



Friends of Plum and Pilot Islands, Inc.

Where History and Nature Meet at the Door!

Founded in 2007

Forum: Winter 2026

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Membership Form

FOPPI *Forum* back issues can be found at the Washington Island Archives, WI Marine Historical Society, Wisconsin Maritime Museum, Egg Harbor Public Library, Sturgeon Bay Public Library, and the Wisconsin Historical Society Archives.

Hello, Friends and Supporters,

Happy 2026!

As I write this, it is 15 degrees below zero in Wisconsin. My dogs rush outside and back in, birds ignore the feeders, and squirrels stop taunting the cat at the window. I'm grateful for the warmth of the indoors but long for summer, when seeing the rear range light eases my worries. Soon, I remind myself—soon.

Thank you for renewing your membership! With your support, we were able to repair the Pilot Island roof. The contractor checked on the rubber membrane we installed earlier and was happy to report that it is still holding sound.

Another project to knock off the to-do list is the boathouse pilings. The contractors were able to complete the project before the ice moved in, assuring us that the building will not collapse into the lake.

During this off-season, we have improved operations by migrating membership data to QuickBooks for easier renewal and program notifications. Our website now features updated content on Historic Preservation and Restoration and recommended books about the islands, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Life-Saving Service/ Coast Guard. Let us know if you have book suggestions to add—we love to learn what our members are reading and enjoying!

We've been preparing for the 2026 season since we put the boat in winter storage. Our "Field Days" program lets you explore Plum Island through activities like Birding 101, Photography, Native American Presence, and Butterfly Tagging. Join us at our outdoor lecture hall, and don't miss our participation in the Door County Festival of Nature and Lighthouse Passport Days. Register or volunteer at www.plumandpilot.org/events-work-days. Members receive a 10% discount on event and cruise tickets aboard *The Shoreline*. Bring a friend!

Please reserve July 25 on your calendar for our annual membership meeting. We look forward to seeing you on Plum Island this season!

—Mary Beth

Plum Island's Life-Saving Station's First Keeper by Mike Palecek

Plum Island Life-Saving Station's First Keeper

When the Plum Island Life-Saving Station was commissioned in 1896, Ingar Olsen was chosen as its first keeper. There was great need at Death's Door for a daring, decisive, and driven seaman to take the helm in one of maritime's riskiest occupations.

Olsen's Early Career

Olsen came to Milwaukee in 1889 as an 18-year-old Norwegian immigrant. He hung around the shipyards and wharves which lined the Menomonee, Milwaukee and Kinnickinnic Rivers, picking up what work he could find. For two years, he sailed on the Great Lakes. Wanting to settle down, Olsen took a seasonal job as a surfman on Milwaukee's life-saving station crew.

In this era, the keeper, the head of a life-saving station, was the only member of a crew on salary. The keeper recruited young men with fishing, swimming, and seafaring experience to work seasonally for \$60-65 per month. The season for upper Lake Michigan life-saving stations was April 1 through December 5. Most stations had seven surfmen, plus the keeper. After getting a call for help, the crew would launch one of their lifeboats into Lake Michigan's mad waves and sail a Mackinaw boat if they could, or row a surfboat if they must, to the scene of the disaster. Gas-powered lifeboats were experimental at the turn of the century.

Ingar Olsen drew the attention of government authorities through his efforts in Milwaukee's 1893 North Point water crib disaster, when waves created by 65-mile-per-hour winds wrecked a water-pipe construction project. The crib was being built to surround and protect the intake shaft which supplied fresh water to the city. It was just a quarter mile off the McKinley Beach shore. In that rescue, the life-saving crew leader was seriously injured. Not only did the 22-year-old Olsen direct the rescue work, but he leapt to the ruined crib as the lifeboat was being hurled in the foam. The only surviving worker had lashed himself to a hoist fastened into the crib's rock foundation to keep himself from being swept away by the violent waves. While awaiting rescue, several of his fellow workers vanished to watery deaths. Olsen tied rescue ropes around the semi-conscious man and hauled him into the heaving, pitching lifeboat, saving his life.

For his extraordinary bravery, the U.S. Treasury's Life-Saving Service awarded Ingar Olsen its coveted gold life-saving medal. He was the first Wisconsinite to earn the award.

However, it was not the first time he had saved a life. Olsen's first gold life-saving "award" came at age 13, while he was growing up along Norway's craggy southern coast. As a storm whipped up the Drammansfjord, he and a friend spotted two merchant ship officers clinging to a capsized boat. The boys courageously rowed out through the storm to rescue the men. The grateful survivors gave each of the lads Norway's largest gold coin as a "tusen takk," a thousands thanks, for saving their lives.



Ingar Olsen, c. 1893. Photo courtesy of Milwaukee County Historical Society.

Plum Island

After the North Point rescue, the Milwaukee life-saving station keeper was disabled when he was scalded during a rescue of another ship. Olsen then helped to run the station. Because he had proven his abilities, when Captain N. Peterson retired, Olsen was chosen to take his place. The Lake Seamen's union protested because Olsen hadn't finalized his American citizenship.

Plum Island's Life-Saving Station's First Keeper by Mike Palecek

Instead of staying in Milwaukee, Olsen was assigned to run the new Plum Island station near the tip of Door County in recognition of his skill. The promotion was prestigious and provided him with a stable, full-time job and a house to live in. It also entitled him to wear an official blue officer's coat with a captain's hat to match. His official title was Keeper, but everyone called him "Captain Olsen."

