

# the Society News

Vol. 1 No. 5

a publication of the Harsens Island – St. Clair Flats Historical Society

December 2010

PO Box 44  
Harsens Island MI 48028  
www.HISCFHS.org  
Email@hiscfhs.org  
Editor: Michele Komar

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

**JAN 22, 2011**

**GENERAL MEETING**

**2PM @ LIONS HALL**

**NO DECEMBER MEETING**

## from the president

Our Island is very quite at the end of November, our summer residents have closed up their cottages and some of our year round residents have left for warmer weather. I for one like winter here on our Island. Working this morning on the December issue of the Society newsletter, the sun over Seaway Island on the South Channel is bright and my front room is warmed as it comes through the window walls, leading to my front porch. The view from my computer is of Light #10 on the Canadian side of the river. In a few short months the river will be filled with ice and frozen solid. Then I will see tracks coming over the ice from Seaway to the Flats, my side of Harsens Island. The grey fox that live over there will be hunting rabbits on my property. My duck boat is out of the water and the motor stored for the winter and if I do any fishing it will be through the ice in Craig Highway along my property line. Enough of this talk about the winter. Back, to the business, of our Society.

Our November 27<sup>th</sup> meeting, held at the Lions Hall, was short on attendance. With the Thanksgiving weekend and fewer of our members still on the Island, I am sure were the reasons. We had a very full agenda as we are heading into the end of our first Society year. Our Secretary, Nancy Licata, reported the membership at 103, can you believe it? Our Treasurer, Chris Wludyka, reported over thirteen thousand dollars in our bank account, in large part from those who joined as Charter Members. Our building fund stands at seven hundred dollars as we work to get the necessary funds to purchase the Old Fire House in Sans Souci or another suitable location to house the Society. Our bylaws are being revised and a report was given on its progress. When completed, it will be presented to the membership for approval. Our Annual meeting will be in August next year and a new slate of Directors will be elected at that meeting. A ballot will be mailed in June 2011 for your vote. If you would like to be a Director, let me know and your name will be placed on the ballot. Our meeting dates for 2011 have been decided both for the Board and General Membership meetings. I am sure Michele will include it in this newsletter. Don't forget, all board meetings are open to our membership, try to attend one and see your Board in action.

cont. pg 4

## Billboard Magazine Chronicles the Decline of Tashmoo Park – Part 1

*While doing some research on Tashmoo Park, your editor came across a series of snippets published from 1943 through 1957 in Billboard magazine. Billboard was founded in 1894. Originally titled Billboard Advertising it was a trade paper for the bill posting industry. Within a few years of its founding, it began to carry news of outdoor amusements, a major consumer of billboard space. Eventually Billboard became the paper of record for circuses, carnivals, amusement parks, fairs, vaudeville, and other live entertainment. The magazine began coverage of motion pictures in 1909 and of radio in the 1920s. From 1961 through today, Billboard is devoted entirely to the music industry. This is Part 1 of a two part series.*

### March 13, 1943 – All Major Spots Certain to Open

DETROIT, March 6.- All major Detroit amusement parks expect to reopen this season despite gas rationing, shortage of help and other wartime problems, a check of all offices revealed this week. Earliest to open, and the only one to set a definite date, will be Eastwood Park, which cracks its season April 16, about the same date as a year ago.

All managers contacted were of the opinion that business would be excellent this year, with spending by war workers toting plenty of moola.

Tashmoo Park, on Harsens Island in Lake St. Claire, is expected to operate as a picnic park on special charter this year. Tashmoo has been handicapped by the absence of regular steamer service and is now reached chiefly by a remote island road that should receive little traffic under gas rationing.

cont. pg 2

### **Aug. 14, 1943 – Flemings Take Over Mich. Tashmoo Spot**

DETROIT, Aug. 7.-Tashmoo Amusement Park, on Harsens Island in the St. Clair River delta, 30 miles north of Detroit, has been taken over by newly incorporated Tashmoo Park, Inc. The company is headed by Arlington R. Fleming and his father, Peter S. Fleming.

Arlington R. Fleming is with the Ashley & Dustin steamship line, which has operated boats from Detroit to the park for several decades, but the park operation is now independent of the boat line.

This season the park is only open on Saturday nights, when a special excursion steamer is run from Detroit. Ballroom and restaurant are in operation, but all rides have been removed and the concessions are not now in operation.

