



P R E S S R E L E A S E

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Fishtown's Village Cheese Shanty Is Now Safe

Leland, MI, January 17, 2020 – The Fishtown Preservation Society (FPS) has lifted and moved one of its historic shanties out of danger from the high water of Lake Michigan on Friday, January 10.

Fishtown Preservation began implementation of Phase I of the Campaign for Fishtown site project in December, 2019. On Friday, January 10, the Village Cheese Shanty was lifted by crane and moved to the Leland Harbor parking lot, so its failed and flooding foundation can be replaced.

The shanty that now houses the Village Cheese shop was built in 1958 by Louis Steffens for his commercial fishing operation and his then new vessel, the fishing tug *Janice Sue*. The wood retaining wall and concrete foundation failed over the years, and recent high water has washed away the soil beneath. The new foundation will be constructed of sheet pile and concrete. After the foundation is rebuilt the shanty will be moved back to its original location.

Building contractor, Bob Biggs of Biggs Construction, says that doing this work in the winter is a challenge, but understands that work in Fishtown can only happen in the off-season, when the Fishtown businesses are closed. He and his crews are also eager for the Village Cheese Shanty to be able to reopen in the spring. Owner of the Village Cheese Shanty, Dave Kareck, says that he has no plans to change anything inside of the shanty, so it will look just like his customers remember, but without the flooding of the summer of 2019.

This winter the Morris Shanty (on the south side of the river), will also soon be lifted and moved safely back from the river's edge until its wood foundation and dock piles can be replaced. The Morris Shanty, named for Adelia Ball Morris, is the oldest shanty in Fishtown, and has been in continuous operation as a commercial fishing shanty since 1903. Morris and her daughters purchased the shanty in 1959 to ensure that commercial fishermen would continue to have a place to work from in Fishtown. Prior to the high water issues, Fishtown Preservation would regularly take small groups into the shanty to experience an authentic commercial fishing space, with fishing equipment that is still in use.

Fishtown Preservation has spent the last five years developing plans to improve Fishtown's infrastructure. The site project includes rehabilitating three shanties — the Village Cheese Shanty, Carlson's Fishery and the Morris Shanty, resolving critical infrastructure and drainage issues, replacing all the docks, fixing drainage issues, and addressing accessibility and landscaping. In the past two years, high Lake Michigan water levels and greater flow over the Leland Dam has exacerbated an already serious situation, causing additional structural problems to the shanties and docks. The situation is now urgent.

The site projects are to be funded by the Campaign for Fishtown. The project construction and materials costs are estimated at \$2,500,000. We are grateful to the many individuals and foundations that have already donated funds to help save Fishtown. At this time a total of \$1,000,000 has been raised, enabling us to begin the critical work on the Village Cheese and Morris Shanties. However, we still need to raise \$1,500,000 to complete all of the site projects — which will preserve Fishtown's historical integrity and ensure that the site will continue to be publicly accessible now and for future generations.

\$480,000 of these funds are from a challenge grant — The Jeffris Family Foundation offered Fishtown Preservation \$160,000 towards work on the shanties if Fishtown Preservation could raise \$320,000 to match it. This goal was met in August, 2019. The Jeffris Family Foundation is dedicated to the Midwest's cultural history and heritage through preserving regionally and national important historic buildings and decorative arts projects. The Foundation supports significant projects that strive for high preservation standards and show a strong degree of broad-based local support. The primary goal of the Jeffris Family Foundation is the fund preservation projects in the Midwest (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin) focusing on projects in smaller cities, villages, and towns. For more information about the Jeffris Family Foundation, visit www.JeffrisFoundation.org

You Can Help

It is going to take a unity of effort to save Fishtown from the effects of the high water. We need everyone that loves Fishtown to help. For more information and to support The Campaign for Fishtown, go to www.fishtownmi.org/campaign To see the project plans and/or to schedule a tour with Fishtown Preservation's Executive Director, Amanda Holmes, call 231-256-8878. Thank you for your continued support of Fishtown.

About Fishtown Preservation Society

Fishtown is a Historical District in Leland, Michigan, comprised of a collection of weathered fishing shanties, smokehouses, overhanging docks, commercial fishing tugs and charter boats along the Leland River, as it flows into Lake Michigan. Fishtown is one of the only working waterfronts left on the Great Lakes, where visitors and locals are able to experience an authentic connection to local and regional history, Great Lakes commercial fishing, and maritime traditions. Today the shanties are filled with unique shops, and an active fishery. The commercial fishing tugs, *Joy* and *Janice Sue*, are licensed and remain active.

Fishtown Preservation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, owns Fishtown — maintaining and preserving the historical integrity of the property and ensuring that it continues to be publicly accessible now and for future generations with the support of the community and donors.