Plum Island was an isolated spot in the middle of the Death's Door strait, one of the most treacherous water routes on the Great Lakes. Located in the passage between Green Bay and Lake Michigan, south of the Detroit Harbor ferry entrance to Washington Island, the current at Death's Door moves unpredictably in all directions depending on the weather. In nasty weather, no one in their right mind would be on the water anywhere near Plum Island. But schooner and steamship captains were often caught there in bad weather. They were either trying to make it to safe harbor or were being battered and blown to shore where their floundering ships would be busted to bits by the angry waves. Olsen acknowledged the hazards of the area in a 1931 interview. He claimed that "Plum Island is in the heart of the danger zone for Great Lakes shipping."

C.F. Bielman:

Largest Wooden Schooner on the Lake

Olsen related the story of a mighty shipwreck on September 18, 1900, saying that "the [C.F.] *Bielman*, which was at the time, the largest wooden steamer on the lake, was about 360 feet in length. She carried a crew of 16 men and one woman... [One of our surfmen on shore leave heard about] a large boat ashore on Fisherman's Shoal... [a tiny 100' x 400' island, two miles east of Washington Island. This rescue was one] of the most thrilling experiences of my career..."

It took four hours of sailing in heavy squalls for Olsen's rescue boat to reach the *C.F. Bielman*. To coax the *C.F. Bielman* crew to abandon ship, he lied to the steamer's second-in-command that Olsen's government-issued sailboat was "non-sinkable and non-collapsible." Realizing that the *Bielman* was lost to the storm and would sink at any moment, the mate yelled, "We'll be ready to come off in a minute."

Olsen said, "We got in close to the *Bielman* and started taking them off one by one as they climbed down the ladder... The first one down was the

cook's wife, the only woman aboard. She was drenched so severely before we could get her off that she died of exposure three days later.

"With the last man finally off the *Bielman* I found ahead of me the greatest problem—that of making port—in the storm with twenty-five passengers and crew crowded together in the 30-foot open [sail]boat... Under close reef canvas we set sail...

"Everything went well until we entered Rock Island passage... eighteen miles wide, and with a southeaster blowing. The currents there form extremely dangerous beach breakers and swift undertow... The sea started carrying over our stern in alarming quantities. I ordered four men to go to work at once bailing the water out, but even as I did so, I knew it would be only a few minutes and our boat would be swamped...

"An idea suddenly formed in my mind... I hastily unbuckled the rubber coat which I wore in place of oilskins. With the coat off my back, I inserted a 16-foot oar through the sleeves and ordered it held by five men in the rear of the boat, so that it acted as a breaker for the water... It came in lesser quantities and the bailers were soon able to show progress... [This idea] saved us all."

During Olsen's four years (1896-1901) as Plum Island life-saving station keeper, his team performed 84 missions to protect life and maritime property.

References

U.S. Treasury Department, Ingar Olsen's Gold Lifesaving Medal Citation, September 16, 1893. www.history.uscg.mil/Portals/1/Browse%20by%20Topic/Notable%20People/Vice%20Commandants/OlsenIngar1893.pdf?ver=2019-03-18-153939-013

Olsen, Ingar Collection, Finding Aid. MSS-2168. Ingar Olsen scrapbook (1893-1964) at Milwaukee County Historical Society.

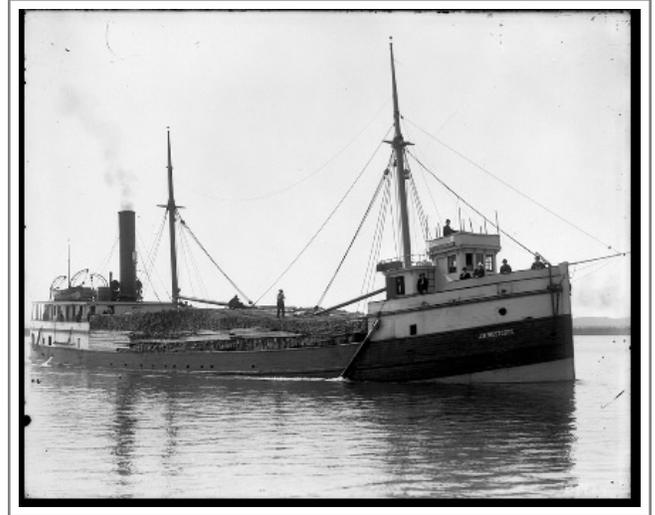
Hero Rewarded: Ingar Olsen Now Captain Of A Station—Will Go To Plum Island Station. *Door County Democrat*, 1896 (undated, in Olsen's scrapbook)

Michigan Claims 3 In Second Crib Disaster; Capt. Olsen Describes Death's Door Rescues. *Milwaukee Sentinel*, December 13, 1931. (from Olsen's scrapbook)

