

## ***Come for the View -- Stay for the Stories***

Exit 223 on Route 2 in Lake County, Ohio, offers a Heritage Tourism Hidden Gem in nearby Fairport Harbor. Founded in 1812 as Grandon, renamed Fairport in 1836 and becoming Fairport Harbor in 1959, this small village of 3000 residents has been the home of the county's most iconic piece of maritime history - an 1825 lighthouse.

Since 1945, volunteers have not only preserved it but have maintained a museum whose collection rivals that of much bigger for-profit organizations. A well-maintained beach just below the lighthouse hill is an added bonus. You may come to the lighthouse for its tower views, but you will definitely stay for its local history stories. LaSalle's Expedition, the Underground Railroad, the Mormon Migration and Lake Erie maritime lore await you.



Fairport or Grandon in 1825 had an estimated population of 300. Good land suitable for farming was not the only draw that interested early pioneers in settling in future Lake County. The Grand River and its potential harbor, as well as new-found access to Lake Erie via the Erie Canal, made development a priority. Nearby Painesville Township, with a population of nearly 1,500 people, made this area second to nearby Madison in size but far exceeded Cleveland's population count of 1,076.

Water Street was Fairport's main thoroughfare. Four warehouses and four taverns were located there. A cemetery located on First Street was washed away by a tidal wave in 1859. Local settlers John Walworth (*New Market-Grandon*) and Samuel Huntington (*Cleveland*) traded homes and acreage that resulted in an 1825 proposal for a local lighthouse to be built. This lighthouse was to be constructed of stone or brick, to include a dwelling house two stories high and have a cellar. Specific dimensions aside, by April the project was underway; and Jonathon Goldsmith and partner Joshua Clapp were the architects chosen. Goldsmith had hoped to become the lighthouse's first keeper, but that was not to be. Goldsmith would become one of the Western Reserve's most celebrated builders. His work included some estates on Millionaire's Row during Cleveland's Gilded Age. Goldsmith even resided in Lake County and is interred in Blish Cemetery on Mentor Avenue, once part of his estate.

The story of Lake County's greatest natural resource - Lake Erie - and the maritime history of the lakes as well as the histories of 16 keepers now reside in the museum in the original 1871 dwelling. The lighthouse that shone for a hundred years awaits you!

Fairport Marine Museum & Lighthouse is open on weekends & Wednesdays from Memorial Day thru late September from 1-6pm. Wednesday afternoons offer a quiet setting and leisurely pace to acquaint yourself with a treasure trove of artifacts and docent stories. Special holiday/weekend hours, as well as tours by appointment, are also part of the regular season's public hours. Monthly special events dot the Lighthouse calendar thru December 7th. Come and visit this 2019 season; 5000-7000 visitors annually can't be wrong.

[www.fairportharborlighthouse.org](http://www.fairportharborlighthouse.org) Call 440-354-4825 Source- Fairport Harbor, Ohio 1976

Submitted by Dan Maxson - Local Lore by Max (2010-2016), The News-Herald Community Media Lab - Volunteer Trustee / Curator - FHHS / Fairport Harbor Lighthouse & Marine Museum - Volunteer Curator / Docent - Old Stone School, Concord Township