

Life saving station coming home

Brenda Battel Tribune Staff Writer Published 6:00 am, Saturday, October 28, 2017



Movers are preparing to relocate the Pointe aux Barques Life Saving Station Wednesday from the Huron City Museum Complex close to its original location in Lighthouse Park. (Submitted Photo)

HURON TOWNSHIP – With historical buildings disappearing all the time, it's not often that one reappears.

But that is the case with the the Pointe aux Barques Life Saving Station, which is schedule to head home Wednesday.

Commissioned in 1876, the station originally was located next to the Pointe aux Barques Lighthouse.

In the 1960s, it was purchased to avoid demolition, and moved to the Huron City Museums complex.

The person responsible for that was Charles Parcels' grandmother, Carolyn Hubbard Parcels Lucas, who was born and raised in Port Austin, and lived from 1894-1987.

"She founded the Huron City Museum in 1953, and contributed the funds so that the Life Saving Station could be moved to the Huron City Museum grounds in 1960," Parcels told the Tribune.

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Several years ago, Charles and his brother Dave decided the station should be moved back to the original location.

"We discussed the idea on our guided tours with visitors to the Huron City Museum and others over several seasons," Charles Parcels said.

"The highly-effective Huron County rumor mill got that around," he recalled.

While Parcels solely credits his grandmother with initially saving the building, others share the credit for continuing to preserve it today.

He credits the Huron County Road Commission for the latest feat of moving it back over a 1.25-mile trek.

The road commission, which oversees county parks, has worked with Todd Talaski of Talaski Building Movers to return the station to Lighthouse County Park.

And keeping with the historical theme, Talaski's grandfather moved the building the first time in 1960.

Parcels also gives props to the Pointe aux Barques Lighthouse Society, members of which will now take responsibility for the building's preservation and upkeep.

"After all these years of caretaking it's simply appropriate that that building should go back to where it originally was," Parcels said.

He called the project "Greenfield Village in reverse," referencing the site that collects historical buildings.

"We collected a building, and now we're giving it back," he said.

The building is in incredibly good shape for its age, said Bill Bonner, president of the Pointe aux Barques Lighthouse Society.

The building was lifted this week from its foundation in preparation for the move.

"When they lifted that building, the mover and the engineer were absolutely amazed," Bonner said.

"It didn't creak. It didn't groan. It didn't squeak," he said. "It just lifted."

"This is the only building of its kind," Bonner said. "There are only four in the country left like this one."

And Huron County's Life Saving Station — a precursor to the U.S. Coast Guard — is the only one of the four in its original condition.

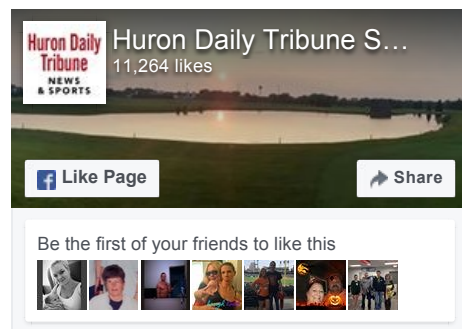
Because of the unpredictable nature of the project, officials were reluctant to comment on its total cost before it's complete.

But Parcels noted that in 1960, the moving fees were \$1,500, and the building was purchased for \$475.

"It's costing quite a lot more now," Parcels said.

A foundation for the building was constructed at the Pointe aux Barques site.

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Bills will also come from the movers and DTE Energy, which will be on hand to take down power lines as the building is moved down M-25 to Lighthouse Road.

The cost of relocating the building is being paid for with camping fees collected by the Huron County Parks program, said Neal Hentschl, secretary-manager of the road commission.

"(The cost is) going to be substantial," Hentschl told the Tribune.

Bonner said that moving the building will likely start at daylight Wednesday.

Parcells was 12 when the structure was moved the first time, and says his grandmother had been involved in the Life Saving Station socially as a young person before it was given to the U.S. Coast Guard.

"She would have gone to the Life Saving Station to watch baseball games and participate in social events," he said. "This wasn't distant history to her."

Parcell has two other siblings who treasure the memory of their grandmother and her role in preserving Huron County History: Katy and Fred.

"It's going to be a fun story to tell for years to come," Parcells said.

"Imagine how much more meaningful this building is going to be if it's back to where it used to be," he added.

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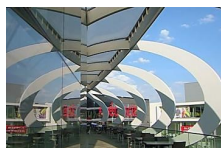
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