From the Annual Report of the United States Life-Saving Service

October 19, 1910

On the morning of this date the keeper of the Plum Island (Wis.) station was informed by telephone from Sister Bay, Wis., that a steamer had stranded on Sister Shoal about noon of the 18th. The message stated that she had made no signals of distress but that, as the wind had shifted to the northwest and was blowing a gale, she was in great danger of breaking up. The station crew responded in the power lifeboat, covering the 18-mile run in two and a half hours. The steamer proved to be the *J.W. Westcott*, of Milwaukee, with a cargo of lumber, and carrying a crew of 13. She had lost her bearings in a fog and grounded as above stated. The life-savers landed the master to enable him to communicate with the owners and summon a tug and a lighter. On the morning of the 20th they carried the master ashore again to telephone for a steam pump, the vessel having sprung a leak and filled during the night. The tug, lighter, and pump having arrived, the work of unloading cargo and pumping the vessel out was begun on the 21st. During the course of this work, several trips were made to and from Sister Bay, 3 miles from the wreck, transporting laborers. After about 175,000 feet of the vessel's load of 513,000 feet of lumber had been removed, the wind became so strong and the sea so rough that operations had to be suspended, and all hands abandoned ship for the night. On the 22nd lines were run to the tug and an unsuccessful attempt was made to get the steamer off. On the 23rd the master engaged the small steamer *Addie Wade* to complete the moving of the *J.W. Westcott's* deck load and part of the lumber in her hold. When she had been thus lightened a diver repaired some of her worst leaks, the life-savers assisting. She was then pumped out, and efforts to release her were renewed. She was hauled off at 1:20 of the 24th and taken in tow for Sturgeon Bay.



The *J.W. Westcott*.

Milwaukee, December 1, 1910

“DEAR SIR: We must plead guilty for not doing our duty more promptly, but owing to pressure of business and absence from the city, we only find time now to compliment the good, clean-cut, hard-working crew at the Plum Island, (Wis.) Life-Saving Station. When our steamer, the *J.W. Westcott*, with a full cargo of lumber went on the shoals off Sister Bay, October 19, 1910 in Green Bay, they came on phone call through a fierce storm and stood by the boat. They lent us most valuable assistance, and the captain, as well as each and every man, was a willing worker. I asked the captain for his name and he replied: “We are doing our duty and the crew with me are paid for this. I am one of them. If there are any compliments, they are for all of us.”

Very truly yours,
M. Hilty Lumber Col,
By C.G. Forster, *President*

For more history and information about the United States Life-Saving Service, visit the following websites:

U.S. Life-Saving Service Heritage Association at uslife-savingservice.org/

Learn more about livesavers and stations (including an interactive station map!) and peruse publications, photographs, and education and resources.

United States Coast Guard at www.history.uscg.mil/Our-Collections/Documents-Publications/

Access variety of reports, photographs, and other information in the public domain.

USLSS/USCG Great Lakes Stations and Assigned Rescue Craft by Mary Beth Volmer

USLSS/USCG Great Lakes Stations and Assigned Rescue Craft

Lake Michigan Stations

Station Plum Island/Washington Island

Assigned Rescue Craft

1896: Beebe-McLellan type pulling/sailing surfboat No. 301

1898: 34ft. Merryman type pulling/sailing lifeboat No. 248 *Eager* (later converted in 1906 to a motor lifeboat, and later transferred to Station Milwaukee)

1901: 34ft. Merryman type pulling/sailing lifeboat No. 488 *Triumph* (later converted in 1906 to a motor lifeboat, and later transferred to Station Kewaunee)

1923: Type H motor lifeboat No. 1954

1932: Type S motor surfboat No. 4033/CG25531

1933: Type S pulling surfboat No. 4088/CG25386

1942: 38ft. cabin picket boat No. 4221/CG38425

1943: One-of-a-kind 40ft. steel motor lifeboat No. 5357/CG40300

1944: Cabin motorboat CG25815

1940s: Type TR motor lifeboat No. 4835/CG36406 (transferred from another station)

1955: 30ft. utility boat-medium CG30388

1958: 40ft. utility boat-large CG40574

1964: 1-40ft. motor lifeboat (CG40300)

1980: Seasonal rescue detachment of 1-41 utility boat-large (CG41376), 1 large motor skiff



Image courtesy of U.S. Coast Guard.

This station, replaced in 1991 by a seasonal facility located on Washington Island, was operated as a Spring/Summer seasonal rescue detachment from Station Sturgeon Bay Canal. The Washington Island Coast Guard Station was closed in October 2022 due to a shortage of personnel affecting the entire military branch. This closure was part of the Coast Guard's adjusted operational plans for 2024, which included transferring crews to their parent command.



The CG40300 docked at Plum Island.



Rendering of the CG40574.

Member Memory... Story from the Summer of 1969 by Ron Friedel

Some of the lighthouses and stations were being automated at this time. One day we went to the Plum Island lighthouse, off the northeastern tip of Door County, in the "Death's Door," near Washington Island. We were refueling them with diesel fuel. The captain of the *Mesquite* very, very carefully approached Plum Island with a crewman on the bow of the ship watching and sounding the bottom. We finally dropped anchor at the extreme end of our refueling hose. The crew called the captain "The Chicken of the Sea" for his caution. Behind his back, of course. They said the previous captain would have just run up on the beach. (Some irony here. From the Wiki article, "*Mesquite* served until December 4, 1989, when it grounded on a reef off of the Keweenaw Peninsula in Lake Superior after, ironically, replacing the summer navigational buoy that warned of that very reef. After several hours of trying to free the vessel, the crew reluctantly abandoned ship.")

