

An Inventory Of Local Treasures ... Part One

Theater Alive And Well In Ottawa County

By Karin Messner

Editor's Note: Over the past two weeks, we have brought you news of a brand new tourism initiative being undertaken along the North Shore of Lake Erie. Seven counties stretching from Lucas to Ashtabula have been designated as a State Heritage Area. Currently Visitors Bureaus in the participating counties are in the process of creating an "Inventory" of all things historic, cultural and of ecological interest. We have a few of our own to suggest and hope you will also lend in your ideas. (For instance, did you know that Genoa boasts the only "privy" on the National Register of Historic Places?)

On one single night sometime during the past year or so, more than 3,000 people were enjoying live theater somewhere in Ottawa County! Hard to believe? Not at all, when you consider the number of theatrical venues large and small available to local residents as well as to visitors. Lakeside's grand old Hoover Auditorium can seat that many on any given night during the busy summer season. The single night mentioned earlier, however, was during the winter, when Hoover is "dark."

As a county, we are culturally and theatrically inclined, and we have a veritable smorgasbord of opportunities to satisfy that interest. Consider the

players and forgive us if we happen to overlook any of your favorites. (In fact, let us hear about it!)

Lakeside is, of course, the "granddaddy" of them all dating back over the last century or two. During the summer, Hoover Auditorium hosts everything from musical stars to live puppet shows, from comedians to symphony orchestras and classic choruses.

Even the concerts in the park, staged in a charming old gazebo, are delightful.

Musicians and entertainers, often in costume, perform here regularly. Lakeside is a treasure not to be missed.

Nearby Danbury High School, small but mighty, stages some excellent student productions each year and prides itself on its State of the Art facility. Likewise, Oak Harbor High School students do outstanding work in a beautiful theater plant complete with an extensive scene shop. The venue has hosted numerous professional presentations including some top-notch children's theater. The Port Clinton Drama Club stages two fine productions each year, and the local Ballet School brings a touch of class each spring.

Going still further afield the Genoa Community Theatre is well known for excellent entertainment and for its beautifully restored Old Town Hall setting. And speaking of settings ... who could overlook the magnificent Perry's Monument Plaza. Once again this year the Toledo Symphony will be presented here. They will, of course, be including the "1812 Overture" during their Historic Weekend concert in September. Or how about the North Coast Concert Band on the lawn behind the Wolcott Keeper's House on the Marblehead Peninsula?

However, one doesn't have to even venture out of Port Clinton to find excellent theater. Consider the possibilities during the last month. Dinner Theater at the Garden/Guest .. staged at Our-Guest Inn with food service by The Garden Restaurant, the U.S. Army Field Band on the lawn in front of the Port Clinton Performing Arts Center, a national Christian touring company, "Legacy," in concert inside the PAC this week and "Jesus Christ Superstar" on-stage at Playmaker's Civic Theatre.

And that's only this month! Wait until next fall, when all these theaters gear up for their winter season plus a full slate of professional touring shows under the Performing Arts Center's "Artists Series" banner!

Whatever your taste in entertainment, you can find it right here in Ottawa County. No need to travel

to Toronto or "The Big Apple. We're into showbiz in a big way along the North Shore!

Perhaps nowhere is that so much in evidence this summer as over Playmakers Civic Theatre. Now in its 54th consecutive season, PCT is one of the most successful and financially solvent community theaters in the state. With a membership of over 150, the organization was a nomad for the first 25 years of its existence. Shows were staged in tents, on the old high school stage and wherever space permitted.

In the early '70s the community theater took the plunge and purchased "the old majorette hall," a metal building originally constructed to house Cochran Majorettes. (Ironically, Jan Meyer, Producer/Director of "Jesus Christ Superstar," was one of the majorettes. Her parents were pioneers in building the facility!)

With the help of Wes Brustad, theater architect from the Ohio Arts Council, Playmakers adopted a unique staging concept, which has been used to surprise and delight audiences over the years. Certain



Port Clinton's Richard Repp as Pilate and Curt Eagle as Christ as Pilate asks Christ to defend himself.



Nick Applehans as Jesus Christ in the triumph

"J.C.S." audiences have been impressed with the unusual and unexpected "blocking" of this production. (We're not about to give