### **June 17, 1944 – Tashmoo, Michigan, Preps for Summer: Post-War Plans Set**

DETROIT, June 10.-Tashmoo Park, in Lake St. Clair on Harsens Island, is slated to open for the summer June 24, according to Arlington R. (Arley) Fleming, former orchestra producer, who bought the property last year.

Tashmoo will be operated chiefly as a picnic spot this year, with reconstruction work being started to remodel present structures and modernize the plant, one of the oldest amusement properties in the area. Installation of full amusement park facilities, such as were formerly on the island, prior to removal some years ago with dropping off of steamboat excursions, is planned in a three-year post-war program.

Principal access to the park this year will be by automobile, with a limited number of special excursions via the S. S. Put-In-Bay, some of them privately sponsored by organizations, scheduled for the season. Tashmoo can only be reached by auto ferry from the mainland, about 40 miles from Detroit.

Tashmoo was operated only on Saturday nights last season, with moonlight parties from Detroit almost the only source of patronage, so that the policy for 1944 marks a manifold increase in activity.

Fleming is considering the possibility of ballroom dancing, with a band booked in for the season.

**Sept. 1, 1945** – T/S B. Shaw Redman, 39, former drummer, drowned recently in the course of secret duty on the Atlantic coast. For three successive years he was the drummer with Finzel's orchestra on the Put-In-Bay running out of Detroit and subsequently on the Tashmoo and Western States. He also played for some three years at the Blossom Heath Inn, Detroit roadhouse. Survived by his widow. Burial in Grandlawn Cemetery, Detroit.

### **Oct. 6, 1945 – Tashmoo Biz Picks Up at Season's End**

DETROIT, Sept. 29.-Tashmoo Park, on Harsens Island in Lake St. Clair, 40 miles from Detroit, has closed for the season after operating weekends only during the summer. Funspot was run by Arlington R. Fleming, who has had it the past few seasons. Access to the park this summer was only occasionally by excursion steamer, as well as patrons coming by car and ferry from Detroit.

Funspot was run by Arlington R. Fleming, who has had it the past few seasons. Access to the park this summer was only occasionally by excursion steamer, as well as patrons coming by car and ferry from Detroit and other parts of the territory. However, there was a pickup of patronage with the lifting of gas rationing the middle of August, but this came too late to give much of a fillip to the season's business.

One feature that did help, however, was the well-systematized advertising campaign run during the early months of the season by resorts and all types of tourist attractions in the Lake St. Clair area designed to draw large weekend patronage. This was handled as institutional advertising for the area rather than as specific publicity for any one spot.

### **August 10, 1946 – Rink & Park To Revamp to Name Band Terpspots**

DETROIT, Aug. 3.- At Tashmoo Park, located on Harsens Island, 30 miles northeast of Detroit, plans for a new ballroom are being made for construction in time for opening next spring. Spot is operated by Arlington R. (Arley) Fleming, who formerly fronted his own band. Originally a full-fledged amusement park, accessible only by excursion steamer, spot has been mostly dormant during the war except for special parties, and most of the old-time amusement facilities have been removed.

### **October 12, 1946 – 20G Remodeling Program Planned for Tashmoo Funspot**

DETROIT, Oct 5. – Arley Fleming, former band leader who has operated Tashmoo Park on Harsens Island, 40 miles northeast of here, the past four years, plans to remodel the ballroom at a cost of \$20,000. When finished, dancery will accommodate 4,000 dancers, Fleming says.

The Tashmoo op plans to bring in name bands, probably for one or two-week stands, in an effort to bid for business which proved so profitable at Walled Lake Casino this season.

Fleming plans a park promotional policy next season aimed at building industrial picnics to increase weekend daytime business. Park has three baseball diamonds, an athletic track, ballroom and picnic facilities. Spot had only one ride this year, a Merry-Go-Round, but more may be added next season.

Regarding 1946 business, Fleming said it increased 200 per cent over 1945. This is the heaviest increase reported by any Michigan park.

Tashmoo Park is one of the oldest amusement centers in Michigan, having been established in 1900.

### **March 8, 1947 – Two Funspots Will Reopen – Tashmoo and Sugar Island should add zest in transportation fight.**

DETROIT, March 1 – Battle for patronage among Detroit's amusement parks may be a bit tougher this year than former years as two old-time parks figure on swinging back into the local picture.

Tashmoo Park on Harsens Island in the Saint Clair River and Sugar Island Park, at the mouth of the Detroit River, are the two spots set for openings this season after being closed for many years. Sugar Island's project was reported last week (*The Billboard* March 1).

