Sailing the Great Lakes is often lonely and sometimes dangerous. Darkness, weather conditions, or human error can create situations that place ships and their crews in great peril. More than 4,000 vessels have been wrecked on the lakes, while countless others have experienced very close calls. In response to this human tragedy and financial loss, more lighthouses were constructed along Michigan’s 3,200 miles of coastline than in any other state. These lights are monuments to the early nineteenth century, most lights marked harbor entrances, with a few additional lights established to indicate critical points of navigation. Comparatively few lights were built in Michigan prior to the Civil War. The value of these lights was diminished because the reflectors used to enhance the lights tended to tarnish quickly. This resulted in a dimmer light and many complaints from sailors.

**Spring**

The lighthouses of Michigan have gone through many seasons. During their spring in society’s efforts to speed waterborne commerce and protect lives at sea. Despite their imposing presence, lighthouses were first and foremost navigational tools, no different from a compass.

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originally maintained by the United States government. The process of deciding where to place lighthouses was influenced by politics. Each lighthouse was constructed as a result of an act of Congress.

The decision to build a lighthouse on St. Helena Island, in the straits of Mackinac, is an example of this process. In 1867 the Lighthouse Board, the federal agency then responsible for navigational aids, submitted a recommendation to Congress to build a light:

"This island [St. Helena] affords an excellent anchorage during westerly and southwesterly gales. It is nothing unusual to see a fleet of fifty sail at one time at anchor under the island. It is low, and the main land to the north of it being high, the island when approached from the southward, can be seen but a short distance. A light here would be of much service."

Several years often passed between the first proposal to Congress for a new lighthouse and the passage of a bill authorizing construction of the light. As time passed various interested parties, including the state government, often expressed themselves regarding the need for a particular light. Events, particularly maritime disasters, also influenced the decision. In the case of St. Helena Island, Congress did not appropriate funds to build the light until June 1872. The sinking of the ship Matelén near the island the previous year might have helped persuade Congress of the need for this light.

**Summer**

The golden summer of Michigan's lighthouses occurred between 1870 and 1925. Improved technology, particularly the development of the Fresnel lens, greatly increased the distance from which a light could be seen. Constantly improving engineering skills allowed lights to be built in remote locations, often miles from shore. At the beginning of the twentieth century, a few Great Lakes' lighthouse projects, such as the White Shoal light, received national publicity for the engineering challenges that were overcome in their construction. In this period more than one hundred lights were maintained by crews who served throughout the navigation season. The era of the keepers is the period that is frequently revisited today and seen through a nostalgic glow. It was a time when steadfast keepers, along with their families, are remembered for having served on remote lights. Most of the stories about the ingenuity, sacrifice, and heroism needed to keep the lights lit come from this period.

Lighthouse keepers were originally political appointees. In 1852 rules and regulations were created that established basic qualifications for lighthouse keepers and, more specifically, outlined the duties lighthouse keepers were expected to perform. By the 1870s those wishing to become keepers were required to demonstrate several characteristics, including:

- Literacy
- The ability to keep simple financial accounts
- The strength and skill to pull and sail a boat
Sufficient mechanical aptitude to maintain the equipment and do minor repairs

In addition a three-month probationary period was established, allowing inspectors to weed out inappropriate individuals.

In 1896 lighthouse keepers were made part of the United States Civil Service. Rules for keepers continued to be important because they created the administrative structure that held together one of the federal government’s most decentralized agencies. These rules also served as the basis for periodic inspections, the results of which partially determined a keeper’s future assignments and pay rate.

Lighthouse keepers originally supplied their own tools and were even responsible for purchasing the fuel used to light the lamp. Over time, however, the government took responsibility for supplying virtually everything that was used in the lighthouse. The photo on page 2 shows several examples of tools supplied to lighthouse keepers in the late-nineteenth century.

- The carrying case that looks like a picnic basket held a “wicking trimming kit” that was used to trim the wick of a fuel-burning lamp. This procedure had to be done at least once each evening.
- Rouge powder was a mild abrasive used for polishing lights employed during the first half of the nineteenth century.
- The oil can held a light lubricating oil that was used

The first regulation cap was described as follows:

“The cap will be made of dark blue cloth, with a cloth-covered visor held by yellow-metal regulation buttons. A yellow metal light-house badge will be worn in the middle of the front of the cap.”

The cap exhibited in this photo is from a somewhat later time.

