

CATAWBA ISLAND TWP.

New history museum in Ottawa Co. opens June 16

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Provided photo/CATAWBA ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY



The new Catawba Museum at Union Chapel will open with an exhibit on ice harvesting.

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Ottawa County's newest history museum is about to open its doors. The Catawba Museum at Union Chapel, 5258 E. Porter St., Port Clinton, will open on June 16. Although it has a Port Clinton address, it's actually in Catawba Island, near the Miller Ferry. The new museum will open with an exhibit on the ice harvesting industry that flourished in the area years ago. Ice harvesting for iceboxes was a big industry until the development of refrigerators.

Ice harvesting was a big industry in Sandusky, so the new exhibit, "A Cool Way to spend a Hot Day," will help Sandusky residents learn about their history, said Craig Koerpel, president of the Catawba Island Historical Society. "The ice harvesting industry was really big in Sandusky Bay," Koerpel said. "Several of the pictures are of ice harvesting that took place in Sandusky Bay." Several members of the historical society worked together on the exhibit. Richard Thomas, a dentist who is also on the board, was in charge of putting the exhibit together.

Dennis Kennedy of Johnson's Island, who used to design museum exhibits, suggested putting in freestanding kiosks. He suggested a design, and Vince Lathrop of Catawba Island built them, Koerpel said. Thomas and Koerpel wrote the words that appear on the exhibits. "We borrowed a lot of stuff from the Hayes Presidential Library in Fremont," Koerpel said.

The new museum is in an old church that dates back to 1888. It's now owned by Catawba Island, but it had been empty since the early 1980s. The township restored the building and leased it to the historical society. The new museum will give history buffs another reason to linger in the area, said Larry Fletcher, executive director of Lake Erie Shores and Islands. "There's certainly a large segment of the people who visit our region who are interested in history," Fletcher said. The new museum already is listed on the Lake Erie Shores and Islands website, Fletcher said. The new museum will open at 10 a.m. June 16. Admission is free. Normal daily hours will be 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The museum will be open every day until June 21, then will follow a schedule of being open on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday and on the second and fourth Saturdays of the month, until closing Oct. 27.

Museum curator Connie Batterton is looking for volunteers to help keep the museum open. To volunteer, call 419-967-5363. The society also can be reached at its website, catawbaislandhistoricalsociety.com and on Facebook.