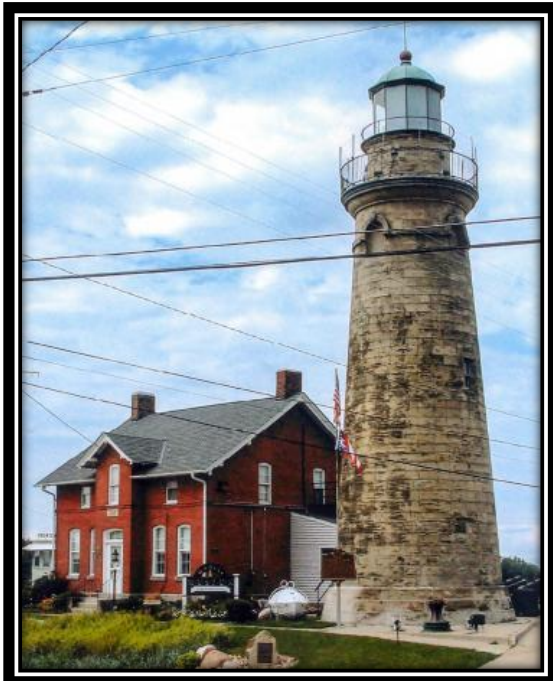


## ***A Beacon of Safety Since 1925: Tour Fairport Harbor's West Breakwater Light***

From 1825-1925, the light that shone for 100 years was on the mouth of the east bank of the Grand River and located in what is today the Village of Fairport Harbor. Little known to most lighthouse enthusiasts is the fact that all lighthouses had money allocated for their eventual demise and demolition. The Grand River light in Fairport Harbor, despite its Mormon migration history, Underground Railroad connection, and port / commercial status, neared its end around the early 1900s. Decommissioned in June 1925, a new history was unfolding. Happily, economic



conditions, World War I and the due diligence of many Fairporters saved the original iconic heritage site from destruction and allowed the lighthouse & maritime museum to become a reality by early 1945. However, the question of navigational aids and Lake Erie remained.

Commissioned by Congress to replace the Fairport Lighthouse, \$42,000 was allocated for its replacement. Built in Buffalo, New York, it was transported 147 miles by the steamship *Wotan* in 1921 to its



present site; and then situated on a west breakwater stone wall started in 1907.

The iron frame was made of steel studding, floor beams, rafters, side and roof plating, cast-iron sills, lintels and cornices. Once in place, it took another four seasons to complete the interior masonry, lantern room and lens fabrication.

June 9, 1925 marked the first illumination of the new Fairport Harbor West Breakwater Lighthouse.

Principal lighthouse keepers were Daniel Babcock (1925-1926), Frank LaRose (1927-1937) and John Brophy (1937-1941?). The United States Lighthouse Society control gave way to the U.S.Coast



Guard maintenance of lighthouses in 1939; and Station Fairport became stewards of the navigational aids on this corner of Lake Erie.

Uninhabited after 1948, this classic 4-square style working structure is similar to its sister structures, the Ashtabula and Lorain lighthouses, which also were partially prefabricated arrivals from Buffalo (1904 and 1917 respectively). The lighthouse is still an active navigational aid maintained by the Coast Guard, but in 2000 added another interesting fact to its maritime history. The National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act of 2000 provided for the disposal of federally owned light stations. The Fairport Harbor West Breakwater Light was sold via the Government Surplus Administration auctions twice, once to a local businessman in 2009 and the next to a

Texan. Transfer issues resulted and on the third try in 2011 a local entrepreneur from Reston, Virginia, was able to save the site. While still an active aid-to-navigation, she is using the 42' two-



story main dwelling as a vacation retreat and summer home. Her dedication to preservation and maritime history has resulted in extensive renovations in compliance with the U.S. Secretary of the Interior and State of Ohio standards. Fully rewired, a working kitchen, functional bathroom and water services have been added. The owner hosts an open house each June of the lighthouse's birthday & anniversary.

**2022 OPEN HOUSE INFORMATION: The date is Sat., June 11, from noon - 4pm. Public visitors welcome, walk out on dunes /**

wall from Headlands State Park to her site, a bit challenging in some spots, good walking shoes are needed.

Visitors able to walk the 1/2-mile path from Headlands State Beach Park through the sand dunes, and traverse a portion of the breakwater wall, can visit the interior.

Enthusiasts may also visit: [www.fairportharborwestlighthouse.com](http://www.fairportharborwestlighthouse.com) and join the followers of the lighthouse and maritime lore.

Photos are from interior of lighthouse, raccoons got in over the winter and cause some mischief.



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