Tall Tales

To while away the long days at remote lighthouses, keepers often told stories. These tales frequently focused on the eccentricities of their colleagues or the peculiarities of their lights. A story keepers sometimes told was the tale of John Malone. A young, single Irishman, Malone helped construct a new light on Isle Royale (Menagerie Island). In 1875, when construction was completed, he asked to be hired as the new light’s assistant keeper. The district inspector, however, expressed a preference for a married man. Knowing what he needed to do, Malone promptly found a bride and gained the appointment. He served as the light’s assistant keeper from 1875 until 1878, when he was named keeper. He held that position until 1893.

In gratitude for his good fortune, Malone named his first
child after the inspector who had hired him. Malone, the storyteller continued, apparently found this a practice worth continuing. He named his eleven subsequent children, all born at the Isle Royale lighthouse, after the then sitting district inspector. Malone was fortunate, the storyteller often added, in that the year his wife bore twins there were two inspectors.

Malone’s post was a difficult one. Storytellers frequently recounted the unseasonably cold year of 1884. The ice was so reluctant to leave Isle Royale that Malone’s family could not safely reach the light until late July. On October 28, Malone recorded that the island “looked like an iceberg.” By November 10 Malone’s log was beginning to sound desperate:

“It is almost impossible for us to stay here much longer for we have to cut ice from the way every day or we could not launch our boat, the only hope we have of getting off for winter quarters.”

Malone was normally required to stay on the light until November 20, returning to Houghton for the winter. The winter of ’84, however, began so fiercely, storytellers recounted, that on November 16 Malone and his family seized the opportunity to escape. They could not reach Houghton, but they managed to find their way through less icebound water to Duluth.

Perhaps the most repeated stories were those about hauntings. The now-abandoned Waugoshance light, just west of the straits of Mackinac, was one lighthouse that inspired many ghost stories. Like most good tales, the Waugoshance ghost stories began with a few simple facts. John Herman, keeper of the light from 1885 through August 1894, was known as a practical joker and a man prone to drink heavily while on shore leave. Despite strict regulations against consuming alcohol at the lighthouse itself, Herman was rumored to drink there as well.

Early one evening the assistant keeper, who had climbed the tower to light the lamp, found himself locked inside the lamp room. He was the apparent victim of Herman’s humor. The imprisoned man called out to Herman, whom he could see on the pier, to release him. But Herman, apparently also lit, continued walking toward the pier’s edge and eventually disappeared from sight, never to be seen again.

From that day forward, strange events were said to occur at Waugoshance. Stories were told of stools suddenly being kicked out from under keepers who fell asleep on duty. Coal was supposedly shoveled into the station’s furnace without the aid of human hands. Keepers often found doors mysteriously open. More frustrating, keepers sometimes found themselves inexplicably locked into various rooms and storage areas. All these occurrences, and many others, were attributed to the ghost of Johnnie Herman.

In 1910 a new light was lit at White Shoal, near Waugoshance. Two years later the Waugoshance light was abandoned. The official explanation was that it was obsolete. The tellers of the tales, however, claimed that the real reason Waugoshance had been closed was because no one wanted to contend with the ghost who haunted the station.

**Autumn**

Even as some of the most challenging lights on the Great
Lakes were under construction, technological improvements were changing the nature of lighthouses. Lighthouses were entering a long, lingering autumn that would stretch until the end of the twentieth century. In this era machinery slowly replaced keepers at Michigan’s lightstations.

Electricity made automation possible. Experiments were conducted using electricity as early as 1886, but it was not until the 1920s that electricity became readily available. This change could only occur after portable generators became reliable and inexpensive and the electric-power-distribution grid grew large enough to reach rural areas of the state. In 1925 about one-fourth of the lights in service on the Great Lakes used electrical power. By the early 1940s virtually all the lights on the lakes were electrical.

The availability of electrical power, coupled with the introduction in 1916 of a device that could automatically change burned-out light bulbs and the development of various sensors that could automatically detect day and night, spelled the end for keepers. Light stations across the Great Lakes were automated. Point Betsie was the last of Michigan’s lighthouses to be automated, in 1983.

If automation was driven principally by cost savings, nonvisual means of navigation challenged the very need for lighthouses. In 1925 the first nonvisual means of navigation was installed on the lakes. Radio beacons were introduced that made it possible for navigators to triangulate their position without reference to any visual features.

In the last quarter of the twentieth century the Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) system eliminated the need for lighthouses. In 1978 the United States military launched the first satellite in a proposed GPS network. The complete grid of satellites became operational in 1993, making it possible for a sailor to know his or her vessel’s location within ten meters of its actual position. This level of accuracy, combined with the low cost of receiver units, led the Coast Guard to propose decommissioning all lighthouses on the Great Lakes by 2005.