Lighthouse Passport Days submitted by Tim Sweet

Volunteers with the Friends of Plum and Pilot Islands (FOPPI) provided boat tours aboard *The Shoreline* during Lighthouse Passport Days on Friday, October 3, 2025. The two-hour cruise brought visitors close to the Plum Island range lights, the life-saving station, and its historic boathouse. Stories were shared about the island's history and the men who served there. The island was closed due to work being done to restore the concrete pilings beneath the 1939 boathouse structure. This project is being funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Shoreline also motored out to the near shore waters of Pilot Island, where the history of the light station was interpreted. FOPPI hired Moore Quality Exteriors, LLC to repair missing shingles that had been blown off the roof of the 1858 lighthouse in recent storms. Funding for the repair was provided by a grant from the Raibrook Foundation and donations from FOPPI members.

Photos provided by Jude Kuenn, Tim Sweet, and Chad Moore.



Guests leaving Gills Rock aboard *The Shoreline*.



Pilot Island Light, with missing roof shingles visible.



Front and rear range lights on Plum Island.



Pilot Island Light, after the roof repair.

FOPPI Quarterly Board Meeting

FOPPI Board Meeting: Saturday, January 31

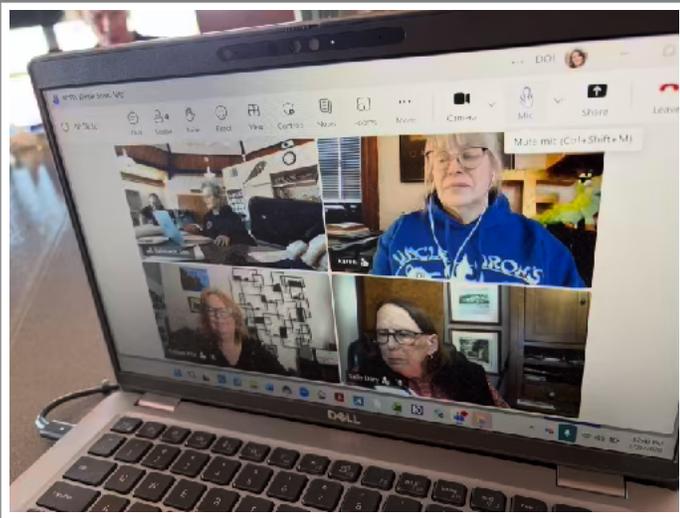
On Saturday, January 31, FOPPI held its quarterly Board meeting at Horicon National Wildlife Refuge (www.fws.gov/refuge/horicon) to discuss upcoming plans for Plum and Pilot Islands. Photos by Tim Sweet.



Clockwise from L to R: Erin Railsback, Mary Beth Volmer, Scott Nelson, Jim Schwartz, Stiles Meredith, Jack Grundmeier, and Jude Kuenn.



Erin Railsback from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service showing the final proofs of the interpretive signage for Plum Island.



Some members joined online, including, clockwise from top R: Karen Ellery, Sally Dery, and Colleen Pilat.

*Thank you to our Board members
and volunteers!*



Scott Nelson, Green Bay National Wildlife Refuge Volunteer of the Year, 2025.

Field Days by Mary Beth Volmer

Last year we began a new series of programs that we call “Field Days.” Dave Schieman from The Ridges Sanctuary conducted a Birding 101 presentation and James Myser, retired USFWS, talked to us about Native American Presence on Plum Island in our open-air lecture hall on the foundation of what we’ve heard call the “Bum Shack.” Word has it that, in later years, it was used as a place for off-duty men to play cards, smoke smelly cigars, and hang out.



Plum Island, with “Bum Shack” to the right.

We have photos in our collection of this building, but the historical data is rather bleak. Our historian, John Lauber, has searched through keepers’ logs, annual reports, and Door County newspapers in an effort to discover the history of this building and hasn’t come up with much. What we do know has been drawn primarily from photos and drawings included in the Historic Structures

Report (HSR). Here is the information that he has found so far:

- The building was in place by 1913, according to a photo that appears on pages 399 and 401 of the HSR.
- The building is shown on a 1915 site plan, and is identified as a “cart room,” presumably to house a beach cart in the lower level. The plan is on page 448 of the HSR.
- A new entrance porch was added to the east side of the building in 1927. HSR, page 407.
- A 1938 site plan indicates that the upper level of the building was divided into a sick bay and a bunk room. HSR, page 451.
- A 1943 site plan identifies the building as a “sick bay.” HSR, page 452.
- A 1943 floor plan of the building shows that the upper level was divided into a ward room and dispensary. The lower level is empty except for a workbench, and may still have functioned as a shop. HSR, page 479.
- The building is still shown as a sick bay on a 1957 site plan. HSR, page 454.
- The building is not shown in a 1967 aerial view and has been demolished. HSR, page 435.

Regardless of its actual use, it was important enough to be added to the Plum Island Station, and we’ll keep its memory alive in the people we meet during our Field Days. Come and join us! Attend a Field Day (or *Days*), gather in our lecture area, and listen for the long-ago sound of cards being shuffled or catch a whiff of a cigar.



Plum Island: 1897



Learn more or sign up for the Heritage Trail Pass here!

Scan the QR code to download your Heritage Trail Pass.

