

Alcona Historical Society

P.O. Box 174, Harrisville MI 48740

Winter 2022

From the President

Greetings and Happy Holidays!

Another year is coming to an end and soon we will be saying “Happy New Year!” This has been a busy year for the Alcona Historical Society. Sturgeon Point Lighthouse and Bailey School were open 48 days this summer with an estimated 5300 visitors. This includes only those who visited when we were open for business. I am confident that the figure is well over 10,000 when both are combined. The gift shop sales and the number of tower climbers increased from last year. We had over 2500 tower climbers this year.

In this newsletter you will find articles about events and programs we held this year and some of our plans for the future. We had a successful Family Fun Day, and the Alcona Historical Society sponsored the Bay to Beacon half marathon at Sturgeon Point for the second year.

We applied for and received several grants this year which helped us cover some the costs of operations and develop some new projects. The main project was the painting and updating of the exhibits in the lighthouse keeper’s quarters. This is a work in progress. We have a group of enthusiastic volunteers, and we hope to have the grand opening for the members in mid-May before our season opening on Memorial Day weekend.

We are also developing a Cabin Fever series of programs for this winter and next spring. Details will follow later in the newsletter. We hope you will join us.

We are happy to announce that we have added a new board member to the ranks. Please welcome Adam Hitch. He is working on publicity and increasing the Society’s presence on social media. Yes, even we want the exposure on Facebook. Please read his article and support us in this effort.

The Alcona Historical Society has created a subcommittee within the organization to support a community group who is interested in the preservation of the Harrisville Train Depot. Their efforts thus far and some plans for the future are also shared in this newsletter.

Last year we opened a fund account with the Community Foundation for NE Michigan. This year are hoping to add an endowment fund to our account. This will give people the opportunity to contribute to the Historical Society for the long run. Once this fund in set up, we will let you know.

Thank you to all of the board members, the five women who worked in the museums and gift shop (Sue, Mary, Morgan, Hannah, and Danica), and our many volunteers who helped make the above possible. It is through everyone’s hard work that we keep progressing and moving forward.

Your membership to Alcona Historical Society is essential in helping us achieve our goals and continue to preserve the history of Alcona County. Please find the membership form in the newsletter. We look forward to your renewal in 2023 and appreciate your contribution. Your interest in local history is what keeps us focused.

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Sturgeon Point Lighthouse



Bailey School House



Lincoln Train Depot

Another Successful Bay to Beacon Half Marathon



Saturday, August 20 was a gorgeous morning for the 2nd annual **Bay to Beacon (B2B) Half Marathon**. Volunteers from Alcona Historical Society and the community helped to make this a fun and exciting day for all. Over 135 racers competed in one of three races: The half-marathon, starting at Negwegon State Park and ending at Sturgeon Point; or the 5K or 10K races, starting and ending at Sturgeon Point. New this year from AHS (and super popular) was a FREE coffee and cookie station at SPLH; runners and guests were all smiles after their caffeine and sugar fix! Volunteers also hosted an all-morning water station for the runners, with bananas after the race to increase depleted potassium levels. This year's B2B was a "zero waste" event. All products (napkins, cups) were recycled and all food items (banana peels, cookie crumbs) were composted. AHS volunteers also helped with parking and race support. After the expenses of the race were totaled, the B2B committee sent a donation to AHS of \$523.00 to support our mission of preserving the history of Alcona County. Next year's race date is Saturday, August 19, 2023. Save the date and consider volunteering to help with this popular community event!

www.baytobeaconhalfmarathon.wordpress.com

ALCONA HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD MEMBERS

Kristin Benghauser	(989) 471-2088	k_benghauser@yahoo.com
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Veryl Davis	(989) 724-6999	veryl5007@gmail.com
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Bruce Welther	(989) 335-1417	weltherbruce2@gmail.com
Sue Welther	(989) 335-1417	suewelther@gmail.com
Nick Williams	(989) 727-4080	nswilliams11@charter.net

Please visit our website at www.alconahistoricalsociety.com

Dear Friends of Alcona Historical Society,

We are asking you once again to support Alcona Historical Society with your annual membership. Your past support and membership indicate that you share the Society's goals and objectives in preserving and protecting the historical resources in Alcona County. We truly appreciate your involvement, whether it is your membership or donations, your willingness to volunteer at one of the Society's historical sites, attending one of our events, or providing historical items or information. All of these activities allow the Alcona Historical Society to continue to grow.