As lighthouses across Michigan are abandoned by the federal government, their survival depends upon local communities and private organizations taking control of the lighthouses as “surplus federal property.” Local governments, private organizations, and even individuals may, if they wish, continue to operate the lights as private aids to navigation. The sad truth is that many of Michigan’s lights will likely be lost to the forces of decay and eventual destruction when they are abandoned by the Coast Guard. A few, however, will be relit by concerned groups and individuals. These lights will continue to guide sailors when a new spring melts winter’s ice and the Great Lakes open for another season.

We would like to thank the Great Lakes Lighthouse Keepers Association (GLLKA) and Mr. John Wagner, author of Michigan’s Lighthouses: An Aerial Photographic Perspective, for their generous assistance in helping us prepare this exhibit. The Clarke Library is proud to have been designated as the archives for both Mr. Wagner and GLLKA.org.
Michigan Newspaper Project

As summer graces the Michigan landscape the Michigan Newspaper Project (MNP) has preserved on microfilm more than 100,000 images of the state’s newspapers. This accomplishment has been made possible by funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities, which has under-written two years of preservation microfilming of Michigan papers.

Despite this substantial accomplishment, the sad truth is that even with NEH funding only about 10 percent of the unfilmed papers in the state be microfilmed during the life of the project. On September 23, 2002, the Michigan Newspaper Project Advisory Board met and selected the following papers for filming:

**Primary Titles:**

- **Arenac County:**  
  *Arenac County Independent*
- **Barry County:**  
  *Barry Pioneer*
- **Benzie County:**  
  *The News*
  *Thomsonville News*
- **Cass County:**  
  *Cass County Republican*
  *Constantine Republican*
- **Cheboygan County:**  
  *Northern Tribune*
- **Eaton County:**  
  *Bellevue Gazette*
- **Genesee County:**  
  *Flint Voice*
  *Michigan Voice*
- **Gogebic County:**  
  *Antigo Daily News*
- **Huron County:**  
  *Harbor Beach Times*
- **Iron County:**  
  *Iron River Reporter*
- **Kalamazoo County:**  
  *Herald and Torchlight*
- **Kent County:**  
  *Catholic Vigil*
  *Grand Rapids Times*
  *Hispano Root*
  *Voceyro Hispano*
- **Lenawee County:**  
  *Deerfield Moon*
- **Macomb County:**  
  *Armada Times*
- **Monroe County:**  
  *Carleton Messenger*
  *Dundee Reporter*
- **Oceana County:**  
  *Mears News*
- **Ogemaw County:**  
  *Ogemaw County Journal*
- **Sanilac County:**  
  *Sanilac Jeffersonian*
  *Sanilac County Times*
  *Sanilac Jeffersonian/Advisor*
- **Shiawassee County:**  
  *Owosso Times*
- **St. Clair County:**  
  *Yale Expositor*
- **Tuscola County:**  
  *Fairgrove Enterprise*
  *Farm and Town Enterprise*
  *Akron-Fairgrove Enterprise*
  *Akron-Fairgrove Times*
  *Akron-Fairgrove Community News*
  *News Connection*
- **Washtenaw County:**  
  *Between the Lines*
  *Ypsilanti Sentinel*
- **Wayne County:**  
  *Ad-daleel*
  *Aobnai*
  *Christian Herald*
  *Detroit Liberator*
  *Detroit Gay Liberator*
  *Liberator*
  *Detroit Journal and Advertiser*
  *Detroit Daily Advertiser*
  *Michigan Advertiser*
  *Detroit Metro Times*
  *Metro Times*
  *Romulus Roman Enterprise Roman Legal Times*
  *Romand American Warrendale Courier Glos Ludowy*

**Secondary Titles**

(to be filmed if time permits)

- **Kalamazoo County:**  
  *American Baltic News*
- **Keweenaw County:**  
  *Tyomes*
- **Van Buren County:**  
  *Van Buren County Press*
- **Wayne County:**  
  *Belleville Enterprise*
  *Detroit Advertiser and Tribune*

The selection criteria used to choose papers were approved by the National Endowment for the Humanities. They included:

- Research value
- Geographic representation
- Temporal representation
- Length of run
- Physical condition
- Accessibility
- Comparison with previously filmed titles
On the Road with the Clarke

Over the past several months the Clarke staff has developed a presentation explaining what the Clarke Library is, and illustrating the Library's holdings through a few examples drawn from its stacks. The "road show" combines a computer-generated, PowerPoint presentation with a variety of "show-and-tell" pieces taken to the demonstration site.