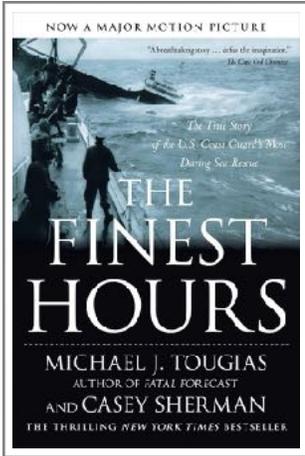
Door County Heritage Trail Pass

The Friends of Plum and Pilot Islands are proud to be a part of the Heritage Trail Pass, sponsored by Destination Door County. The Door County Heritage Trail consists of 28 historic and cultural sites across the peninsula—from iconic lighthouses and maritime museums to local history centers, churches, and preserved homes.

As you travel the trail and check in at each stop using your mobile pass, you’ll earn fun rewards along the way. Visit 5 or more locations to receive a Door County-themed prize.

Whether you explore over a weekend or throughout the year, the Heritage Trail Pass is a meaningful way to connect with the people, places, and moments that shaped this beloved destination.

Start your journey today and discover the heritage behind the scenery. Download your pass at:
www.doorcounty.com/experience/heritage-trail.



The Finest Hours

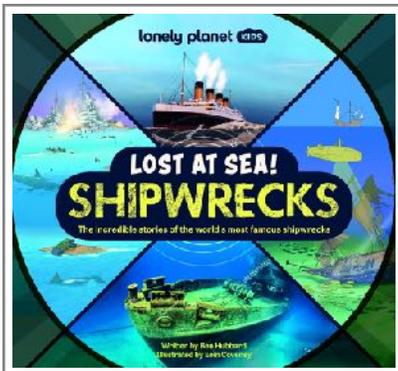
by Michael J. Tougias and Casey Sherman

The harrowing story of an unbelievable rescue on the New England coast, when not one but TWO tankers split in half in a terrible storm, leaving 84 men adrift in a Nor'easter storm with 70-foot waves. Their only hope was to be rescued by members of the Coast Guard, who in 1952 were not equipped for a storm of this magnitude. Regardless, the coasties lived by the motto "You have to go out, but you don't have to return," and four of them ventured out into the storm in the 36500 (36-foot boat) in the dark with only a search light, faith, and a prayer. Surprisingly, they located the stern section of one of the tankers bobbing up and down in the frightful waves. When they looked up and saw the 30+ survivors, they were overwhelmed: How were they going to get all these men on a boat that only held 12?



Dive into this must-read book first, and then rent the movie. Be sure to have a box of tissues at the ready. —Review by Mary Beth Volmer

For younger readers...



Lost at Sea!

Shipwrecks

by Lonely Planet Kids

Discover 12 gripping retellings of fascinating shipwrecks in this mind-blowing kids' book packed with heroic escapes, daring rescues, and oceanic adventure. Bursting with amazing illustrations, historic photography, and interactive surprises, this is a must-buy book for curious minds fascinated by dramatic real-life events and the secrets of the sea.

Did you know there are over three million shipwrecks lying beneath the world's seabeds? Unearth 12 legendary stories buried with each wreck and learn about the ship's original mission, the period it sailed in, the day it all went wrong, and the moment the ship was discovered at the bottom

of the ocean. Children will delight in unfolding the book's interactive pages that bring these historical stories to life. —Review courtesy of amazon.com

Wrecked: Deep Dive into the World's Most Famous Shipwrecks

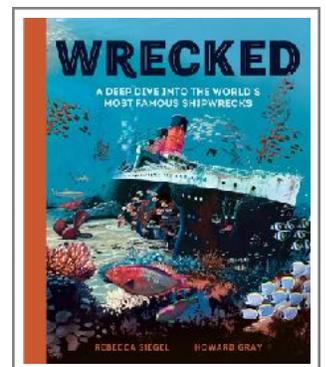
by Rebecca Siegel

Take a journey deep below the waves, down to the seabed and explore some of the most famous shipwrecks, including the *Titanic*, the *Odysseus* and the *Endurance*.

There are over three million shipwrecks on Earth. They are many things at once: memorials to lives lost, science experiments, treasure chests, works of art, and home to millions of living creatures.

They are time machines, allowing modern explorers a glimpse into the past.

From spacecraft and fighter planes to exploration vessels, merchant ships and cruise liners, discover the gripping stories of conflict and courage behind some of the world's most iconic shipwrecks. —Review courtesy of amazon.com



In Memory: Warren “Dan” Nilsson

In Memory

Warren Daniel Nilsson, 83, of Van Vleck, TX, and Washington Island, WI, passed away peacefully January 4, 2026, in Houston Hospice, Houston, TX.



Warren “Dan” Nilsson

Dan, as he preferred to be called, was born March 6, 1942, at Bellin Hospital, Green Bay, WI, to Warren and Ann Nilsson. Dan grew up in New England where he graduated from Groton High School, Groton, CT, in 1960 and earned a basketball scholarship to the University of Rhode Island (URI) where he played four years. Warren served in the U.S. Coast Guard during WWII while infant Dan stayed with his mother and grandparents in Green Bay and Washington Island.

Upon graduating from URI, he was hired by IBM in Poughkeepsie, New York. While working at IBM, he completed his master's degree at New York University and his doctorate at Oklahoma State University (OSU).

While Dan was completing his degree at OSU, he met and married Beth Ward who was there with her son, Rocky, teaching and finishing her master's degree.

