

Celebrating the history of the Lake Erie Islands Historical Society

PIB Centennial Celebration, 1975-77 gave birth to LEIHS



The Lake Erie Islands Historical Society (LEIHS) stands as a testament to the dedication of island residents who sought to preserve and share the rich history of the Lake Erie Islands. Originally founded in 1975 as the Put-in-Bay Centennial Committee, the organization was renamed in 1985 when a passionate group of locals came together with a vision: to create a museum that would celebrate and safeguard the unique stories of the islands. This group gathered to appoint a President, Secretary and Treasurer and three advisors.

First Board of Trustees Elected by Membership

On September 27, 1986, LEIHS held its first Membership Meeting under the 501c3 non-profit's bylaws. At that well attended meeting, members elected Russ Ervin as President, Ann Heidenreich, Vice President, Ed Islay, Secretary, and Helen Klatt, Treasurer. Board members elected were Mary Ann McCann, Mary Sutphin, Jeff Koehler, Dan Howley, Scotti Hammerberg, Skip Duggan and Mike Span.

The Birth of the Museum

Their collective dream became reality in 1987, when the Society opened its first museum in the historic Bottling Works building, located in downtown Put-in-Bay behind the police department and adjacent to the Town Hall. This location, steeped in local history, provided the perfect setting for the museum's mission to educate both the community and visitors about the islands' past. The museum quickly became a hub for learning, research, and community events, offering engaging exhibits on topics ranging from maritime history and the War of 1812 to local industries and daily island life.

A Milestone Anniversary

In 2026, LEIHS will proudly celebrate the 40th anniversary of the first Membership Meeting to elect a full Board of Trustees on September 27, 1986. To mark this significant milestone, a special birthday party will be held on that date in 2026. We're inviting museum members, volunteers, and islanders to join in commemorating four decades of historical preservation and community engagement.

Expanding Our Legacy

Over the years, the Society has grown, opening a new 6,000-square-foot main building in 1998. Over the years it has expanded its offerings to include a research library, archives, and a variety of programs for all ages. Today, the museum is open daily during the summer and on weekends in the spring and fall, welcoming school groups, history enthusiasts, and curious tourists alike.

Modernizing Our Archives

Our archivist is currently focused on inventorying the Museum Archive and entering artifacts and documents into the museum's archive database, Past Perfect. This ongoing project ensures that the treasures of island history are meticulously cataloged and preserved for future generations. By digitizing our collections, we are making it easier to share these stories through new exhibits, research opportunities, and educational programs.

More Events, Programs, and Services

LEIHS has renewed its commitment to providing more events and programs for members and visitors, including seasonal lectures, tours, children's activities, and special membership events that showcase items rarely seen from our archives. Our new quarterly membership newsletter keeps the community informed about upcoming events, recent acquisitions, and ongoing projects, fostering a sense of connection and shared purpose among our supporters. *Cont. on Page 7*



Bob Dodge signs a copy of his book "Isolated Splendor" at the museum opening in 1987.

Memorial Walk 1998.