



The SOCIETY

PAGES

HARSENS ISLAND / ST. CLAIR FLATS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Together, we can make great things happen.

What Can I Do?

Why is local history so important?

In school, we learned history mainly on a national or world level, and it can seem very removed from our own lives. Local history allows us to connect to the past and help us feel a sense of belonging.

How can organizations like the HISCFHS help preserve and promote our history?

Aside from collecting and preserving materials of historical significance, we help care for and promote local history by engaging the people in our community through programs and events. We can introduce the community to local history through our museum, and we reach out to other community organizations for partnership opportunities.

What can the community do to help preserve and promote local history?

People often hold a wealth of information about the history of their own community. Perhaps you have a story that needs to be told and would like to do an oral history recording. Or utilize your own community knowledge to assist as a volunteer at the museum. You can also support us by attending sponsored events or historical programs. Better yet, if you haven't joined, become a member of the Historical Society.

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From the President

Where has our summer gone? As I sit at my computer today, the 4th of July weekend is nearly here. It has been an eventful year for our Harsens Island / St. Clair Flats Historical Society. The Old Fire Hall has been successfully turned into our museum. Nancy Boulton, Marie Eidt and Chris Wludyka have been busy over the last few months accepting and cataloging the many Harsens Island artifacts donated to the museum. If you have not been to the museum yet make it a point to visit any weekend between noon and 4:00 p.m. On that note Nancy is looking for volunteers to man the museum in two hour shifts on Saturday and Sunday. Take the time to sign up, those who have express how enjoyable it is to greet our visitors and explain the various items on display.

On July 23 we will hold our monthly General Meeting at the museum; it will be our second there since our opening in May. It is also the last date that your ballot for our election of Directors can be turned in. The inspectors will tabulate the vote and report the results at our August General Meeting. Don't forget mail in your ballot or return it in person!

I hope you were able to attend the Rum Runners Party at the Middle Channel Golf and Country Club on June 25. Over 100 members and guests were in attendance and a good time was had by all. At this writing the results of the monies raised for our building fund are not complete. A report will be given at our July General Meeting.

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HISCFHS Board of Directors

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Gary Grout - 810-748-3320

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Secretary

Nancy Licata - 810-748-1825

Members at Large

Bernard Licata - 810-748-1825

Lucy Burby-Mastro - 810-748-8977

Donations Needed

If you have an item you would like to donate or loan, please call Nancy Boulton at 810-748-3802.

- Tashmoo Park
- Hotels
- Ferry Service
- Bars and Speakeasies
- Ships, Lighthouses
- Coast Guard
- Party/Grocery/Other Businesses
- Marinas/Boats
- Clubs/Organizations
- Schools
- Family History/Photos
- Hunting/Fishing
- Firefighters/Police
- Surrounding Islands
- Reference Materials/Books
- Farms
- DNR
- Churches
- Ice Jams
- Old Club

From the President

continued

In June a Building Fund mailing went out to all residents of Harsens Island. The brochure, titled ***BUILDING for THE FUTURE - PRESERVING OUR PAST*** is our major fundraiser that will allow us to raise the funds to purchase the Old Fire Hall. I am glad to report that we have received several contributions from the mailing but many more are needed. You will be kept informed as our building fund grows. We are a long way from our goal to raise the necessary funds to purchase the Old Fire Hall, but I am sure with the help of our membership and many friends of the Historical Society our goal will be obtained. When you are planning for deductions on your federal tax return, remember your Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) and make a generous contribution to our **BUILDING FUND**.

- Gary Grout

Building Fund Contributors

Irene Anbender

Lanie Anderson & William Hampton

Anonymous

Janie & Art Armstrong

Patricia & Harold Bain

Betty Baker & Family

Sandra & Gordon Bernhardt

Nancy Boulton

Nancy & David Bryson

Susan & Bob Bryson

Nancy & Michael Cannon

Cookie & John Cantrell

Sue & Doug Dawson

Debbie & Bill Demunnik

John Dion

Arlene Earl

Nancy Eldridge

Clayton Evans

Claudia & Dennis Gilpatrick

Helen & Richard Jositas

Joyce Kelly

Richard Knight

Father Zyg Kowalczyk

Donna & Ron Krispin

Dr. Jeffrey Lipton

Doreen & Charles Miller

Mary & James Nicolai

Iris Olmin

Barbara & Raymond Peters

Patricia & Ken Quint

Family of Bob Schueler, Jr.

Ruth Schueler

Barbara & Edward Shaw

Alan Simasko & Cynthia Lane

Mary & Walter Skula

Karen & Bill Smith

Mary Ann Smith

Ginger Terrien

Julie & Jim Testori

Donna & James Thompson

Robert H. Travis

Judy & Paul Wargo

Gail & Jack Warren

Mary Weishert & Family

What Can I Do?

continued

Why is local history important to all age groups?

Local history has something to offer for every generation, from teaching the ways of the past to offering visions of the future. It gives older adults an opportunity to connect to the places and events that shaped their lives and share the resulting stories. For children, learning about local history often creates their first sense of what life was like before the digital age, and lays the groundwork on which to build their understanding of history. For the young folks, local history shows how people and events created the world we live in today, and offers lessons and inspiration for creating a better community.

Why should I volunteer?

All of us lead busy lives with jobs, family and other responsibilities. We know it can be difficult to make the time to help. Volunteering can give you a feeling of achievement and let you give back something to the community. You can make new friends and have new experiences. For us to move forward, we need volunteers to help staff the museum, with fundraising and on committees. There are many opportunities to volunteer and even if you only have an hour to spare, we can use your help.

Why should I contribute to the Building Fund?