The presentation's structure is fixed, but specific elements can vary. It always begins with a discussion of the Clarke's history and current mission. Having explained who Norman Clarke, Sr., was, and that the Library today documents Michigan history, collects children's literature, and serves as the archives for Central Michigan University, the presentation quickly moves on to a discussion of some of the Library's many holdings.

The heart of the presentation is the discussion of the Library's holdings. The reason for this is quite simple; for most people the works the Library possesses are far more interesting than the institution possessing and preserving them. The specific examples of documentation vary, depending on the nature and interest of the audience. Lighthouses, the Ann Arbor Railroad, the Aladdin "kit" home records, examples from the Molson collection of original art drawn for children's books, alumni letters, and the Library's Native-American material have all found their way into the presentation at one time or another.

The presentation is given to CMU alumni groups and other individuals interested in the CMU Libraries in general and the Clarke Library in particular. Approximately fifty people have attended the presentation each time it has been offered. To date we have been to Ann Arbor, Kalamazoo, and Canadian Lakes. We look forward to presenting the "road show" at additional sites this fall.

Generally, audience reaction has been quite positive. The most unusual experience, however, occurred in Ann Arbor. Part of the presentation dealt with the letters of Selma Khoubasser, a foreign student who attended Central in 1947. Much to everyone's surprise, a woman in the audience shared with those in the room that she had lived in the dormitory with Selma and wondered if we might be able to give her Selma's current address. Although connecting long-lost friends is not one of the primary reasons for our "road show," we were delighted to share Selma's address, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and equally delighted to eventually receive a note from Argentina thanking us for putting her in touch with a friend from more than half a century ago.
Evelyn Leasher Retires

For the past fourteen years researchers who have visited the Clarke have been greeted and assisted by Evelyn Leasher. Over the years Evelyn has helped scholars locate difficult-to-find material, worked with community members researching their town’s past, and listened politely to genealogists who could not contain themselves and insisted on introducing her to the wonders of their families. They never realized, of course, that what was to them so exciting might not be quite as interesting to a nonfamily member.

Thus, it was with sadness (as well as good wishes) that all our researchers, as well as the staff, learned of Evelyn’s retirement plans. On January 30, 2003, Ms. Leasher officially retired from the Clarke as well as from Central Michigan University. To mark the occasion, the Clarke Historical Library Board of Governors adopted the following resolution:

Whereas Evelyn Leasher has served Central Michigan University since January 21, 1985, first as a librarian in Off Campus Library Services and, beginning in 1988, as the public services librarian in the Clarke Historical Library;

Whereas during her tenure within the Clarke she has distinguished herself through her service to the students, staff, and faculty of Central Michigan University, as well as to members of the nonacademic community who make use of the Clarke Library;

Whereas she has also contributed actively to the professional and scholarly life of the Library, including compiling the bibliography Native Americans in Michigan, editing Letter from Washington, 1863-1865 by Louis Blyan Adams, and creating a major, web-based Michigan local history bibliography;

Resolved, that the Clarke Historical Library Board of Governors expresses their gratitude and appreciation to Evelyn Leasher and wishes her many year of health and happiness in her retirement.

Whereas a librarian in Off Campus Library Services she helped meet the educational needs of those students who are served by the College of Extended Learning;

The staff of the Clarke joins the Board of Governors in expressing our thanks to Evelyn and wishing her many years to enjoy her retirement.
Hemingway Exhibit

This fall, in conjunction with the Michigan Story Festival, the Clarke Library's Francis and Mary Lois Molson Gallery will feature an exhibit devoted to Ernest Hemingway, one of the twentieth century's most influential and charismatic writers. Entitled "Hemingway in Michigan: Michigan in Hemingway," the exhibit will focus on the author's youthful experiences in northern Michigan and the ways in which they continued to influence his writing throughout a career that took him to Europe, Africa, and the Caribbean.

During the winters Ernest Hemingway's family lived in the affluent suburb of Oak Park, Illinois, but summers were spent at a cottage on Walloon Lake, near Petoskey. The young Hemingway filled these times by exploring the surrounding forests, streams, lakes, and villages, absorbing the unique texture of what Michiganders still refer to as "Up North." He hunted, fished, tramped the woods, and hiked along the railroad tracks, absorbing the details of people and places that he would draw on later for such stories as "Up in Michigan" and "Big Two-Hearted River."

