

Celebrating the history of the Lake Erie Islands Historical Society

PIB Centennial Celebration, 1975-77 gave birth to LEIHS



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*

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.



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



Memorial Walk 1998.

Protecting Museum Artifacts and Ephemera Archival Acquisitions

Have some cool Island Memorabilia?

If you are thinking about donating it to the Archives, one thing to consider is whether it would be better shared in the place of its origin, if you can safeguard its condition in an environment with protection from excessive heat, moisture, and bugs.

But if you are interested in seeing if it would be an important addition to our museum archives, there is a process for acceptance. Please contact Amy Huston to set up a meeting either by phone or in person. She will take it to the Archives Committee which will survey our existing collection to see if we have duplicates.

The committee will consider whether your piece fits into the museum's mission statement and whether it could be included in an existing permanent exhibit, a visiting exhibit, or simply stored out of the view of the public in the archives.

If the committee's answer is yes, then you could choose to donate it to the archives, or to loan it permanently or temporarily. It will be entered into our PastPerfect database of archival items.

If the committee's answer is "not at this time" you could ask for suggestions for other museums whose collections are more appropriate to your item.

Our museum receives no governmental funding which means it operates financially through memberships, fundraisers, volunteer hours, and donations. We welcome donations to our historical raffles and auctions.

We even happily accept stuff that didn't sell at your yard sale at our Heritage Resale Shop.

Most Board members have a special Museum mission. I am working in the Archives to update our Past Perfect archives index, catalog new acquisitions, and store artifacts correctly. I also help create exhibits and public programs. I can assist the public in accessing specific historical information.

– Amy Huston

Preserving the Past: The Importance of Curating, Archiving, and Maintaining a Historical Collection

A historical society's mission depends on safeguarding the physical and intellectual legacy of its community. Curating, archiving, and maintaining a database of artifacts and documents are essential to that purpose.

Each artifact, photograph, and record holds an irreplaceable story, and without proper preservation, these stories risk being lost to time.

Effective curation ensures that items are properly identified, interpreted, and displayed in ways that connect the public with history.

Archiving protects fragile documents and images through professional handling, controlled environments, and digitization.

Maintaining a searchable database provides long-term accessibility for researchers, educators, and the community by organizing key details—such as provenance, condition, and historical context—in a structured, retrievable way.

The process at LEIHS is to bring in your item for review. Some items may not be related to our mission, or we may have duplicates.

If accepted, you'll complete a form that includes your personal info and the provenance of the artifact.

You'll be given options on whether the donation is permanent or on loan. It will be assigned a distinct number, photographed and entered into the Archive Database.

Future newsletters will feature items from the Museum Archive. Historical images shown are from the private collection of board member Maggie Beckford.



DONATIONS IN MEMORY OF

JEFF BYKOWSKI
Don & Mary Anne Fritz

JEFF BYKOWSKI
Matt Parker

JEFF BYKOWSKI
Linda Mansell

Help LEIHS secure your Museum Archive

Archivist Amy Huston will need help inventorying the current archive and then tackling a backlog of items waiting to be entered into the database.

Anyone interested in assisting with this ongoing project is encouraged to volunteer.