# BAILEYS HARBOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**January 2026**

### 2026 BOARD OF DIRECTORS & OFFICERS

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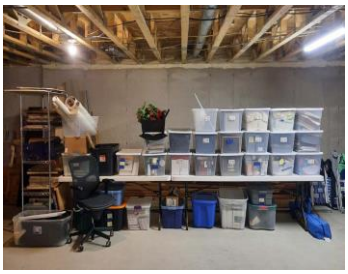


## BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT

The Board reviewed its primary initiatives for 2025, which included re-launching the Society's social media presence on Facebook, designing and adopting a new organizational logo, and acquiring an electronic collection management system, CatalogIt. The Society also committed to participating in the Destination Door County Heritage Trail and added two new events to the summer program schedule. These events included participation in the History Week kick-off celebration, sponsored by the Heritage Alliance of Door County, and a May open house at the Toft House.

During the year, the Society worked with community partners to find permanent homes for the stored panels of the Nelson Building mural. The Nelson family accepted the portion of the mural depicting their family and business. Additional panels that featured the range lights, Emma Toft, Cana Island Lighthouse, and the Hickey fishing boat were accepted by The Ridges Sanctuary and the Door County Maritime Museum. We look forward to seeing these portions displayed publicly in the future.

The preliminary financial report for 2025 shows the Historical Society in a strong position. Revenue totaled $6,716, consisting of membership fees, donations and memorials to LeAnn Despotes. Expenses for the year were $3,842. As of December 31, 2025, the Society's account balances totaled $31,892, of which $2,275 is restricted for future improvements to the Toft House when the Town elects to commence with that work.

## A Grateful Start to the New Year

We begin the year by acknowledging a somewhat unusual, but tremendously valuable donation made to the Historical Society by members Joanne and Wayne Scaggs. When the Town of Baileys Harbor notified the Society that our collection needed to be moved out of the Town Hall storage space on very short notice, the Scaggs immediately came to our aid. They generously offered space in the basement of their new home to house the entire collection.

Filing cabinets and a storage cabinet were relocated to the Toft House with assistance from the Town Maintenance staff. BHHS Board members who organized and moved the many totes of materials included Katherine Jones, Julie Sausen, Tom and Andi Esau, along with member Karen Berndt. Their teamwork ensured that the transition happened smoothly and quickly.

We also extend our sincere thanks to Gil Carlson for a very generous financial contribution at the end of the year. His donation will support the monthly fee for our newly acquired online cataloging software, which we have begun using to document the many items in our collection.

## REMEMBERING GRANDMA ALMA

*By Paul Karweik*

Paul Kraweik contacted the Baileys Harbor Historical Society to see if he could learn the name of the general store where his Grandma Alma may have seen the coveted Christmas sled described in this story. With a clue that the store name started with a "B" and the relative dates, we determined that it was likely the Brann Brothers store where the sled was displayed. Thanks to Paul for sharing this story of his grandmother with the Historical Society for publication.

Alma A. (Wilke) Karweik was born January 23, 1901, the youngest in a family of 7 children. Her parents, Frederic Wilke and Bertha Augusta (Schultz) Wilke, lived with their children around Mud Lake, just northwest of Bailey's Harbor proper, in a community of German and Norwegian families where German language was spoken more than American English.

Although, as a child I remember seeing her Baileys Harbor home around Mud Lake, it was uninhabited. The house was more like a one room building with newspaper insulation on the walls and that was dilapidating. Grandma Alma always described her life in Baileys Harbor as the TV show "Little House on the Prairie." She loved to watch that show, no doubt it brought back memories. Once attending Bailey Harbor school, Alma soon picked-up reading and writing in English. She did quite well as her early grammar school reports indicated. Alma took part in the weekly horse drawn wagon trips into Baileys Harbor where English was spoken or at least attempted while negotiating with retail store cashiers. At times, either my Grandma Alma or a sibling would help their father in translating from German to English in order make a business deal in town.

Alma enjoyed going to school seeing other children and learning. She especially enjoyed the warmth in winter when the coal stove heated the building, a feeling of comfort not always available at her home. Alma's home chores included preparing and serving dinner with her mother. Alma became an outstanding baker and cook in later life. She was able to drain lard off all waterfowl and once hardened it for use in cooking in place of butter or margarine.

Alma developed strong affection for her parents, but her mother was the task enforcer while her father was warmer and more lighthearted in nature. Alma adored her father. A few weeks before Christmas when Alma was 5 years old and out with her father she saw a beautiful sled in the front window of a Baileys Harbor general store. She wanted that sled but knew her family could not afford that unrealistic purchase. However, on Christmas day Santa had left a sled for Alma. The sled was not the same shiny red and sleek one as in the store window, but it was a handmade sled with her name engraved in the steering handle upfront and that was enough for Alma. She and a few of her siblings took turns on the sled. As the snow became packed from the previous sled-runs taken, Alma's next sled run was exciting because of increased speed and the added attraction of going the furthest on the sled, but at the cost of almost traveling into Mud Lake. (The photo at the left is a stock photo, not one of the actual sled described above.)