Every weekend visitors to the island are coming through our museum in the Old Fire Hall in numbers that really warrant being open. We are showcasing our unique history and highlights of island life. The building is the focus of our group and our fundraising efforts. We hope to add displays and generate interest in this effort and that will build support for the funding.

Downtown Sans Souci has a unique charm and character of its own that can attract visitors as it once did. It can also be a place that, as Islanders, we can be proud of. The Old Fire Hall brings with it a prime location and has the heart strings of the community; it is proving to be the perfect spot to tell our story.

The Historical Society's efforts to bring the history of Harsens Island and the St. Clair Flats into a museum will provide services to the community in the form of educational, cultural and social events; and, it will help improve the downtown area. We hope it will serve as a catalyst to other improvements that will help the community prosper.

We have a wonderful community and we want it to thrive....not deteriorate. Please make a contribution and be a part of history. ■

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Historical Society hosted its first **Historical Society Social Hour** on June 15. The informal gathering was so well received by the 20-30 attendees, we plan to continue the event throughout the summer, so **PLEASE JOIN US!**

Harsens Island / St Clair Flats Historical Society Social Hour

Wednesday, July 13

6:00 to 8:00pm

at the Historical Society Museum

3058 South Channel Drive

Downtown Sans Souci

Bring a lawn chair, your favorite beverage and an appetizer to share. Spend a relaxing evening meeting Island neighbors, friends and visitors, or exploring new additions to the museum.



Don't Forget to Vote!

All members should have received a ballot via email if you have it and by regular mail if you don't. If you did not receive a ballot, please contact Nancy Licata at 810-748-1825. Ballots must be returned via US Mail or by dropping it off at the Old Fire Hall weekends between 12-4pm. Votes will be tabulated at the July General Membership Meeting held at the Old Fire Hall on July 23 at 9:30 am.

Rum Runner Party



E.J. and Roderick McKnight
Best Dressed Couple



Roxie and Brian Lowe – Best Dressed Couple.



Debbie and Bill Demunnik get in the spirit of the event.

On Saturday June 25, The Harsens Island /St. Clair Flats Historical Society hosted the Rum Runners Party, a prohibition era themed gala at the Middle Channel Golf & Country Club. The event launched the Historical Society's fundraising effort to **Save the Old Fire Hall** - which it hopes to purchase and establish as its permanent home and historical museum.

Attendees of the Rum Runners Party enjoyed a delicious dinner, dancing, a silent auction, as well as a Best-Dressed Rum Runners Contest. Taking home Best-Dressed honors were Roxie and Brian Lowe and E.J. and Roderick McKnight. The Rum Runners Party was a great start to the Historical Society's **Save the Old Fire Hall Building Fund**, and with your donations and support of future events like these, we'll raise the remaining \$104,000 needed to purchase the old Fire Hall before our lease expires.

To those of you who have already contributed to the Building Fund...**we thank you!**

Let the Lower Lights Be Burning: A History of the Lighthouses at the St. Clair Flats

Located at the head of Lake St. Clair, the delta area popularly known as the "Flats" has been an obstacle to navigation since the first Native Americans explored the region by canoe. During the 19th century, as commerce developed on the Great Lakes, it became obvious that improvements were needed at the Flats. These navigational aids included charts, dredging of shipping channels, and lighthouses. by Cynthia S. Bieniek

The Twin Lighthouses of the New Ship Canal

The 1872 Annual Report of the Lighthouse Board states that the twin lighthouses of the new Ship Canal were lit November 15, 1871. These identical lighthouses were located at the ends of the dikes at opposite ends of the Canal. The original lights were fixed red 4th order lens with ruby chimney. The focal planes were 45 feet above water. The towers were octagonal red brick with cut stone bases. The keepers' houses were built of red brick with slate roofs and green window "blinds." Each dwelling had ten rooms and water was piped from the lake to a hand pump in the kitchen sink. A white boathouse, red painted oil house, and whitewashed chicken coop completed the scene. The lighthouses were accessible only by boat.



At one of the new Ship Canal lighthouses, Andrew Rattray began as keeper in 1883 when he joined the Lighthouse Service at age 31. He stayed at this post for the next 36 years. He was born September 13, 1852 on Harsens Island of pioneer parents. Andrew and his wife Alice, had two sons, William and Radcliffe. A daughter Alice was born at the upper lighthouse. The family spent their winters in Algonac. Their son William was temporarily stationed at the old South Channel light during November and December 1905 because of the sudden death of keeper John Sinclair. Andrew Rattray retired from the Lighthouse Service to a cottage at the Flats in 1919, and died in 1948 at the age of 96. The other light keeper at the new Ship Canal was Tom Lappin, who served nearly as long as Rattray.

The difficulty in visiting these lighthouses by land probably contributed to the lack of images existing today of these structures. Although they were unique in being duplicates built from the same plans, they were never popular topics of postcards at the Flats, as were the hotels and hunting clubs which dotted the landscape in the 1890s and early 1900s. ■



2011 Activities & Events Calendar

Museum Open Saturdays and Sundays from Noon – 4pm

Volunteers are needed to staff the museum and should contact Nancy Boulton at 810-748-3802 for orientation and assignments. Visit our gift shop!

General Membership Meetings held at the Old Fire Hall 3058 S Channel in downtown Sans Souci

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|--------|----|---|
| July | 23 | 9:30 AM General Membership Meeting |
| | 13 | Society Social Hour – see page 3 |
| August | 21 | ANNUAL MEETING 4:00 PM General Membership |
| Sept | 24 | 2:00 PM General Membership Meeting |
| Oct | 22 | 2:00 PM General Membership Meeting |
| Nov | 6 | 2:00 PM General Membership Meeting |
| Dec | | No General Membership Meeting |