Following graduation, they moved to Carmel, NY, and Dan returned to IBM. Three years later in 1976, IBM transferred Dan to Atlanta, GA, to support Atlanta University by teaching in their MBA program and bringing the university into the computer age.

While living in Atlanta, Dan accomplished his dream of writing a book, *Orientation to Professional Practice* (McGraw-Hill, 1980), and Beth completed her doctorate.

Together they started their own consulting firm, Nilsson & Associates, LLC. While Dan and Beth were consulting at client locations, Rocky and his wife, Tracey, provided office and materials

support. Nilsson & Associates continued to serve clients until 2021 when covid shut down the country.

Dan never met a stranger and was an encourager to all. His smile was contagious and his kindness never ceased.

Dan trained to become a Navigator, a Christian ministry that shares the gospel of Jesus and helps people grow in Christ. He shared his faith in Jesus Christ with nearly everyone he encountered. He was a member of First Baptist Church, Bay City, TX, and Bethel Evangelical Free Church, Washington Island, WI. Along with leading Navigator groups, Dan led Bible studies, and most recently, Grief Share groups. Most of all in later years, he loved preparing for and participating in Vacation Bible School at Bethel.

Dan had numerous hobbies and interests. Photography was his favorite and he shared his knowledge and love of birding with many. His photography from his trips around the world would make an unbelievable coffee table book.

Fishing wasn't far behind. He was a member of the Washington Island Sportsman's Club and had many great fishing buddies, adventures, and tall tales.

Dan's genealogy research culminated in a book that he donated to the Washington Island Historical Archives. His love of Washington Island led him to participate in Friends of Plum and Pilot Islands in a long fight to recover those island's natural environments, restore their declining fisheries, and save their historic lighthouses.

Dan is survived by his wife, Beth, Rocky and Tracey (son and daughter-in-law), and Will (grandson), his siblings Norma Beaty (Don) and Nancy Main (George) along with seven nieces and three nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents, Warren and Ann Nilsson.

A Celebration of Life for Dan was held at First Baptist Church, Bay City, TX, on Saturday, January 24. Burial will be on Washington Island, WI.

Donations in memory of Dan Nilsson can be made to First Baptist Church, Bay City, TX, or Bethel Evangelical Free Church, Washington Island, WI.

Someday Is Today!

Volunteer with FOPPI and Learn from New Experiences, Grow from Different Challenges, and Make Wonderful Friends

Marketing Guru

We are looking for someone to work on our marketing team. In this role you would:

- Write and update social media content on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and BlueSky
- Assist with updates to the Friends of Plum and Pilot Islands' website
- Write press releases to promote FOPPI's mission, projects and events
- Learn about the importance of historical preservation and restoration
- Work alongside some of the most dedicated and passionate volunteers on the planet
- Walk among the spirits of giants and preserve the history of those who served on the islands with the U.S. Life Saving Service and Coast Guard

This is a virtual volunteer position. Perks include behind-the-scenes tours of the Green Bay and Horicon National Wildlife Refuges along with the opportunity to represent FOPPI in community outreach events, programs, and projects.

Membership Assistant

We are looking for someone to assist our membership team leader. In this role you would:

- Record new memberships
- Follow up on renewals
- Update our mass mailing program (MailChimp)
- Launch new membership campaigns
- Report membership numbers to board members
- Learn about the importance of historical preservation and restoration
- Work alongside some of the most dedicated and passionate volunteers on the planet
- Walk among the spirits and preserve the history of those who served on the islands with the U.S. Life Saving Service and Coast Guard

This is a virtual volunteer position. Perks include behind-the-scenes tours of the Green Bay and Horicon National Wildlife Refuges along with the opportunity to represent FOPPI in community outreach events, programs, and projects.

Crew for *The Shoreline*

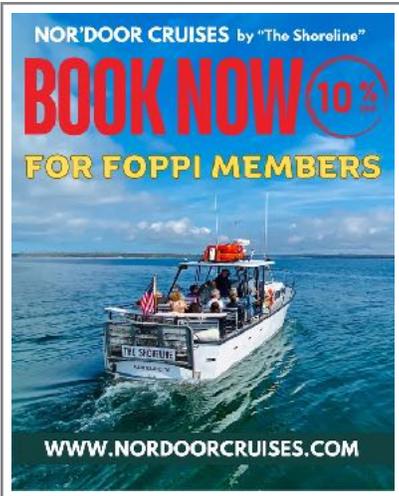
The Friends of Plum and Pilot Islands owns and operates the 17-passenger tour boat *The Shoreline* out of Gills Rock. The profits from the operation of *The Shoreline* directly support the preservation of the historic maritime structures on Plum and Pilot Islands.

We need **several** volunteer crew members for *The Shoreline*. We are looking for anyone who loves being on the water, and **we will train you!** Duties include assisting with docking and departing, answering guests' questions, doing light cleanup of the boat, and understanding and conveying safety procedures. There are no set hours. As cruises are booked, you will be asked if you are available for that cruise. Advance notice of a cruise might be as short as a day or two or as long as several weeks. As a volunteer on a Coast Guard-regulated boat, you will be required to have a drug test.

There is some task to do for everyone who is willing and able, no matter your background or experience. Please reach out to us with your interest or questions at friendsofplumandpilot@gmail.com. Thank you for your consideration!

