgages, wills, probate records, court litigations and tax sales. The abstract will also show the names of all property owners and how long a particular holder owned it as well as showing the price the land was exchanged for when it changed owners. Property abstracts are considered good starting places

for research on historical buildings.

Thanks to Mary and John's efforts, the Port Washington Historical Society now has empty table space in the basement to start work on re-arranging the shelves.



Thanks John for doing the heavy lifting!



Ruth Renz accepts the Ozaukee County Abstracts being delivered by John Enright.

WISH LIST

Storage Space

We are still in need of some off-site storage for materials we don't need immediate access to. If you have, or know someone who has, about 50 square feet of dry, safe storage to keep some collections, please contact the Office at 262-268-9150.

Volunteer

of the

Quarter

The *Volunteer of the Quarter Award* is presented to the **Port Washington State Bank.**

One might wonder how a bank can be considered a volunteer. In reality it is the people who operate the bank who make it possible. The Schowalter Family starting with Ron, who is the Chairman of the Board; Steve, his son, who is the President and CEO and Mark, Ron's other son, who is Executive Vice President and COO who make up this wonderful volunteer effort. It is their participation in our Light Station restoration, the Gala events, the Maritime Heritage events and many of the other activities of the organization that assist the

Society's in furthering the mission of preserving the history of our city.



The Port Washington State Bank has been one of the Society's most generous benefactors. In addition to financial support, we have had the assistance with credit card usage, donations of pewter ornaments as a fund raiser, marketing assistance and involvement with the Society's activities. The

Bank has been an ongoing supporter of the Light Station Restoration. Congratulations to Port State Bank as you celebrate 110 years of service to your community and as the Port Washington Historical Society Volunteer of the Quarter!

Light Station Wish List

1. Two cases 20 lb. white copy paper
2. One case (10 reams) 24 lb. white paper
3. Ten cases bottled water
4. 1,000 napkins
5. Plastic forks, knives, spoons
6. 48 rolls paper towels
7. 100 rolls toilet tissue
8. 12 boxes Kleenex tissue
9. 12 hours masonry tuckpointing
10. Painters willing to climb ladders
11. 3 to 6 hours electrical work
12. NEW TOUR GUIDES: Able minded, history minded, maritime minded, light-house minded people like YOU, 16 years or older. Call 1-262-284-7240 and leave a message if you can help out at the Light Station. See page 10 for more details.



In Memoriam and Donations



MEMORIALS

In Memory of Peter Jushka

Carol Heinen
Nina, Derr and Fred Look
Jackie and Eric Oleson
John and Gladys DeMerit
Edward and Kathryn Johnson
Mary E. and Theodore Flierl
Ann and William Flierl
Robert and Joy Dreier
Mary Becker
Charles and Ann Ross
Ann and Bill Flierl
Geri and Roy Zehren
Norbert and Sharon Vogt
Cynthia and Phillip Lehner
Leroy and Joan Bley
Bonnie Knaub
Margaret Sauer
Frank and Catherine Metz
Joana Eckert
JoAnn Stade
Dennis and Karen White
Richard and Kathleen O'Leary
William and Patricia Moren
Donald and Carol Schwarz
Elaine Nulph
Linda Nenn
Mr. & Mrs. Dybdahl
Mr. & Mrs. Augusto Garay
Mr. & Mrs. Paul Albrecht
David Del Ponte
Mr. & Mrs. Fred Schaefer
The Family of Peter Jushka
Anonymous
Paul and Joy Bloemer
Super Sky Products, Inc. Thiensville
Celebration Church

PWHS ENDOWMENT FUND

Green Bay Packers Org.:
In honor of Rick Smith
Jackie Jushka:
In Honor Of Peter Jushka

DONATIONS

Sue Bruner	Mary E. Flierl
James Fowler	Rick Smith
Linda Nenn	Angie Cope
Jackie Oleson	Ruth Gruber
Beatrice Krier	Louise Red
Port Washington State Bank	

Computer Technology

Linda Nenn	Ray Wagner
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Fire House Plaque

Sue Bruner

LIGHT STATION MEMORIALS

In Honor of Susan Kenny

Linda Nenn

In Memory of Peter Jushka

Linda Nenn

LIGHT STATION DONATIONS

Green Bay Packer Org., In
Recognition of Rick Smith

LIGHT STATION Items Donated for Re-sale

Linda Nenn

LIGHT STATION Goods and Services

James Fowler
Rick Smith
Linda Nenn

LIGHT STATION TECHNOLOGY

Linda Nenn

NEW ANNUAL CORPORATE SPONSOR

Portico Gift Shop

Any omissions are unintentional. Please contact Linda Nenn regarding corrections or additions.

150th Anniversary of the Port Washington Light Station

Let's Celebrate!

The 150th Anniversary of the Port Washington Light Station and the 10th Anniversary of the Restoration

coordinated with the Judge Eghart House—
watch your mail box for post card invitation.