At Tashmoo, which has been operated as an occasional picnic spot the last few years, Owner-Manager Arlington R. Fleming has elaborate plans for full-scale park operation, including installation of rides, concessions and other attractions. Developments are being held up, however, because of the grave uncertainties of transportation to the island. Projected end of the Detroit and Cleveland Navigation Company would upset the possibility of getting Detroiters to the island, except by a roundabout bus and ferry route or those driving their own cars over the same route. Plans for large scale picnic operation, however, have centered on reaching the island, about 40 miles by direct water route from Detroit, by lake steamers.

Tashmoo management, incidentally, is set to benefit inadvertently from a real press agent's dream, since the Detroit Telephone Company is placing in service a new telephone exchange named Tashmoo and the park's local representative is on the new exchange.

#### **April 5, 1947 – Detroit's Tashmoo Opening Hits Snag**

DETROIT, March 29. - Plans for operation of Tashmoo Park, which was expected to reopen on an enlarged scale this year, have been hit by counter plans to sub-divide the property and remove the amusement attractions. Formerly one of the area's major parks, it has been threatened by loss of steamer transportation from Detroit.

Arley Fleming, orchestra leader, and Val Campbell, Gus Sun Booking Agency, owners of the property, came up with a plan this week to transfer the large Merry-Go-Round and building to Belle Isle park, city-operated spot, at present without commercial entertainment. Plan is now up before the parks and recreation commission.

#### **May 3, 1947 – Lack of Steamship Service Halts Tashmoo Reopening**

DETROIT, April 26. – Val Campbell, Gus Sun Booking Office, and Arley Fleming, operators of Tashmoo Park on Harsens Island, have tentatively abandoned plans to reopen the park on an enlarged scale this season. Lack of steamship service on the Great Lakes, caused by labor disputes, has made direct access from Detroit impossible, and the park accordingly may be closed.

Project to move the Merry-Go-Round, a 64-passenger unit to Belle Isle Park, operated by the city, has been presented to the city council by the park owners, and is now pending official action.

#### **Aug 9, 1947 – Steamer Service Rebuilds Tashmoo**

DETROIT, Aug 2.- Business at Tashmoo Park on Harsens Island, in Lake Saint Clair, has shown a nice pick-up Tuesdays and Thursdays with the resumption of steamship transportation from the city by the S. S. Put-In-Bay for the first time in several years. Park was otherwise accessible only by private car over a long roundabout course from Detroit, with a ferry

trip across a corner of the lake, and was operated only as a picnic park in recent seasons.

Deal was under consideration earlier in the year to move the large park Merry-Go-Round to Belle Isle, city-owned park in the Detroit River, but has been dropped, and the spot retains the ride as one of its major attractions.

Spot is managed by Arlington (Arley) Fleming, former band leader, who took over the property about five years ago. It is the oldest amusement spot in Southeastern Michigan, with a good excursion following which is being rebuilt with the return of boat transportation.

#### **Jan. 17, 1948**

##### **AMUSEMENT PARK & EXCURSION STEAMER**

Park is located 30 miles from Detroit and contains about 20 acres, completely fenced, fine shaded picnic groves, 2 ball diamonds, athletic track, steamer dock, dance hall, pavilion, cafeteria, Merry-Go-Round building, 7-room caretaker's home, new 9-room owner's residence, large cottage, 3 concession stands, toilets, workshops and various other buildings. Personal property includes 50-ft. Merry-Go-Round, picnic tables and benches for 3000 people, cafeteria tables and chairs, coffee urns, steam tables, cash registers, refrigerators, all tools and equipment and many other items. The excursion steamer carries 2600 passengers and is in excellent condition. Vessel has large dance deck, dining room, bars, lunch and drink stands, private parlors and steamer chair deck. This business can be purchased for a small fraction of replacement cost. \$125,000 cash will handle, balance terms

**TASHMOO PARK, Inc.**

**4251 West Lafayette**

**Detroit 8, Mich.**

**Tashmoo 5-1849**

#### **Dec 13, 1948 – Tashmoo, Det., In New Hands**

DETROIT, Nov 6. - Tashmoo Amusement Park on Harsens Island, one of the oldest recreation sites in this area, has been purchased by Tashmoo Park Recreation Company, recently incorporated as a Michigan firm with a capitalization of \$50,000. Spot was bought from Arlington R. Fleming, former band leader and booking agent, and his father, Peter S. Fleming.