I feel the greatest reward for doing is the opportunity to do more.
—Jonas Salk

Supporting FOPPI



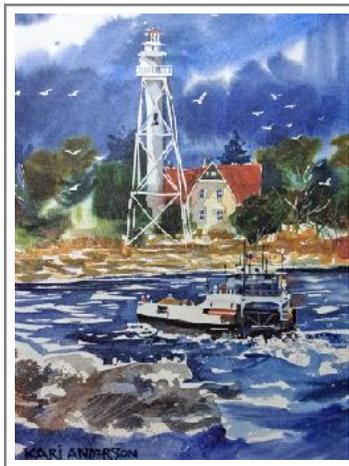
Gift yourself an outing to remember. Book your cruise on *The Shoreline* today! FOPPI members save 10%.



Self-care is never a selfish act—it is simply good stewardship of the only gift I have, the gift I was put on earth to offer to others.—Parker Palmer



Mug featuring Plum Island Life-Saving Station.



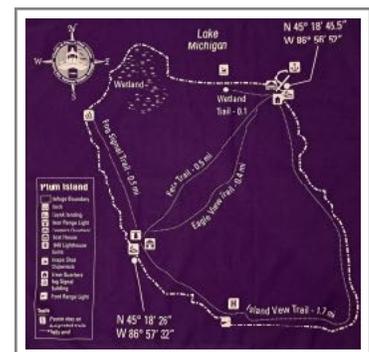
Print by Kari Anderson.



Cool Plum Island patch.

Merch Alert!

Visit foppistore.square.site/s/shop to check out these awesome new additions to our FOPPI shop and to view our selection of tee shirts, glasses, hats, and so much more!



Bandana designed by FOPPI volunteer Karen Ellery.

Supporting FOPPI

Friends of Plum and Pilot Islands welcomes these new members:

- ◆ Jack Miron, Green Bay, WI
- ◆ Bob Spielman, Fish Creek, WI

Thank you for your membership!

Friends of Plum and Pilot Islands, Inc. (FOPPI) was established in 2007 to preserve the unique island ecosystems and foster partnerships to preserve their heritage for future generations.

Your membership dues and charitable gifts help to restore and preserve the historical maritime structures on these island and support education in the areas of conservation, natural history, and environmental protection.

Members who receive our quarterly newsletter, *FOPPI Forum*, are invited to attend the annual meeting and to join us seasonal cleanup, trail maintenance, invasive species removal, and light repair work.

Whatever your interest, there are events and projects that will benefit from your talent and support! Visit www.plumandpilot.org/foppi-volunteer to learn more.

To view FOPPI's financial records,
scan the QR code below.



Follow FOPPI on social media!
Download our audio tours at
www.plumandpilot.org/audio-tour.

It's always "that time of year" to consider your charitable distributions! Are you dealing with your Required Minimum Distribution from your IRA? Tax-Free Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs) can benefit you and Friends of Plum and Pilot Islands' work.

Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs), also called IRA charitable distributions, enable individuals to fulfill their required minimum distribution by a direct transfer to support a charity/charities, as long as the sum of the distributions is within the \$100,000 limit. And because QCDs don't increase taxable income, they can help you avoid higher tax rates. You can use this strategy if:

- You are 70½ or older at the time of the gift.
- You direct distributions in the amount of your choosing, up to an annual limit set by the IRS from your traditional or Roth IRA to Friends of Plum and Pilot Islands (other types of retirement plans are not covered by the law).
- To count for the current tax year, QCDs distribution must be made before December 31.

Contact your IRA custodian and ask them to send the check for a "qualified charitable distribution" to: Friends of Plum and Pilot Islands, EIN 74-3226051.

**Is your organization or nonprofit hosting a community event?
Let us know if you would like FOPPI to come share our story!
Email us as friendsofplumandpilot@gmail.com, and we will arrange for one
(or more!) of our knowledgeable and passionate volunteers to attend.**

Supporting FOPPI

FOPPI is an affiliate of the Wisconsin State Historical Society (wisconsinhistory.org), members of Washington Island Chamber of Commerce (washingtontisland.com), Door County Historical Society (doorcountyhistoricalsociety.org), U.S. Life-Saving Service Heritage Association (uslife-savingservice.org), Door County Visitor Bureau (doorcounty.com), and a partner with Wisconsin Marine Historical Society (wmhs.org).

FOPPI thanks its distinguished
community and business associates!



Thank you, Donors!

The work done on the Green Bay National Wildlife Refuge is funded in part by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Friends of Plum and Pilot Islands. The projects and programs we have worked on would not be possible without your financial support. Your donations and inspiration help us to preserve and restore this important part of our heritage within the Green Bay and Gravel Island National Wildlife Refuge. Our gratitude is great.

Tom & Jeannine Biermann
Gil & Joyce Carlson
Sally A. Dery
Danielle Englebert
Railbrook Foundation Inc.
Steve & Jean Fox
Jack Grundmeier
Gerald F. Harris
Marjorie Lynn Karges
Peter & Marion LeMere
Stiles & Deb Meredith
Sandy & Ed Miller
Christopher Nelson
Scott Nelson
Larry & Linda Perkins
Mark Replogle
Timothy Sprecher
William and Cheryl Surbaugh
Thrivent

And all who donated at one of the many other events where FOPPI was represented!

Thanks to Jeff Heal of Washington Island for assisting with FOPPI's mail pickup!



