

## New book chronicles history of Ottawa County

11/29/2016 Tom Jackson, Sandusky Register

PORT CLINTON — During its history, Ottawa County has been home to a criminal so notorious he was known as "Public Enemy Number One." The county was the site of Ohio's first battle during the War of 1812. "Lucky Lindy," Charles Lindbergh, made an unscheduled stop here while trying to fly to Detroit. Ottawa County was a place to smuggle booze during Prohibition. A house of ill repute did business in the county for decades.

That might sound like enough history to fill a book. The members of the Ottawa County Historical Society thought so. The society has published "History of Ottawa County: The First 175 Years," by Patrick Lawrence O'Keeffe. O'Keeffe, 67, a member of the board of the historical society, says the book is his first, although he's coming out with a novel, "Cold Air Return," which will be published by Bottom Dog Press in Huron in early 2017. The author says that once he agreed to tackle the job, he was given the freedom to pursue the project as he saw fit. He worked for a year and a half on the book, almost full time.

"History of Ottawa County" is lavishly illustrated with about 350 photos, and many of the photos come with a story. About 40 percent of the photos came from the society's Ottawa County Museum, but images also emerged from farmhouse attics, small museums and local libraries.



Civil War financier Jay Cooke of Sandusky, with his family on Gibraltar Island in 1899. The island is now the home of Stone Lab.



Charles Lindbergh gets help putting fuel in his airplane after making an unscheduled landing in Ottawa County.

One tip came from the folks at the Carroll Township Museum, who told a surprised O'Keeffe that after crossing the Atlantic safely in 1927, Lindbergh ran out of gas flying westward in 1928 and landed in Ottawa County, near where the Davis-Besse nuclear plant now stands. "They said, 'We have the picture when Lindbergh landed here.' I said, 'What?',"

O'Keeffe said. The photo made it into the book.



There's also a photo of Alvin Karpis, a member of the notorious Ma Barker gang, who robbed a train in Ohio in 1935. Karpis then hid out in Port Clinton, in the garage of local rumrunner John Zetzer, who smuggled booze into the U.S. in an airplane.

John Zetzer stands next to his airplane, useful for carrying booze over Lake Erie during Prohibition.

Zetzer, hired to fly Karpis to Arkansas, got the job done, but not until running out of gas twice along the way and having to subject his passenger to two forced landings.

But if criminals played a role in Ottawa County's history, so did people on the right side of the law. "The Highway Patrol started in Ottawa County in Camp Perry," O'Keeffe said. "That was their first training camp."

O'Keeffe, a Pennsylvania native, studied for the priesthood for five years at Notre Dame but eventually pursued careers in industrial fabrication and writing. He and his wife, Karen, have five children and eight grandchildren. O'Keeffe has been a Port Clinton resident since 1995, when he moved from Akron to take a job as manufacturing manager at Sandusky Cabinets, formerly located in downtown Sandusky.

"History of Ottawa County: The First 175 Years," by Patrick Lawrence O'Keeffe. \$49.95 for deluxe hardcover with hundreds of photos.

WHERE TO BUY: Green's Pharmacy, Unique Antique, Mary's Blossom Shoppe, Northern Exposure Gallery and the Ottawa County Community Foundation, all in Port Clinton; Christi's Just for Ewe, Marblehead; also, Mantiques and Pills N' Packages Pharmacy, both in Elmore.