

New history museum planned on Catawba Island

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The historic old Union Chapel in Port Clinton is the Catawba Island Historical Society's new museum location. The new museum is slated to open in 2018. - Register photo/ERIN McLAUGHLIN

CATAWBA ISLAND TWP. — A new history museum is landing in Catawba Island. The Catawba Island Historical Society's new museum has a location, historic old Union Chapel, 5258 East Porter St., Port Clinton. And it has a new curator, Connie Batterton, who has decades of experience dealing with antiquities.

The new museum could open as soon as spring 2018, according to Craig Koerpel, the historical society's board president.



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The museum will be operated by the historical society and will be housed in a church that dates back to 1888. The building is being restored with the assistance of Catawba Island Township.

Koerpel, who is retired, explained that local history buffs got together about a year ago, when Don Rhodes decided it was time to close the Ottawa City General Store, which has many old items. "A group of us realized we were going to lose a very big piece of Catawba history if we didn't do something about it," he said.

Koerpel and other history buffs put together their group; applied for and obtained nonprofit status; and began working with Catawba Island Township trustees to take over the lease of 3,000-square-foot Union Chapel, which had long been empty. "The building is in remarkable condition for being a century-old building," Koerpel said. "Work has already begun on the renovations. Most of the outside work is already done." That work including upgrading water and gas lines, improving parking and doing concrete work.



The inside of the historic Union Chapel receives fresh coats of paint on Thursday, Sept. 14, 2017, in Port Clinton. Township maintenance workers are dealing with the inside of the building. "They are going to refinish the original wooden floor that was beneath it," he said. "Most of the cost of doing the renovation of the building and the operating cost will be picked up by Catawba Island Township. They look at it as if it were a park. It's a community asset."

Next month, the historical society will host a meeting to begin selling memberships in the society and to introduce Batterton as the curator. She's already well-known locally and operated the former PC Antiques in Marblehead for years. "I gave up management of the store, now named Marblehead Mercantile, after 10 years to simply rent space there," Batterton said. "It was part of a plan my husband and I put together for me to phase out of fulltime work so we could spend our winters in Florida," she said. "Now I will stop my storefront activity, head south from November through April, and oversee the Catawba Island Historical Society's Union Chapel Museum during its planned May through October operating season." Batterton said she has lived in Catawba Island full time for 18 years, and long been interested in local history.

Memberships for people willing to support the Catawba Island Historical Society will start at \$25 a year at the "historian" level, \$100 for a "curator" and a \$1,000 lifetime membership for Council of Nabagon members. Other opportunities to donate also will be offered. Donations are tax deductible.

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Want to go?

What: Meeting of the Catawba Island Historical Society

Where: Catawba Island Township Community Hall, 4822 E. Cemetery Road, Port Clinton.

When: 6:30 p.m. Oct. 2.

Who: Hear Brian Redmond, curator of the Cleveland Natural History Museum, speak about Indians in the area's early days, meet new museum curator Connie Batterton and learn how to join the historical society.



Connie Batterton holds one of the early Catawba Island maps to be displayed at the new Union Chapel museum.