We also encourage you to consider receiving your newsletter via email. This saves the Society quite a bit in printing and postage costs. If this is an option you would like to try, please give us your email address on the form below.

Please complete the membership form below and send it with your check to Alcona Historical Society, P. O. Box 174, Harrisville, MI 48740. If you have any questions regarding membership, please do not hesitate to contact me at (989) 471-2088 or by email – k_benghauser@yahoo.com.

Thank you so much for being a part of Alcona Historical Society and supporting the work we do.

Sincerely,

Kristin Benghauser, Membership

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone Number (_____) _____

Email
address _____

I do not have an email address. Please mail my newsletter. _____

TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP:

Individual - \$20 _____ Family - \$35 _____ Sponsor - \$55 _____

I would like to pay more than one year - _____

Please contact me so that I may learn more about volunteer opportunities _____

Kristin Benghauser, AHS Membership Chair, P.O. Box 174, Harrisville MI 48740

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Thank you.

Lastly, we are excited to provide the Art raffle again this year. This will be the third year and it has proven to be a successful fundraiser for us. Thanks to all who have contributed in the past. Look for your tickets in the mail in the next couple of weeks. The drawing will take place in February.

In the meantime, have a safe, healthy and Happy New Year.

Kristin Benghauser, President

Grants!

Alcona Historical Society is honored to be supported by various grants to help with the mission of promoting and preserving Alcona County's Historical Past.

- Michigan Museum Recovery Grant of \$7,500 from the Michigan Humanities Council. This grant helped us make up for lost revenues from the COVID closure, and was used for 2022 utility bills and staffing support. Funding for these grants has been provided by Michigan Humanities and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) as part of the American Rescue Plan (ARP).

- Community Foundation for NE Michigan awarded us \$1,500 for Family Fun Day on August 6, 2022. This money was used for program expenses, publicity, a portable E-Z up canopy, a reusable sandwich-board sign, cakes and refreshments, art supplies, signage and other expenses relating to this one-day event.

- Michigan Arts and Culture Council (MACC) awarded us \$2,800 for our "Cabin Fever Lecture Series," high-quality lectures by renowned Michigan historians to be presented January – May 2023.



Family Fun Day Recap



Family Fun Day was held on the grounds of Sturgeon Point Lighthouse on Saturday, August 6 for the first time since 2019. To start off the day, we celebrated the 40th year of AHS's Restoration of the Lighthouse with two large and delicious cakes (and not a crumb was left!). Other events throughout the day included tower climb, scavenger hunts, Petoskey stone hunt, stone skipping demo, watercolor art project and programs by PaleoJoe (fossils at Sturgeon Point), and Peg Ridgway of the AuSable Audubon Society (Piping Plover nests on Lake Huron shoreline). The Keeper's Quarters, Bailey School and the Gift Shop were open all day and visited by folks of all ages from all over the U.S. Thank you to all the volunteers, staff members and visitors for helping make Family Fun Day, well, FUN! Also thanks to Community Foundation for NE Michigan for providing grant funding to support this event. Mark your calendar for next year's Family Fun Day on Saturday, August 5, 2023.

History Hounds Series

We have good news from the Historical Society of Michigan. For years Alcona Historical Society has been a member of the Historical Society of Michigan. With the Covid pandemic they started to provide their History Hounds lecture series on line. You, as a member of the Alcona Historical Society, can have access to this resource for free. Here how it works:

- Step 1: Go to www.hsmichigan.org
 - Step 2: From the home page, click on programs
 - Step 3: Click on History Hounds lecture series - there is a list of programs
 - Step 4: Click on H. H. Registration – Member
 - Step 5: Click on 'A member of an organization member of HS Michigan
 - Step 6: Fill in registration information and submit
- An email with the details on how to join the remote access will be sent to you.