1. **Free** children's admission when accompanied by a member or paid adult the first week-end of every month.
2. **Free** hotdog and soda to members or paid admissions touring the Light Station the 2nd weekend of each month.
3. **Free** admission to anyone that joins the Historical Society while touring the Light Station.
4. Potluck picnic for members and friends, 4th Sunday in June, 4 p.m.-6 p.m.
5. **Free** paintbrush for all new and returning volunteer painters. Yes, this is a sly way to lure volunteers to the Light Station any day, Monday through Friday, to repaint the exterior wood on the buildings. Free paint stick also!
6. **Free** lightkeeper's t-shirt to each new or returning tour guide at the completion of their 5th day giving tours at the Light Station.
7. **FREE** surprise gift with admissions, third weekend of each month.
8. The Lighthouse after dark. 9 to 11 p.m. tower climb and outdoor lighthouse slideshow. Nights to be announced.
9. 1860 Lighthouse drawing contest. Children's age groups. To be announced.
10. Membership Appreciation Day June 28th—

TOUR GUIDES NEEDED AT LIGHT STATION

Training Sessions are being offered Sat. April 17 and 24, 1 to 3 p.m or Sun. April 28 and May 4, 1 to 3 p.m. Other times by arrangement. Basic two hour training covers rules, regulations and safety. Added sessions to learn or share history of Port Washington and its lighthouses. Ability to climb ladder and stairs a plus, but not required, as sit down guides are welcome. Tour guides are asked to volunteer a minimum of 3 times per month, about 12 to 15 hours. Willing to do more? You are most welcome. Please call 1-262-284-7240 and leave your full name and phone number and stated interest in becoming a tour guide. The Historical Society needs volunteers in a variety of capacities.

Keepers of the Light

by Linda Nenn

Port Washington's history is full of surprises and two such surprises happened just around 150 years ago – coinciding with the construction of the current Light Station. Bernard and Margarethe Schommer were unlikely candidates for a federally appointed position of light house keeper. Émigrés, Luxembourgers and Margarethe being a woman made their appointment by the government

quite an exceptional accomplishment. Light keepers were required to read, write and speak English meaning that the majority of keepers were of Anglo decent and not European émigrés. Lacking political connections also left most émigrés out of the running for these highly sought after positions but the Schommers overcame those odds and both served as keepers between 1857 and 1861.

Bernard Schommer was born in Koerich,

Luxembourg 1 January 1823 and immigrated to America in 1846. Around that same time, Margarethe Everard, age 30, also arrived in America from Luxembourg. The two met, married and together gave birth to seven children - Nicolas (1849), Henri (1851), Lambert (1853), Anna (1854), Nicolas (1855), Bernard (1857) and Mathias (1858.) Their first son, Nicolas, died of an accident at the age of five years, hence the duplication in names.

Bernard's occupation during his first ten years in Wisconsin is unknown but was likely that of a farmer. He adeptly developed social connections that enhanced his position in the political climate of the time. He joined the *Masonic Lodge* and associated with the Protestant Republicans that were the business leaders and city fathers of the party that occupied the State House. These actions separated him from the largely Catholic and Democratic Luxembourger community but led to his eventual federal appointment as a lighthouse keeper.

On 28 May 1857, at the age of 34, Bernard was appointed the third light keeper of the original Port Washington light station. He moved his family into the small three-room keeper's cottage that boasted a kitchen, combined living-dining quarters, a small first floor bedroom and a sleeping loft for the children.

The brick and mortar construction light house Bernard tended was built in 1849 and was located 50 to 100 feet east of the keeper's cottage residence. He was paid \$350 a year plus an allowance for basic food supplies and tended a sixth order Fresnel lens year round. Sadly, only two years after his appointment, Bernard passed away following an illness. It was late December, 1859 and Margarethe, was left a widow in the company of many mouths to feed.

Women light keepers were rare but fortunately for Margarethe and her children, Gustavus H. Scott, the Superintendent of the Eleventh Lighthouse District recommended Mrs. Schommer to assume the post of Head

Keeper of the Port Lighthouse. While busy raising a family and tending the lighthouse, construction of a new lighthouse began in the spring of 1860. The new lighthouse and keeper's quarters were built at the site of the old keeper's cottage, combining the original kitchen and west wall into the new construction. It is unclear where the family lived during this transition, but it is clear Margarethe Schommer and her six children were the very first occupants of the 1860 Light Station that stands atop St. Mary's hill today.

The new light station must have seemed like a castle to the children. Their loft bedrooms were replaced with new second floor rooms warmed by heat passing through two grates in the floor from the kitchen and dining room stoves below.

Margarethe served as the 4th light keeper in Port Washington until May, 1861. Census records reveal that the eldest son Henri was left with Schommer relatives in the Holy Cross area. It is believed that Margarethe and the other children moved to the Chicago area where she most likely she remarried.

Margarethe and her husband overcame the obstacles presented to 19th Century non-native English speaking immigrants from Luxembourg. Bernard served as a light house keeper during a time when keepers were nearly exclusively British. He was followed by his wife who tended the light, raised a family and saw the station through the transition from the original 1849 structure to the expanded 1860 building. Margarethe was the only woman to serve as keeper in Port Washington. Twenty years later when another woman appealed to serve as Port Washington's lighthouse keeper following the death of her husband Charles Henry Lewis, she was denied. In 1880, for unknown reasons, Mariah Lewis was passed up in favor of her only son, Charles Henry Lewis Jr.



PORT WASHINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 491
Port Washington, WI 53074-0491
www.portwashingtonhistoricalsociety.org

Society Calendar

QUARTERLY MEETING

Wednesday, April 21, 2010 at 7:00 p.m.

Wilson House Dining Room

**Northeast corner of Franklin and Main Streets
in Port Washington**

Public and guests welcome!

May 2010

Light Station opens for tours

Summer 2010

Special Events to Celebrate the 150th
Anniversary of the Light Station

Sunday, June 28th

Member Appreciation Day at the Light
Station & Judge Eghart House

July 21, 2010

Quarterly meeting & Program (TBA)

August 20-22, 2010

Maritime Heritage Festival

Fall Gala, Cornucopia of History

Saturday, November 6th, 2010