New company is headed by Don Zimmer, president: Harold Lightbody, vice-president, and Peter Krispin, secretary-treasurer. Zimmer and Lightbody are affiliated with the Zimmer Trailer Company here, while Krispin was park's resident agent. Paul Greeley, business manager of the park this year, remains under the new regime.

Plans for 1949 include the installation of several new rides, with operation primarily as a picnic park. Direct boat service from Detroit again is anticipated for next year, while park is also accessible by car and two ferries. ■

**Look for Part 2 in the January 2011 issue**

## from the president *cont. from page 1*

Let me close on this note, God blessed us with Harsens Island; we are here on his mission, to protect it not only for ourselves but for our children and their future children. That is the mission of our Society. Telling the stories of Harsens Island from the first Native Americans, who hunted our Island and fished the waters which surround it. Jacob Harsen and his family, who first settled along the North Channel. The Harvey Stewart family, their house still standing on Stewart Road and the house of Aura P. Stewart, his farm now owned by Bob Williams. The Indian burial ground discovered when Captain Smith was having his basement dug on the South Channel. The tombstone of Jacob Harsen II the inscription reads:

JACOB HARSEN  
died October 31, 1843  
aged 54 years 4 mos. 9 days

Found by our member, Denne Osgood, on the property of his father, Milton Osgood. You can read about it in the *Delta News* 1965 issue. Also, the stories you can tell about when and how you came to Harsens Island. Don't forget to write about them and share with us through our Editor, Michele Komar.

*- Gary Grout*

## new members for nov 2010

Barbara Crown  
Walter & Mary Skula

***Special Thanks*** to those for their generous donation to our Building Fund.

Bill & Karen Smith  
Walter & Mary Skula  
Arlene Earl  
Clayton Evans

## from our members

I recently learned about the HISC Historical Society from my friend, Jerry Munro. He has kindly sent me an application for membership and a copy of the August newsletter. The newsletter is fantastic!

I really enjoyed reading about Tashmoo Park and vaguely remember finally convincing my parents to take my sister Alice and me to the park one day. I must have been quite young because my impressions aren't at all sharp. I imagine that we did ride on the merry-go-round though.

My family lived in Detroit and purchased a cottage next to the one owned by the Munroe family. Their Cottage was called "The House That Jack Built" and our cottage was called "MooreView" as our last name was Moore. We lived there all summer from the early 1940s until my sister and I were both married in 1960. My Dad passed away soon after that and my mother sold the place around 1962.

My sister and I have wonderful memories of our happy days there spent fishing, boating, swimming and watching the river traffic. I remember the freighters passing by, first pulling the water out of the canal behind the cottage and then the surge of water that would follow. We liked to be out on the river in front of the cottage in inner tubes to "ride the waves". Later, the freighter traffic was diverted from our part of the river.

I am 70 years old and my husband and I actually met the first time on Harsens Island. He was attending the University of Detroit and had a classmate, Al Aimette, who later became my brother-in-law. Al came up one day in November to help us take a couple of boats out of the water for the winter. He had asked around the dorm if anyone wanted to come to Harsens Island to help him and my husband, Bob Kaiser, volunteered. We have been married for nearly 50 wonderful years (our actual anniversary is November 26<sup>th</sup>). We have 6 children and 19 grandchildren so we are always busy with family visits and events.

Bob was a career Army officer and retired in 1988. We lived in many beautiful places both here in the United States and Europe but my childhood and teenage years spent on Harsens Island hold very dear memories. We last visited in 2008 when we went to Detroit for my 50th high school reunion. We dropped in on Jerry Munroe "out of the blue" and he most graciously welcomed us and we spent several hours reminiscing. We actually took a picture standing on the very spot where Bob and I met all those years ago. It was a wonderful day.

Congratulations on founding the Historical Society. Again, the newsletter is so impressive and I look forward to receiving more issues in the future.

Mary Ann Kaiser  
September 23, 2010

# Fact and Romance of Harsens Island Indians Loved It Old Mother Rood and Her Dead Papoose Harsen Homestead Tragedy Part 1

The Society President, Gary Grout, has contributed an article printed over 100 years ago. As it is rather lengthy, we will print it in installments. Here is Part 1 from the *Detroit News Tribune*, Aug. 30, 1896, page 16:

Early Recollections of the Beautiful Island at the Mouth of the St. Clair River Harsen's Island, situated at the mouth of the St. Clair River, has a history, recorded and hereditary, reaching back for more than 200 years; a history coincident, in many respects, with the history of the borderland.