We're on Facebook!

Love it, hate it or just grudgingly accept it, AHS is on social media!

Our first foray into this medium is a Facebook page to give our organization a dynamic platform to keep our community up to date on AHS happenings. We are boldly going into this medium to highlight all things historical in our great county! Emphasis will be on videos and pictures of historical sites to make history come alive!

Any social media platform needs to be social to be successful. This is why we want your participation! "Share posts", make comments, send us private messages – we want to hear from the community! Do you have pictures of community holiday parties from years gone by? We would love to post them!

March is Women's History Month, do you have a woman or women from Alcona's past that were instrumental in shaping our present and future? Send us a PM (private message) so we can highlight them over a series of posts.

Social media at its best, brings static topics alive to a wide audience and can be the most democratic of platforms. AHS hopes to harness this potential to expand awareness of Alcona History.

All you have to do is like the page, share with friends and comment when something strikes a nerve! If you are unfamiliar with Facebook but interested in taking a look, you can follow these simple steps to check out our page.

1. Go to www.facebook.com
2. Type in "alcona historical society" in the search field and select it when it shows up below.
3. Click on the link that says "Following"

This is all you need to do!

Have a great Holiday Season!



It was brought to the Society's attention that Perley Silverthorn's grave in Mt. Joy Cemetery did not have a marker. For those who don't know, Perley was the first lighthouse keeper and first Life Saving Service captain at Sturgeon Point. Thanks to Tom Trevillian, Perley's great, great grandson, and Society member, Perley now has a headstone. Tom had the headstone with Perley's wife's information removed, Perley's info added, and the stone revitalized and replaced. It looks great. Thanks Tom for orchestrating this project.

Harrisville Train Depot Update

This summer the Alcona Historical Society created the Harrisville Depot (Sub)Committee to advance efforts to receive the gift of the Harrisville Train Depot from Lake State Railroad for restoration. This little historic gem, built in 1901 from locally sourced limestone, has spent two thirds of its life shuttered and abandoned. As a building of noted historical significance, not to mention eye catching architecture and loads of interior charm, it is well deserving of preservation. The Harrisville Depot Committee has been working to finalize the transfer of ownership and initialize steps leading to its future preservation. Currently the documents to prepare for the title transfer are in process and we are on track for the Historical Society to receive ownership by year's end.

Based on the deed restrictions set by Lake State Railway and discussion in committee and within the community, the current best use of the property is a combination community center and event venue with the potential for an artist in residence &/or room to let, if needed for a future revenue stream. Once renovations are complete, the property will need to earn enough revenue to sustain itself for future generations.

Under the guidance of the committee and with the help of the community, several short term goals have already been achieved. The roof has been repaired, the build-

ing cleared of debris, and a new survey was done by John Oliver and his crew from Northeastern Land Surveys. Thirty-six T posts have been donated for use as a temporary fencing option to delineate the RR RofW along the concrete promenade, per a deed requirement. A grant subcommittee has been formed which includes quite a resume of talent and experience and the gathering of information needed for grant preparation has begun. We've been working to engage with the community, build enthusiasm, and begin what is sure to be the arduous task of fundraising. Donations can be sent to: Alcona Historical Society, Harrisville Depot Fund, PO Box 313, Harrisville MI 48740

This effort is in its infancy and will only be brought to satisfactory completion with help and support garnered both in and around our community. Successful projects such as the Standish Depot Restoration show grassroots fundraising and widespread community outreach are necessary ingredients to kick off a successful endeavor. We encourage everyone not only to join our efforts by either signing in to our new website @ Harrisvilledepot.com or by joining our "Harrisville Train Depot" Facebook group, but by encouraging your friends, family, and neighbors to join us too! We need everyone on board to get this project on track .