As Alma's older siblings moved out and on their own, her father decided (or had no choice) to move for a change and better opportunity to Sturgeon Bay. Anna was just 10 years old. Her father could only find part-time, odd jobs in Sturgeon Bay such as a dock watchman. Her parents both died within a few years of moving to Sturgeon Bay. Her mother in 1914 and then her father in 1917. Both are buried in the Bailey's Harbor cemetery, with the Americanized spelling for their last name, Wilkey, on their headstone.

After the death of her father, Alma followed her older sister Alvina and brother-in law, George Levanger (also from Baileys Harbor and a lifeguard turned Navy sailor) to Milwaukee. Alma married in Milwaukee and resided with her own family for the remainder of her life (1981).Through the years until mid-1970s, Alma would go back to Sturgeon Bay and Baileys Harbor for vacation, visit friends, and see her niece, Sadie Ahrens, who operated a small general store on 3rd and Main, Sturgeon Bay.

## RECOGNIZING BAILEYS HARBOR'S IRISH HERITAGE

The Baileys Harbor Historical Society remains committed to organizing and mounting displays that highlight the rich history of our community at both the Town Hall and the Toft House throughout the year. We concluded our summer program schedule with a presentation by Laurie Collins on the Irish in Baileys Harbor. Laurie shared her extensive research on the Collins family. Continuing that theme, our holiday display honored the customs brought by the Irish settlers who helped shape our town.

*Nollaig Shona Duit*, "A Happy Christmas to You," was a familiar greeting that could be heard from December 8, the Catholic Feast of the Immaculate Conception, through January 6, known as Little Christmas or Women's Christmas. Traditionally, this final day of celebration was one when men took over the household chores in appreciation of the women in their families.

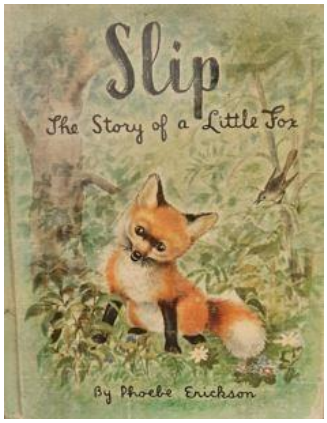
Our Historical Society tree, displayed in the Town Hall, featured traditional Irish ornaments accompanied by explanations of their meanings. Celtic knots, with no beginning or end, symbolize eternal love, family unity, and the bond between mother and child. Wrens are linked to St. Stephen, who, according to legend, was betrayed by the small bird. The Celtic cross, combining a cross with a circle or halo, reflects the blending of pagan and Christian traditions. Holly, abundant during the winter season, represents Christ's crown of thorns and was traditionally burned shortly after the New Year. A typical Irish Christmas dinner might have included boiled, spiced roast beef, roast goose, and ham, followed by festive desserts such as a Yule log, sherry trifle, mince pie, and tins of biscuits.

The Historical Society once again partnered with the Baileys Harbor Community Association to offer holiday craft activities for families during the Harbor Holiday celebration on December 6. It was a joy to participate in bringing the community together in the spirit of the season.

## CELEBRATING THE WORK OF PHOEBE ERICKSON

The Bauldry family has generously shared its collection of early editions of books written and illustrated by Baileys Harbor native Phoebe Erickson. Born in 1907 as the twelfth of thirteen children, Phoebe grew up in North Bay, where her daily life was surrounded by the natural world, a setting that deeply influenced her artistic style. She studied at the Art Institute of Chicago from 1931 to 1933 and later continued her education at Columbia University in New York.

Phoebe's illustration career began during her student years in Chicago, when her design for a set of playing cards caught the attention of a publisher at Children's Press. Her first book, Slip, the Story of a Little Fox, was published in 1948. She went on to write and illustrate more than thirteen books of her own and became a sought-after illustrator for other children's authors. Although she married Arthur Blair, she chose to use her maiden name professionally throughout her career.




Visitors are encouraged to stop by the Town Hall to view this remarkable collection of Bauldry family books, including a first edition of Slip, the Story of a Little Fox. Following the exhibit, the Bauldry's plan is to donate the collection to the Baileys Harbor Public Library. The library already preserves a treasured assortment of Erickson's letters, autographed books, and original artwork gifted over the course of her long and accomplished career.

## HISTORICAL SOCIETY ADOPTS NEW LOGO

The Baileys Harbor Historical Society is pleased to announce the adoption of its new logo. Last year, the Board identified the need for a visual identity that would reflect our community's rich history and strengthen the organization's visibility. Board members brainstormed concepts inspired by Baileys Harbor's maritime and lighthouse heritage, along with the natural "quiet-side" environment that supported the area's earliest settlers.

These ideas were shared with professional graphic designer Kelsey Fox, owner of Local Marketing, LLC, who skillfully transformed them into the logo pictured at left.

In the months ahead, the new logo will appear on the Baileys Harbor Community Association membership page, on our website and Facebook page, and throughout our letterhead and event promotions.

**We thank the Town of Baileys Harbor Board and Staff for their support of the Historical Society.**

## Contact or Visit Us

**Baileys Harbor Historical Society**
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info@baileysharborhistory.org
The Toft House – May – October
920-893-2366
8061 Hwy 57
Town Hall Lobby Displays
2392 County Road F

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**Recipient Name**
Street Address
City, ST  ZIP Code