NorDoor Cruises

Docent-led Lighthouse and Death's Door Cruises
and Private Charters



"To Death's Door and Back with FOPPI!"

www.NorDoorCruises.com

*"Where History
and Nature meet
at The Door."*



www.PlumandPilot.org

***Winter reminds us that everyone and everything
needs some quiet time.***

—Katrina Mayer



Broken ice, Detroit Island. February 1, 2026.
Photo by Nancy Hoefs.

Membership Form



Where History and Nature Meet at the Door!

FOPPI Membership/Donation Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Name as I wish it to appear in appreciation materials: _____

Please do not list my name in your materials.

Do you have a connection to the islands? _____

I would like to receive my newsletter: by mail; by email; both.

Please choose a Membership level to join us in our mission to preserve and protect Plum and Pilot Islands.

- \$30 Individual
- \$50 Family (two or more family members)
- \$75 Patron
- \$100 Keeper
- \$1000 Lifetime

Gift memberships are available!

Please use this section to mark this membership as a gift.

Gift Membership for:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Your support is critical to the Friends of Plum and Pilot Islands (FOPPI). Restoration and preservation of these beautiful Wisconsin islands and structures require a group like FOPPI to make it happen.

Fun Fact: Plum Island is home to the only Duluth-style Life Saving Station on the Great Lakes!

If you would like to donate to a specific FOPPI cause, please let us know:

- Environmental Education \$ _____
 - Historic Preservation \$ _____
 - Special Events \$ _____
 - "Float the Boat" donation for *The Shoreline* \$ _____
 - Gift Membership (\$30 each) \$ _____
- Total Amount** \$ _____

The Friends of Plum and Pilot Islands is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Your gift is tax deductible as allowed by law.



FOPPI Members Receive:

- ◆ FOPPI Forum Newsletter
- ◆ Invitation to FOPPI's Annual Meeting
- ◆ 10% off in-person merchandise sales
- ◆ 10% off *The Shoreline* cruises
- ◆ Priority access to programs and Refuge volunteer opportunities

MAIL TO:

**Friends of Plum and
Pilot Islands
PO Box 61
Washington Island, WI
54246**

OR VISIT US ONLINE!

www.plumandpilot.org/membership

OR USE OUR QR CODE:



Friends of Plum & Pilot Islands/Membership

Is it time to renew your membership?

Mailing label includes membership expiration date above your name. If membership has expired, please renew using the form on page 15. Mail it along with your payment to: FOPPI, P.O. Box 61, Washington Island, WI 54246. If you receive the *Forum* electronically, watch for an email that tells you it's time to renew. For membership questions call Mary Beth Volmer: (262) 613-4680.



Friends of Plum and Pilot Islands, Inc.
P.O. Box 61
Washington Island, WI 54246

Help Us Be Green!

To help save paper, printing, and postage expenses, please consider receiving your newsletter via email. Just contact us at friendsofplumandpilot@gmail.com.

Previous issues of the *Forum* are available on our website to download or read.



The mission of Friends of Plum and Pilot Islands is to partner with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to support the preservation, restoration, maintenance, and contemporary use of the historic resources on Plum and Pilot Islands, and to conserve and protect wildlife resources while providing opportunities for quality wildlife-dependent recreation.

Friends of Plum and Pilot Islands, Inc.

President: Mary Beth Volmer, 2026
The Shoreline Director: Stiles Meredith, 2028
Treasurer: Kimberly Wells, 2026
Secretary: Karen Ellery, 2026

Board of Directors

Historic Preservation & Restoration: Open
Membership: Laura Chappell, 2026
Merchandising: Sally Dery, 2026
Volunteer Coordinator: Jim Schwartz, 2028

Emeritus Directors

Mike Brodd
Lew Clarke
Eric Greenfeldt
Jude Kuenn
Chuck Scheckel
Paul Schumacher
Tim Sweet
Gary Wilson

Volunteer Team Members

Environmental Education: Jack Grundmeier, Ginnie Harney*, Dawn Nelson
Fundraising: Karen Ellery*, Jim Schwartz, Tim Sweet, Mary Beth Volmer
Governance: Open
Historic Preservation & Restoration: Dallas Greetham, Jude Kuenn, Paul Kuenn, Paul Schumacher, Tim Sweet, Louis Wegner, Kimberly Wells
Marketing: Jake Heffernan*, Colleen Pilat
Membership: Laura Chappell*, Bob and Sue Griem, Cheryl Lenz
Merchandising: Sally Dery*
Newsletter: Nancy Hoefs*, Jude Kuenn, Stiles Meredith, Mike Palecek, Tim Sweet, Mary Beth Volmer
Outreach: Sally Dery, Ginnie Harney, Jude Kuenn, Dawn and Scott Nelson, Jim Schwartz, Mary Beth Volmer
The Shoreline Captains: Jason Albertson, Al Hunsader, Stiles Meredith, Scott Nelson, Jim Robinson, Doug Smith, Ben Young
Crew: Emily Campbell, Sally Dery, Ginnie Harney, Barb Jacobs, Nancy Hoefs, Pete LeMere, Deb Meredith, Dawn Nelson, Mike Repp, Jim Robinson, Jim Schwartz, Jon Wall
Volunteer Coordinators: Sally Dery, Bob and Sue Griem, Jim Schwartz*

*Denotes team leader