Becky Schroeder

Co-Chair Harrisville Depot Committee

989/724-5676



Cabin Fever series returns

Cabin Fever programs are FREE programs presented throughout the winter & spring months highlighting NE Michigan History by renowned Michigan historians. AHS is in the process of finalizing the schedule, but here are the tentative dates:

Thursday, January 19, 6:00 p.m.: Ross Richardson, author and Shipwreck Hunter, presents “Michigan Mysteries,” stories of aircraft missing in the Michigan Region and features one from NE Michigan, at the Harrisville branch of the Alcona County Library.

Tuesday February 28, 1 p.m.: Thunder Bay Marine Sanctuary shipwreck program at Curtis Township Library in Glennie.

Thursday, March 16, 6:00 p.m.: Anna Marck presents her one-woman show, “Women of the Watch: Keepers of the Light” at the Harrisville branch of the Alcona County Library.

Tuesday, April 11, 6:00 p.m.: Al and Dave Eicher, “Michigan’s Lumbering Days and Camp Life,” location tba.

May 18, 6:00 p.m.: Ric Mixer, Shipwreck Expert and PBS Producer, will be our guest at the AHS Annual

Meeting at the Alcona Township Hall in Black River. Program to be determined (so many fascinating *programs to choose!*).

Check the webpage and FB for updates on our final schedule. All are welcome to attend these FREE Historical Programs. Light refreshments will be served.

“Cabin Fever” is supported by the Michigan Arts & Culture Council, administered by NORTHEAST MICHIGAN CENTER FOR FINE ARTS INC.



Anna Marck



The Alcona Reader

Stories and history of Alcona County written by those who lived it!

Available at Amazon.com

(ISBN 978-1726301725).

Stories by local authors R.E. Prescott, Doris Gauthier, Hazel Phetteplace, Annette Ludwig, Marie Schelley, Elrita Sterling, Charles Reynolds, Bill Kahn, Annie Anderson and many, many more.

Comments and Reviews:

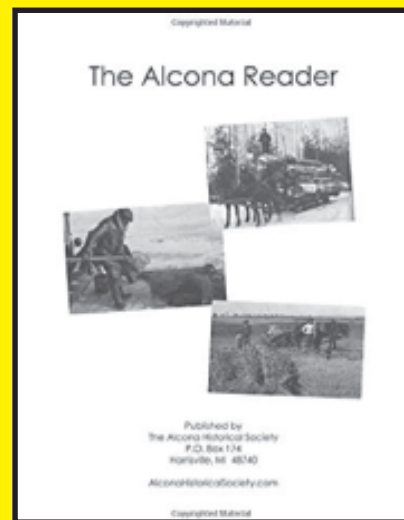
“I read it cover to cover in one sitting. Couldn’t put it down.”

“Every county would be lucky to have a book like this”

“Lots of laughter, and a few tears.....”

“Alcona history comes alive with these stories.”

“A snapshot of the hardships and joys of the early settlers.”



Fire at Killmaster

A Mill, Dam, Elevator and Bridge go up in Smoke

June 25, 1908

Reports came from Killmaster Saturday that the whole village was burning.

Later reports showed conditions to be not quite as bad as at first represent. Fire started in some way in or near the old mill, and driven by a high wind soon had the mill, the elevator and a small stable reduced to ashes. The fire continued its destructive work until the dam and the bridge across Pine river were also destroyed.

All of the buildings were vacant. The elevator, valuable chiefly for the lumber used in its construction, was the property of H. K. Gustin. The flying embers ignited the dwelling of John Rushman several times, and it was only by hard work that it was saved.

The destruction of the bridge makes crossing Pine River at this point with teams impossible, though the township authorities will undoubtedly begin work immediately on a new one.



Village of Killmaster

Address Service Requested

Harrisville, MI 47840

P.O. Box 174

Alcona Historical Society

**Stamp
Here**