From the earliest known period it has been the home of the Indian. The facility with which their favorite food could be obtained from the forest, lake and stream induced the naturally indolent savage to pitch his wigwam in this wild, romantic spot. The Indian villages nestled among the vine-draped trees and stretched along the white, sandy beach. Their homes were simple and rude. Broad strips of bark and the skins of wild animals spread out from the center pole of the wigwam gave them shelter and more skins heaped upon the floor furnished them their beds.

From this spot the warrior braves, in all their paraphernalia of savage splendor, war paint and feathers, went out to battle in their long, birchen canoes, returning amid wild war whoops and hideous chantings with strings of reeking scalps waving from long poles and droves of shackled prisoners, who were expected to furnish material for the war feast. On the hard, sandy beach in front of the prison lodge the fires were kindled and the kettles hung.

When all the horrible preparations were completed, the warriors from all parts of the Island were invited to the feast. The invitations were sent out by the chief of the tribe. Small squares of birch bark supplied the place of cards, and the bearer by word of mouth gave the invitation. Each guest brought with him his wooden bowl and spoon. Further details of the loathsome banquet are best left to the imagination.

Here in times of peace, within the shadows of the primitive forest and overlooking the beautiful river, the young squaws squatted upon mats of colored rushes and embroidered their buckskin moccasins and their broadcloth petticoats, leggings and blankets, with glass and shell beads and colored porcupine quills; fit "fancywork" for the clever fingers of the dusky maidens.

And here the little "niches", the Indian boys and girls, practiced with their bows and arrows, paddled their toy canoes or sported like ducks on the bounding waves. The Chippewas were the most intelligent of all the old Indian tribes in this vicinity. Early in the sixteenth century they gained possession of all the land bordering on Lake St. Clair, together with the adjacent islands.

There was among them a tradition, which had been handed down from generation to generation, that some time in their early history a great battle was fought and many savage tribes among their enemies were exterminated.

Throughout this region, particularly along the rivers and streams and on the most elevated spots of the islands, are mounds filled with human bones scattered around showing that they were hastily gathered together. These mounds are plainly visible in certain parts of Harsen's Island. In fact, the whole Island was a favorite burial place for the roving tribes as well as for the Chippewas.

The burial of a great chief in the old orchard near the Harsen homestead is thus described by an early writer. The body was wrapped in a blue broadcloth blanket bordered all around with silver broaches and fastened together with many silver clasps. His hat was trimmed with silver lace and a string of 16 silver crescents was around his neck. Many broad silver bands around his arms completed the ornamentation of the chief's body. But of all these bits of legendary lore this picturesque setting in a frame of green foliage nothing remains but a shadowed remembrance.

There is another picture, however so deeply stamped on memory's walls that death, not time may efface it. It is of a later period when the red man's lands were fast passing into the hands of the paleface in exchange for the paltry "presents" which were annually doled out at the trading posts by the government agents. At this time, their dress and customs were just beginning to show the touch of their contact with civilization.

Next month: The story of Old Mother Rood and her Dead Papoose.



## Calling All Aspiring Storytellers

Do you have a family story to tell?

Any skeletons to rattle?

Do you have a passion for the Island you want to share?

Maybe some old time photos?

Email us at [Email@hiscfhs.org](mailto:Email@hiscfhs.org)





## The Old Fire House

This is the property that the Society is interested in purchasing as our new home. It was built in the 1930s and housed the fire station for many years until the fire department moved to its current location on LaCroix Rd. We are trying to raise \$145,000 to purchase this historic building. It has a large open space that would be perfect for a museum as well as office space. The windows, A/C and heat were upgraded in 2001. There is a parking area in the front with room for additional parking. It is right in downtown Sans Souci and a perfect location. Help us by making a donation today to the Building Fund today!