After his marriage in 1921, Hemingway never again returned to the state for more than a day or two, but the formative years he spent there never left him. Although he often reconstructed the literal reality of past experiences for artistic and personal purposes, in many instances he was hauntingly true to the essential nature of northern Michigan in the early twentieth century, and even today.

Highlighting the exhibit will be rare photographs of the young

Hemingway family at Windemere.

Federspiel Hemingway Endowment

The Clarke Historical Library is very pleased to announce the creation of a new endowment that will make possible the purchase of additional resources relating to Ernest Hemingway's ties to the state of Michigan. Through the generosity of CMU alumnus and Hemingway collector Michael Federspiel, the Clarke will be able to add significantly to its collection of books, manuscripts, and visual materials illustrating the relationship between this great writer and the northern counties where he spent much of his youth. Mr. Federspiel is currently an administrator with the Midland Public Schools, and he serves as an adjunct faculty member in the History Department at CMU.
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The Clarke Board of Governors and staff are deeply grateful to all contributors.
A Final Word

The retirement of Evelyn Leasher brings to a close a distinguished career of service within the Clarke Library. Evelyn’s scholarly knowledge about Michigan was considerable and her ability to identify and complete publishable book-length projects was the envy of many other faculty members. But what I think she is most remembered for is delivering unfailingly friendly reference service of a consistently high quality to our users.

Special collection libraries have a reputation for being somewhat stuffy centers of scholarly endeavor. Evelyn made all of the Clarke users feel as if the library was their home, a place that existed to help them discover the answers they sought.

An example of her concern emerged one day when I walked through the reading room and saw two young children coloring. Coloring books are not the usual fare in most special collection libraries. When I asked Evelyn where the books had come from she said that she had observed that on those occasions when researchers arrived with small children, the kids got bored, they (both the kids and the parent) often got cranky, and things didn’t go well. So she’d visited the dollar store and picked up some very nontraditional supplies. I am still amazed how many problems can be solved with a coloring book and a box of crayons.

This unique ability to take into consideration the needs of a variety of people and make them feel comfortable while providing a very high quality of reference service is something I will certainly miss. Whomever we hire to fill Evelyn’s old position (and we are searching vigorously to find that individual) will undoubtedly be a highly qualified person in his or her own right. But he or she will have a tough act to follow.

All of us wish Evelyn well in her retirement. But we’ve kept her home phone number handy to deal with the inevitable researcher who comes in, not quite remembering the author or title of the book he or she wants, but who calls “it was a big book with a blue cover.” The person usually concludes the description by saying “and Evelyn always knew where to find it!”

Evelyn Leasher’s retirement is one of several pieces of staff news. All of us in the Clarke were extremely pleased that we were able to place Pat Thelen into a newly created digitizing position. The need for such assistance was increasingly obvious to those of us who work in the Library. More and more our users expect us to be able to provide high quality, digital copies of material.

Even more important, more and more users expect to find valuable historical material not only in the Library’s stacks but also on its website. For the past several years we have met that need through a variety of strategies, but ultimately to sustain such a website called for the creation of a staff position.

Money was budgeted for this purpose as part of the “opening budget” for the “new” Library. But as hard economic times began to affect both the state and university budgets, there was a universitywide realization that staff positions would have to be eliminated. In such circumstances newly created, vacant positions are particularly vulnerable because their elimination does not involve laying someone off.

Despite the fact that it was an “easy” cut, I was pleased, and deeply gratified, that the university’s senior officers understood the need for this position and allowed it to be filled. Doing so demonstrated a real commitment to the Library and recognition of the important role the Library plays both within the university and the state.

In a related matter George Weeks, who has served for a decade on the Clarke Library’s Board of Governors, chose not to seek reelection to the post this spring. Although George’s “day job” is that of a political columnist, those who are privileged to know him understand that he also has a deep and passionate interest in Michigan history. His advice and help to the Clarke over the past few years has been invaluable. Although I can certainly understand why, after so many years of devoted service, his many commitments made it impossible for him to continue as a board member, we will certainly miss his good judgment at our meetings. And, as in Evelyn’s case, I’ve still got George’s phone number in the office!

Finally, let me close by thanking Joel Lewis, a graduate student in the History Dept., for his help in creating this newsletter.

Frank Boles
Friends of the Library
The CMU Friends of the Library is a membership organization that supports, through contributions and volunteer activities, the programs of the University Library, the Clarke Historical Library, and Off-Campus Library Services.

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