### Firemen

Back Row: W. Herschelman, Robt. Hill, Frank Cummings, Hayden Prather, Dick Ishmael, (on truck) Orville Squires, Tom Yax, Fred Yax, Don Ishmael, Dick Earle, Jim Yax, (Chief) George John, Ray Schweikart. Front: Tom Ishmael, George Yax, Al. Beaudoin, Sr., Pat Smith, Bill Spencer.

from the August 1956 edition of *The Delta News*

# HISCFHS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

SUMMER ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: Harsens Island STATE: MI ZIP: 48028

HOME PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

CELL: \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

WINTER ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_

STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

WINTER PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM AND SEND WITH CHECK MADE PAYABLE TO:**  
HISCFHS  
P.O. BOX 44  
HARSENS ISLAND, MI 48028

## Annual Membership Dues renewable March 15

\_\_\_\_ Individual: \$15.00

\_\_\_\_ Family: \$20.00

\_\_\_\_ Business: \$25.00

\_\_\_\_ Patron: \$25.00

## Life Membership

\_\_\_\_ Life Individual: \$150.00

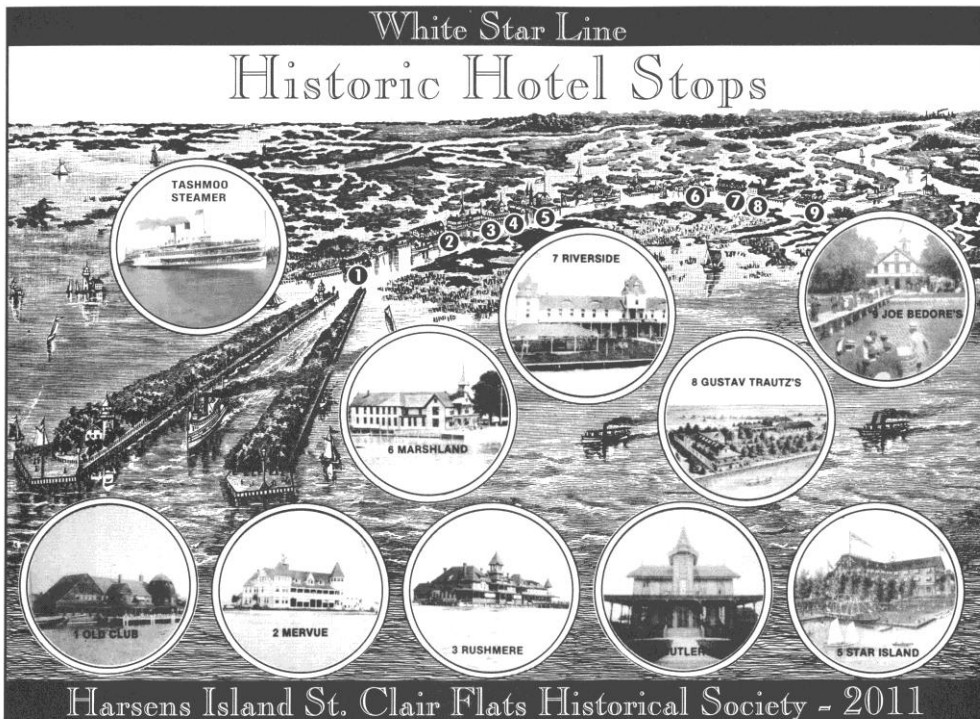
\_\_\_\_ Life Family: \$200.00

\_\_\_\_ Benefactor: \$500

## Building Fund Donation

\_\_\_\_ Amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

The HISCFHS is a 501(c)(3) organization.



## HISTORIC HARSENS ISLAND 2011 CALENDAR

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DIFFERENT ST. CLAIR FLATS  
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AVAILABLE.**

**CONTACT NANCY BOULTON  
810-748-1825**

The cover to the calendar is from the Special/Patrons edition of Mike Dixon's first book, *Life At The Flats, vol I, When Bedore Was King*. It was a labor of love that he commissioned an artist to compile it with illustrations from his collection.

HARSENS ISLAND ST. CLAIR FLATS HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
PO BOX 44  
HARSENS ISLAND MI 48028

## The Society 2011 Meeting Dates

### Board Meetings – Readers Cove

January 8	2 PM
February 12	2 PM
March 12	2 PM
April 9	2 PM
May 7	9 AM
June 4	9 AM
July 2	9 AM
August 6	9 AM
September 10	2 PM
October 8	2 PM
November 12	2 PM
December 10	2 PM

### Membership Meetings – Lions Club

January 22	2 PM
February 26	2 PM
March 26	2 PM
April 23	2 PM
May 28	9:30 AM
June 25	9:30 AM
July 23	9:30 AM
August 27	ANNUAL MEETING
September 24	2 PM
October 22	2 PM
November 26	2 PM
December	No Meeting

*Meeting dates may be subject to change*